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Removing the Lens of Bias:

Promoting Self-Efficacy of Black Female Leaders in Turnaround Schools through Organizational Systems

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Peabody College, Vanderbilt University

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Lastly, I dedicate this work to my husband, parents, siblings, and greater family who have supported me on my journey in education.

Project Overview

This capstone project was a study of how organizations support the self-efficacy of Black female principals leading turnaround schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted of Black female principals who currently lead or have lead turnaround schools with a focus on the following: (a) professional learning; (b) perceptions as a leader including the perceptions of supervisors, teachers, parents, students, and the greater school community; and (c) supports provided by the organization. The findings in this report couple the intrinsic (personal) motivations of Black female leaders constructed from their personal experiences and narratives with the extrinsic supports of the organizations that they work/worked in. The narratives of the Black female respondents were obtained solely through the interviews that were conducted. Based on themes that emerged from the interviews and research, recommendations are presented that organizations could implement to increase the support of Black female principals leading turnaround schools. Recommendations include a turnaround leader network within the organization, mentorship, targeted professional development, and equity bias training while focusing on improved outcomes for turnaround schools. The goal of the recommended organizational support should align with and support the self-efficacy of Black female principals leading turnaround schools.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Opal Harrison: Opal is a graduate of Xavier University of Louisiana, where she earned a B.S. in Physics in 2002. She received her M.S. in Microelectronics-Photonics from the University of Arkansas in 2004. Opal has been an educator since 2005 and was recognized as the 2013 Secondary Assistant Principal of the Year for the Houston Independent School District. She is currently the Principal of Deady Middle School in Houston, TX.

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Executive Summary

Objective: The purpose of this report is to provide recommendations around the support of Black female turnaround principals in working toward a *Met Standard* designation of the schools which they lead. Equity and access in learning opportunities and support for Black female turnaround leaders could result in greater outcomes for schools and districts with Black female principals.

Rationale: Research on school turnaround shows leadership is critical. State policies guide turnaround work, ensuring that students are progressing toward being on grade level. "The omission of Black leadership narratives, along with an adequate analysis of the contexts in which leadership has worked, limits our ability to develop ways to improve schools and communities for children who live in poverty and children of color" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, pg. 591). Furthermore, the contribution of Black women has gone unnoticed in many instances, but their impact clearly shapes the lives of students (Reed, 2012). Providing organizational support for leaders who are defying the characterization of their positions to forge ahead toward meeting accountability is essential for the improvement and success of challenging schools that are led by Black female principals. Black female principals represent a subset of principals who work extremely hard to attain results in unsupportive organizations that require them to work harder than their non-Black female counterparts (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). Black female principals also rely on their high self-efficacy to meet and exceed standards and expectations of their organizations and those within the organization. "Self-efficacy becomes a necessary trait for Black female leaders to excel in the face of challenges and may give Black female leaders leverage in their ability to succeed" (Carter & Peters, 2016, pg. 124). Hence, the need for organizations to provide support of Black female turnaround leaders. This, in turn, supports improvement and outcomes for the greater organization.

Research Questions:

1. How does the gender and race of Black female principals impact their self-efficacy in school turnaround?
   a. How do Black female principals view themselves as leaders?
   b. How effective do Black female principals believe that that they are/have been in the principal role?

2. How do institutional systems support the self-efficacy of Black female principals in turnaround work?
    a. What is the extent of support provided to Black and female principals engaged in turnaround work in K-12 settings?
    b. Are there opportunities provided or extended to Black and female principals to ensure their success, as related to state accountability requirements?

Incentive: The long-term impact of the proposed recommendations is increased support through access to appropriate and effective professional learning opportunities and networks. This will develop expertise and understanding of Black female leaders in turnaround work, resulting in positive gains in school accountability. The creation of a network or learning community of turnaround leaders will leverage the creativity and resources within the group that could result in systemic change through shared best practices and implementation.

Key Findings:

1. How does the gender and race of Black female principals impact their self-efficacy in school turnaround?

    Impact of Gender and Race on Self-Efficacy: Black female principals were determined to have high self-efficacy. They have a determination to prove themselves as capable leaders.

    a. How do Black female principals view themselves as leaders?

    Self-Perception: Black female principals viewed themselves as leaders with vision and focus to achieve the prescribed goals of the school. Each principal noted their knowledge and expertise in instruction and instructional practices to support teachers in their growth and development. Each leader had varied educational backgrounds, which strengthened their confidence in their ability to effectively lead turnaround schools.

    b. How effective do Black female principals believe that that they are/have been in the principal role?

Reflection on Effectiveness: Black female principals believed that they are/were moderately effective in their role as principal. They did not want to rate themselves highly, as each noted room for improvement. They each reflected on ways in which they could have been more effective during their time as a leader. In their reflection, they noted that they had to prove themselves in turnaround leadership and are now more effective in advocating for themselves and their schools.

2. How do institutional systems support the self-efficacy of Black female principals in turnaround work?

   Organizational Support on Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy of the leader was not impacted by the organization. There was no added value. Professional development and growth opportunities were not tailored to Black female leaders nor to turnaround leadership.

   a. What is the extent of support provided to Black and female principals engaged in turnaround work in K-12 settings?

      Extent of Support: Principals noted that support was provided by their immediate supervisors. Their support entailed feedback and supporting resource allocation to the school. Principals found value in their supervisor, specifically in the relationship that existed. There were no other supports outside of the supervisor.

   b. Are there opportunities provided or extended to Black and female principals to ensure their success, as related to state accountability requirements?

      Opportunities: Principals noted opportunities did not exist for them to grow as turnaround leaders. The opportunities presented by the organizations were standard for the organization and did not provide support in the areas of need for turnaround schools. Principals sought out opportunities on their own.

Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Create/establish a network of turnaround principals in which principals not only are able to learn from each other in turnaround work but can develop effective working relationships with other turnaround leaders. This will allow principals and supervisors to better learn about each other which could lead to the removal of bias and promote support of each other. It was found that principals desired a network for support and learning in which they could connect with other turnaround leaders. Principals also desired the ability to connect with other Black female leaders in turnaround as their experience in leadership was found to be unique in having to work harder to prove themselves.

Recommendation 2: Develop relationships and mentorships that focus on strengths and motivations of the Black female principal within the established turnaround network. Principals reported that although there was a relationship with an immediate supervisor, that there was the need for a mentor who understood their journey as a Black female principal in turnaround.

Recommendation 3: Create leadership development opportunities specifically for turnaround campus efforts. Principals reported that professional development was provided but was not targeted to the needs of a turnaround school. Professional development that was reported as beneficial in their growth as leaders in turnaround work was sought by the principal outside of their organization.

Recommendation 4: Provide training for campus and central administration in equity and bias so that interactions are more intentional. This will aid in developing relationships that focus on strengths and motivations of the Black female principal. The focus will provide areas/characteristics that are typically viewed as negative. Principals noted the perceived support provided to campuses with non-Black, non-female leaders. That support was different and at times more than the support provided to them. There were also instances in which principals had to "call out" biases with their supervisors. Principals also noted the perceptions of others when they utilized their voice to advocate for themselves or their campuses.

Context

In the context of school improvement and turnaround, this study seeks to better understand how the self-efficacy of Black female principals is supported by their organization and impacts school performance through their work and leadership efforts. An important objective of organizations should be "enhancing leadership self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). "Self-efficacy beliefs contribute to motivation in several ways: They determine the goals people set for themselves; how much effort they expend; how long they persevere in the face of difficulties; and their resilience to failures" (Bandura, 2010, pg. 14). Since these women have been chosen and/or selected to lead schools, one can assume that they possess the experience and qualities/competencies that were sought to successfully lead turnaround work. With a wealth of experience, much of it may be the result of the Black female leaders' intrinsic motivation and desire to seek opportunity and extend their learning beyond what is required of their organization. Principals' creativity and risk-taking are a product of lack of resources and exclusionary practices and behaviors within the organization (Newcomb & Niemeyes, 2013). Black leaders may lack awareness of opportunities that include leadership institutes, mentors, stipends for professional degree programs, travel funds, grant monies, support services, professional/civic memberships, etc. and how to give/receive information that may result in obtaining needed resources and/or opportunities (Echols, 2006). With the lack of access and support that has been noted by prior research, the exploration of the impact of intrinsic motivators versus external support will help organizations understand how to best support Black female leaders of K-12 turnaround schools. This capstone project will explore the self-efficacy of Black and female principals leading or who have led school turnaround efforts and how their organizations support them as turnaround leaders.

TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) was signed into law in 2015 as an adjustment to the previous law (NCLB – No Child Left Behind). Highlights of ESSA include provisions that will require high academic standards to be taught to all students and ensuring that students are progressing toward those high academic standards as measured by annual state assessments. In the state of Texas, the managing

education agency (TEA – Texas Education Agency) crafts policy and laws to ensure the alignment and adherence to ESSA.

Every year schools and districts face regulations and oversight by TEA. According to TEA, the School Improvement division of the agency intervenes with campuses and districts that earn a *D* or *F* through the State Accountability System. These schools and districts are then considered turnaround campuses. Copeland and Neeley (2013) define a turnaround school as one "that has exhibited a pattern of low student achievement and has to be improved dramatically." To stave off the possibility of school or district closures and/or takeover by the education agency, districts are forced to make decisions about leadership and the staff of the school in order to lead turnaround efforts and forge a path toward meeting state and federal accountability standards. In the 2016 & 2018 Biennial Reports on Texas Public Schools published by TEA, between 300 to 600 schools were noted as turnaround campuses between 2015 to 2018. The data reflects schools (inclusive of Open-Enrollment Charters) that were designated as *Improvement Required* by the state accountability system. The leadership focus in this report reflects schools that are currently turnaround schools or have been designated as turnaround schools in previous years.

LEADERSHIP OF TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Leadership of schools is extremely important as leaders often set the expectations and systems that will hopefully lead schools toward a *Met Standard* designation. "The principalship is the most recognizable leadership position in a school, and the position most empowered by district, and even state, policy while also being the one most accountable for progress or lack thereof" (Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016, pg. 1274). It is important for the principal to create and foster conditions that result in change and its sustainability for school improvement to be successful (Fullan, 2002). The selection of the right principal to do the work needed for the school to progress toward a *Met Standard* designation is important. School leadership is critical to education reform where it is crucial for the leader to possess certain competencies and actions (Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016; Copeland & Neeley, 2013). These competencies and actions can be developed through training to ensure their effectiveness (Echols, 2006). Research suggests that the competencies that are crucial to the success of leaders in turnaround schools are different from the competencies of successful leaders in already high-performing schools (Kowal & Hassel, 2011).   Public Impact published "Competencies of a Turnaround Leader".

The competency, which is most aligned to this study, based on the Public Impact report, is *Showing Confidence to Lead* as it relates to an individual's self-efficacy. "It includes both presenting oneself to the world with statements of confidence, putting oneself in challenging situations, taking personal responsibility for mistakes, and following up with analysis and corrective action" (Steiner et. al., 2008, pg. 31).

FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

Female principals are often selected for challenging urban schools as they are viewed as and expected to be "clean up women" (Peters, 2012). They are also placed in a double bind because of the gender stereotype associated with the principal role and if they fail to succumb to the stereotypes then their actions are misaligned with expectations of the role (Weiner & Burton, 2016). While female principals have greater challenges than male principals in establishing their position as a leader, they also face the challenges as a turnaround leader to grow their teachers and students.

BLACK FEMALE LEADERSHIP IN TURNAROUND SCHOOLS

"Principals, especially Black females in urban schools, maintain that very little support exists as they embark on the challenges of being a principal" (Grant, 2014, pg. 146). This is compounded with the stresses of leading a campus in turnaround where the stakes to meet end of year goals and accountability standards are even higher. Black females are also placed in high-need environments at a higher rate than any other race and gender leader and are more likely to experience added pressures and critique in the role, resulting in lower performance evaluations, shorter tenures, and higher stress levels (Weiner, Cyr & Burton, 2019). This is like the "glass cliff" phenomenon seen in corporate America where women and minorities are given assignments that present greater risk and effort. Leaders must acknowledge their biases and practice as it is integral to transformative leadership (Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016). The combination of race and gender present the challenge for Black female leaders to excel and meet expectations while facing the challenges presented by a turnaround school (Carter, & Peters, 2016). In Texas, female principals are in the majority as seen in the table below, while Black principals comprise less than 13.55% of the principals in the state.

	Female	Black
2018-2019	5,488 (64.81%)	1,147 (13.55%)
2017-2018	5,427 (64.48%)	1,069 (12.70%)
2016-2017	5,286 (63.73%)	1,033 (12.45%)
2015-2016	5,158 (62.73%)	1,000 (12.16%)

Source: Employed Principal Demographics in Texas Retrieved from: https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/Employed%20Principal%20Demographics%202014-15%20through%202018-19.pdf

This data does not reflect the intersection of Black and female principals nor does it provide principal demographic data for turnaround campuses. Based on the demographic data provided, the reasonable assumption can be made that the intersectionality of Black and female principals in the state of Texas is less than 13.55% of the state's principal population.
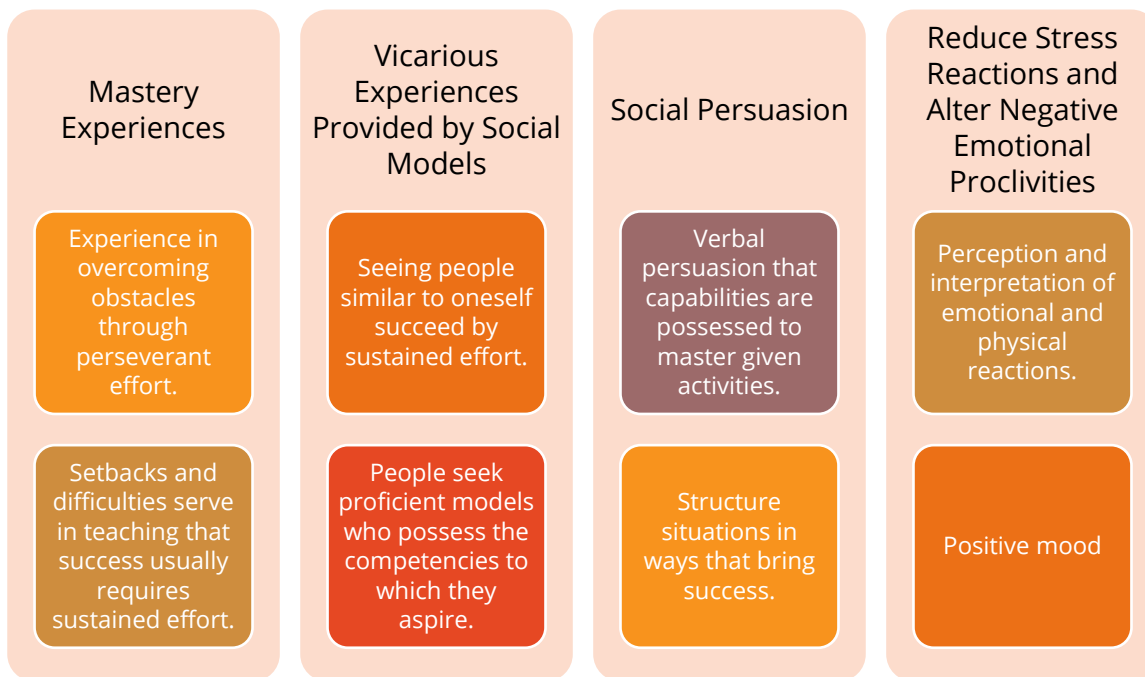
For the purpose of this study, the accountability measurement from the state of Texas will be utilized to characterize a campus designated as a turnaround campus.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework consists of self-efficacy of principals including a reflection on their leadership strengths and opportunities as related to the work and campus culture. Another important component of the framework will be professional learning (professional development) to include learning that the principal participates in that supports the work that occurs on their campus and supports their ability to engage in turnaround work. Also included will be support (asked for and/or provided) from individuals or a group/entity that enhances the ability to engage in the turnaround work. The following theories will be utilized to explain and understand the importance of the experiences of the Black female principals who were interviewed are:

- Standpoint Theory
- Social Role Theory
- Intersectionality Theory.

