

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MINORITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
ADMINISTRATORS IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF
CALIFORNIA: THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS,
BARRIERS, AND PERSEVERANCE

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By
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

First of all, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my beloved parents, Jaroon and Sriprapai Yodduangkhae, who taught me the value of education, and spent their lives working for public education to promote the success of every student. You have given me an educational opportunity from the best institutions and supported me financially, physically, and emotionally throughout my life. I am proud to be your daughter and the first generation to receive a doctorate degree in our family.

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Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to you, my friends, my cohorts, and colleagues who motivated me, and assisted me in this journey. Your sacrifices, inspiration, and support through the years have been invaluable to me.

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ABSTRACT

In California, data indicate that minority administrators are significantly underrepresented in the public school system in California when compared to overall student enrollment (California Department of Education, 2013). This qualitative research study explored the lived experiences of a small group of minority administrators in California public schools. The semi-structured and open-ended questions were used to capture narrative data through an in-depth interviewing process. The theoretical framework for this study was based on Critical Race Theory (CRT), a lens to give voice to the lived experiences from the perspectives of participants. Participants reported personal, professional, and external challenges that acted as barriers to minorities ascending into higher administrative positions. Racism was mentioned as the highest critical factor, particularly in combination with factors like culture, childhood environment, formal education, and commitment to family. Other local factors like governing boards, hiring processes, community partnerships, and perceptions of minorities were also mentioned as challenges. The highest mentioned factor for achieving success was networking, followed by having job skills, a pre-defined mindset, and integrity. The results of this study provided valuable information to minority administrators and other stakeholders. In addition, the results of this study contributed to current research on minority school administrators and how they have become successful in their careers.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

In California, public school administration consists of 1,043 school districts that oversee 10,296 schools serving over six million students with diverse backgrounds (California Department of Education, 2013). School administrators play a major role in school improvement planning, educational decision making, and daily school operations in efforts to promote the success of every student in the public school system. The California Department of Education (2013) stated that:

California's educational system relies on local control for the management of school districts on the theory that those closest to the problems and needs of each individual district are the best able to make appropriate decisions on behalf of the district. In allocating their resources among the schools of the district, school district governing boards and district administrators must follow the law, but they also have the additional tough job of setting the educational priorities for their schools and weighing the importance and urgency of all of their education needs.

District administrators including superintendents, assistant superintendents, program administrators, chief business officers, fiscal administrators, and principals work collaboratively with school boards, parents, and other stakeholders to allocate fair and equitable resources to promote the success of every student.

Historically, school administration has been a persistently white-dominated field, but this is gradually changing (Melendez, 2008). Minorities are slowly moving into roles of school administration as the nation's population becomes more diverse. In 1997, as shown in Table 1, public school administration in California was 75% white, 12% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 5% other ethnicities. Since then, minority administrators have slowly increased, and numbers of white administrators have gradually dropped. The most recent demographic data show that 62% of total administrators are white, 21% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 9% other ethnicities (California Department of Education, 2013).

Table 1

California School Administrators by Ethnicity

	1997- 1998	%	2011- 2012	%	+ / -	%
Hispanic	2,772	12.16%	4,752	20.54%	1,980	8.38%
American Indian	164	0.72%	123	0.53%	-41	-0.19%
Asian	639	2.80%	825	3.57%	186	0.77%
Pacific Islander	37	0.16%	70	0.30%	33	0.14%
Filipino	113	0.50%	185	0.80%	72	0.30%
African American	1,843	8.08%	1,802	7.79%	-41	-0.29%
White	17,113	75.06%	14,434	62.38%	-2,679	-12.68%
Two or More Races	23	0.10%	185	0.80%	162	0.70%
No Response	95	0.42%	764	3.29%	669	2.87%
Total	22,799	100.00%	23,140	100.00%	341	0.00%

In 1997, as show in Table 2, students in public schools were 39% white, 40% Hispanic, 9% African American, and 12% other ethnicities. Since then, Hispanic students have increased progressively, white students have gradually decreased, and other ethnicities including African Americans have plateaued. The most recent

demographic data show that Hispanic students now represent 53% while white students represent only 26% of the total population (California Department of Education, 2013). Minority administrators, particularly Hispanic, are gradually increasing as the Hispanic student population rises. However, they are not close to being representative of the minority population found in California public schools. To reflect a student enrollment of 53% Hispanic, there should have been 12,264 Hispanic administrators instead of 4,752 as shown in Table 1. The gap of 7,512 could potentially be filled with teachers and pupil services staff. For African American groups, even though data show that African American administrators are overrepresented in California, they are underrepresented in some regions in California like Stanislaus County, as shown in Table 3.

Table 2

California Student Enrollment by Ethnicity

	1997- 1998	%	2012- 2013	%	+ / -	%
Hispanic	2,319,072	40.49%	3,282,105	52.71%	963,033	12.22%
American Indian	49,328	0.86%	40,414	0.65%	-8,914	-0.21%
Asian	466,399	8.14%	536,970	8.62%	70,571	0.48%
Pacific Islander	34,649	0.60%	33,958	0.55%	-691	-0.05%
Filipino	137,126	2.39%	154,891	2.49%	17,765	0.10%
African American	501,303	8.75%	394,695	6.34%	-106,608	-2.41%
White	2,219,426	38.77%	1,589,393	25.52%	-630,033	-13.25%
Two or More Races	0	0.00%	149,806	2.41%	149,806	2.41%
No Response	0	0.00%	44,757	0.71%	44,757	0.71%
Total	5,727,303	100.00%	6,226,989	100.00%	499,686	0.00%

In 2012, the data show 328,876 certificated staff in California: 218,154 (66%) white; 58,770 (18%) Hispanic; 14,226 (4%) African Americans; and 37,726 (11%)

other ethnicities (California Department of Education, 2013). Certificated staff include school administrators, teachers, and pupil services. The data indicate an even bigger disproportionality issue at the total certificated staff. However, a potential pool of Hispanic administrators could be 54,018 and 12,424 for African American administrators. These numbers arrived from teachers and pupil services staff because they have a potential to move up into higher administrative roles. Nevertheless, the potential pool of minority candidates who have not yet been employed by educational agencies remains unclear.

It is critical that school administrators proportionally represent student population to increase student's engagement level. Melendez (2008) made the following point:

Minorities lead school districts whose student bodies are predominantly black or Latino. African-American superintendents tend to be found in large urban districts, while Latino superintendents are generally concentrated in south west. They often lead challenging districts where they serve not only as educational leaders, but also as inspirational role models for students and staff (para.9).

Minority administrators create a positive environment to increase students' levels of comfort, motivation, and achievement in schools with high minority populations (Sanchez, Thornton & Usinger, 2009). Because minority representation remains relatively low in administrative positions, it is important to explore the factors that

contributed to the success of those minority leaders who able to persist into higher administrative roles.

Statement of the Problem

Minority administrators are significantly underrepresented in the public school system in California when compared to student enrollment. Overall, students from minority groups represent nearly 75% of total student enrollment, but only 38% of school administrators are from minority groups, as shown in Table 3. In particular, Hispanic administrators are underrepresented by 32% when compared to the Hispanic student population. On the contrary, white administrators are overrepresented by 37%. The data indicate a significant disproportionality issue of minority school administrators in California.

Table 3

California School Administrators vs Student Enrollment Representation by Ethnicity

	Administrators	Students	Difference
Hispanic	20.54%	52.71%	-32.17%
American Indian	0.53%	0.65%	-0.12%
Asian	3.57%	8.62%	-5.05%
Pacific Islander	0.30%	0.55%	-0.25%
Filipino	0.80%	2.49%	-1.69%
African American	7.79%	6.34%	1.45%
White	62.38%	25.52%	36.86%
Two or More Races	0.80%	2.41%	-1.61%
No Response	3.29%	0.71%	2.58%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	

The disproportionality issue of school administrators appears to be worse in the Central Valley of California. For example, in Stanislaus County, students from

minority groups represent nearly 70% of total student enrollment but only 21% of school administrators are from minority groups (as shown in Table 4). The data show that Hispanic administrators are underrepresented by 39% while white administrators are overrepresented by 48%. The other counties located in the Central Valley of California including San Joaquin, Merced, Madera, and Fresno show 36% to 49% underrepresentation of Hispanic administrators, which is relatively higher than average state level of 32% (California Department of Education, 2013).

Table 4

Stanislaus County School Administrator vs Student Enrollment Representation by Ethnicity

	Administrators	Students	Difference
Hispanic	17.16%	55.85%	-38.69%
American Indian	0.50%	0.59%	-0.09%
Asian	1.00%	4.05%	-3.05%
Pacific Islander	0.25%	0.77%	-0.52%
Filipino	0.00%	0.88%	-0.88%
African American	1.24%	3.09%	-1.85%
White	78.61%	30.88%	47.73%
Two or More Races	0.50%	2.29%	-1.79%
No Response	0.74%	1.60%	-0.86%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	

For African American groups, the data show one and a half percent overrepresentation of African American administrators at the state level when comparing to student enrollment. However, African American administrators are underrepresented in Stanislaus County by nearly two percent. The other counties located in the Central Valley of California including San Joaquin, Merced, Madera,

Fresno show one to three percent underrepresentation of African American administrators which is opposite than state level (California Department of Education, 2013).

Furthermore, the disproportionality gap is larger in the Central Valley of California particularly in key leader positions including superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs). For example, there are 69 Hispanic and five African American administrators serving 25 school districts in Stanislaus County (California Department of Education, 2013). However, there are currently no Hispanic superintendents and only one African American superintendent serving in the county. Similarly, there are two Hispanic chief business officers, and only one African American fiscal director in Stanislaus County. It appears that the minority groups, especially Hispanic and African American administrators, are struggling to advance their careers to the top management positions in Stanislaus County.

It is critical that school administrators proportionately represent the student population to better serve every student and increase academic performance. Increasingly, the majority of students enrolled in California public schools are Hispanic and other minorities. However, numbers of minority administrators remain significantly low in the Central Valley of California. Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2009) stated that “This mismatch is a problem. Leadership that represents the cultural and ethnic groups that make up U.S. society is important for all students because the world students will join as adults are richly diverse” (p. 1). Williams and Loeb (2012) believed that “Diversity among the ranks of school leaders has

implications beyond symbolic representations of fairness and equality because the presence of minority principals may affect learning, particularly for minority students” (p.6).

Minority administrators serve as role models for minority students. For example, Hispanic administrators serve as role models and effectively establish a connection between home and school for Hispanic students (Fisher, 1998). African American principals act as role models to motivate African American students and increase student engagement (Tillman, 2004). Successful minority administrators certainly inspire all students to recognize that students from any ethnic group can become successful leaders. Therefore, disproportionality issues of minority administrators could demotivate or negatively impact the academic achievements of students from minority groups.

Table 5

State Academic Performance Index (API) Report

	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Hispanic	743	729	715	698	683	666	656	642
American Indian	745	733	728	715	708	697	691	678
Asian	906	898	890	877	865	852	847	831
Pacific Islander	777	763	753	742	734	720	714	700
Filipino	870	859	851	837	824	813	808	797
African American	709	696	686	670	659	644	635	626
White	855	845	838	827	814	806	801	790
Two or More Races	852	836	808	793	-	-	-	-
State Average	791	778	768	754	741	728	721	709

According to the 2012 State Academic Performance Index (API), minority students including African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, and Pacific

Islanders have performed below state target scores since 2005 (see Table 5). White students have performed above state target scores. The API scores range from a low of 200 to a high of 1000 to reflect student group's performance level based on statewide assessments. The state has set 800 as the API target for all schools to meet (California Department of Education, 2013).

The data confirm that minority students, particularly African American, Hispanic, American Indian, and Pacific Islanders, perform significantly lower than white students. Statistically, the minority students (except Asians and Filipinos) perform lower than the state API targets, whereas white students perform higher. Educational pipelines may serve as a primary barrier for minority student success. Haven, Adkinson, and Bagley (1980) listed barriers such as lower career aspirations, lack of support for aspirations at school, workplace resistance, and lack of role models.

The public school system has been evolving in the past decades. The key point is that every student, regardless of demographic background, must receive fair and equitable resources to promote academic achievement. Minority students somehow continue to struggle in current educational systems to meet academic achievement, which may negatively impact their motivation to become school leaders. Statistical data show that minority populations are significantly underrepresented as school administrators in the Central Valley of California. Hiring minorities as school administrator is beneficial, as they often lead challenging districts where they serve not only as educational leaders, but also as inspirational role models for students and

staff (Melendez, 2008). Therefore, it is critical to understand how individuals from underrepresented minority backgrounds become successful as school administrators. Several studies show benefits of having minority administrators as role models for minority students.

The disparity among school administrators may lead to major issues including academic achievement, social skills, and career attainment at the personal level, district level, state level, and beyond. Most studies emphasize minority principals who directly oversee students at the school site level. Some studies involve minority superintendents who play a major role in critical decision making at the district level. Surprisingly, there is limited study on chief business officers, even though they primarily oversee financial and business functions and support operations of the school districts. The superintendents and chief business officers are key positions in school administration. Their responsibilities highly engage in policy implementation and financial transactions of school districts. Nevertheless, little is still known about how individuals from underrepresented groups have become school district superintendents, or chief business officers, especially in the Central Valley of California. Clearly, there is a need for more research on this subject.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of seven minority superintendents and chief business officers at school districts in the Central Valley of California. The narrative case study was conducted on minority superintendents and chief business officers to reveal their career pathways, barriers, and modes of

perseverance. The results contributed to current research on minority school administrators and how they became successful in their careers. For the purpose of this study, only Hispanic and African American were included. The Hispanic population was selected to examine due to significant disproportionality issues and low academic performance. Hispanic students perform second to the lowest in comparison to their peers and significantly below state standards. Their average API score in FY 2012 was 743 when the state target score was 800. The African American population was selected because in California, African Americans perform lowest in comparison to their peers and significantly below state standard. Their average API score in Year 2012 was 709 when the state target score was 800. In addition, both Hispanic and African American groups are underrepresented in administrative roles when comparing to student enrollment.

The study focuses on superintendents and chief business officers. The superintendents were selected in this research because they are highly involved with decision making of school operations, instructional design, and student achievement. The superintendents act as chief executive officers to manage all programs and business functions. The chief business officers were also included to reflect challenges and barriers in perspective of financial management. The chief business officers oversee all business activities such as finance, human resources, transportation, school nutrition, maintenance, technology, and other business functions. Both positions are included because their roles have a significant impact on education systems, including daily operations, closing the achievement gap, and

education reform. School districts in California have faced challenges of improving student achievement and meeting fiscal obligations due to lack of resources like funding, effective leaders, and effective programs. Therefore, it is critical for school districts to select effective superintendents and fiscal administrators to provide leadership support on instructional designs and financial management.

Accordingly, this qualitative study focuses on both leadership positions. In addition, this study focuses on the Central Valley region due to current demographic information which leads to higher levels of significant disproportionality. The career pathway, barriers, and perseverance of Hispanic and African American administrators were analyzed using critical race theory frame work. The research questions included:

1. What barriers did African American and Hispanic superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) in the Central Valley of California face in their pursuit of the positions?
2. What factors facilitated African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California to overcome the barriers they faced in their pursuit of their positions?
3. What professional development programs (including mentoring programs) did African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California participate? How did these programs impact their pursuit of their positions?

4. What are the leadership qualities of Hispanic and African American superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California? How do they perceive their leadership qualities impacting student achievement?

These Research Questions served to guide the research design and methodology of the study.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT recognizes that racial inequality is embedded within society. Matsuda (1991) described CRT as:

The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

Furthermore, Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993) defined CRT as meeting the following criteria:

- Critical race recognizes racism is endemic to American life.
- Critical race theory expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy.
- Critical race theory challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law. Critical race theorists adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.

- Critical race theory insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.
- Critical race theory is interdisciplinary.
- Critical race theory works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

The researcher used CRT as a lens to understand career pathways, barriers, and perseverance perceived by minority administrators.

Rollock and Gillborn (2011) defined CRT as “an approach that offers a radical lens through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society” (p. 1). People of color are frequently marginalized in American educational institutions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This study using majoritarian storytelling revealed that stories from minority groups are often silenced and distorted while stories from white groups are privileged within the educational system (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). The CRT methodology challenges cultural deficit stories and empowers communities of color. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) pointed out that

Critical Race Theory advances a strategy to foreground and account for the role of race and racism in education and works toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin. (p.25)

Accordingly, the researcher utilized CRT methodology to voice real life experiences in the educational pipeline and career pathways from the perspectives of individuals of color.

Operational Definitions

Key Leaders

For the purpose of this study, key leaders refer to superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) who play critical role in school administration.

Chief Business Officers

Under direct supervision of school district superintendents, Fiscal Administrators serve as chief financial officers (CFOs) to oversee all business transactions such as accounting, budgeting, human resources, payroll, and other related activities. There are different position titles including chief business officials, business managers, and fiscal directors, depending on the size of the school districts. For the purpose of this study, chief business officers refer to key leaders who oversee fiscal and business functions of school districts.