The preparation and success of a leader can contribute to a sense of one's own strengths and weaknesses. Ongoing professional learning and support can potentially predict efficacy of a leader. Since self-efficacy is a primary focus for this study, the support of the organizations in which the respondents worked was explored to determine the impact of external influences on the self-efficacy of the leader in addition to the principal's beliefs about themselves. Albert Bandura (2010) notes that four sources that can develop people's beliefs about their efficacy. Those sources are:

Mastery Experiences	Vicarious Experiences Provided by Social Models	Social Persuasion	Reduce Stress Reactions and Alter Negative Emotional Proclivities
Experience in overcoming obstacles through perseverant effort.	Seeing people similar to oneself succeed by sustained effort.	Verbal persuasion that capabilities are possessed to master given activities.	Perception and interpretation of emotional and physical reactions.
Setbacks and difficulties serve in teaching that success usually requires sustained effort.	People seek proficient models who possess the competencies to which they aspire.	Structure situations in ways that bring success.	Positive mood

Source: Bandura, 2010.

The sources noted will be utilized to support the categorization of themes that emerged from the interviews.

Standpoint Theory utilizes the narratives of Black female principals to provide meaning to their experience in turnaround leadership (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). It proposes that people gain knowledge through their positions or social locations. The theory also "provides legitimacy and rationale to how Black female principals lead their schools, especially schools with low-performing circumstances, by using language and stories to produce alternative realities" (Grant, 2014, pg. 157). Respondents would bring the perspective of their position in reflecting on their self-efficacy and the role of their organization and past experiences to inform the work and work products at their schools. Included in their perspective is the perceived viewpoint of others and how it impacts their self-efficacy and ability in

their role. As Black female leadership increases in challenging settings, such as turnaround work, it is helpful to examine their narratives as leaders to provide support for future leaders in challenging settings such as school turnaround (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). Personal experience and insight are important to open discussion and provide recommendations that will support intended outcomes of organizations. "Standpoint Theory acknowledges that one's position in life impacts his/her ability to acquire knowledge and emphasizes and facilitates storytelling and reflections on personal experiences" (Lomotey, 2019, pg. 5). This narrative provides a starting point for change and the support of Black female turnaround leaders in organizations.

Social Role Theory proposes that there are societal expectations for men and women that include qualities and behavioral tendencies based on gender and expectations around which roles women should occupy (Weiner & Burton, 2016). The principal role was historically a male role which, based on the data from Texas, is no longer that way. Yet, some of the expectations of women in the role are based on male behaviors and characteristics. This requires female leaders to prove their ability and work to disprove their perceived inability to demonstrate leadership in the principal role. The experiences and stories of the respondents in this study will also explore the expectations placed on the Black female leader and the role of leading a turnaround campus.

Intersectionality is also important for this study in the exploration of the impact of being Black and female has on the self-efficacy of a turnaround principal. Intersectionality will explore the intersection of gender and race, which was "initially used to examine the degree to which individuals such as Black women faced discrimination based on both their race/ethnicity and gender with the framework being adopted to examine the phenomena of discrimination and bias against individuals" (Fuller, Hollingworth & An, 2019, 135). The exploration of self-efficacy of Black female turnaround leaders in K-12 education presents the opportunity to examine how intrinsic motivators impact the learning and leadership of these individuals. There are discrete issues that impact women and Blacks respectively, while the additive of being Black and female compound these issues.

Guiding Questions

The following questions were addressed in this study:

1. How does the gender and race of Black female principals impact their self-efficacy in school turnaround?

   Impact of Gender and Race on Self-Efficacy: Black female principals were determined to have high self-efficacy. They have a determination to prove themselves as capable leaders.

   a. How do Black female principals view themselves as leaders?

   Self-Perception: Black female principals viewed themselves as leaders with vision and focus to achieve the prescribed goals of the school. Each principal noted their knowledge and expertise in instruction and instructional practices to support teachers in their growth and development. Each leader had varied educational backgrounds, which strengthened their confidence in their ability to effectively lead turnaround schools.

   b. How effective do Black female principals believe that that they are/have been in the principal role?

   Reflection on Effectiveness: Black female principals believed that they are/were moderately effective in their role as principal. They did not want to rate themselves highly, as each noted room for improvement. They each reflected on ways in which they could have been more effective during their time as a leader. In their reflection, they noted that they had to prove themselves in turnaround leadership and are now more effective in advocating for themselves and their schools.

2. How do institutional systems support the self-efficacy of Black female principals in turnaround work?

Organizational Support on Self-Efficacy: Self-efficacy of the leader was not impacted by the organization. There was no added value. Professional development and growth opportunities were not tailored to Black female leaders nor to turnaround leadership.

a. What is the extent of support provided to Black and female principals engaged in turnaround work in K-12 settings?

Extent of Support: Principals noted that support was provided by their immediate supervisors. Their support entailed feedback and supporting resource allocation to the school. Principals found value in their supervisor, specifically in the relationship that existed. There were no other supports outside of the supervisor.

b. Are there opportunities provided or extended to Black and female principals to ensure their success, as related to state accountability requirements?

Opportunities: Principals noted opportunities did not exist for them to grow as turnaround leaders. The opportunities presented by the organizations were standard for the organization and did not provide support in the areas of need for turnaround schools. Principals sought out opportunities on their own.

Research during this study revealed that Black female principals in turnaround schools have high self-efficacy as evidenced by their responses during the interview. They also view the overall perceptions of others as positive and in support of them as leaders and the work and effort that they engage in. There are examples of negative perceptions from others noted later in this paper. These negative perceptions and the pressure of progressing a turnaround school did not deter the belief of the respondents in themselves or their capabilities as leaders.

Sample & Methods

This qualitative study was conducted in an effort to understand the impact of organizational support on the self-efficacy of Black female principals leading turnaround efforts at K-12 schools and provide recommendations to organizations on how to support Black female principals leading turnaround efforts at K-12 schools. A snowball sampling method was utilized to identify potential respondents for participation. Snowball, also known as chain referral sampling, is often used for sociological research as it allows for a sample that reflects "natural interactional units" within the focus population (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The focus population is as follows:

- Black; and
- Female; and
- Current or Former Principal of a Turnaround K-12 Campus.

Potential respondents identified were contacted via e-mail and the person who provided the name and contact information, in all but one instance, also reached out to the potential respondent to establish a connection. The interview respondents provided evidence that informed the study around key concepts which include professional learning, perceptions as a leader, and supports. Definitions of words that are commonly used throughout this study are provided in Appendix C. This will support understanding of the context.

Standardized open-ended interviews (Patton, 2010) were conducted to gain insight about perceptions, support, and professional development of and provided to Black female principals leading turnaround efforts. This style of interview was chosen so that all participants were asked the same questions that provide the opportunity to provide open-ended responses. In some instances, the response provided to questions in the interview resulted in follow-up questions that were not a part of the Interview Protocol found in Appendix D. The interview questions were divided into three categories: professional learning, perceptions as a leader, and supports.

Respondents selected their preference of interviewing by phone or interviewing via the Zoom platform. As a part of the interview protocol, subsequent respondents were identified and contacted to participate in the interview. Each participant was

interviewed once for approximately 40 – 60 minutes. The standardized open-ended interviews were recorded and transcribed utilizing Otter.AI if the interview occurred by phone or through the Zoom transcript which is available after the Zoom recording has concluded.   Transcripts were reviewed with the recordings for accuracy. Transcripts and notes taken during the interviews were analyzed to determine emergent themes and findings.

Confidentiality of each participant was agreed upon prior to participation in the interview, therefore each participant was assigned a pseudonym as noted in Appendix A. Descriptors of participant's institutions are noted, so that organizational identifiers are not provided.

Ten potential participants were contacted via e-mail to participate. Of the ten, seven responded and agreed to participate. The final sample study included six Black females who are or were principals of turnaround schools. There were two former principals who now work in the central administration of their respective organizations. One of the two former principals was not a principal in the state of Texas. Participants had an average of 20 years in education; three had more than 20 years. Respondent profile descriptors are as follows:

Leadership & Educator Experience			
Educator Experience (in years)	*Number of Respondents*	*Principal Experience (in years)*	*Number of Respondents*
10 – 15	2	0 – 5	2
16 – 20	1	6 – 10	4
21 – 25	2		
26+	1		

Leadership & Educator Experience			
Turnaround Principal Experience (in years)	*Number of Respondents*	*Type of School*	*Number of Respondents*
0 – 5	4	Public	4
6+	2	Non-Public (Charter, Private, etc.)	2

Two of the six respondents are former principals and now working as members of central administration within the same organization in which they served as principals. Those two respondents work in Charter organizations.

Qualitative data obtained from the administered interviews was reviewed to extrapolate recurring themes that emerged from the interviews around self-efficacy and organizational support. The subsequent recommendations are based on the findings from the data around (a) professional learning; (b) perceptions as a leaders including the perceptions of supervisors, teachers, parents, students, and the greater school community; and (c) supports provided by the organization. Emergent themes align with Bandura's sources of efficacy which include perceived support, models for success through networks and the organization, and coping mechanisms. These themes are related to narratives found in Standpoint Theory which are a product of the intersectionality of the race and gender interactions of the principals.

Findings

The findings represent themes that emerged from the interviews that were conducted and offer the perspective and narrative of Black female leaders in turnaround schools. The intersection of gender and race provide a unique narrative from that of other leaders in turnaround. All the respondents provided how the intersection of their race and gender impacted their leadership, leadership opportunities, and/or perspectives of others as a leader.

GUIDING QUESTION 1: HOW DOES THE GENDER AND RACE OF BLACK FEMALE PRINCIPALS IMPACT THEIR SELF-EFFICACY IN SCHOOL TURNAROUND?

➔ **Finding 1: Principals felt mostly effective in their roles.**

The findings for this question were a product of the respondents' description of themselves as leaders in addition to how they believe they are perceived by others (teachers, students, parents, community, supervisors, etc.). Findings for this guiding question were also informed by respondents rating their effectiveness as turnaround leaders. Respondents provided further insight when asked if there is any other information that they feel is important and would like to provide.

The respondents provided detailed responses when describing themselves as leaders. They were asked to describe themselves as leaders as well as measure their effectiveness as a leader. The effectiveness measure was explored through questions that provided insight on how support and professional development influenced their effectiveness as a principal. All respondents indicated that they were well-grounded and proficient in instructional practice with backgrounds including Literacy & Math Specialists.

<u>Description as a Leader</u>

Leader descriptors along with a narrative of the descriptors were provided by respondents. The narrative provided for a shaping of their roles of leaders in their schools. The descriptors will be grouped based on The Competencies of a Turnaround Leader (Steiner, et. al., 2008). Direct quotes from the interviews are utilized to further narrate the descriptors provided.

Competency	Descriptors Provided
Driving for Results	Clear Vision, Relentless, Goal-Oriented
Influencing for Results	Leads by Example, Advocate, Builds an Inclusive Environment, Fair, Compassionate, Communicator, Collaborative
Problem – Solving	N/A
Showing Confidence to Lead	Firm, Consistent, Strikes a Balance, Reflective, Take Responsibility

Driving for Results: Two of the six respondents explicitly stated or described vision when referring to themselves as leaders. Janet stated, "making sure that the vision that you're marching towards is one that's shared by your team and the people in the work." While Aliyah described vision by stating, "I was clear about where we were going. I was clear about expectations for all stakeholders, from leaders to teachers to kids to parents."

Influencing for Results: Three of the six respondents noted that they strive to lead by example. Janet stated, "I think if you ask people to do it, you should be willing to do it yourself." Sharon expressed the same by saying, "I don't ask them [employees] to do anything that I don't do, haven't done, or won't do." Nicole also noted that she is in the trenches with everybody. I'm not asking anybody to do anything that I won't do."

Participants noted having to advocate for themselves and their campuses when needing resources and/or support. Veronica, for example notes that, "I've had to have those conversations with and provide examples whereas my White counterpart could ask for the same thing in a different manner and requests seem to be granted faster." When speaking about advocacy, Aliyah stated "in order to

advocate for what you need, you need time and space to think about what you need." Time and space were limited with all principals as turnaround leaders due to the need for progress and "quick wins" so that campus goals can be met.

Compassion is another descriptor utilized by the respondents. Keyana stated "I am one who listens and listens intently for passion...I like to bring people around the table as often as possible because as a leader, we become family when we're under fire." Janet believes in "doing right by people and trying to do what I would want someone to do for me in the same situation, whether it's staff or parents or kids."

Showing Confidence to Lead: Two of the six respondents referred to their consistency as leaders. While Sharon shared that she would "get the job done by any means necessary." Janet noted the importance of "striking the balance of being vulnerable, but not being too vulnerable because it can be perceived as weakness." Based on the responses provided, all respondents appeared to have utilized positive and inclusive descriptors to represent themselves as leaders. One principal, Aliyah, even noted that "the biggest thing is that I think a part of being a Black female turnaround leader is that there's this inner strength and resilience that I think I've encountered in my life that I've pulled from. When I think about other Black women who have done turnaround work, it is like a call to a higher purpose in life." One area that was void of descriptors was Problem Solving. Respondents did not report descriptors that were a component of thinking, connections, and solving problems as a leader. In the narrative, it is evident that their approach to turnaround leadership involves growing and progressing their campuses. It was not explicitly stated when asked to describe themselves as leaders.

Effectiveness as a Leader

When respondents were asked to rate their effectiveness as a turnaround leader, on a scale of 1 (one) being least effective to 10 (ten) being most effective, all responses were in the 5 (five) to 8 (eight) range of effectiveness. The approximate effectiveness measure of the group was 7 (seven). All respondents noted that there was no structured support from their organization. The two respondents from Charter schools noted that there was not a lot of structured support from their organizations and their contribution to their effectiveness. Additionally, both Charter respondents noted that they sought out their own professional development that they found extremely beneficial in their development as a leader. They both spoke to support from their immediate supervisor and finding benefit in

the presence and feedback of their supervisor but did not find structured support from the greater organization. The public-school principals spoke about the lack of structured support from their organizations, resulting in no organizational contribution to their effectiveness. One principal specifically noted a school with a White principal being able to participate in an out-of-town professional development opportunity that she had asked to participate in and was told no. Two of the six respondents rated themselves between a 5 (five) and 6 (six) as beginning principals in turnaround work while rating themselves higher now that they are experienced principals. (Principal effectiveness measures along with the associated reasoning is noted in Appendix B.) Further discussion around the level of effectiveness resulted in some of the following responses:

> *"I had done a year-long fellowship with Leverage Leadership. And so, thinking about data-driven instruction, staff culture and student culture, that was probably the best professional development that I had ever in my educational career." – Aliyah*

> *"My first few years, you are just learning the job. You did not know what you were doing. But when I left, I would say, I left at about a five or six but since I've been here [current campus] about eight." – Sharon*

> *"I still have a lot to learn." -   Nicole*

➔ **Finding 2: Principals had coping strategies to support their effectiveness.**

Respondents noted their commitment to their school and communities but revealed the need to seek or rely on outside support to sustain themselves through the challenges of leading a turnaround campus. One principal noted, "as a Black female leader in turnaround, you have got to be spiritually rooted. You're not going to make it without it." There exists a connection between the spirituality and religious convictions of Black women and how they are used to help Black women cope with stress and adverse circumstances to provide a sense of optimism (Loder, 2005; Lomotey, 2019). Another principal noted "towards the end of the year, I fell into almost this place of depression to where I was encouraged to go to therapy and if I needed to leave work early for the appointment, and I started to do that towards the end of the year because it got so bad." All respondents noted an unwavering commitment to the work of improving the campuses that they lead and were transparent about the hard work and effort that was required to improve

academic outcomes in the school. This aligns with Bandura's "Mastery Experiences" and "Reduce Stress Reactions" in the promotion of self-efficacy of leaders. They are persevering through the challenges of turnaround leadership as a Black female while finding ways to remain positive and reduce stress. Black female leaders must ensure the maintenance of their confidence, which can be afflicted by what happens in their workplace (Carter & Peters, 2016).