Minority

A minority is a group that experiences a narrowing of opportunity (success, education, wealth, etc.) that is disproportionately low compared to their numbers in society. Generally, the minority groups include Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, Filipino, African American, and other ethnicities. For the purpose of this study, only Hispanic and African American groups were included.

Superintendents

Under direct supervision of the school board, superintendents are ultimately responsible to a group that experiences a narrowing of opportunity including success, education, wealth, etc. that is disproportionately low compared to their numbers in the society.

Academic Performance Index (API) Report

The API is calculated from the performance of individual students using California Standardized Tests. The score is on a scale of 200 to 1000. The statewide API goal is 800 for all schools. The higher numbers generally indicate better performance on the tests.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity relates to a group of people with a common heritage, racial, religious, linguistic or cultural background.

California Public School Districts

Public school districts in California are identified as such by the California Department of Education.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study included several assumptions. First of all, the researcher assumed that an achievement gap exists between white groups and minority groups, particularly in Hispanic and African American population, and this gap may not change significantly until there are more minority role models in education. Secondly, in the Central Valley of California, the minority groups, especially Hispanic and

African American, are struggling to advance their careers as school administrators. Superintendents and chief business officers are key leaders in school districts. Both positions are highly involved in critical decision makings including program implementations and financial obligations. There is value in closing the gap between the percentage of minority administrators and minority students. Because minority administrators serve as role models for minority students to promote academic achievement, social skills, and career attainment, it is important to understand key factors of that influence career pathways and academic success of minority groups.

The limitations of this study include the nature of qualitative study, which is based on unique personal experiences and perspective of individuals. The participants may be hesitant to disclose certain information for variety of reasons including their cultural norms and relationship with researcher. Also, the numbers of participants are small due to lack of minority superintendents and CBOs in California. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to the larger population.

In terms of delimitations, the qualitative method was used to explore lived experiences of minority groups. The result was limited to the nature of qualitative study. The study was limited to Hispanic and African American groups because they perform lowest in academic achievement. The boundary of this research was limited in the Central Valley of California due to high number of minority groups. Accordingly, the experiences were limited to the Central Valley of California region only. The participants for this study were limited to superintendents and chief business officers because they are key leaders at school districts. Other administrators

such as assistant superintendents, program managers, principals were not included in this study.

Significance of the Study

School administrators play a major role in school functions to promote achievement of every student. Data show a significant disproportionality between minority administrators and minority students. The percentage of Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers are not close to being representative of the minority population found in California public schools. Therefore, this study is significant because it explores the challenges confronting minority administrators during their journeys into educational leadership. This study may also shed light on why so few Hispanic and African American educators are represented in superintendent and CBO positions in public education. In addition, this study explored the factors that have contributed to the success of those who are in key leadership positions. The results of this study would greatly provide valuable information to minority administrators and other stakeholders.

Several studies were conducted to analyze barriers faced by minority superintendents. Ceja (2013) interviewed six Hispanic superintendents and found that a lack of role models was a barrier to success. Gillett (2012) examined minority superintendents and found that race plays a factor in decision-making processes. Due to lack of minority superintendents in general, the results may or may not pertain to minority superintendents in other demographic areas. Therefore, it is important to identify factors that have contributed to success of minority superintendents in

particular areas. In addition, there is limited study on minority chief business officers (CBOs) who are primarily responsible for fiscal and business functions of school districts. At this time, a little is known as to how minority CBOs become successful in their profession.

The significance of this study includes analysis of barriers that minority administrators faced in their pursuit of the position of superintendents and chief business officers in the Central Valley of California. The differences and similarities in these barriers and factors that facilitated current Hispanic and African American administrators to overcome these barriers were reported. The effects of professional development and other mentoring programs on minority administrators were also analyzed. The study also explored the leadership styles of participating Hispanic and African American administrators. It is the sincere desire of the researcher that this study be used to assist aspiring, current, and future minority administrators particularly Hispanic and African American in their pursuit of the superintendent and chief business officer positions. In addition, the results of this study informed the general population such as school boards, school administrators, parents, community members and other key stakeholders that there is significant value of minority groups served school administration.

Conclusion

This study involved a qualitative study of minority superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) in the Central Valley of California. The statistical data suggested that there is a significant disproportionality issue between minority

administrators and minority students. Sanchez, Thornton, and Usinger (2009) stated that minority public school administrators create positive impacts on students' levels of comfort, motivation, and achievement in schools with high minority population. The superintendents and CBOs play a major role of school decision making to promote achievement of students. Therefore, it is critical to understand factors influencing their career pathways, barriers, and perseverance. The study provides valuable information to minority administrators as well as the general population.

The next chapter provides a summary of research related to the topic of minority school administrators and the factors that allow minority administrators to overcome barriers. Research on mentorship and school administrators is also provided in the next chapter. Chapter 3 delineates the methodology that was used in this study. Specifically information about the participant selection process, data collection process, and data analysis process is provided. Specifically, the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory is explicated and coding processes are described in detail. Chapter 4 provides an explanation of data, which includes reporting on coded interview data collected during the course of the study. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the findings of this study and implications of the research, further analyzing and summarizing the four Research Questions and providing recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to explore the life experiences of a small group of minority administrators in California public schools. The narrative study was conducted specifically on Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers at school districts located in the Central Valley of California. Accordingly, this chapter includes literature related to the theoretical framework and background information of the study. In addition, this chapter discusses conclusions from previous studies on minority school administrators and other related issues. The review of related literature is presented in four sections as follows: minority school administrators, Critical Race Theory (CRT), low achieving Hispanic and African American students, and factors for success.

Minority School Administrators

California school administrators play a major role in school improvement planning, educational decision making, and daily school operations in order to promote the success of every student in the public school system. Petersen (1999) conducted a study to identify characteristics of effective superintendents to improve student achievement. Data were collected from superintendents, school boards, and principals from five mid-size school districts (5,500-9,500 students) in California with the largest percentile growth in state assessment in the late 1980s. The study reveals that effective superintendents provide instructional leadership by articulating

a vision for children's education, weaving vision into the district's goals, using key strategies to deliver vision through shared decision making, and evaluating the personnel and program.

Dillard (2003) conducted an interpretive ethnological study that consisted of in-depth interviews with eight Hispanic superintendents in the state of Texas. The study focused on identifying strategies utilized in overcoming the challenges these minority superintendents faced in their advancement to the position of superintendent. One major theme Dillard identified as a challenge was the hiring practices of an exclusionary nature that prevented Hispanic educators from moving into the positions of superintendent. These practices included school boards hiring candidates that are similar in demographic structure to that of the school board. Padilla (2003) conducted a similar study of the 77 superintendents in the state of Texas, also identifying hiring practices as one of the barriers to Hispanic administrators in their advancement to the superintendent position, further explaining the argument of race as a barrier. Minority leaders in key positions have the power to inspire and motivate students of color, but these studies show that despite the importance of representation, these leaders face challenges within the initial stages of career advancement, namely a hiring process that is designed to employ people of similar demographic makeup to that of the status quo.

Critical Race Theory

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) defined race as a purely social construct that arbitrarily places individuals into discrete groups "based on characteristics such as

physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation or history, ethnic classification, and/or the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time” (p.). The concept of race has been contested and redefined throughout history, but as long as race has existed as a social construct, so has the practice of racism, a system that provides advantage for one group to subordinate another. Racism can appear on an individual level (through the expression of attitudes and beliefs, through socialization, interpersonal interactions, and individual behaviors), at an institutional level (through housing, employment, education, health care services, religion, media, government, and law), or on a cultural level (through values, language, standards of beauty, holidays, sex roles, systems of logic, and societal expectations. These various modes of oppression occur in complex combinations with one another.

Racism has been prevalent throughout the course of American history, as evinced by even the earliest legislative acts like the Naturalization Act of 1790, which restricted citizenship rights to land owning whites. From the removal of Native Americans from their homelands and the “purchasing” of Mexican territory without giving rights to those living on their ancestral homelands, to legislation designed to oppress specific groups (for example, the Foreign Miners Tax, which places an extra charge on Latin and Chinese miners but not on European American miners), to one of the largest blights on American history, the institution of slavery, the country is still recovering from its dark past, a past that has placed privileges of one dominant culture over another. When discussing privilege, Powell (2012) stated the following:

An important benefit of recognizing and confronting privilege is addressing its effects on not only the “deficit” holders but also the members of the privileged group. . . Acknowledging privilege means accepting that comforts and gains are not necessarily the result of good work, and that rewards are not always deserved. Recognizing the necessity of confronting privilege is a difficult task for privilege holders. (p. 80)

Powell recognized the necessity for recognizing privilege as the first step to enacting social change.

Hardiman and Jackson defined a social identity model in five developmental stages that begins with a lack of social consciousness and navigates through acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997). Each stage involves identity development perceived by agents and targets on various issues such as racial differences, religion preferences, and gender identifications. The “agents” are dominant groups or oppressors while the “targets” refer to minority or oppressed groups. The first state is marked by naiveté, or what the authors describe as a lack of social consciousness. This occurs in early stages of life, approximately up to four years of age. Both agents and targets have no understanding of racism. The second state involves either active or passive acceptance. The agents accept their dominant group and reject minority targets, while the targets accept the idea that being a certain ethnicity equates with having a privilege and acquiesce to feeling unequal to their oppressors.

The next state of active or passive resistance occurs when agents begin to learn more about targets and start to question their own privilege. The targets at this stage begin to advocate for their rights. The fourth stage, redefinition, occurs when both agents and targets re-examine their own identities and reach out to other agents or targets with the same beliefs. The last step of internalization follows when both groups find ways to live together in society without having conflicts. The ideal is for both agents and targets to be in the internalization state. However, it appears that very few people actually reach this level of development. This model is usually presented in terms of other social justice diversity issues.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT recognizes that racial inequality is embedded within society.

Matsuda (1991) described CRT as:

The work of progressive legal scholars of color who are attempting to develop a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in American law and that work toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of eliminating all forms of subordination. (p. 1331)

Rollock and Gillborn (2011) defined CRT as “an approach that offers a radical lens through which to make sense of, deconstruct and challenge racial inequality in society” (p.1). People of color are frequently marginalized in American educational institutions (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This study using majoritarian storytelling revealed that stories from minority groups are often silenced and distorted while stories from white group are privileged in educational system (Solórzano & Yosso,

2002). The CRT methodology challenges cultural deficit stories and empower people communities of color. Accordingly, this study will utilize CRT methodology to voice real life experience in education pipeline and career pathway from the perspectives of individuals of colors. In addition, the critical race theory will be used as a lens to understand the life experiences of minority administrators. CRT is an important lens to use when examining the experiences of minority voices.

Low Achieving Hispanic and African American Students

Current data show that minority students, particularly African Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, and Pacific Islanders perform significantly lower than white students (California Department of Education, 2013). Statistically, minority students (except Asians and Filipinos) perform lower than state API targets while white students perform higher. Finkel (2010) stated the following:

Long-term data on the much-discussed achievement gap between white and black students shows uneven improvement over the past few decades. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results since 1980 show that gaps in fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math scores have either narrowed or, at worst, stayed the same. But the most current data, from 2009, still show great gaps. (2)

Haven, Adkinson, and Bagley (1980) addressed barriers for minority students including lower career aspirations, lack of support for aspirations at school, workplace resistance, and lack of role models. One of the most serious problems associated with the educational failure of Hispanic students results from a shortage of

adequately qualified teachers and a lack of appropriate preparation among credentialed teachers (Menken & Holmes, 2000).

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) pointed out that differences between groups existed on many different dimensions. In terms of education, they claimed that

Nationally, school districts with the highest enrollment of white students have on average \$902 more to spend per student than school districts with the highest enrollment of students of color. . . In addition to being denied adequate funding, minority students in racially segregated schools encounter a less rigorous curriculum, face lower expectations from their teachers, and receive inadequate, if any, information about financial aid, college opportunities, and other avenues to well-paying careers. (p. 124)

These authors pointed out that schools in which white students were the majority were more than twice as likely to offer Advanced Placement classes as those schools with Latino or African American majorities. In terms of the labor market, the authors also pointed out that “income and life chances for people with the same educational attainment are also widely disproportionate across racial groups” (p. 125). These disproportionalities can also be seen in the housing market, mainstream media, and the criminal justice system.

In an eye-opening report outlining the connections between white privilege and higher education, Carnevale and Strohl (2013) argued that while access to higher education is increasing, this increase in access most benefits affluent white students. Though access has increased, white students are still funneled into higher-tier four-

year institutions while minorities are funneled into two- and four-year open-access schools. According to the authors,

Since 1995, 82 percent of new white enrollments have gone to the 468 most selective colleges, while 72 percent of new Hispanic enrollment and 68 percent of new African-American enrollment have gone to the two-year and four-year open-access schools. As a result of these uneven flows, the white share of seats at the top 468 colleges has increased, and the white share of seats at open-access colleges has declined relative to the white share of the college-age population (ages 18-24). Conversely, the relative share of the new seats going to African Americans and Hispanics at the 469 most selective colleges has declined while the African-American and Hispanic share of seats at the 3,250 open-access colleges has increased relative to their share of the college-age population. (p. 9-10)

The key point is that every student regardless of demographic background must receive fair and equitable resources to promote academic achievement. Minority students somehow continue to struggle in current educational system to meet academic achievement, which may negatively impact their motivation for such endeavors as becoming school leaders. The statistical data show that minority populations are significantly underrepresented as school administrators in the Central Valley of California (California Department of Education, 2013). Therefore, it is critical to understand how individuals from underrepresented minority background become successful as school administrators.

Factors for Success

Minority administrators serve as role models for minority students, effectively establishing connections between home and school and providing motivation to increase student engagement. Successful minority administrators inspire all students to recognize the potential of their success. Several studies highlight the benefits of having minority administrators as role models for minority students.

Disproportionality of minority administrators could negatively impact academic achievement and effectively demotivate students from minority groups. Ceja (2013) interviewed three male and three female Hispanic superintendents and found that a lack of role models was a barrier to success. These leaders faced negative perceptions about their capabilities as well as gender barriers. They had a strong desire to prove their worth and they believed that their experience helped them overcome their barriers. They also noted strong family support as one of the factors for their success.

Gillett (2012) examined the way minority leaders in superintendent positions use racial identity to address issues of race. He found that race plays a factor in decision-making processes. Although these leaders may identify and empathize with students from similar cultures, their ultimate success stems not from promoting issues that focus on their own race, but those that focus on the needs of the students. Moua (2011) conducted a qualitative study in which she interviewed nine high-achieving Hmong women to examine the factors that influenced their success as leaders. She found that the impacts of their cultural backgrounds and experiences with poverty contributed to their development as leaders. These leaders focused on strategies (like

perceiving education as liberation, finding inner strength, networking, and seeking role models) in order to attain and maintain their leadership roles. They also faced similar barriers like familial responsibilities, a necessity to sacrifice one important thing for another, gender disparities, racism, and ageism.

Cardenas (2014) conducted a case study analysis in which he interviewed nine Latino males who persisted to achieve doctoral degrees and work in leadership positions. He found that key influences like family support played a major role in success and persistence. Participants also reported the same sense of loss as reported by the Hmong women described by Moua (2011). Cardenas (2014) also found that successful participants used their personal challenges as opportunities for motivation.

Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007) offered the term “ally” and described an ally as “a member of the advantaged social group who takes a stand against social injustice directed at a target group...An ally works to be an agent of social change rather than an agent of oppression.” These authors were referring to allies as people from different racial or cultural groups, but they also pointed out that when multiple groups are targeted by oppression, that these groups can form unlikely alliances in order to support one another or speak out against injustice. The ally recognizes the existence of oppression as it connects to all forms of social injustice, “acknowledges unearned privileges received as a result of advantaged status and works to eliminate or change privileges into rights that targeted group members also enjoy.” This idea of an ally can be applied to the mentor-student relationship model in which the ally/mentor advocates for and supports the target/student.

Conclusion

The statistical data show that minority populations are significantly underrepresented as school administrators. Therefore, it is critical to understand how individuals from these groups become successful as school administrators. Several studies show benefits of having minority administrators as role models for minority students. Many studies have been conducted in the area of school administrators. Most studies emphasize minority principals who directly oversee students at the school site level. Some studies involve minority superintendents who play a major role in critical decision making at district level. Surprisingly, there is limited research on chief business officers even though they primarily oversee financial and business functions and support operations of the school districts.

Accordingly, this study focused on minority administrators, especially Hispanics and African Americans, who serve as superintendents and chief business officers at school districts located in the Central Valley of California. Critical Race Theory was used as a lens to understand the life experiences of minority administrators. The next chapter delineates the methodology used in this study, providing specific information about the participant selection process, the data collection process, and the data coding and analysis process.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of a small group of minority administrators in California public schools. More specifically, the narrative study was conducted on Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers at the school districts located in the Central Valley of California. Their career pathways, barriers and perseverance were explored. The factors that contributed to their success and barriers were also examined. The results of this study contributed to current research on minority school administrators and how they became successful in their careers.