GUIDING QUESTION 2: HOW DO INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS SUPPORT THE SELF-EFFICACY OF BLACK FEMALE PRINCIPALS IN TURNAROUND WORK?

The findings for this question were a product of the respondents input on professional development that they participated in/received. Respondents were asked to identify professional support that was provided versus sought out. Additionally, organizational supports that were provided such as mentors were also explored with each participant to gain an understanding of the support available and accessible.

➔ **Finding 3: Principals were met with bias within their organizations.**

People possess biases. Organizations employee people with biases. These biases oftentimes show up in the most unassuming ways as recognized by Janet in an interaction with her supervisor. She stated, "if you are a Black female, then you know about tending to kids, culture stuff and getting them disciplined in the right way. There is not as much of a perceived knowledge based around teaching kids how to read or those kind of discrete teaching skills." Veronica also noted the following:

"I do feel like we [Black female principals] have to work harder to prove ourselves first. Whereas, other counterparts, once they are placed in a role, you are automatically granted leniency or the 'we wouldn't have put you in this role if you couldn't handle it.' Whereas, I feel like as a Black woman it's 'we put you in this role because we need somebody a minority over there and you met the qualifications, but you still have to work to prove yourself.'"

Sharon stated that "the expectations are exactly the same because of where I am, but I will tell you that the expectations of what I do are different from the expectations of principals, Black and white and Hispanic in other areas of town." At the beginning of Keyana's quest to principalship, she stated "so much of the work, the planning, the innovation piece was the women. Even when it came to managing difficult students who became violent, a lot of time, it was the women who got them under control. It's funny because the face [of the school] had to be a tall, Black man."

➔ **Finding 4: Principals had autonomy in leadership and decision-making.**

Principals who were in their first or second year of leadership noted limited autonomy. They noted established plans that they had to follow. Experienced principals had more autonomy and noted that they had "proven" themselves as leaders. Sharon stated, "we have autonomy within boundaries." When speaking of autonomy, Nicole noted that "it is limited. With certain things, there is no autonomy and then for other things, I'm able to have autonomy as long as I'm meeting those goals that have been established." Keyana viewed autonomy as the greatest support for her as a turnaround leader. Veronica stated, "If you asked me could I have the same amount of freedom and autonomy four years ago, absolutely not. In my first year or two, it was very scripted. The last three years that has definitely changed. I am left alone to do my own thing." Respondents referred to their immediate supervisor as the authority over their autonomy.

➔ **Finding 5: Principals desired support greater than what was provided.**

All principals spoke of support received from an immediate supervisor. They also spoke of support from their organization. Principals noted that they received feedback and support from their immediate supervisors which was beneficial to them as a leader and supporting their efforts to progress their campuses. When speaking of the greater organization, principals did not find the same level of support from the organization but acknowledged that most of what was asked for was provided.

When asked about effectiveness as a product of support, Janet replied, "to be honest, I think there's probably not a whole lot of length there." She found the most useful feedback in conversations with parents and students from her campus,

stating that "the parents and the kids kind of bring you back to reality and help you think about the larger picture." Veronica noted the great support that she received from her supervisor. She noted, "I would say 1000% the support that she offered, the leadership she has granted me has grown me as a leader. The support I received from her has allowed me to do the work that I do, but that's like one person." While principals also sought more support from their organizations, they also were aware of leaders who received support in ways that they had not. For example, Aliyah recalled a conversation with a fellow Black female principal. She stated, "I was on a call with another Black female school leader and she was really upset with what was being asked of her in transitioning her successor, who was a white woman. She was like 'why wasn't this structure setup for me.'"

Another area of support that was desired is mentorship and a network of turnaround leaders. Skills and knowledge required for success in principalship can be gained over time through roles that prepare for principalship such Assistant Principal coupled with mentoring and a good preparation program (Echols, 2006). One principal stated that she will be participating in a mentorship partnership with an external organization. Janet noted that "some type of formalized mentorship or network of people to lean on would have been helpful. I think that having a network of other women would have been really, really important to have a support structure and share ideas before taking it back to my supervisor." Keyana stated, "I think upper leadership has so many responsibilities that if they would just stop and bring us together and get to know us. Just let us all unpack a problem together. We're the ones who implement it. If you would stop and just recognize that the answer is probably in the room. There are people who have such a wealth of knowledge and experience." Professional learning communities (networks) are essential for effective leadership and must be fostered by the organization for continual growth and learning (Fullan, 2002). It is also important for "underrepresented leaders to surround themselves not only with a supportive network but also coaches and advocates who they can trust and who will help them navigate turbulent times" (Thomas, 2019, pg. 1).

➔ **Finding 6: Principals felt that professional development from organizations was not sufficient for leader growth and scope of work.**

All principals stated that they sought their own professional development grow. Three of the six principals noted instances in which the organization funded the

professional development. Two principals spoke to opportunities that either were not provided at all or provided to other leaders and not to them. "What saddens me most is that a lot of other Black women that I meet in education who want to move into higher roles don't have access to training. I think some type of development program [would be most beneficial]. The development program that I went through was awesome, but it was ran by all white women. I think there were some limitations there about just relating that would be great for Black women to have access to. Courses that support a new principal in navigating challenges and dealing with different frames of a problem are things that I found to be most challenging." – Janet

Veronica noted that, "we have to fight for everything we want, everything we do to continuously improve ourselves." When speaking of her institution, Janet stated, "we're not yet doing that great of a job of developing. We can do good to sustain folks. We don't do the job of helping build them up and give them that development when they're with us."

➔ **Finding 7: Perceived bias exists with Black female principals.**

Principals noted instances in which their immediate supervisors did not offer support that may have been granted to another principal who was white and/or not female. Veronica stated the following:

"I think they [supervisors and the organization] need to be aware of and admit the fact that female voices are not always heard and there need to be a system of self-checking or gut-checking the system and supervisors. Pay attention to how we respond when our Black female leaders make requests or comments. How are we receiving what they say in comparison to other people? I think it has to start there. People have to understand and really admit that there are differences. If they're not willing to admit that there is a difference between a Black female leader and how we are treated compared to another counterpart, whether they're Black, white Hispanic, male or female; there's a huge difference between how we come into the system being treated and perceived. Until people are able to admit that, I feel like we're going to constantly be stuck in that system of working to prove ourselves feeling like that old adage of you got to work 10 times harder to show them that you can, and it shouldn't be like that."

Keyana also noted, "I have to be careful about now being the angry Black woman. I don't want to be that principal that's one step away from them ousting me."

Black females are scrutinized and criticized because of the way they communicate and lead when they speak up and assert themselves as leaders (Carter & Peters, 2016). This was also seen in the opportunities provided as leaders. Respondents felt as though the intersection of race and gender excluded them for consideration to be leaders of other schools in the organization, which is discussed more in detail later in this paper.

➔ **Finding 8: Principals desire supports not currently offered by their organizations.**

All principals noted the need for a supervisor or mentor that has lead turnaround work. They expressed that the level and intensity of work required for a turnaround school is not understood by those who have no experience in a turnaround environment. The feedback does not always align with the needs of a turnaround campus. Veronica notes that, "it can't be cookie cutter for what you do for our turnaround campus compared to another campus. You cannot offer the same resources and expect to get the same results." Principals also note the need for "voice" in their organization. Respondents provided that there are opportunities, resources, professional development that they deem as beneficial to their school and employees that may not be provided. The greatest supports mentioned by all respondents was time and human capital. One principal noted that when she became the principal of a non-turnaround school that she had too many teachers for the number of students at her school. The organization did an audit and told her she had too many teachers. She thought she was going to lose the overage of teachers but did not. She had a similar situation at the turnaround campus that she led, and the overage of teachers were removed from her campus.