The researcher implemented a qualitative research design to capture the narrative data through an in-depth interviewing process. Accordingly, this chapter describes the research design and method that was utilized in this study. The role of the researcher is highlighted to ensure accuracy of this research. In addition, the research questions, participant selection process, and demographics of the study are explained, followed by the instruments and data collection method. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the data analysis procedure, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study.

Research Design and Method

The qualitative research involved non-statistical data from small samples and significantly relied on the perspectives of the research participants through

interviews, observations, or case study processes (McRoy, 2006). Creswell (2013) stated the following:

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or a call for change. (p. 44)

The researcher utilized qualitative research methods to conduct and capture life experiences of the participants. This research is a narrative study based on interviews conducted with Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers in school districts located in the Central Valley of California.

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT recognizes that racial inequality is embedded within society. The CRT methodology was used to challenge cultural deficit stories and empower people communities of color. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) claimed that

Critical Race Theory advances a strategy to foreground and account for role of race and racism in education and works toward the elimination of racism as

part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin.

(p.25)

Thus, this study utilized CRT methodology to voice real life experience in the education pipeline and career pathway from the perspectives of participants who are either Hispanic or African American. In addition, CRT was viewed as a lens to understand their life journeys, including career pathways, barriers, and perseverance.

Background of Researcher

This researcher is an Asian female who was born and raised in a middle class family in Thailand. She relocated to the Central Valley of California in 1998 to pursue higher education at the graduate level. The researcher began her career in the fiscal department at the Stanislaus County Office of Education in 1999. Currently, she is serving as a fiscal administrator at the same organization. As a fiscal administrator, the researcher works collaboratively with the school district superintendents and chief business officers in the Central Valley of California on a daily basis. The researcher has a strong knowledge of the school administration system, particularly in fiscal perspectives. She incorporates professional skills and knowledge to develop an appropriate research design and effective interview questions.

The researcher is able to reach out the participants through professional network systems and peer referrals. She also understands specific terminology used by participants during the interview session. This particular skill helps in maintaining accuracy during the data collection process. In addition, the researcher is familiar

with the majority of the participants on a professional and personal level. As a result, the participants may comfortably respond to the open-ended interview questions and possibly share insight information of their life journeys. Based on the researcher's background, the researcher is a minority individual based on ethnicity, gender, and age. The researcher is the only Asian female fiscal administrator out of 24 school districts in Stanislaus County and possibly the youngest. All of these factors, when aligned with the Research Questions and the CRT framework, coalesce into a fitting context for which the researcher to conduct her study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher plays a major role in a qualitative research study, acting as an instrument to gather data and interacting intensively with the participants. Consequently, the researcher's biases, personal values, gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status may shape the data interpretation during the study and therefore should be identified (Creswell, 2013). This researcher is aware of possible biases and preconceptions that may impact the result of the study. The personal values and preconception were controlled throughout the study. Nevertheless, the researcher's background was used as a positive tool to increase the accuracy and precision of the data collection. The narrative study significantly relied on how much the participants were willing to share their lived experiences. As a minority administrator, this researcher was able to provide a level of comfort to the participants who are also minority administrators in order to access their lived experiences during the interview process.

The researcher controlled biases and possible preconceptions by using the semi-structured interview questions to conduct a pre-interview questionnaire and an interview. The researcher kept field notes during and after the interviews. The field notes included researcher's insights, interpretation, analysis, and hypotheses during the data collection process. The bracketing method was used in field notes to separate the interpretations and the researcher's reflections so that data was not tainted (Patton, 2002). The researcher frequently met with her dissertation advisor during the data collection process to review collected data and field notes. As a result, necessary adjustments to the study were made in order to minimize bias and promote objectivity.

The researcher also implemented expert review to measure the validity of the interview questions. The expert review established the content validity of an instrument and improved the effectiveness of interview questions, format, and scales (review instruments are included in Appendix B). The researcher made necessary changes based on comments from the expert review in order to increase effectiveness of the final interview questions. The researcher consistently used the same set of questions on all participants to avoid misguiding or misleading. Finally, the interview data was transcribed and sent to each individual participant to review for accuracy prior to reporting the final result.

Research Questions

The career pathway, barriers, and perseverance of Hispanic and African American administrators were analyzed using the Critical Race Theory framework.

The Research Questions were:

1. What barriers did African American and Hispanic superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) in the Central Valley of California face in their pursuit of the positions?
2. What factors facilitated African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California to overcome the barriers they faced in their pursuit of their positions?
3. What professional development programs (including mentoring programs) did African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California participate? How did these programs impact their pursuit of their positions?
4. What are the leadership qualities of Hispanic and African American superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California? How do they perceive their leadership qualities impacting student achievement?

The interview questions for this study were developed to form valid responses to the specific research questions. The participants were given a pre-interview questionnaire to complete prior to the interview. The purpose of pre-interview questionnaire was to obtain demographic information of the participants. The semi-

structure and open-ended questions were used during the interview in order to gain in-depth information of participants.

Selection of Participants

The study explored the experiences of seven minority superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) at school districts in the Central Valley of California. Generally, minority population usually refers to non-white groups including Hispanics, American Indians, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Filipinos, African Americans, and other minority populations. For the purpose of this study, only Hispanic and African American participants were included. These populations were selected due to significant disproportionality issues and low academic performance. Hispanic and African American school administrators are also significantly underrepresented in the public school system in California when compared to Hispanic student enrollment. Based on a recent state performance report, Hispanic students perform second to the lowest in comparison to their peers and significantly below state standard (California Department of Education, 2013).

The study focuses on superintendents and chief business officers only. Both positions are the key leaders in school administration. The superintendents were selected in this research because they are highly involved with decision making of school operations, instructional design and student achievement. The superintendents act as chief executive officers to manage all programs and business functions. The chief business officers are also included to reflect challenges/barriers in perspective of financial management.

This study was conducted in the Central Valley region of California. The selected counties included San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Merced, which were chosen due to a significantly low number of total minority administrators. In addition, the accessibility aspect was considerably factored into the selection of participants. The researcher has a strong professional and personal networking system within the Central Valley region of California particularly in selected counties. Accordingly, the researcher was able to identify and approach minority administrators in person and they were more likely to agree to participate in the study. The researcher contacted the prospective participants in person, via telephone, and e-mail.

The researcher interviewed seven minority administrators from selected areas. However, a total population of possible participants who are African American or Hispanic superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) is unknown. For example, there is only one African American superintendent and no Hispanic superintendents from 24 school districts in Stanislaus County. Similarly, there is only one African American fiscal director and two Hispanic CBOs in the same county. Accordingly, seven participants were selected from the possible pool using convenience sampling (taking into account such factors as researcher's peer referral and travel distance). The participants were asked to sign participant consent forms (Appendix A) to confirm their participation in this study.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher is one of the most important instruments in the narrative study, especially during the data collection process. The researcher must be able to ask

appropriate questions and interpret accurate answers (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, the researcher must be a good listener, flexible, understanding, and unbiased (Yin, 2003). According to Stake (1995), the researcher must construct the interview questions that positively evoke responses to answer the research questions. In addition, the researcher creates a written transcript with key ideas and episodes captured within a day of the interview (Stake, 1995). The researcher used semi-structured and open-ended questions to capture the narrative data through in-depth interview sessions. The in-depth interviews were the major sources of data collection used to capture the life experiences of each participant. Therefore, the researcher followed guidelines and suggestions for effective interviews. The other important instruments, including the pre-interview questionnaire, interview questions, and interviews, as well the process of expert review, are described in the following sections.

Expert Review

There was an expert review of interview questions (Appendix B) prior to actual interview with the participants. The purpose of expert review was to measure the validity of the interview questions. The expert review established the content validity of the instrument and improved the effectiveness of interview questions, format, and scales. The review consisted of two or three persons who were not participating in the study but knowledgeable about the study. They reviewed each of interview questions and provided appropriate feedback about whether the questions were understandable, constructed in the way that only one response could be made, or loaded (designed to elicit a biased response). The researcher made necessary changes

based on comments from the expert review to increase effectiveness of final interview questions.

Pre-Interview Questionnaire

The researcher identified seven participants who were Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers in the Central Valley of California. The pre-interview questionnaires (Appendix C) were sent to each participant via e-mail. The pre-interview questionnaire included general questions in order to gain perspective, background knowledge, and educational and career backgrounds of each participant. Once the pre-interview questionnaires were completed, the interview sessions were conducted. When necessary, follow-up interview sessions were conducted to clarify any questions raised or overlooked during the interview sessions.

Interviews

The researcher conducted interviews with each participant. During the interview, the researcher provided each participant with a copy of the interview questions. The researcher listened and took appropriate field notes, kept main questions in mind, and asked for clarification when necessary. Semi-structured and open-ended questions were used to capture the narrative data through an in-depth interviewing process. The semi-structured and open-ended interviews were designed to encourage participants to liberally discuss their perceptions of life experiences and answer the research questions guiding this study. Each interview took approximately one hour in length.

The seven participants were asked the same series of questions to reveal their academic achievements and professional developments that positively promoted their career pathways. Additionally, they were asked to share barriers that prevented them from being successful and perseverance strategies that assisted them in remaining persistent at their positions. When necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted via e-mail, phone, or in-person to clarify any questions raised or overlooked during the interview sessions. During the follow-up interviews, the participants had opportunities to correct or include additional information to the study prior to data analysis. The follow-up interviews took approximately 30 minutes in length.

Interview Protocols

Interview questions. The semi-structured and open-ended questions were used to capture the narrative data through in-depth interviewing process. Each interview consisted of approximately ten questions (Appendix D). The interview questions were specifically focused on the research questions. Previous studies and questionnaires were reviewed for questions with the specific goal of ensuring reliability and validity.

Interview time and location. The interview sessions were scheduled at the convenience of the participants. The location of the interviews took place at the school district office or general public place based on the flexibility and comfort level of the participants. The interview was audio recorded and approximately one hour in length. The interview data were transcribed and forwarded to the participants for their review prior to data analysis.

Taking field notes. The researcher kept field notes during and after the interviews. The field notes included the researcher's insights, interpretation, analysis, and hypothesis during data collection process. First of all, the researcher documented the essential aspect of the responses, including verbal and non-verbal communication. Secondly, the researcher made an effort to distinguish between the data collected, interpretations, and the researcher's reflections. In addition, the researcher frequently met with her dissertation advisor during data collection process to review collected data and field notes. As a result, necessary adjustments to the study were made in order to minimize bias and promote objectivity. The researcher also answered the interview questions based on her life experience and reported her responses.

Interview recording and transcription. The interview sessions were audio recorded. The researcher transcribed the data within a day of the interview. Microsoft Word was used as an instrument to transcribe raw data into a word processing format. The transcribed data from the interview was sent to the participants for their review prior to data analysis. When necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted via e-mail, phone, or in-person to clarify any questions raised or overlooked during the interview sessions. Additionally, members of the dissertation committee were asked to review the questions for further reliability and validity. Afterward, the researcher used *Dedoose* as an instrument for coding and data analysis. The *Dedoose* program is a web-based program with 24-hour password protected access. The coding and data analysis process are described further in the data collection and analysis section of this chapter.

Member checking. The transcribed data was sent to the participants for their review and feedback prior to data analysis. The researcher made necessary changes to the data to reflect feedbacks from the participants in order to increase accuracy and minimize misinterpreting of the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

This section discusses data analysis procedures of the study. The data analysis for a qualitative study involves making sense of massive amounts of data (Patton, 2002). The researcher analyzed the data and identified key patterns to report the findings of the data. Creswell (2013) suggested several important steps during the data analysis process. The first step was to organize and prepare the data for analysis. After that the researcher read through all data and began detailed analysis with a coding process. The researcher used the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis. The next step was to determine how the description and themes were represented in the qualitative narrative. The last step of data analysis was to interpret the data (Creswell, 2013). The data analysis process helped the researcher interpret the collected data and obtain a deeper level of data interpretation.

Transcribing and Coding Data

The interview data was transcribed into Microsoft Word program. All field notes were typed into Microsoft Word documents as well. The researcher read through all the transcribed data to be fully immersed in the data collection process. The transcribed data was forwarded to the participants for their review. The

participants provided comments, corrections, and additional information if needed. The researcher made necessary changes to reflect feedback from participants. The purpose of this member checking process was to give an accurate voice of the narrative study and to avoid any misinterpretation of data.

The transcribed data was imported to the *Dedoose* program, a web-based program designed for qualitative data analysis with 24-hour access and password protection. The researcher also used *Dedoose* program to crosscheck data for validity and reliability and to manage, integrate, analyze and report the narrative research data based on identified themes. Identifying the overall themes was essential during the analytical process. The researcher coded data, frequently called “chunking,” or organizing the data into themes or categories (Creswell, 2013).

Merriam (2009) described open coding as the process of beginning the analysis of data. In this case she argued that the researcher should be as expansive as possible in identifying any segment of the data that might be useful. This process involves taking segments of transcriptions and placing categorical labels. The creation of the codes allowed for the researcher to make meaning and connections of the data. Merriam (2009) also described the process of assigning codes to the data in a manner that begins to construct categories as axial or analytical coding. Creswell (2013) further described axial coding as the process of selecting categories and positioning them within a theoretical model. Each transcription was coded according to common themes as reported by the participants. The coding was also based on the research questions presented. Using the coding process, common themes and patterns

reported by the participants in response to the research question were analyzed and reported. Accordingly, the researcher used initial coding, focus coding, and axial coding.

Charmaz (2006) stated that “Initial codes are provisional, comparative, and grounded in the data” (p.48). The initial codes are opened up to other analytic possibilities and codes that best fit the data. Initial coding process initiates ideas making sense of the collected data. During this step, the researcher reviewed the transcribed data and field notes in order to identify general codes and then organized the themes with the most descriptive words to create categories. According to Charmaz, “Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amount of data” (p.57). The researcher determined which initial codes made the most analytic sense to categorize the data insightfully and completely. In addition, the researcher analyzed the large chunks of data and condensed them into relevant themes. The researcher looked for recurring patterns and themes emerged during the initial coding process. Axial coding “relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimension of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (p.60). The researcher made relationships to the identified themes and made connections to the collected data in order to have a deeper understanding of the data.

Generating Themes and Interpreting Data

Creswell (2013) suggested the researcher use the coding process to generate the description of the setting. The researcher identified the patterns of recurring themes and created a specific number of themes. The interrelated themes were linked into a storyline that laid a basis for the theoretical model (Creswell, 2013). Subsequently, the researcher selected how themes would be represented into the qualitative narratives.

The last step of data analysis was to interpret the data. The qualitative research is essentially interpretive (Creswell, 2013). The researcher made meaning of all of the extracted data from the narrative by creating key themes that reoccurred in the data. The researcher also had the opportunity to reflect and interpret the collected data. The process included developing a description of an individual or setting, analyzing data for themes or categories, and finally making an interpretation or drawing conclusions about its meaning (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness

Shenton (2004) warned that “The trustworthiness of qualitative research generally is often questioned by positivists, perhaps because their concepts of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way in naturalistic work” (p. 1). The qualitative study is influenced by the data revealed. The researcher must ensure that the findings are derived directly from the data collected instead the researcher’s biases (Shenton, 2004). According to Guion, Diehl, and McDonald (2011), “Validity, in qualitative research, refers to whether the findings of a study are true and certain—

‘true’ in the sense that research findings accurately reflect the situation, and ‘certain’ in the sense that research findings are supported by the evidence” (p. 1). As shown in Table 6, the validity and reliability of qualitative study is measured in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher used data triangulation, debriefing with dissertation advisor and peers, member checking, field notes, and analytic memos to establish to trustworthiness of this study.

Table 6

Criteria for Assessing Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Research

Assessing Criteria	Strategy Implemented
Credibility (Internal Validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Triangulation • Peer Debriefing • Regular Meeting with Dissertation Advisor • Member Checking • Prolonged Engagement in the Field
Transferability (External Validity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed Description of Research’s Context
Dependability (Reliability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Triangulation • Peer Debriefing • Regular Meeting with Dissertation Advisor • Creating Audit Trail Through Journaling and Analytic Memos • Inter-Coder Reliability and Coding/Recoding Strategies
Confirmability (Objectivity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Triangulation • Field Notes, Analytic Memos and Journaling

Credibility

Credibility is a key area that helps ensure trustworthiness for a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher ensured validity by using data triangulation, which involves analyzing information from multiple sources to increase validity of qualitative research (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). This method was implemented by conducting an interview with each participant. When necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted via e-mails, phone, or in-person to clarify any questions raised or overlooked during the interview sessions. The researcher reviewed and analyzed data collected to establish credibility of the study.