➔ **Finding 9: Black female principals believe that they are not selected for schools that are either not turnaround or have a diverse demographic due to the intersection of their gender and race.**

All principals stated that they do not believe that they would have the opportunity to lead campuses that are not in turnaround. The reasons varied by principal. Janet noted, "our turnaround schools are run by Black leaders. I would say the majority by Black female leaders." Veronica remarked, "because of the success I've had at my current campus, I feel like I will be boxed in and always placed at a school that looks like my campus." Keyana also noted, "if my school were anywhere else in the school district, I would not be the principal of it. I know it." Black female principals are disproportionately assigned to struggling schools with challenges

such as lack of resources and systems without adequate support (Peters, 2012; Weiner, Cyr, & Burton, 2019). Respondents expressed that they worked hard in comparison to other colleagues and would like to have the same consideration when leadership is sought for other campuses within their organizations.

Discussion

➜ **Takeaway 1: Providing "voice" to Black female leaders in turnaround will result in organizations understanding where gaps in support exist.**

When asked if you could have anything from your organization what would it be, Sharon stated "the freedom to speak. You know your truth and what you are truly experiencing. I am saying this because I have not always had the right to speak your truth and to speak without being judged, labeled, or criticized. You have people who are afraid to say because they will think I am stupid and think I should have already known that. It really stifles and hinders the work because you have people that may want to say, but don't want to." Nicole shared the sentiment by stating "depending on who's in the room, when we speak up and advocate and we're relentless, we're seen as being aggressive and not passionate about making sure our kids are okay." Respondents provided that organizations should listen to their leaders so that they have a better understanding of the needs and resources that would be most impactful in turnaround schools. Turnaround schools comprise approximately 13% of the five largest school districts in Texas. Organizations make decisions based on the majority which may not benefit the turnaround campuses. It is important to utilize "voice" through focus groups, feedback, surveys to inform decision making coupled with other data points.

➜ **Takeaway 2: Not all leaders and schools are equal.**

The needs of leaders vary. The needs of schools, including turnaround schools, vary. Differentiation is essential in meeting the needs of all leaders and schools. Principals noted the professional development and support provided, in many cases, was the same for all schools within the organization although the needs of the schools were different. Keyana noted, "I am two minutes down the road from the school I spent the last four years in if I didn't have 10 walkthroughs a week, I'd almost be written up...now, I get sent the 'best teachers with master's degrees. They say, 'you might want to check this teacher out.' I mean I do. No one ever called me at my other school." Most respondents who had experience leading turnaround and non-turnaround schools noted the disparities in support from the organization between school types. There was also variation in the expectations from their supervisor.

➜ **Takeaway 3: A source of building self-efficacy are the students, parents, and community that are served by the leaders.**

Respondents noted that parents and students often offered the best feedback. At times, the feedback was directed as criticism. Leaders listened more intently and developed relationships with stakeholders. Aliyah even noted a community faith leader showing her around the community to point out circumstances driving behaviors on her campus. This prompted her to advocate for greater wraparound support from her organization that included staff riding school buses with students before and after school. Principals also based their effectiveness on student data, student/parent feedback and interactions, student progress and discipline/safety indicators on the campus.

➜ **Takeaway 4: Relationships and understanding leaders' strengths, weaknesses, goals, and aspirations are important.**

Principals expressed that they were confined to leadership in a school with a certain demographic or type. They did not perceive that support existed for growth and opportunities within the organization. One principal noted that a fellow principal had sought growth opportunities within the organization and eventually left and went to another district because she felt "capped." There is a need for organizations to develop pipelines or networks to support the goals of leaders within their organizations. Black women must work harder than their counterparts to prove themselves and are "often excluded from informal social networks" (Carter & Peters, 2016). They are often overlooked and not considered for opportunities within the organization if hiring authorities are not aware of their work or capabilities. It is important to get to know the Black women who lead in organizations to provide opportunities and consideration to their growth and self-efficacy.

Theory of Change -
*Equity in Support
of Black Female
Principals Leading
Turnaround
Campuses*

IF the organization provides research-based support practices that promote greater self-efficacy for all principals who lead turnaround schools through professional development and networks within the organization,

"It is important for us to identify successful school environments that have experienced change and transformation and learn about the impact those in leadership positions have had on those environments, how them came to be leaders in these schools, and how they make sense of their roles." (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015)

"Principals, especially, African American women in urban schools, maintain that very little support exists as they embark on the challenges of being a principal post-NCLB." (Grant, 2014)

THEN Black female principals in turnaround schools will be able to work toward expected outcomes with a greater array of tools and support from the organization.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Create/establish a network of turnaround principals in which principals not only are able to learn from each other in the turnaround space and work but can also develop effective working relationships. This will allow principals and supervisors to better learn about each other resulting in a different source and level of support.

"Districts can design support structures to develop and evaluate the principals' efficacy with principals engaging in an analysis of their actions and with deliberate and focused support, potentially increasing their effectiveness in raising the achievement level of all students" (Copeland & Neeley, 2013, pg. 8). This support provides principals in turnaround work, especially Black female principals, a network that includes other individuals engaged in the same work and may be experiencing the same bias based on gender and race. The purpose is to learn from, develop and strengthen a collaborative relationship with other principals engaged in turnaround work. This network provides an opportunity for leaders to learn each other's strengths and passions while debunking stereotypes and myths that may exist within the organization. The network also allows the sharing of ideas and effective practices that may emerge in turnaround work that may not be readily accessible outside of the network (Carter & Peters, 2016).

Recommendation 2: Develop relationships and mentorships that focus on strengths and motivations of the Black female principal within the established turnaround network.

Mentorship and training are important to the development of leadership skills needed for principals to be effective in their practice (Echols, 2006). An approach that could be utilized to develop relationships is through a mentorship program where Black female principals who have had success in school turnaround serve as a resource to Black female principals who are new to turnaround efforts. There
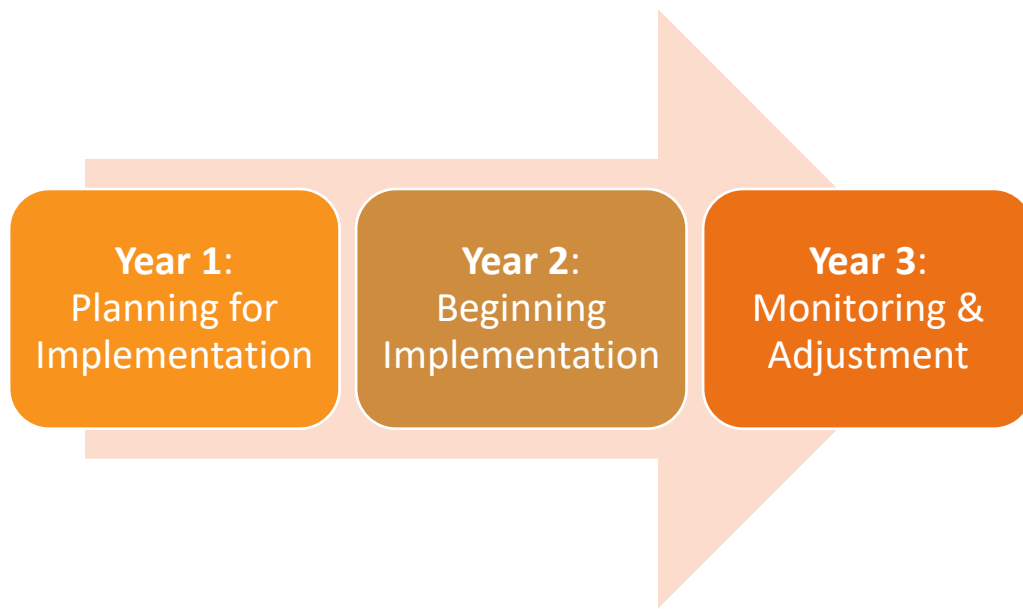
may be positive impact on leadership practices and organizational outcomes if there is an increase in mentorship connections between experienced and less experienced Black female principals (Reed, 2012). This connection could foster creativity and relationships between turnaround leaders leading to greater support. "One of the most effective ways to prepare and support principals in their careers is to provide a mentoring program with mentoring characterized as an active, engaged, and intentional relationship between two individuals based on a mutual understanding to serve primarily the professional needs of the protégé" (Echols, 2006, pg. 4). The mentor/mentee (protégé) relationship will foster an important connection and mutual understanding of the scope and intensity of a turnaround approach. Additionally, the race and gender similarity can lend itself to support and guidance around matters that may be unique to a Black female leader. The principal role is often viewed as isolated so when combined with intersectionality, it leads to further isolation for Black female principals (Reed, 2012). The mentor/mentee relationship will foster the sharing of ideas, feedback and supports for the principal. Black women are often lacking feedback, "whereas viable and important feedback is given to others, Black women are not afforded that luxury, thus failing to get enough strategic feedback about how they are doing" (Carter & Peters, 2016, pg. 127). There exists a link for Black principals between mentoring, self-efficacy, and spiritual belonging (Echols, 2006). Hence, mentorship supports coping which was seen in respondents and noted as an indication of high self-efficacy amongst the respondents.

Recommendation 3: Create leadership development opportunities specifically for turnaround campus efforts.

Most organizations have leadership development by way of professional development and learning cohorts and/or programs for leaders aspiring to become principals. This same effort should be put forth to ensure if/when a district or campus enters turnaround status that there exists a group of trained administrators within the district who have had competencies developed to successfully lead the effort. Capacity building must become a core feature of all improvement strategies, focusing explicitly on sustainability (Fullan, 2005).

Recommendation 4: Provide training for campus and central administration in equity and bias so that interactions are more intentional. This will aid in developing relationships that focus on strengths and motivations of the Black female principal. The training will also guide the organization on awareness of systems and practices that may perpetuate bias within the organization.

<u>Proposed Timeline</u>

Year 1:
Planning for Implementation

Year 2:
Beginning Implementation

Year 3:
Monitoring & Adjustment

Year 1: The first year will begin in August 2020 and will consist of a planning year where the organization can either determine how funds will be allocated to fund an equity and bias training for the designated administrators or the organization can employ a train the trainer model where individuals within the organization are trained to deliver training to central and campus administration. Funds will need to be identified and allocated for a train the trainer model as well but will not be as costly as an external entity training all the designated administrators within the organization. Year 1 will also be a Planning for Implementation year to determine areas where lack of equity and bias exist within the organization. The planning year should consist of surveys of the organization's stakeholders which will provide the organization with insight on perceptions of the stakeholders when it comes to equity and bias. This way the training can be tailored to the needs of the organization as it seeks to promote equity and reduce bias across the organization. Surveys will be provided within the organization in January 2021. If the

organization has a research and accountability department, this department can support data acquisition and analysis.

Year 2: The organization will set short, mid, and long-term goals based on the priorities as noted from the survey and data (including demographics of leaders by school type, accountability, etc.) A progress monitoring protocol will be established. Training will begin in July - August 2021 with the beginning of implementation for equity and bias practices. The Turnaround Leader Network will be established with current and former turnaround leaders within the organization. A monthly schedule of professional learning opportunities will be provided to support the needs of leaders in turnaround campuses.   Opportunities to develop working relationships within the network will exist so that leaders support and idea sharing can naturally evolve and exist outside of the established network.

Year 3: Monitoring and adjustment of equity and bias practices and the Turnaround Leader Network will occur to determine impact of implementation on accountability outcomes and leader self-efficacy. Conduct another survey to gauge impact of training within the organization. Identify Black female turnaround leaders from the established network to serve as mentors to Black female leaders who are new to turnaround and/or to aspiring Black female leaders within the organization.

Conclusion

Black female principals have high self-efficacy as demonstrated by the narratives provided by the respondents. Development and support of the self-efficacy of Black female turnaround leaders is essential as noted in the context and discussions of this report. Leaders need to be supported to be most effective (Peters, 2012). The development should support the needs of the leaders and the schools that they lead. "Diversity leadership researchers, cognizant of the embeddedness of race, gender, power, and culture in leadership processes are more likely to shift focus from outcome variables of leadership performance to process variables of leadership emergence, selection, and development that can reveal biases and help design systems and mechanisms for developing diversity leaders" (Chen & Velsor, 1996, pg. 294). Biases within organizations must be addressed so that there is equitable support of principals and the schools that they lead. Organizations need to invest in tiered learning and support. This would better meet the needs of campuses and leaders at varying levels within the organization. The increased, targeted support will lead to greater self-efficacy of leaders. The behavior of principals is influenced by their internal beliefs which are shaped by the environment in which they work (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2004). The role of the organization in promoting the self-efficacy of principals is crucial in ensuring success in the principal's leadership and shaping the outcome of the schools within the organization.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include:

- Study Sample
- Examination of Perception
- Positionality
- COVID-19.

Study Sample

A snowball sampling method was utilized. Six respondents were interviewed as a part of this study. All respondents were Black and female. Although the input and feedback were filled with valuable insight, the respondents represent less than 1% of the Black principals identified by the TEA PEIMS data for the 2018-2019 school year. Additionally, the snowball sampling method taps into existing networks as participants are solely identified through other participants. The researcher relinquishes a considerable amount of control over the sampling phase to the informants (Noy, 2008). Four of the six respondents worked at turnaround campuses in the same organization. This perspective limited a broader sampling from various organizations which may have provided a greater variation in viewpoints and responses. The sample did not include participants who were not Black and female. This would have allowed the contrast of qualitative data to determine if self-efficacy in Black female turnaround leaders was different from those of non-Black and female turnaround leaders, moreover further exploring any variations that may exist in organizational support for leaders from contrasting backgrounds.

Examination of Perception

The respondents were asked to provide their perception of how others perceived them. The interview protocol included questions that explored how respondents felt they were perceived by:

- Their supervisor
- Parents
- Students
- Teachers

- Peers (other Principals)
- The community.

This may not accurately represent actual perceptions of those stakeholders. Observations of the principals in their campus environment coupled with standardized open-ended interviews of a sample of stakeholders would have provided a better representation and data on the perceptions of others.

Positionality

The similarities of my professional background to those of the participants impacted the questions that were asked and how the qualitative data was interpreted. Data analysis and review was based on the narratives and responses provided by the respondents. Personal viewpoint and bias were not included in the analysis.

COVID-19

The study proposal included observations of the participants in this study. Schools began operating remotely in March 2020, prior to IRB approval of this study. This limited the scope of this study to only interviews of participants. Observations of the participants in the school environment would have provided an additional data point for data triangulation.

Future Research Opportunities

1. In the state of our society's current race relations, not one respondent spoke to the impact of current events (COVID-19, racial injustices, etc.) on their responses. Questions were not asked around these topics either, but they did not come up in conversation. The impact of current events on organizational support will alter the way support is provided as well as expectations of the organization. Although this is a unique circumstance, the resulting impact on leadership practices within turnaround schools and the greater organizations should be considered. The response of organizations could shape leadership development for the potential of future disruption to organization.

2. Matching leadership to demographics of campuses versus selecting the best fit for the campus is another area of consideration and exploration. Respondents spoke to male principals being favored for positions because persons of influence within the organization such as board members. Respondents also stated that they did not feel that they would be selected to lead schools that were not struggling or did not have large minority populations. They believed that they are limited to certain school profiles for campus leadership. One principal noted her placement at a specialty school in her district. There was another specialty campus in the same district whose program was a match with her degree and background but feels that she was not placed at the campus because it was a majority white campus. She was placed at the specialty campus that was majority African American.