Peer debriefing also served to ensure trustworthiness of the data. The researcher identified two or three persons who were not participating in the study, but had a strong background in the study to complete expert reviews of interview questions and review data collected. Peer debriefing also incorporated the committee members to analyze and challenge the investigators interpretation of the data. This process ensured the validity of the study since any adjustments would be based on the experts in the field. The researcher met with the dissertation advisor on a regular basis to ask critical questions to minimize the researcher's biases. The collected data and field notes were reviewed and any necessary adjustments to the study were made in order to minimize insider bias. In addition, member checking was conducted after each interview to determine accuracy. The transcribed data was sent to each participant prior to analyzing data. This process allowed the participants to reflect on their answers and provide feedback.

This researcher is a female minority fiscal administrator with a prolonged engagement in the field of public school administration. She used her professional and personal background as a tool to develop an in-depth understanding of participants' life experiences. To avoid insider bias, the researcher used semi-structured and open-ended interview questions to ensure that only participants' voices were transcribed, and not the researcher's opinions.

Transferability

Transferability comprises the ability to transfer the findings from one study to other conditions (Merriam, 2009). The researcher was responsible for providing detailed contextual information of the research's setting so that the reader is able to make a transfer (Lincoln & Guba 1985). The sufficient contextual information enables readers to relate the findings to their own settings. Accordingly, to establish transferability, detailed descriptions of research's context including number of participants, participant selection process, demographic information, data collection method, length of data collection process, and research limitations are disclosed.

Dependability

The data triangulation, debriefing with peers, regular meetings with dissertation advisors, and member checking were also used to promote dependability of this study. The detailed process of the research was reported so that future researchers were able to replicate the study in a different environment (Shenton, 2004). Accordingly, the researcher disclosed the detailed process of research design, data collection process, and effectiveness of the process (Shenton, 2004). She created

an audit trail through journaling and analytic memos reflecting all aspects of the analysis process. The audit trail is available for public inspection in order to strengthen the dependability of this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To establish reliability during the coding process, the researcher implemented the following steps:

1. The researcher identifies two individuals with strong background in qualitative research but not participating in this study.
2. The researcher and two individuals separately code the data collected from the interviews.
3. To establish the appropriate codes for this study, the identified codes and themes created by the researcher and the other two individuals are compared and the mutual codes and themes are used in the study.
4. The rationale for the chosen codes and themes are discussed. The sample coding must be at 80% or greater for reliability to be established. If the sample coding is less than 80% then the researcher makes necessary adjustments to establish inter-coder reliability.

The concept of confirmability is to ensure that the findings are the true voices of the participants rather than the researcher's preferences (Shenton, 2004). In addition to data triangulation and audit trail, the researcher used field notes to establish confirmability of this study.

As stated by Patton (2002), "Field notes are the fundamental data base for constructing case studies and carrying out thematic cross-case analysis in qualitative

research” (p. 305). Accordingly, the researcher kept thorough field notes throughout the data collection process. The field notes included researcher’s insights, interpretation, analysis, and hypothesis during data collection process. The bracketing method was used in field notes to separate the interpretations and the researcher’s reflections, so that data are not tainted (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the researcher also answered the interview questions to voice her own life experience separately from data collected.

Ethical Considerations

The research was reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the California State University, Stanislaus, prior to data collection process. The purpose of the IRB is to safeguard the rights and welfare of the participants involved in the study. The researcher followed IRB policies and protocols to comply with the university’s regulations regarding human subjects. Ethical consideration in research involves informing participants that they are subjects in a study. The researcher gained permission from the participants in order to use the data in the study. Accordingly, the participants were asked to sign a participant consent form (Appendix A) to confirm their participations in this study. There was no known cost to the participants in this study, except for their time and efforts during interview process. There was no direct benefit to participants from participating in this study.

Confidentiality is necessary to protect the participants’ privacy. All publications, public distributions, or presentations of the findings from this study, including but not limited to the researcher’s dissertation, did not reveal the identity of

any participants taking part in this study if the participants requested not to have their identity disclosed. When necessary, the pseudonyms were assigned for institutions, organizations, participants, or anyone mentioned in this study. In addition, the researcher did not disclose any information that the participants did not feel comfortable to share such as demographic information or certain information during interview process. All data including interview transcripts, audio recordings, and demographic questionnaires were kept in a locked file cabinet. Any information stored electronically was secured with password protection. All data obtained for this study will be destroyed one year after completion of the study.

Conclusion

This chapter explains the research methodology of a narrative research study designed to explore the life experiences of Hispanic and African American superintendents and chief business officers of public school districts in the Central Valley of California. The researcher utilized a qualitative research design to capture narrative data through an in-depth interview process. The semi-structure and open-ended interview questions were used to capture life experiences of the participants. The theoretical framework utilized in this study is based on critical race theory (CRT), which is viewed as a lens to understand their life journeys, including career pathways, barriers, and perseverance. Additionally, the mechanisms and strategies that determined selection of the sample, instrumentation, materials, data collection, and data analysis are provided in this chapter as well as the research questions and interview questions. The next chapter presents the results of this study based on the

data collected from the participants. This includes reporting on coded interview data collected during the course of the study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The narrative case study was conducted using an in-depth interviewing process with seven minority administrators. The participants included superintendents, and chief business officers (CBOs) at school districts in the Central Valley of California. The selected counties include San Joaquin County, Stanislaus County, and Merced County. The purpose of this study is to reveal their career pathways, barriers, and perseverance. The researched used semi-structured and open-ended interview questions to capture life experiences of the participants. The study was guided by four primary research questions in the area of challenges and barriers, success factors, professional development, and leadership qualities. The results of this study will contribute to current research on minority school administrators and how they became successful in their careers.

An expert review of interview questions (Appendix B) was conducted prior to actual interviews with the participants. The purpose of expert review is to measure the validity of the interview questions. The interview questions were sent to three persons who are not participating in the study but knowledgeable about the study's subject. They reviewed each of the interview questions and provided appropriate recommendations as to whether the questions were understandable, constructed in the way that only one response can be made, or if it was a loaded question. The

researcher made necessary changes based on comments from the expert review to increase effectiveness of the final interview questions (Appendix D).

The researcher identified and approached seven minority administrators who agreed to participate in the study and signed the consent form (Appendix A). The pre-interview questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to each participant via e-mail. The seven participants completed pre-interview questionnaires prior to the interviews. The questions were designed to gain a perspective and background knowledge of the educations and careers of each participant prior to actual interviews. Four participants are African American and three participants have Hispanic background. Four participants are superintendents and three participants serve as chief business officers. This chapter will begin with demographic information of each participant, coding process, and findings. The factors that contribute to their barriers and success will be disclosed. In addition, the differences in finding between African American and Hispanic participants will be discussed.

Demographic Information of Participants

African American Administrators

Four African American administrators were interviewed (see Table 7). Three of them are superintendents and only one is a chief business officer. The majority of them are retirees but still actively involved in the community.

Table 7

Summary of Demographic Data – African American Administrators

Participants	Dr. Camp (1)	Dr. Jones (2)	Dr. Toliver (3)	Mr. Martin (4)
Position	Superintendent	Superintendent	Superintendent	CBO
Years in position	2 years	4 years	5 years (retired)	4 years (retired)
School district	Riverbank	Denair	Stockton	Stockton
Enrollment	2,800	1,400	40,000	40,000
County	Stanislaus	Stanislaus	San Joaquin	San Joaquin
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male
Marital status	Married with children	Married with children	Married with children	Married with children
Age group	40-49	60-69	70-79	60-69
Educational level	Doctorate	Doctorate	Doctorate (in progress)	Master's Degree
Parent education	Mother: Master's Degree Father: Bachelor's Degree	Mother: High School Father: Some College	Both: Elementary	Both: Some High School

Dr. Daryl Camp. The first participant is Dr. Daryl Camp. Dr. Camp described himself as an African American Male in the 40 to 49 years of age range. He earned a bachelor's degree from Atlanta Georgia in 1991 and a master's degree in educational leadership from California State University, Hayward. In 2011, Dr. Camp received a doctoral degree in in educational leadership (Ed. D.) from the California State University, Sacramento in 2011. He began his career in education in 1991 as a substitute teacher. He served as a mathematics teacher, a basketball coach, an

assistant principal, a high school principal, an assistant superintendent of educational services, and a superintendent. Dr. Camp is a current a superintendent at the Riverbank Unified School District (RUSD), Stanislaus County. The RUSD serves approximately 2,800 students with population of less than 0.25% African American, 80% Hispanic, and 18% white (California Department of Education, 2014). He is in his third year of superintendency and overseeing over 240 employees. Dr. Camp is the first African American male Superintendent in Stanislaus County.

Dr. Mary Jones. The next participant is Dr. Mary Jones. Dr. Jones described herself as a black-Jamaican female in the 60 to 69 years age range. She received a doctoral degree of education (Ed.D) from University of San Francisco in 2005. She earned an administrative credential from Fresno Pacific University. Dr. Jones began her educational career in 1973 as a sixth grade middle school teacher at Newark, New Jersey. She relocated to California and continued her educational career a language development specialist in 1984, and later on a principal for school districts in Merced County. Dr. Jones continued her principalship at Ceres Unified School District and advanced her career to a deputy superintendent in 2010. In 2013, Dr. Jones was appointed as an interim deputy superintendent at Denair Unified School District (DUSD), Stanislaus County. The DUSD is a small school district serving nearly 1,400 students with a population of 0.5% African American, 43% Hispanic, and 52% white (California Department of Education, 2014). Dr. Jones is the first African American female superintendent in the area.

Mr. Carl Toliver. The third participant is Mr. Carl Toliver. Mr. Toliver is a retired superintendent. He described himself as a black male in the 70 to 79 years of age range. Mr. Toliver received a master's degree in educational leadership from University of the Pacific, Stockton and continued the doctoral program at Walden University. He earned a California teaching credential, a secondary teaching credential, and an administrative credential. Mr. Toliver began his career in education in 1979 at Stockton Unified School District (SUSD), San Joaquin County. He served as a principal, a director of secondary education, a consultant to governing board, an associate superintendent, and a superintendent. Mr. Toliver was appointed as the superintendent at SUSD in 2006 and retired three ago. The SUSD is the largest school district in the area serving nearly 40,000 students with population of 11% African American, 63% Hispanic, and 7% white (California Department of Education, 2014). Mr. Toliver was the first African American male superintendent in San Joaquin County. He was highly involved with professional organization including Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), United Way, and Blue Ribbon Crime Task Force. Additionally, Mr. Toliver is a board member for the First Five Organization. After retirement, he continued to be an active educator in the community.

Mr. Wayne Martin. The fourth participant is Mr. Wayne Martin. He described himself as an African American male in the 60 to 69 years of age range. Mr. Martin received a master's degree in business from California State University, Stanislaus. He also earned a chief business official certification from University of

Southern California. Mr. Martin began his career in education in 1983 at San Joaquin County Office of Education where he served as a financial services analyst, and then a coordinator for district services. After that he accepted the business position at Stockton Unified School District (SUSD); the largest school district in the area. Later on, he was named as a director of fiscal services and an executive director of business services. In 2009, Mr. Martin was appointed as chief business officer (CBO). He recently retired in 2013 from SUSD. After retirement, he continued to attend school business workshops and networking events. He was the only African American CBO in San Joaquin County.

Hispanic Administrators

Three Hispanic administrators were interviewed (see Table 8). Only one of them is a superintendent and the other two are chief business officers (CBOs). All of them are still currently serving the school districts.

Table 8

Summary of Demographic Data – Hispanic Administrators

Participants	Mr. Zamora (5)	Mr. Fabela (6)	Mrs. Trejo (7)
Position	Superintendent	CBO	CBO
Years in position	4 years	2 years	7 years
School district	Livingston	Ceres	County Office
Enrollment	2,600	13,000	6,500
County	Merced	Stanislaus	Stanislaus
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Marital status	Married with children	Married with children	Married with children
Age group	40-49	50-59	50-59
Educational level	Master's Degree	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree
Parent education	Mother: None Father: 3 rd Grade	Mother: 9 th Grade Father: 10 th Grade	Mother: 4 th Grade Father: 3 rd Grade

Mr. Andrés Zamora. The fifth participant is Mr. Andrés Zamora. Mr. Zamora described himself as a Latino/Mexican male in the 40 to 49 years of age range. He earned a master's degree and also received an administrative credential. Mr. Zamora is a bilingual educator. He served as a teacher, an elementary principal, a middle school principal at Hilmar Unified School District (HUSD), Merced County. He had six years of teaching experience and seven or administrative experiences at HUSD prior to accepting the position of assistant superintendent at Livingston Union School District (LUSD) in 2007. The LUSD serves approximately 2,600 students of

Merced County with 0.50% African American, 84% Hispanic, and 5% white population (California Department of Education, 2014). In 2010, he was appointed as a superintendent at LUSD. He is in his fourth year of superintendency and overseeing over 185 employees. He is well recognized for his initiative of a dual language program. Mr. Zamora is one of a very few superintendents with a Hispanic background in Merced County.

Mr. Steve Fabela. The next participant is Mr. Steve Fabela. Mr. Fabela described himself as a Mexican American male in the 50 to 59 years of age range. In 2000, he earned a master's degree in educational leadership. He also received an administrative credential and teaching credential. Mr. Fabela did not begin this career in education until 1996 at the age of 40. Prior to that, he was a general manager in a manufacturing business in the private sector. He also had a military background. Since 1996, Mr. Fabela served Ceres Unified School District (CUSD) as a teacher, a principal, an educational options coordinator, a supervisor of personnel services, a coordinator of personnel services, and a director of personal services. In 2012, he was appointed as an assistant superintendent, business services/CBO overseeing 225 employees. The CUSD is a large school district in Stanislaus County serving approximately 13,000 students with less than 1% African American, 72% Hispanic, and 18% white population. Mr. Fabela is one of two Hispanic male serving as CBO in Stanislaus County.

Mrs. Ramona Trejo. The last participant is Mrs. Ramona Trejo. Mrs. Trejo described herself as a Mexican female in the 50 to 59 years of age range. She earned

a bachelor's degree and began her educational career in 1986. She started as a child development analyst for the Child and Family Services Division at the Stanislaus County Office of Education. Later on, she served as a child development analyst II, and a data director. Mrs. Trejo was appointed as a director of fiscal services/CBO in 2007. Her role is to oversee a 56 million dollar budget for early childhood programs including Early Head Start program, Regional Head Start program, Migrant Head Start program, preschool programs, and other early childhood programs. The Child and Family Services Division serves approximately 6,500 children aged zero to five. The majority of children enrolled are from low income families with Hispanic background. Mrs. Trejo attends professional workshops and conferences on a regular basis including Head Start national conference and Head Start financial workshops. Mrs. Trejo is the only Hispanic female serving as a CBO in Stanislaus County.

Coding Process

The researcher captured coding categories by using three steps in the coding process including initial coding, focused coding, and axial coding. The initial step in the coding process began with listening to the audio to identifying categories and creating an initial code tree. The secondary coding process involved focused coding. During this process the researcher examined the demographic questionnaire, journal notes, and the narrative data to develop very specific categories based on preliminary list. The last stage of coding involved the axial coding process. The researcher developed categories based on relationships generated by the data. The code tree (Appendix E) was shared with the dissertation committee chair to reduce any

researcher bias. The researcher identified three main coding categories which include challenges and barriers, success factors, and professional development. The challenges, barriers and success factors were then organized into subcategories (personal, professional, and external factors). These codes were applied to interview data using *Dedoose*. Codes that appeared more than once generated data on the co-occurrence analysis.

Frequency of Applied Codes

The frequency of applied codes is presented based on three coding categories. The main categories include challenges and barriers, success factors, and professional development. The rank order of each coding category and sub-category for African American and Hispanic group will be discussed.

Challenges and Barriers Category

For challenges and barriers (see Table 9), these codes were organized into sub-categories (personal challenges, professional challenges, and external challenges). The three highest occurrences of applied codes are presented.

Table 9

Rank Order of Challenges and Barriers

Personal Challenges			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Gender	1	Culture
2	Pre-defined mindset	2	Parents
3	Family commitments	3	Gender
		3	Family commitments
Professional Challenges			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Formal education	1	Formal education
2	Job skills	2	Job skills
3	Knowledge of job Opportunity	3	Knowledge of job Opportunity
External Challenges			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Racism	1	Racism
2	Local factors	2	Local factors
3	Opportunities given	3	Socio-economic status (SES)

Personal challenges. For the purpose of this study, the personal challenges involve internal challenges including gender, family commitments, cultural background, parents, and having a pre-defined mindset. The results showed that both African American and Hispanic Administrators agreed on gender as a challenge in their career advancement. However, the African American administrators discussed the most about gender among their personal challenges, while Hispanic administrators discussed more on other factors. According to Dr. Jones:

Certainly, there is the barrier of being a woman. This is a barrier because in the position of superintendent, many in that position are male. The other barrier, of course, is the fact that I am African American and I believe, this is my perception, that initially people do not view African Americans, especially in the area where we live, as people that they see in executive positions. (Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent)

The discussion particularly focused on females as minorities. Dr. Camp shared his view as follows:

From my perspective I think gender plays a factor. I think people are fighting with a cultural stereotype of what a superintendent looks like. I think that plays out in the hiring process where boards of education have an idea and they try to find somebody that is going to fit that idea ... I think it is true for women as well. Among 23 African American superintendents in California, I understand that there were only four African American female superintendents. (Dr. Camp, African American superintendent)

All Hispanic participants discussed gender as one of their personal barriers. Gender was mentioned the least when comparing to culture and parents. Mr. Zamora shared his view related to gender that “Based on my observation, I can see a greater challenge is being a female. There are very few female superintendents. Also, being a female with minority background is even harder” (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent). Mrs. Trejo also described her direct experience growing up as a Hispanic female:

When I chose to have kids, I made the decision that they would be my priority. I told myself that when my daughters were in high school, I would go back to school ... I will probably go to school again, though not necessarily to advance my career, but to advance my knowledge. I am not looking for something else right now. I focused on my daughters and I wanted to make sure that I had a good education. My opinion is that being a Hispanic female holds you back a little in your career. Again, of course we would like to have a career but that is secondary. That is just our culture. I cannot have a full-time job, go to school, and be a mom. I have to choose. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

Mrs. Trejo's statement touched on both gender and family commitments as challenges for career advancement. The Hispanic administrators in general mentioned gender as a barrier at the same level as family.

However, both groups agreed at the same level that commitment to family is certainly a challenge. In addition to family commitments, Hispanic Administrators discussed cultural background as a personal challenge. This is a unique factor for Hispanic group and it was not mentioned at all by African American group. Mr. Fabela described his experiences:

I am second generation Mexican American, so the influence of my father living at that time because I am older was for us to assimilate because he believed that was the only way to be successful. So that is how my parents raised us in terms of our education, in terms of reading, work ethic et cetera.

They did not want to give us Latino sounding names. That is why they named me Steve, my brother Phil, my brother Paul. Now, it is not as much as a concern to be named Jose, because it is much more inclusive. But back then you have to assimilate as fast as you can so you can compete and work with Caucasians. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

In his statement, Mr. Fabela also touched on parents as a factor in career advancement. This is also a unique factor to the Hispanic group and it was not mentioned at all by African American participants.

Having a pre-defined mindset as a challenge was discussed more frequently by African American participants. This factor appears during the interview less than gender but more than family as a barrier. Mr. Martin related his experiences:

From my perspective, I did not feel there were ever any barriers. The only barrier I thought I had was probably kind of a self-evaluation barrier.

I am probably harder on myself than others would ever be on me. I had to convince myself first that I wanted to be a CBO. I was in the school business for 30 years until I retired this past June. I did not become a CBO until my last four years because I was happy where I was ... I was trying to determine whether I wanted to be a CBO because I knew the responsibilities were far greater than the responsibilities that I had as an executive director. (Mr. Martin, African American CBO)

The pre-defined mindset was mentioned by the Hispanic administrators. However, it was not discussed as much as the other personal factors they have experienced.

Professional challenges. For the purpose for this study, professional challenges are factors faced by the participants during their career preparation processes. The results show that both African American and Hispanic administrators agreed with the rank order that formal education, job skills, and knowledge of job opportunity are major challenges for career advancement. The challenges related to formal education were discussed the most by both groups. Mr. Zamora stated during the interview that minority students perform lower than their peers. He described the following:

I think it goes back down to the school system itself. What kind of kids are graduating? The college rates of African Americans are low compared to white and there is an achievement gap. We can say we have been closing the gap over the past few years. I do not know that we closed it ... They are just not moving up through the college process. Some students go into teaching and they stay in teaching or they do not even graduate from college and they end up doing something else. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

Furthermore, Mrs. Trejo shared that:

The majority of the Hispanic people here come from families with very low educational attainment. So, because it is a majority it is very easy for non-Hispanics to think that all Hispanics are the same. When I was in high school, as a matter of fact, our counselor was a Hispanic gentleman, the nicest person ever, but he always felt bad placing someone like me and my sister into higher-level classes because he did not want us to fail. Honestly, non-English

speaking kids would have failed, so he held us back. He did not believe we could handle it. We pushed and pushed to get into those classes. He finally agreed and saw that we succeeded. Then we started taking other higher level classes in high school. But by then my sister was a senior and I was a junior so it did not give us a lot of time. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

Mrs. Trejo mentioned that she faced education challenges growing up. She indicated that school counselor would not allow advance placement because she is Hispanic.

The African American participants also shared their perspectives on formal education. Mr. Toliver expressed the following:

I have a feeling the job opportunities for minorities have decreased. I do not know if it is because people stopped going into education or if it is because of financial crisis. I am not sure the reason, but I would imagine it has a lot to do with the financial crisis because we do not have a lot of minorities going into education like we used to. So my question would be “how many minorities graduated from college?” Because of the graduation rates of minorities, I think it is one of the reasons. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Mr. Toliver suggested graduation rates for minorities are relatively low, especially in college settings.

The second rank order related to professional challenges for both African American and Hispanic is having job skills. Mr. Fabela shared his experience when he began his career in education:

One of the challenges I faced is that my working background is not in education. I became an educator in 1996-97 and from there I started my career in education. I earned my teaching credential and administrative credential when I was already 40 years old. I had worked in a manufacturing business private sector profession beforehand... but when people come in new to education there is a system that they have to go through to be an administrator. Typically, they have to teach first, then become a site level or school administrator for a few years. After that, they have to learn the school business before ascending to other positions at district office. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

Mr. Fabela did not begin his career in education until the age of 40. He had to go back to school and acquire a teaching credential and an administrative credential prior to developing experience as an educator as and an educational administrator.

The third rank in the area of professional challenge has to do with knowledge of job opportunity. According to Mr. Martin:

Much it has to do with knowledge and if folks have a better understanding of the different types of opportunities that are available, that may perhaps spark some interest. Then perhaps they become motivated and then at that point, they start moving in that direction. You have to have those components that are all aligned and then you can move in that direction. But if you cannot start the process by knowing what is available, you are not going to move too far... It means that there's a job available that you apply for... And if you do not

know about the opportunities, if you do not have an interest, if you are not motivated, you are not going to get interviewed because the work we do, generally speaking, is very specific. So I just think it starts with knowledge.

(Mr. Martin, African American CBO)

The African American and Hispanic administrators mentioned at the same level that the minority might not be aware about the job opportunity and availability.

External challenges. According to the results, the external challenges include racism, local factors, opportunity given, and socio-economic status (SES). Racism was mentioned the most by both African American and Hispanic administrators as an external challenge or barrier as well as overall in their career advancements. Mr.

Fabela shared his view related to white privilege as follows:

If you take a look at California, one of the fears I think white people have is there are so many Mexicans. When I was growing up there wasn't as many. That is okay. They [white people] might be concerned about what Hispanics are going to do. There's no master evil plan, but sometimes when we are talking about these kinds of things with white administrators, I get worried how they view that. Nobody wants to hear things like "well, you got to your position because you have other privileges that I do not." They might respond with "well, I worked hard to get there". (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

In addition, Mr. Trejo shared experience with racism at her school district. She stated:

First of all, racism is big deal. When people felt that I shouldn't have the job just because of Hispanic background, I did not take it personally. I do not know if race makes any difference; you simply are who you are. So I forged ahead, believed in myself, and tried to always do the right thing. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

In addition, Dr. Jones shared her experience with racism:

I think it has a lot to do with the unconscious institutional racism. It is institutional and it is unconscious and that is why it is so hard sometimes to see it, and sometimes to identify it. I was a teacher for 20 years before I became an administrator. I wasn't trying to be an administrator prior to that, but when I did probably my first interview for an administrative position, I did not get it because of racial quotas. Also, our demographics we are highly Hispanic population in our area. But you still do not see Hispanics moving into those positions as frequently. (Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent)

Mr. Toliver shared how racism could impact hiring at school districts in his perspective:

Certainly, race is a barrier. As a minority, I believe that racism exists in obtaining positions. That is why you make sure that minorities are well qualified and have good sponsorships. The numbers speak for themselves. At the time, I was the only African American superintendent in the area. I was hired because of my qualifications. I served two more terms. But, if there was

another candidate who's white with equal skill, I might not get the job. The governing board and local factors have huge impact in hiring process. A community may or may not want to hire an African American to be a superintendent. The union may also influence the board member to hire or not to hire someone. Personally, I think those are barriers. So, politics are very important. It is critical to build good relationship with the board and everybody else. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent).

According to Mr. Toliver's statement, racism was described along with local factors. The local factors were mentioned as the second frequent factor shared by both African American and Hispanic administrators.

The local factors involve demographic information, community value, labor group, governing board, etc. Mr. Toliver commented further on local factors:

It is from my perspective. First of all it depends on the policies of the board. If they want someone to reflect the community then they have an obligation to try to hire someone to reflect that ... So having staff reflect the makeup of a district is number one. Number two is politics again. Now you may have labor groups who for whatever the reason may or may not support you because of some bias. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

In addition, Mr. Zamora mentioned that the board members may want to hire someone to reflect their community:

I think that obviously depends on if the governing board would want to hire people who are reflective of their community. And this is a perfect example. I

think I might be the first Mexican superintendent ever in the district. All principals in my districts are Hispanic. Before we had a Portuguese superintendent, and American Spanish, and at one point there was a larger Portuguese population in this area and in the valley in the north part of the county. So I think there are opportunities. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

Mr. Zamora, along with other Hispanic participants, mentioned that job opportunities are there for minority groups. Accordingly, lack of job opportunities was not mentioned by Hispanic participants.

On the contrary, African American participants felt that job opportunities were not given to minorities. The lack of opportunity was the third most frequent factor mentioned during the interview process. Dr. Jones voiced her opinion that “numbers speak for themselves. I do not think the job opportunities for minority has increased in our area. I have been here in Stanislaus, Merced, and Stanislaus County for 30 years. I do not think it has changed much” (Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent). The other African American participants shared similar experiences. The numbers do speak for themselves.

The last most commonly mentioned external challenge was socioeconomic status (SES). SES was not mentioned at all by African American participants. It is a unique factor for Hispanic group. Mr. Zamora shared how that lack of financial resources impacted his career pathway when he said “I think a barrier would just be not having the financial resources at home and not having the mentor. Also, it would

be not having the knowledge that a family with college graduate parents would have” (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent). The other Hispanic participants shared similar experiences as growing up with lack of financial support.

Success Factors Category

This section reports factors to overcome barriers and challenges in career advancement. The success factors (see Table 10) are organized into sub-categories by personal factors, professional factors, and external factors. The top three most occurrences of applied codes are presented.

Table 10

Rank Order of Success Factors

Personal Factors			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Pre-Defined Mindset	1	Integrity
2	Be Prepared	2	Passion
3	Willing to Relocate	3	Pre-Defined Mindset
Professional Factors			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Job Skills	1	Job Skills
2	Formal Education	2	Experiences
3	Experiences	3	Formal Education
External Factors			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Networking	1	Family Support
2	Having Sponsorship	2	Having a Mentor
3	Local Factors	3	Networking

Personal factors. The data showed that both African American and Hispanic groups indicated that having a pre-defined mindset is important. This is the only

personal success factor that both groups have in common. However, having a pre-defined mindset as success factor was mentioned the most from the African American group but it was mentioned the least by Hispanic group. Dr. Jones shared her view on having a defined mindset to overcome barriers:

I believe a major factor that helped me to overcome barriers is that I did not believe in the barriers. Even though barriers may have been put there, it was my belief that it was an artificial barrier, like the glass ceiling. It is a barrier that I believed I could overcome. And that no matter what others believed, of African Americans as a group or whatever, I believe that I shouldn't let that be a barrier. Leave the barriers there. But in my mind, it is not a barrier for me because I am going make sure it is not. (Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent)

Mr. Zamora also commented on having a mindset:

I am the type of personality that if it is something I am going to do, I am going do it. And barriers are just figuring out how to get through them to accomplish a goal. Whether it is race based or economically based, it is how you approach challenges. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

He shared that having a defined mindset and how you approach those challenges.

Another importation factor is having integrity. Integrity was mentioned the most as personal success factors by Hispanic participants. This is unique factor for Hispanic group only. Mrs. Trejo, a Hispanic CBO, stated:

Key to this is being a hard worker, understanding the rules, and doing a good job. Doing my best and having high integrity are important. When you are in charge of the numbers, you need a lot of integrity. You have to know the rules and you have to understand them. And you have to be able to explain these rules with audiences that don't have the same background such as non-fiscal administrators. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

In addition to having the integrity is having passion. During the interview, Mr. Fabela, a Hispanic CBO, shared that he has a strong passion toward working for public education. He made a career shift at age of 40. Mr. Fabela shared that it was driven by his integrity:

I was still working for that company but then we were kind of too old to have children but my wife had two boys and then all of a sudden I had two granddaughters. My company was going move me to Texas... Even though they paid me quite a bit and we did well, I did not feel like I was doing what I wanted to accomplish something good, something that my parents would be proud of. My father died when I was 40 after having cancer. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

Being passionate was mentioned as the second most frequent factor discussed among personal success factors. Being passionate is a unique factor for the Hispanic group as well.

On the other hand, the African American mentioned being prepared and ready for career advancement as the second most frequent factor discussed during interview. According to Mr. Martin:

The key is that you are prepared to act, to take advantage of those opportunities when they avail themselves to you. So maybe, that is what happens often at times and I am not sure if everyone is prepared to act on those opportunities. I know with me, I always wanted to work in business in some aspect, and I knew that years and years ago. That is why I received my undergraduate degree in business administration and then it was just a matter of finding a good match, you know because I could have worked in the private sector for business. But then, for me the public sector is a better fit ... So, I believe opportunities are always there, you just have to be ready for them. Whether you are African American, whether you are Hispanic, you just have to prepare yourself. (Mr. Martin, African American CBO)

Besides being prepared and ready for the job, Mr. Martin also mentioned that being willing to relocate is another factor to success. Other African American administrators also shared similar thoughts. Mr. Toliver described a leader as “one who demonstrates leadership, and one that can build trust, a hard worker. Not only must a superintendent be competent, and mobile. You have to be able to move out, to move up” (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent). Being willing to relocate was not mentioned at all by Hispanic participants. This factor is unique to the

African American group. It is the third most frequent occurrence shared in discussion.

Professional factors. For the purpose of this study, professional factors involve career preparation such as having job skills, job experience, and formal education. The data showed that job skills were mentioned the most by both African American and Hispanic participants. Formal education was mentioned more by African American participants as success factor than their job experiences. On the contrary, experience was mentioned more frequently by Hispanic participants than formal education.

Mr. Martin, an African American CBO, discussed the topic of job skills during the interview:

I was primarily judged on my ability to perform, to get things done. I always felt that if I put myself with the skills, the tools, the resources that I needed to be successful that I would be successful. My success was more determined by me in terms of where I wanted to end up where I was going to take my career... it was just a matter of staying the course, focusing on the end results and getting it done. But at the same time, you want to equip yourself, just like a carpenter has their tools. There are certain things in the business field that you have to equip yourself with in order to make sure you are well prepared to get the job done. (Mr. Martin, African American CBO)

Mrs. Trejo, a Hispanic CBO, also mentioned having job skills as a success factor:

I think understanding what rules I need to follow is a key thing...And then once I understood and implemented them, I passed that knowledge to other decision makers. Providing management with financial tools they need to make decisions is a large part of my job. So I think those are the factors that helped my boss be confident in my abilities. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

Furthermore, both African American and Hispanic participants agreed on experience as a factor for success in career advancement. However, it was mentioned more frequently as the second factor discussed by the Hispanic group and as the third most frequently mentioned factor by African American participants. Mr. Fabela, a Hispanic CBO shared how experiences help him in his career. He shared his experiences:

I think my background helped me a lot to get into the position that I have. As I said before, you have to be able to work with people. I call it giving by what I am selling. I do not mean that in a bad way. But one of the reasons I liked to work for the current superintendent is that I buy 95 percent of what the superintendent is selling. And unless I buy at least that much I won't work for you. Because I have a belief, I buy. He is selling accessibility. He is selling inclusiveness and caring about other people. He is selling that kids need to learn...So, those factors have been helpful to me to get into my position. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

Mr. Fabela was able to apply his experiences from private sector into his current working setting at school district.

Another factor for success is formal education. This factor was the third most frequently mentioned by Hispanic administrators. However, it was mentioned more frequently by the African American group. As an example, Mr. Toliver stated:

A formal education such as doctoral degree is very important, especially for minorities. To become successful, you must be willing to accept a difficult job in difficult districts. You must be a problem solver, have good writing skills, and good financial skills. For a minority, you must have all those job skills and work well with other ethnic groups. There are pros and cons when applying for jobs within or outside your districts depending on your reputation. Therefore, you also need to keep an excellent reputation.

Sponsorship is very important. So, you have to build positive culture with community partnership. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

The other administrators in both ethnicities shared similar opinions.

External factors. The external factors for success include networking, having sponsorship, understanding local factors, family, and having a mentor. Both African Americans and Hispanics agreed on having networking as one of success factor. The rests of the factors are unique for each ethnicity. Networking is the most frequent factor mentioned by African American participants. However, it was third frequent factor discussed by Hispanic group. Dr. Camp shared his view on networking:

The funny thing is, as a superintendent, it is easier now. There are only 23 African American superintendents in the state so you kind of notice each other. But when we are not a superintendent, even though I think

superintendents and people that I connect with have been very helpful, it is something we cannot understand unless we are in the position that is why I think it is helpful reaching out to others. I constantly keep in contact with other African American superintendents as well as other ethnicities. I think it is very helpful. We need a network. Once we get that position also it is a job like none other. (Dr. Camp, African American superintendent).

Dr. Camp indicated that networking is very helpful, especially when he began his journey as a superintendent. Mr. Zamora also commented on networking. He stated:

Sometimes you definitely have to make an exerted effort to connect with people regardless. And you know, I like to believe most people are going to give you the chance to be who you are and not say here comes the brown guy or black guy. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

The next factor most frequently mentioned by African American participants is having sponsorship. For the purpose of this study, sponsorship is someone who believes in you, sees your value and advocates for you. This factor is unique to the African American group. Dr. Jones shared her experience with having sponsorship as success factor in her career advancement:

I think I am good at what I do which for minorities is very important. I know you have heard that you have to be twice as good. You have to prove yourself over and over and over again. When I went to the Ceres Unified School District, there were people who believed in me ... The superintendent was very interested in what I could do and so she advocated me as well as the next

superintendent who came. Both were people who advocated for me because they knew me and knew my skills and they were very open-minded people.

(Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent).

Dr. Jones indicated having sponsorship is an important success factor for minorities.

The next success factor is the understanding of local factors. Local factors involve understanding of demographics, labor group involvement, governing boards, community values, etc. The local factors were the third most frequently occurring factors mentioned by African American participants. It is also a unique factor for African American group. Mr. Toliver stated:

Superintendents need to communicate with all board members equally not just one. Building trust among board members is also a major factor. They need to be transparent. Dysfunctional governing boards can be a disaster. The governing board can be sponsored by labor groups and business partners within the community. This will influence their decision making. This is when their integrity comes in play. They need to maintain a healthy and positive governing board and community. They need to work with each board member, understand their roles and be proactive. CSBA (California School Board Association) is a good source for board training. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Mr. Toliver shared that good relationship with local members will promote success in the careers of minority students and that community members might very well turn into sponsors at critical times.

Family support is also important. This factor was mentioned the most by Hispanic participants. Family support is a unique factor to the Hispanic group.

According to Mrs. Trejo:

My parents are wonderful people. They made decisions for us because they wanted to protect us. My mother did a wonderful job because she had 12 kids and we are all happy. We all have different jobs. My oldest sibling is a farm worker. The second one is a migrant farm worker. I am a CBO. Two of my other siblings are teachers. So we all have different jobs, but we are all very happy people. To me that is the most important thing in life: to be happy. My mom did a very good job. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

In addition to family support, Mrs. Trejo described her experience of having a mentor:

I think having a mentor is important. I am very thankful to my first supervisor here because to me he was my mentor. He gave me a lot of opportunities and I took advantage of those opportunities and I learned a lot from him. So I think having a mentor, having someone who believes in you, and helps you see that you can do whatever you choose to do. And you know we all need a little bit of help. We all need to learn things because you can learn in school all the accounting but there are certain things on the job that you can only learn from a mentor. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO).

Having a mentor was frequently mentioned by Hispanic participants as the second highest factor to success. For the purpose of this study, a mentor is someone who

coaches you and teaches you skills. This is another unique factor applied to the Hispanic group only.

Professional Development Category

The benefits of professional development (see Table 11) were mentioned by both African American and Hispanic groups. The top three most occurrences of applied codes are presented.

Table 11

Rank Order of Professional Development

Professional Development			
Rank Order	African American	Rank Order	Hispanic
1	Networking	1	Having a mentor
2	Workshops	2	Networking
3	Certifications	3	Certifications

Both African American and Hispanic participants agreed that networking is important. However, it was mentioned at the most frequent occurrence by African American participants, but the second most frequent by Hispanic group. Dr. Jones shared:

I participated in the curriculum instruction academy through ACSA which I thought that it was a great networking. Most of my professional development has been through ACSA. ACSA offers great professional development and networking opportunities. The ACSA professional development has been the most beneficial to me. (Dr. Jones, African American female, superintendent)

Dr. Jones suggested that Association of California School Administration (ACSA) offers networking opportunities as well as professional development. Mr. Zamora commented:

Networking is very important as well as mentoring. But networking is absolutely a key for success especially for aspiring or new superintendents. If they do not know how to network correctly, they limit opportunities for themselves. I am still working on as a relatively new superintendent. I belong to both formal and informal networks of superintendents to discuss work issues and brainstorm ideas. In my opinion, it is essential not only to ascend to the superintendent position but also to stay successful in the position. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

Mr. Zamora suggested that networking is a key to success, particularly being new to the position. Dr. Camp also commented on networking:

Being a high school principal was very helpful. That was a great form of professional development right there. But also while doing that I stayed active in ACSA ... I went to a number of their leadership assignments and participated in a number of activities... ACSA has several academies: a business academy, superintendent academy, personnel academy, so they many. I just did not have time to participate in all of them. I was working on the doctorate and that was all the time I had. (Dr. Camp, African American male, superintendent)

Dr. Camp described his experience with networking during the interview. He is an active member of ACSA. He also participated in several academies such as business academy and superintendent academy. His comment also touched on professional certifications area as described in the next section.

Dr. Camp recommended obtaining professional certifications such as superintendent academy, business academy, superintendent academy, etc. offered by Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). Mr. Martin shared the following:

When I decided to advance my career to the CBO position, I attended to the CBO certification program at the University of Southern California. I thought that was really helpful because it basically reinforced a lot of the things I knew. The CBO certification covered several departmental functions including human resources and other related areas. It provided an in-depth sense in terms of affirming what I already knew. (Dr. Camp, African American male, superintendent)

Mr. Martin shared that in his opinion, the Chief Business Officials (CBO) certification program was the most prominent professional development. Mr. Zamora also commented on certifications. He mentioned:

In addition to my administrative credential, I completed the Chief Business Officials Academy through School Solution. I have also completed the Superintendent Academy offered by Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). I attended the Harvard Institute for instructional

round program. In my perspective, professional certifications were very helpful for superintendents. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent)

Professional Certifications were mentioned as the third most frequent factor by both African Americans and Hispanics. For workshops and conference, Mr. Toliver suggested:

In addition to people here getting that experience, go to a couple of school services sessions they have. They have them twice a year at best. You know but you sit there and you learn something and you get the information... When you go out and meet people at conferences and workshops... And you connect with them. Here you are, you are thinking down the road now you have to keep connected. I will say stay connected and be persistent in working with possible mentors. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Mr. Toliver suggested attending workshops and conferences will lead to connections with experts in the field. This factor is unique to the African American group.

The factor of having a mentor is unique to the Hispanic group. Having a mentor was mentioned most frequently when comparing to other professional development opportunities. Mr. Fabela stated:

I have also participated in best academy, the Scott Siegel Academy. In other words, he used to be in this position. He was the CBO for probably eight years. I was very lucky I have him and have access to him. He is my mentor when it comes to business. We learn from each other. His strength is definitely numbers and budgets ... You have to constantly try to improve. We

both have our strengths -- you mesh those together and you can really move things. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

Mentoring can be both informal and formal. Mr. Fabela suggested that one on one mentoring from an expert in the fields is very effective.

Rank Order of Code Co-Occurrence Findings

The researcher used the *Dedoose* program to reveal data in which specific challenges, success factors, and professional development were mentioned in combination with one another. Accordingly, Table 12 shows the rank order of the eleven most frequently applied code co-occurrences.

Table 12

Rank Order of Code Co-Occurrences

Rank Order	Code Co-Occurrence
1	External Challenges/Local Factor and Racism
2	External Challenges/Local Factor and Governing Board
3	External Success Factor/Networking and Having a Mentor
3	Personal Success Factor/Passion and Integrity
4	Professional Development/Networking and Having a Mentor
4	External Challenges/Racism and Professional Challenge/Education
5	Personal Challenges/Family Commitments and Pre-Defined Mindset
5	External Challenges/Racism and Personal Challenge/Gender
5	External Challenges/Racism and Governing Board
5	External Challenges/Racism and Personal Challenge/Culture
5	Personal Success Factors/Job Skills and Experiences

External Challenges

During the interview, the participants repeatedly mentioned local factors in combination with racism. This is the most co-occurrence factor discussed by both

African American and Hispanics followed by local factor and governing board. The other co-occurrences include relationships between racism and education, racism and gender, racism and governing boards, and racism and culture.

Local factors and racism were most frequently mentioned in combination by both groups. Mr. Toliver stated:

Now, there may be labor groups which, for whatever reason, may or may not support an initiative because of some bias...So yes, race can be a barrier with anyone. The labor groups may show some favoritism towards an African American ... In my experience, race can be large factor in the school district.

(Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Local factors such as demographic data and community support were discussed along with racism during an interview with Mr. Toliver. He shared that local community members may show favoritism toward certain ethnicities.

The second most frequently mentioned co-occurrence was between local factors and governing boards. Mr. Toliver shared further:

First of all it depends on the policies of the board. If they want someone to reflect the community then they have an obligation to try to hire someone to reflect that ... So having staff reflect the makeup of a district is number one.

Number two is politics again. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Mr. Toliver mentioned that the governing board may want to hire someone to reflect local demographic.

The participants mentioned racism along with obtaining formal education as the fourth most frequently discussed factors. Mrs. Trejo described his experience:

The majority of the Hispanic people here come from families with very low educational attainment. So, because it is a majority it is very easy for non-Hispanics to think that every Hispanics are the same. When I was in high school, as a matter of fact, our counselor was a Hispanic gentleman, the nicest person ever, but he always felt bad placing someone like me and my sister into higher-level classes because he did not want us to fail. Honestly, non-English speaking kids would have failed, so he held us back. He did not believe we could handle it. We pushed and pushed to get into those classes. He finally agreed and saw that we succeeded. Then we started taking other higher level classes in high school. But by then my sister was a senior and I was a junior so it did not give us a lot of time. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO)

Mrs. Trejo shared an experience growing up that a school counselor prevented her from taking advanced classes due to her race. This particular counselor was a Hispanic male who was stereotyping Hispanic students as low performing students.

The participants mentioned racism together with gender as the fifth most frequently discussed challenges in career advancement. Mr. Zamora stated “Based on my observation, I can see a greater challenge is being a female. There are very few female superintendents. Also, being a female with minority background is even harder” (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic superintendent). Mr. Zamora shared that female

minorities face greater challenges in career advancement. Racism and governing boards were also frequently mentioned by the participants. Mr. Toliver also shared:

I was hired because of my qualifications. I served two more terms. But, if there was another candidate who's white with equal skill, I might not get the job. The governing board and local factors have huge impact in hiring process. A community may or may not want to hire an African American to be a superintendent. The union may also influence the board members to hire or not to hire someone. Personally, I think those are barriers. So, politics are very important. It is critical to build good relationship with the board and everybody else. (Mr. Toliver, African American superintendent)

Racism and culture were also frequently discussed factors. Mr. Fabela described his experiences:

I am second generation Mexican American, so the influence of my father living at that time because I am older was for us to assimilate because he believed that was the only way to be successful. So that is how my parents raised us in terms of our education, in terms of reading, and work ethic. They did not want to give us Latino sounding names. That is why they named me Steve, my brother Phil, my brother Paul. Now, it is not as much as a concern to be named Jose, because it is much more inclusive. But back then you have to assimilate as fast as you can so you can compete and work with Caucasians. (Mr. Fabela, Hispanic CBO)

Mr. Fabela shared that he was not given a Hispanic name. In addition, he was raised to assimilate into American's culture.

External Success Factors

Networking and mentoring were ranked as the third most frequently mentioned co-occurrence factors for success. Dr. Camp stated:

There are some people on my list who I meet with annually ... I would follow up and schedule appointments and talk to them informally but I used my own mentor network. That is one thing that made it easier. I looked at African Americans, particularly men and some women that have been in positions that I wanted to be in. But I sought out mentors, people like Mr. Toliver and others. We sat informally but then I also reached out and have been active in ACSA (Association of California school administrators) as well. I have been pretty active and I think that has helped out also and I try to connect to white superintendents also because I want to learn from them. (Dr. Camp, African American, superintendent)

Dr. Camp participated in networking and mentoring organization such as Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). He also created his own informal networking. The other participants shared similar experiences.

Personal Success Factors

Having passion along with integrity was mentioned as the third most frequent co-occurrence. Mr. Zamora described:

You know to becoming a superintendent ... I think for me it has always been driven by my initiative, my desire to make a difference, my motivation to do good things for school systems and possibly when I was younger I would think -- and I guess that was part of building me to the position now. (Mr. Zamora, Hispanic, superintendent)

The other participants shared similar opinions that they are passionate and maintain a high level of integrity in order to thrive in the educational setting.

The participants mentioned job skills along with experiences as the fifth most frequent co-occurrence. Dr. Camp described his experience:

I think once again I have been extremely blessed and when opportunity met preparation I think I had a lot of factors that played to my favor, one would be having six years as a high school principal job and then I do not know maybe six years or seven years before that as other administrator roles, probably helped out the six years as a high school principal meant that I was tested in a way at Lodi Unified. I went through some difficult situations as many high school principals will. So that was great preparation right there. (Dr. Camp, African American male, superintendent)

Dr. Camp stated that six years of experience as a high school principal gave him job skills toward a superintendency position. The other participants shared similar experiences.

Professional Development

Having a mentor and networking were not only discussed as success factors but also in terms of professional development. Mrs. Trejo stated:

That is the best thing. Networking is the best, mentoring is even better. Well I do not know about any specific program but the word mentoring to me those two words are it because if I know people who were accountants and now are CBO's I want to know what steps they took...I saw my supervisor as my mentor. (Mrs. Trejo, Hispanic CBO).

The participants suggested having a mentor and networking as the fifth most occurrences factors during interviews.

Personal Challenges

The participants mentioned family commitments along with having a pre-defined mindset as the fifth most frequent co-occurrence of factors. Mr. Martin shared his view that “There are a lot of sacrifices and we have to ask ourselves at the end of the day, ‘Is it worth it?’ There were some soccer games I couldn't go to with my daughter ... You know you have to balance all that” (Mr. Martin, African American CBO).

Mr. Martin indicated that it was a challenge to have a good mindset and determine the balance between family and work related issues. The other participants share similar experiences.

Quality of Evidence

The researcher made various attempts to ensure accuracy of the data collected. The seven interviews were conducted face-to-face and digitally recorded. All interview questions were open-ended to prompt responses that were individual in nature. Upon completion of interviews, the researcher sent the audio to a professional transcriber for transcription. All transcripts were later reviewed and checked for accuracy by the researcher. Transcripts were then sent to the participants for review, a process utilized for member checking to make sure the data collected were reflective of the participants' voices. Transcriptions were later uploaded to *Dedoose*, a computer program used to code and analyze the data for this study. Throughout the process, the researcher worked closely with her dissertation chair. A journal was kept for further information needed.

The data was analyzed utilizing multiple modalities in *Dedoose* including code application, code co-occurrence, and codes by descriptors to examine the collected narrative data. The researcher took several steps to ensure inter-coder reliability; identifying auditors outside the study, independently coding several examples, and comparing results and further discussing rationales behind specific selections. Four colleagues familiar with the research topic were each asked to apply codes from the study's code tree and apply selected codes properly. The sample coding achieved a 90% accuracy rating which indicated an excellent agreement of inter-coder reliability (set at 80%). The researcher was also careful to consult and

triangulate different sources of data, like the demographic questionnaire and interview questions. The researcher was able to ensure quality of data accordingly.

Conclusion

The researcher analyzed the data derived from the interviews of all seven minority administrators. This analysis generated evidence from the *Dedoose* program. The frequency of applied codes was presented based on three coding categories (challenges and barriers, factors for success, and professional development). In addition, the rank order of code co-occurrences was discussed. This chapter presented the findings of the data collected during this research study. The data collected was coded and themes were developed from the interviews. Each of the seven participants shared their challenges and success factors in their accession to superintendents or chief business officers. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). The researcher utilized CRT to voice lived experiences from perspectives of participants. In addition, CRT will be viewed as a lens to understand their life journey. The results of this study provided valuable information to minority administrators and other stakeholders. In addition, the results of this study contributed to current research on minority school administrators and how they have become successful in their careers.

Tables included in the chapter illustrate the categories and sub-categories derived from the interview data. This chapter included a brief overview of the study, a summary of the findings, the interpretation of the findings, and the researcher's

recommendations and findings. Chapter 5 provides discussion of findings and implications of this research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The researcher conducted a narrative case study on seven minority administrators in the Central Valley of California using an in-depth interviewing process to reveal their career pathways, barriers, and perseverance. The theoretical framework for this study is based on Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT is used to voice lived experience from perspectives of participants, and viewed as a lens to understand their life journeys. This study was guided by four primary research questions in the area of challenges and barriers, success factors, professional development programs, and leadership qualities. The research questions are as follows:

1. What barriers did African American and Hispanic superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) in the Central Valley of California face in their pursuit of their positions?
2. What factors facilitated African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California to overcome the barriers they faced in their pursuit of their positions?
3. What professional development programs (including mentoring programs) did African American and Hispanic superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California participate? How did these programs impact their pursuit of their positions?

4. What are the leadership qualities of Hispanic and African American superintendents and CBOs in the Central Valley of California? How do they perceive their leadership qualities impacting student achievement?

The participants included African American and Hispanic superintendents and chief business officers (CBOs) at school districts located in the Central Valley California. Selected counties included San Joaquin County, Stanislaus County, and Merced County. The four African American participants were Dr. Daryl Camp; superintendent, Dr. Mary Jones; superintendent, Mr. Carl Toliver; retired superintendent, and Mr. Wayne Martin; retired CBO. The three Hispanic participants are Mr. Andres Zamora; superintendent, Mr. Steve Fabela; CBO, and Mrs. Ramona Trejo; CBO. Only Dr. Jones and Mrs. Trejo are female administrators. The rest of participants are male administrators. The results of this study provide valuable information to minority administrators and other stakeholders and contribute to current research on minority school administrators.

Summary of Findings

The researcher used the *Dedoose* program to reveal the frequency of applied codes and co-occurrences. The frequency of applied codes was presented based on three coding categories (challenges and barriers, success factors, and professional development). As such, the following reflective discussion will address each of these categories. The coding frequencies and code co-occurrences appear in Tables 9, 10, 11 and 12 in Chapter 4.

Challenges and Barriers

In terms of personal challenges, the participants agreed that gender was a challenge for career advancement. However, the African American administrators discussed gender the most among their personal challenges, while Hispanic administrators discussed other factors such as culture and parents. Many discussions focused on females as a minority. Dr. Jones shared that the majority of superintendents are male, so being a woman is certainly a barrier. In addition, African Americans are not commonly seen in superintendent positions. In her opinion, an African American female faces a greater challenge of being a female minority. Dr. Camp commented that there were not many female superintendents in the area. There are 23 African American superintendents in California, but only four of them are female. Mr. Zamora agreed that being a female is already a challenge, but the challenge is even greater for being a female minority. Mrs. Trejo also shared her experience as a Hispanic female. In her culture, family takes first priority and career advancement is secondary, particularly for females. Her priority is being a mother. Accordingly, she decided not to pursue further education in a graduate school in order to take care of her young children.

The next challenge involved family. Mrs. Trejo's statement touched on both being female and having family commitments as challenges for career advancement. The Hispanic administrators mentioned both family and gender as challenges at the same level. The African American participants also agreed that family is a challenge. Dr. Camp mentioned that balancing between job and family is one of the toughest

things to do. In addition to family, cultural issues were most frequently mentioned as a unique factor for the Hispanic group; it was not mentioned at all by the African American group. Mr. Fabela shared his experience as a second generation immigrant born in the United States. Growing up, he was influenced by his father to assimilate. His father didn't want to name him and his sibling in Hispanic. At that time, the only way to be successful was to assimilate quickly so he could compete and work with Caucasians. In his interview, Mr. Fabela touched on parents as a factor in career advancement, another factor unique to the Hispanic group and not mentioned at all by African American participants.

Conversely, having a pre-defined mindset as a challenge was discussed more frequently by African American participants. This factor appeared during the interview less than gender but more than family as a barrier. Mr. Martin asserted that the only barrier he faced was a self-evaluation barrier. He was in the business for 30 years but did not become a chief business officer (CBO) until the last four years of his career. Even though he had job skills, he was trying to determine whether he really wanted to take greater responsibilities to become a CBO. The pre-defined mindset was slightly mentioned by the Hispanic administrators. However, it was not discussed as much as the other personal factors they have experienced.

Result shows that both African American and Hispanic administrators agreed that formal education, job skills, and knowledge of job opportunities are major challenges for career advancement. Mr. Zamora pointed out during the interview her awareness of an achievement gap. Minority students perform lower than their peers;

they do not even graduate from colleges. Many minority teachers stay in teaching at school levels instead of moving into district administration. Furthermore, Mrs. Trejo added that she faced educational challenges growing up. She shared that her school counselor would not allow placement in advance classes because she is Hispanic. The counselor did not believe that she could handle the class, especially that particular course because it was already difficult for white students.

Another professional challenge mentioned by both African American and Hispanic participants was having job skills. Mr. Fabela switched his career from business to education at the age of 40. At that time, his challenge was not having the appropriate job skills for school administration. He had to obtain a teaching credential. He began teaching, started from the bottom, and moved up in the rank into administration. Having job skills is important, and there is a specific career pathway in educational settings.

External challenges frequently mentioned by participants include the topics of racism, local factors, opportunity given, and socioeconomic status (SES). Racism was mentioned the most by both African American and Hispanic administrators as an external challenge as well as overall in their career advancements. Mrs. Trejo had experienced racism at her school district. However, she did not take it personally when people felt that she did not deserve the job because she is Hispanic. She believes in herself and knows that she always does the right thing. Dr. Jones shared her belief that racism exists at an institutional level. It is unconscious and difficult to identify. She felt that she did not receive one of the administrative positions she

applied for because of racial bias. Mr. Toliver shared how racism could impact hiring at school districts in his perspective. He believes that race is a barrier. He was hired because of his qualifications. However, he feels that if there had been a white person applying for the same position, if qualifications were the same, he is not positive that he would have received the job at the time.

Local factors were mentioned as the second most frequent factor shared by both African American and Hispanic administrators. The local factors involve demographic characteristics, value attributed to groups in the community, labor group, governing boards, etc. Mr. Toliver commented further on local factors that hiring processes could depend on the policies of the governing boards. Mr. Zamora agreed that the board members may want to hire someone to reflect their community.

Lack of job opportunity was a unique challenge mentioned by African American participants. They felt that job opportunities were not given to minorities. Dr. Jones voiced her opinion that due to a low number of minority administrators in the area, she did not think that there were job opportunities for minorities. The other African American participants shared similar experiences. They felt that the numbers do speak for themselves. The last external challenge is Socio-Economic Status, which was not mentioned at all by African American participants. It is a unique factor for the Hispanic group. Mr. Zamora shared that lack of financial resources impacted his career pathway. The other Hispanic participants shared similar experiences as growing up with lack of financial support.

Success Factors

In terms of personal factors, the data showed that both the African American and Hispanic groups indicated that having a pre-defined mindset is important. This is the only personal success factor that both groups have in common. However, having a pre-defined mindset as a success factor was mentioned the most from the African American group but it was mentioned the least by the Hispanic group. Dr. Jones shared her view on having a defined mindset to overcome barriers for her. She had a mindset that no matter what others believed, she wouldn't let these be barriers. Mr. Zamora viewed barriers as part of the process in accomplishing goals. He focused on having a defined mindset and how to approach those challenges.

Another important factor is having integrity. Integrity was mentioned the most as personal success factors by Hispanic participants. This is a unique factor for the Hispanic group only. Mrs. Trejo, a Hispanic CBO shared that she always performs her best with high integrity. In addition to having the integrity is having passion. During the interview, Mr. Fabela, a Hispanic CBO, shared that he has a strong passion toward working for public education. Mr. Fabela made a career shift at the age of 40. He shared that it was driven by his integrity. He wanted to do something meaningful that his father would be proud of.

Being passionate was mentioned as the second most frequent factor discussed among personal success factors. Being passionate is a unique factor for the Hispanic group as well. On the other hand, the African American group mentioned being prepared and ready for career advancement as the second most frequent factor

discussed during interview. Mr. Martin believed that the opportunities are always available and that minority administrators must be prepared for the job whether they are African American or Hispanic. Mr. Martin also addressed that willingness to relocate is another factor to success. Other African American administrators also shared similar thoughts. When there are job opportunities elsewhere, Mr. Toliver agreed that relocation might be necessary to move up in the rank. Willingness to relocate was not mentioned at all by Hispanic participants. This factor is unique to the African American group. It is the third most frequent occurrence shared in discussion.

The data showed that job skills were mentioned the most by both African American and Hispanic participants as factors for success. Formal education was mentioned more by African American participants as a factor for success than job experiences. On the contrary, job experience was mentioned more frequently by Hispanic participants than formal education. Mr. Martin, an African American CBO, frequently felt that he was mainly judged on his ability to get work done. He equipped himself with skills and resources to be successful in his career. Mrs. Trejo, a Hispanic CBO also agreed having job skills as a success factor. She described herself as a hard worker. She understood the rules and implementing them effectively.

Furthermore, both African American and Hispanic participants agreed on experience as a factor for successful career advancement. However, it was mentioned more frequently as the second factor discussed by the Hispanic group but as the third frequent factor mentioned by African American participants. Mr. Fabela shared that

his business background helped him in his career as a CBO. He was able to apply his experiences from the private sector into his current working setting at a school district.

The other success factor is formal education. This factor was the third most frequent factor mentioned by Hispanic administrators. However, it was mentioned more frequently by the African American group. As an example, Mr. Toliver commented that a formal education such as doctoral degree is very important, especially for minorities to become successful in their career. The other administrators in both ethnicities shared similar opinions.

Based on the results, the external success factors involve networking, having sponsorship, understanding local factors, family, and having a mentor. Both African American and Hispanic participants agreed on networking as one of the success factors. The rest of factors are unique for each ethnicity. Networking was the most frequent factor mentioned by African American participants. However, it was third frequent factor discussed by the Hispanic group. Dr. Camp shared his view as superintendent that it is very helpful reaching out to other African Americans or other superintendents to discuss things you want to understand more. Dr. Camp indicated that networking was very helpful especially when he first began his journey as a superintendent. Mr. Zamora also commented on networking that he made an extra effort to connect with people nevertheless. Based on his experience, most people will give advice regardless of ethnicity.

The next factor most frequently mentioned by African American participants was having sponsorship. This factor is unique to the African American group. Dr. Jones indicated having sponsorship is an important success factor for minorities. She felt that as a minority, she has to be twice as good and constantly prove herself to others. Because of her skills and work ethics, people believe in her and advocate for her, especially her supervisor. Dr. Jones indicated having sponsorship is an important success factor for minorities.

The next success factor is the understanding of local factors. Local factors involve the understanding of demographics, labor group involvement, governing boards, community values, etc. The local factors were the third frequently occurring factors mentioned by African American participants. It is also a unique factor for the African American group. Mr. Toliver commented that administrators must communicate with all board members equally, not just one. Building trust with governing boards, labor groups, and community partners is important. Mr. Toliver shared that a good relationship with local members will promote success in a growing career.

Family support is also important. This factor was mentioned the most by Hispanic participants. Family support is a unique factor to the Hispanic group. Mrs. Trejo shared that her family is supportive. Her mother did a great job raising twelve children and they are all happy people. In addition to family support, Mrs. Trejo described further that having a mentor is important. She was very thankful that her supervisor was her mentor. She learned a lot from him. Administrators can learn

much from school, but there are certain things that must be learned from a mentor. Having a mentor was frequently mentioned by Hispanic participants as the second most frequent factor to success. This is another unique factor applied to the Hispanic group only.

Professional Development

Both African American and Hispanic participants agreed that networking is important. However, it was mentioned at the most frequent occurrence by African American participants and the second most frequent by the Hispanic group. Dr. Camp networked with other school administrators through the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). Dr. Camp also recommended professional certifications such as a superintendent's academy, business academy, superintendent academy, etc. offered through ACSA. Professional certifications were the third most frequently mentioned factor by both African American and Hispanics. Mr. Toliver suggested that attending workshops and conferences not only contributes to development of job skills but also opportunities for networking. This will lead to connections with the experts in the field. This factor is unique to the African American group.

The next professional development factor involved having a mentor. This factor is unique to the Hispanic group. Having a mentor was mentioned as the most frequent when comparing to other professional development. Mr. Fabela shared that he participated in the best academy that is the "Dr. Scott Siegel" Academy. Dr. Siegel is a current superintendent at Ceres Unified School District. Mentoring can be both

informal and formal. Mr. Fabela suggested one on one mentoring from an expert in the fields is very effective.

Code Co-Occurrences

The researcher used *Dedoose* program to reveal data in which specific challenges, success factors, or professional development were mentioned in combination with one another. Table 12 in Chapter 4 shows the rank order of the eleven most frequently applied code co-occurrences. Based on the results, racism was occurred the most along with other factors such as local factors, formal education, gender, governing boards, and culture.

Challenges. During the interview, the participants repeatedly mentioned local factors in combination with racism. This is the most frequently mentioned co-occurrence factor, discussed by both African American and Hispanics, followed by local factors and governing boards. The other co-occurrences included the relationships between racism and education, racism and gender, racism and governing boards, and racism and culture.

Local factors and racism were commonly mentioned by both groups. Local factors such as demographic data and community support were discussed along with racism during an interview with Mr. Toliver. He shared that local community members may show favoritism toward certain ethnicities. The second most frequently mentioned co-occurrence was between local factors and governing boards. Mr. Toliver shared further that the governing boards may want to hire someone to reflect local demographic.

The participants also mentioned racism along with obtaining formal education as the fourth most frequently discussed factor. Mrs. Trejo described her experience growing up that a school counselor prevented her from taking advanced classes due to her race. This particular counselor is a Hispanic male who was stereotyping Hispanic students as low performing students. In addition, the participants mentioned racism together with gender as the fifth most frequently discussed challenge in career advancement. Mr. Zamora shared that a female minority faces greater challenges in career advancement.

Racism and governing boards were also the fifth most frequently co-occurring factors mentioned by the participants. Mr. Toliver shared he was hired because of his qualifications. However, he felt that he might not have been hired if there had been a white candidate with the same skills. Racism and culture were also frequently mentioned at the same level as racism and governing boards. Mr. Fabela shared that he was not given a Hispanic name in order to easier assimilate into American culture. The participants also mentioned family along with having a pre-defined mindset as the fifth most frequent co-occurrence factors. Mr. Martin indicated that it was a challenge to have a good mindset and determine the balance between family and work related issues. The other participants share similar experiences.

Factors for Success. Networking and having a mentor was ranked as the third most frequently mentioned co-occurring factor for success. Dr. Camp participated in networking and mentoring organizations such as Association of California School Administrators (ACSA). He also created his own informal

networking. The other participants shared similar experiences. The results also showed frequently mentioned co-occurrence in the area of personal success factors. Having passion and along with integrity were mentioned as the third most frequent co-occurrence factors to success. According to Mr. Zamora, his career pathway has always been driven by his initiative and desire to make a difference. The other participants shared similar opinions that they are passionate and must have a high level of integrity to work in an educational setting.

The participants also mentioned having job skills along with experience as the fifth most frequently mentioned co-occurrence of factors for success. Dr. Camp mentioned that six years of experience as a high school principal gave him job skills toward a superintendency position. The other participants shared similar experiences. Having a mentor and networking were not only discussed as success factor but also professional development. Mrs. Trejo addressed networking as the best and mentoring is even better. She was fortunate that her supervisor was her mentor as well. The participants suggested having a mentor and networking as the fifth most occurrences factors during interviews.

Discussion of Findings and Implications

The Influence of Racism on Educational Career Pathways

The findings confirmed that racism has been the biggest ongoing challenge faced by these minority groups. Both African American and Hispanic participants agreed that racism is a barrier in their career pathways. Racism is perceived to be unconscious and institutional. It is embedded in local factors, formal education

settings, governing boards' decision making, and cultural values. Hispanic participants have faced racism from the moment they were born. They could be the first generation or second generation born in the United States. Regardless of their actual English proficiency, people with Hispanic backgrounds are often perceived as non-English speaking immigrants from uneducated families of low socio-economic status. Parents quickly realized that the only way to survive at that time was to assimilate. As they were growing up, in some cases, they were forced to give up their cultural attributes like names and language in order to blend in. Some regret giving up these attributes.

Using a "foreign" name and speaking with a strong accent could be stereotyped in a certain way, and mostly not in a good way. For example, Mrs. Trejo, a Hispanic female shared that she was prevented from taking advanced classes because of her race. Her school counselor felt that the specific classes were difficult for white students. Therefore, they must be too difficult for her as a Hispanic student. This particular counselor was a Hispanic male. These racial and cultural barriers are consciously and unconsciously embedded, even within Hispanic people themselves. These barriers were the most mentioned barrier when compared to other barriers. This is a unique barrier for the Hispanic group. Surprisingly, the African American participants did not mention racism while obtaining their formal education.

In addition to these racial and cultural barriers, female minorities face a greater challenge in their career advancement, owing to their underrepresentation in leadership roles. Only two out of seven participants of this study were female due to

the lack of female minorities in the top levels of educational administration. Even though there are more female administrators than males working for school districts, females do not make it to the top management positions. Particularly for Hispanic females, being a mother takes first priority in their cultures, a factor that can block them from accepting more responsibilities and opportunities to advance their careers.

The Hispanic participants experience racism as embedded in their cultural backgrounds. On the other hand, the African American participants face racism through local factors as external challenges. The African American participants appeared more open to discussing external challenges while Hispanic participants were more reticent. Local factors such as demographics characteristics, labor groups, and most importantly, governing boards, which have hiring and firing power, were mentioned most often as barriers faced by African American participants. Instead of assimilating themselves to fit in locally, they were even willing to relocate to wherever they would better fit in. This explains why numbers of African American administrators are low only in the Central Valley region, but they are not disproportionate at the state of California level, while Hispanic administrators are underrepresented in the region and at the state of California level. The Hispanic participants would rather stay closer to their family and local community rather than relocate. According to Hardiman, and Jackson (1997):

It is less likely that targets in Resistance or Redefinition consciousness will be able to acknowledge coexistent agent identities. Furthermore, those who find themselves victims of more than one form of oppression ... find that their

developmental process in one area of their social identity may be useful in dealing with other of their targeted identities as well. (pp.23-29)

Hardiman and Jackson described agents and targets of social identity into five developmental stages; naïve, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and internalization (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997). The “agents” are dominant groups or oppressors while the “targets” refer to minority or oppressed groups. The ideal is for both agents and targets to be in the internalization state. However, it appeared that few people actually reach this level of development.

The Importance of Networking in Career Advancement

Networking is definitely a key factor to career advancement for the African American group. This factor was mentioned more frequently than having job skills, formal education, or professional certifications. The perception is that that who you know is more critical than what you know. The African American administrators are certainly more active in participating in both formal and informal networking. The formal networking is established through organizations such as Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), and the California Association of School Business Officials (CASBO). The African American group also arranges for informal networking locally with colleagues. They are mobile and more willing to travel to networking events on a regular basis. Networking is their gateway to success. Oftentimes, people that they networked with became their mentors and sponsors. Sponsorship, defined as someone who sees another’s value and advocates for him or her, is greatly important for the African American group.

The Hispanic group, however, is less active in networking, preferring to have a mentor, someone locally who coaches them with job skills. Networking or having a mentor requires time during work as well as after hours. It appears that the Hispanic group is not willing to give up family time after hours. This also implies that the Hispanic group is not as mobile as the African American group. Surprisingly, most of their mentors or sponsors are not of their same ethnicity but are white Anglos. Their mentors and sponsors are open-minded professionals, willing to give job opportunities to qualified candidates regardless of their ethnicities.

The Power of Having a Pre-Defined Mindset

Having a pre-determined mindset can be both a great challenge and a success factor, mentioned mostly by the African American group. As a barrier, a mindset limits their abilities to see above and beyond the present situations. They may not be able to accomplish certain goals because they have already told themselves that this could not be done. As a success factor, a mindset allows you to see beyond barriers and convince yourself that you can do something. Mr. Martin, an African American CBO described that he has always focused “the mind,” and so it has always been his thought that “whatever the mind can perceive and believe can be achieved.” Having a pre-defined mindset is a powerful tool to success. This factor was mentioned by the Hispanic group as well but not as frequent as the African American group. Surprisingly, having a pre-determined mindset is not mentioned as frequently by the Hispanic group.

The Perception of Effective Leadership Qualities

Both African American and Hispanic administrators agreed that putting students first is the first priority. Everything school administrators do must be linked to student achievement. This is part of their passion and integrity to make a difference. Along with other participants, Dr. Jones, an African American female superintendent indicated that student learning is the bottom line and everyone should be aware of that. Accordingly, an effective leader must have strong communication skills and be able to work collaboratively with stakeholders to promote the success of every student. Having good relationship with stakeholders was the most-mentioned leadership quality for school administrators. Among the stakeholders are staff, governing boards, labor groups, and community partnerships. Stakeholders could ultimately be your sponsors who support you and advocate for you.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study is limited by the nature of qualitative study, which is based on unique personal experiences and perspective of individuals. Some participants were hesitant to disclose certain information for a variety of reasons such as their cultural norms and relationship with researcher. In addition, the numbers of participants are small due to lack of minority superintendents and CBOs in California. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to the larger population.

The study is limited to African American and Hispanic groups due to low academic performance in average. The boundary of this research is limited in the Central Valley of California due to high number of minority groups. Accordingly, the

experiences are limited to the Central Valley of California region only. In addition, the participants for this study are limited to superintendents and chief business officers because they are key leaders at school districts. Other administrators such as assistant superintendents, program managers, principals were not included in this study.

Recommendations for Action and for Future Research

The African American and Hispanic participants in this research are exceptional school administrators, able to overcome barriers and persist in their positions as superintendents or chief business officers (CBOs). This research attempted to allow their voices to be heard, providing advice to aspiring minority administrators. Therefore, a recommendation for action would be for minority administrators to serve more frequently as role models, and begin to mentor others minority administrators.

Disproportionality occurs when the proportion of minority school administrators does not represent student demographic characteristics. In order to close the disproportionality gap, governing boards should hire administrators that reflect student demographics of their community. An action recommendation would be to initiate an increase in the potential pool of minority administrators through networking. Minority administrators may take advantage of networking to build trust and relationships among colleagues. Both Hispanics and African Americans need to become more mobile and ready to relocate when necessary to move up in rank.

This study is limited by a nature of qualitative data, which is based on unique personal experiences and perspective of individuals from the Central Valley of California. One of the recommendations is to incorporate a quantitative approach into this study. Surveys could be sent out to other Hispanic and African American administrators in California. Using mixed-methods design to reach out the other minority administrators could have expanded this study. In addition, reviews of documents such as governing board policies of school districts on hiring minority could be helpful. The information gathered would be valuable to this study in addition to interviews data provided solely by the participants.

Furthermore, the purpose of this study was to give voice to minority school administrators to share their lived experiences including barriers and success factors. Due to the small number of participants in the Central Valley region, the results were limited and might not be generalized to the larger population. Another recommendation is to expand the future research to a larger scale to reach out to more participants in the northern or southern regions of California. Other administrators such as assistant superintendents, program administrators, or fiscal administrators could be included in the study to get their perspectives of their accessions to the positions and the barriers for not moving up to the higher rank. In addition, only African American and Hispanic groups were included in this study. It was mentioned frequently by the participants during interviews that they were not aware of any Asian superintendents. In fact, the researcher is the only Asian chief business officer in the

area. Therefore, it would be beneficial to involve other minority groups such as Asian populations.

Underrepresentation of minority females in top level administration is another area worth looking further into. Due to lack of minority female administrators in the area, only two out of participants were females; an African American superintendent, and a Hispanic CBO. An African American participant felt that she did not get one of the positions she applied for because of her gender. The other female participant shared that in Hispanic culture, being a mother takes first priority, and career advancement is secondary. As a result, she decided to take care of her young children instead of pursuing further education in a graduate school. During interviews, both male and female participants agreed that being a female is already a challenge but the challenge is even greater for being a female minority. More studies can be done to gain a better understanding of inter-relationship among race, gender, and cultural attributed.

Conclusion and Reflections

The researcher initiated this research in light of a significant disproportionality issue of minority administrators when compared to the proportion of minority students in the region, particularly Hispanic and African American students. Even though numbers of minority administrators in the area are low, the researcher was able to identify seven participants through networking with peers and mentors, confirming the importance of networking and mentoring. All participants were willing to share their experiences as administrators with the researcher. All of them

allowed their identity being presented in this research report. As a result of their collaboration with this study, the researcher was able to address key research questions and suggestion meaningful information to aspiring minority administrators in region.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Invitation Letter to Participate and Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Annie Arounsack and I am a Doctoral Candidate in Educational Leadership at California State University, Stanislaus. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study on the minority superintendents and chief business officers in school districts located in the Central Valley of California. This study seeks to identify factors that contribute to their success and barriers. The intent of this study is to explore their career pathways and provide opportunity to minority administrators to voice their life experiences.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer questions regarding your life experiences including career pathway, barriers and perseverance. This will be a semi-structured interview and audio recorded. The interview should take approximately one hour. There may be a follow-up interview. The interview will be conducted at a convenient time and location for you. In addition, you will receive a pre-interview questionnaire prior to the interview, which is voluntary, but highly recommended to complete. However, you are not required to answer any of the questions that may make you uncomfortable.

Confidentiality is necessary to protect the participants' privacy. All publications, public distributions, or presentations of the findings from this study, including but not limited to the researcher's dissertation will not reveal your identity, if you request not to have their identity disclosed. The pseudonyms will be assigned instead.

There are no known risks to you for your participation in this study. You may not benefit directly from this study, however the information that you provide may benefit other minority administrators who aspire to obtain superintendents or chief business officers' positions in public school districts. All publications, public distributions, findings, audio recordings, and data will be protected from inappropriate disclosure under the law. In addition, all research protocols involving human subjects will be reviewed and approved by the CSU Stanislaus Institutional Review Board to assure compliance with all regulations and applicable laws. There is no cost to you beyond the time and effort required to complete the procedures described above. Again, your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty.

If you decide to participate to this study, please indicate this decision by filling out the bottom portion of this form. If you have any questions regarding your rights and participation as a research subject, please contact me, Annie Arounsack at (209) 380-3725 or my faculty sponsor, Dr. Jim Riggs, at (209)664-6789. You may also email CSU Stanislaus Institutional Review Board at IRBAdmin@csustan.edu or contact the director at (209) 667-3747.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Annie Arounsack
Researcher

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. You are free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point without penalty.

I give my consent to participate in this study:

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Printed Name of Study Participant / Title

APPENDIX B

EXPERT REVIEW INSTRUMENT

Time: approximately 1 hour

Subjects: 2-3 persons

Purpose: As part of a research project to fulfill a doctoral dissertation, I developed research questions designed to capture life experience of minority administrators. I appreciate your willingness to help review the research questions and provide some feedback on your understanding and perception of the research questions. Your individual responses in the expert review phase are not going to be recorded or reported to anyone except for myself who is designing the research questions.

Process:

1. The researcher will provide copies of the research questions.
2. Please note how much time is required to answer all the questions.
3. Once you have completed the questions, respond to each question in three ways.
 - A. **Understandable:** Was the question “understandable?” That is, did you have to read the question more than once to understand what it was asking? Was the meaning of the questions clear and straightforward?
 - B. **Only one response:** Was the question written in such a way that you could have answered it more than one way? (E.g., could you have said BOTH “very little” and “very much?”)
 - C. **Loaded:** In your opinion, was the question written in such a way that there was ONLY one OBVIOUS answer for you? In other words, the way the question is worded; it is highly unlikely that respondents would be able to respond using more than one response choice.
4. Please circle yes/no for each question.

For any questions you answered “no,” please explain why you responded this way in the Comments box.

Interview Questions	Understandable?	Only one response?	Loaded?	Comments
Barriers faced by minority administrators:				
1. What barriers have you faced in your ascension to the position of superintendent or chief business officer (CBO)? To what degree do you consider race to be a barrier when it comes to obtaining the position? If race is barrier, in what ways do you believe it has impacted your career and your ascension to the superintendent or CBO rank?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
2. Do you believe that other Hispanic/African American superintendents and CBO have faced similar or different experiences in their pursuit of the positions, and what do you believe these similarities and differences are?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	

Interview Questions	Understandable?	Only one response?	Loaded?	Comments
3. Base on the demographics of the Central Valley of California, in your opinion, have opportunities for Hispanic/African American superintendents/CBOs increased or decreased, and why?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
Factors to overcome the barriers:				
4. Given your experience, what factors do you believe played a role in your appointment as a superintendent/CBO?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
5. What factors have helped you overcome the barriers you faced in the pursuit of the position? What is your description of the word resilient? And what resilient qualities do you believe you possess?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
6. What factors do you believe have helped other Hispanic/African American superintendents/CBO overcome barriers they faced in their ascension to the position? And how can more Hispanic/African American be attracted to the superintendent or CBO' positions?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
Professional Development:				
7. What professional development programs for superintendents/CBOs have you participated in? And how did the programs impact your pursuit of the position?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
8. What are your thoughts about networking and mentoring programs?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
Leadership Styles:				
9. What do you feel is your leadership style and why? How do you feel your leadership style is beneficial to your district? And how does it impact student achievement?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	
10. In your opinion, what is your greatest leader quality from your staff's perspective?	Yes No	Yes No	Yes No	

APPENDIX C

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age group?

20-29
30-39
40-49

50-59
60-69
70-79

2. What is your marital status?

Married
Widowed
Divorced

Separated
Never married

Do you have children? Yes____ No____

3. Please describe your ethnicity background:

4. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

High School Diploma
Associate's Degree (e.g. AA, AS)
Bachelor's Degree (e.g. BA, BS)

Master's Degree (e.g. MA, MS, MBA)
Professional Degree (e.g. MD, DDS, LLB)
Doctorate Degree (e.g. PhD, EdD.)

Please describe professional certifications (if any)

5. Please describe both of your parents' educational level.

6. What is your current position and how long have you been in this position?

Number of employees you are responsible for: _____

7. Please provide a description of your current organization/district.

8. Please provide a description of your career in the education profession? When did your career begin? What positions have you held? List your promotions? And, how long have you been a superintendent or a CBO?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Barriers faced by minority administrators:

1. What barriers have you faced in your ascension to the position of superintendent or chief business officer (CBO)? To what degree do you consider race to be a barrier when it comes to obtaining the position? If race is barrier, in what ways do you believe it has impacted your career and your ascension to the superintendent or CBO rank?
2. Do you believe that other Hispanic/African American superintendents and CBO have faced similar or different experiences in their pursuit of the positions, and what do you believe these similarities and differences are?
3. Base on the demographics of the Central Valley of California, in your opinion, have opportunities for Hispanic/African American superintendents/CBOs increased or decreased, and why?

Factors to overcome the barriers:

4. Given your experience, what factors do you believe played a role in your appointment as a superintendent/CBO?
5. What factors have helped you overcome the barriers you faced in the pursuit of the position? What is your description of the word resilient? And what resilient qualities do you believe you possess?
6. What factors do you believe have helped other Hispanic/African American superintendents/CBO overcome barriers they faced in their ascension to the position? And how can more Hispanic/African American be attracted to the superintendent or CBO' positions?

Professional Development:

7. What professional development programs for superintendents/CBOs have you participated in? And how did the programs impact your pursuit of the position?
8. What are your thoughts about networking and mentoring programs?

Leadership Styles:

9. What do you feel is your leadership style and why? How do you feel your leadership style is beneficial to your district? And how does it impact student achievement?
10. In your opinion, what is your greatest leader quality from your staff's perspective?

Wrap up questions:

Are there any other factors not mentioned during this interview that assisted you in your career in the education profession? Or is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX E

CODE TREE/LIST

<p><u>CHALLENGES/BARRIERS:</u></p> <p><i>Personal Challenges</i> Age Culture Family Gender Language Barriers Have a Pre-Defined Mindset Parents</p> <p><i>Professional Challenges</i> Education Job Skills Knowledge of Opportunity</p>	<p><i>External Challenges</i> Governing Boards Lack of Mentoring Lack of Sponsorship Local Factors Knowledge of Job Opportunity Lack of Role Model Opportunity Given Racism Socio-Economic Status (SES)</p>
<p><u>SUCCESS FACTORS:</u></p> <p><i>Personal Factors</i> Ambitious Be Creative Be Open Minded Be Positive Be Proactive Be Ready/Prepared Be Respective Bilingual Experience Hard Worker Insight Knowledge Integrity Intelligent/Competent Life Long Learner Love What You Do Have a Pre-Defined Mindset Willing to Relocate Passionate/Motivated Persistence Result Oriented Transparent Visionary</p>	<p><i>External Factors</i> Local Factors Resource/Material Building Trust Family Support Governing Board Having a Mentor Networking Role Model Sponsorship Supervisor Support</p> <p><i>Professional Factors</i> Business Background Experiences Formal Education Job Skills Professional Certifications Good Resume</p>
<p><u>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</u> Certifications Formal Education Mentoring Program</p>	<p>Networking Workshops/Conferences</p>