3. Organizational support of charter organizations in successful turnaround. One of the two principals from charter organizations spoke to her work in bringing her campus in line with the systems and framework of the organization which was a vital component in successfully leading the turnaround work on her campus. The principals who lead turnaround efforts in charter organizations noted a centralized structure that was prescribed by the organization.

4. Sustainability in turnaround work. Principals spoke to the goal of achieving "short, quick wins" to meet accountability goals for the campus. Exploring capacity building in turnaround schools with the administrative team and other potential leaders on the campus. In many of the interviews, the respondents worked as assistant principals at turnaround campuses, but were selected to lead different campuses. There were instances where the principal position was vacant at the campus in which they were an assistant principal. Exploration of the benefits of sustainability in continuing the progress of turnaround campuses if progress was made with the leadership team. The recommendation of an established turnaround network serving as a training pipeline for turnaround leadership in the organization. The goal is for campuses to exit turnaround status. Creating leadership sustainability could lead to continued progress of campuses that have exit turnaround status.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Information

Pseudonym	Current Position	Educator Yrs. Experience	Principal Yrs. Experience	Turnaround Principal Yrs. Experience	School Level	School Type
Keyana	Principal	22	3	2	ES, MS & HS	Public
Janet	Principal Supervisor	11	3	3	MS	Charter
Veronica	Principal	19	7	7	ES	Public
Aliyah	Principal Supervisor	13	6	2	MS	Charter
Sharon	Principal	30	14	3	ES & MS	Public
Nicole	Principal	22	2	2	ES	Public

Note. HS = High school predominantly serving grades 9 – 12; MS = Middle school predominantly serving grades 6 – 8; ES = Elementary school predominantly serving grades K – 5

Appendix B: Participant Effectiveness Matrix

Pseudonym	Measure of Effectiveness (Scale – 1: Least Effective to 10: Most Effective)	Key Quote
Keyana	6 or 7 ("immediate effect"), 5 or 6 ("sustained effect")	"We saw tremendous turnaround. We dipped one year because we didn't monitor the system. You've got to monitor the whole system. Somebody else might say 10."
Janet	6	"We did a great job. We moved the scores, reduced suspensions and had alternatives in place...I think that the constraints of turnaround and the pressure leads you to go for those short-term wins."
Veronica	8 or 9	N/A
Aliyah	7	"I was effective in executing a vision, getting folks on board, responding to me proactively, addressing some gaps based off of my listening tour where I wasn't effective...It feels like you have a straw to sip from a fire hydrant bursting with water, but only thing that you can take in, as far as water, is what goes through that straw."
Sharon	8 (5 or 6 in first years as turnaround principal)	"I don't want to say that I'm that close to perfect because I am not. I'm learning every single day."
Nicole	7	"I'm hard on myself. I will say that I'm somewhat effective. I still have a lot to learn."

Appendix C: Definitions

1. **Charter:** According to the Texas Education Agency, a public school that operates via a contract with an authorizer such as local school district authorizers or the state authorizing office. The Texas Charter Authorizing Office oversees the state's charter portfolio.

2. **Self-Efficacy:** a person's belief that they can be successful when carrying out a particular task (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus).

3. **TEA (Texas Education Agency):** the agency oversees public education in the state of Texas and is governed by federal and state education laws.

4. **Turnaround School**: A school that has exhibited a pattern of low student achievement and must be improved dramatically. Low student achievement, typically in the areas of mathematics and reading, have led the school to be labeled as Improvement Required. (Copeland & Neeley, 2013)

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

What is the extent of support provided to Black and female principals engaged in turnaround work in K-12 settings? More specifically, are there opportunities provided or extended to Black and female principals to ensure their success, as related to state accountability requirements?

Conceptual frameworks: self-awareness; professional learning; support (from an individual or group/entity)

Professional Background

- How long have you been an educator? What positions have you held and how long were you in those positions?
- How long have you been a principal?
- Why did you decide to become a principal?

Current School/Position

- How long have you been the principal of your current school?
- Were you a principal at another school prior to leading your current school? If so, was your prior school a turnaround campus?
- How would you describe your experience as a principal thus far?
- Why did you choose to become the principal of a turnaround campus (campus in need of improvement)?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?

Professional Learning

- What type of leadership development activities or programs have you participated in since becoming a principal?
- How have those leadership development activities or programs prepared you for your role as a principal?
- What type of leadership development activities or programs since becoming a principal that has been targeted to the needs of a leader of a turnaround campus?

- How have those leadership development activities or programs prepared you for your role as a principal of a turnaround campus?
- What type of opportunities within your organization to engage in professional development opportunities that are targeted to the needs of a leader of a turnaround campus?
- Are there opportunities outside of your organization to engage in professional development opportunities that are targeted to the needs of a leader of a turnaround campus?
- In thinking about the professional development opportunities that you have experienced, to what extent are they provided to you or to what extent do you seek them out?
- Do you have a mentor or supervisor who provides additional support to you as a turnaround leader? If so, what does that support entail?
- (Ask if principal has been a principal of a campus that was not a turnaround campus.) How would you compare the support received as a principal at a campus that was not in turnaround status versus a turnaround campus?
- If you could have all the support that you needed to be effective as a turnaround leader, what would that support entail?
- How do you think the professional development in which you engage is shaped by the fact that you are a female principal?
- How do you think the professional development in which you engage is shaped by the fact that you are a Black principal?

Perceptions as a Leader

- Why do you think parents select your current school? What are some specific elements that attract parents to your current school?
- What do you think parents expect of you as the school leader? In what ways do you believe those expectations are shaped by you being a Black female principal?
- Why do you think teachers select to work at your current school? What are some specific elements that attract teachers to your current school?
- What do you think teachers expect of you as the school leader? In what ways do you believe those expectations are shaped by you being a Black female principal?
- What does your immediate supervisor expect from you at your current school?

- Do you believe that your supervisor would have different expectations of you if you were not a Black female principal? Explain.
- What is the degree of "freedom" or "autonomy" provided to you as a leader of a turnaround school by your organization?
- How do you think the autonomy you experience is shaped by the fact that you are a Black female principal?
- On a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being least effective and 10 being most effective, how effective do you think that you are as a turnaround principal?
- To what extent is the measure of your effectiveness a product of your professional development as a turnaround principal?
- To what extent is the measure of your effectiveness a product of support that you have received as a turnaround principal?
- Is the measure of your effectiveness based on feedback from peers? Teachers? Parents? Students? Community? Supervisor?

Supports

- As a Black female turnaround leader, what supports do you believe would be most beneficial in your role?
- How do those supports differ from being a Black female principal in a school that is not in turnaround status?
- As a Black female turnaround leader, what professional development do you believe would be most beneficial in your role?
- How does that professional development differ from professional development provided to a leader who does not lead a turnaround campus?

Closing

- Is there anything that I haven't asked you about that you think is important?
- Do you know a Black female leader in turnaround who may be willing to be interviewed? If yes, do you mind connecting us?

Thank you for your time! truly appreciate your participation.

Appendix E: Request to Interview – Initial Contact

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening [POTENTIAL RESPONDENT],

My name is Opal Harrison and I am a doctoral student at Vanderbilt University. My capstone project is on Self-Efficacy of Black Female Principals in turnaround work. It includes perceptions and support of Black female leaders who lead or have lead turnaround campuses. I was provided your name and email as a leader that I could potentially interview for this project. If you agree, I would love to speak with you at a time that is convenient for you. Please be assured that my research plan has been evaluated and approved by Vanderbilt's Institutional Research Board, a group charged with protecting those who agree to participate in research at Vanderbilt. We take such protections of privacy and confidentiality very seriously.

The interview would take about 30-45 minutes and can take place by phone or via a Zoom call, whichever is your preference. I look forward to hearing from you.

With Gratitude,

Opal Harrison, M.S.
Doctoral Candidate, Vanderbilt University
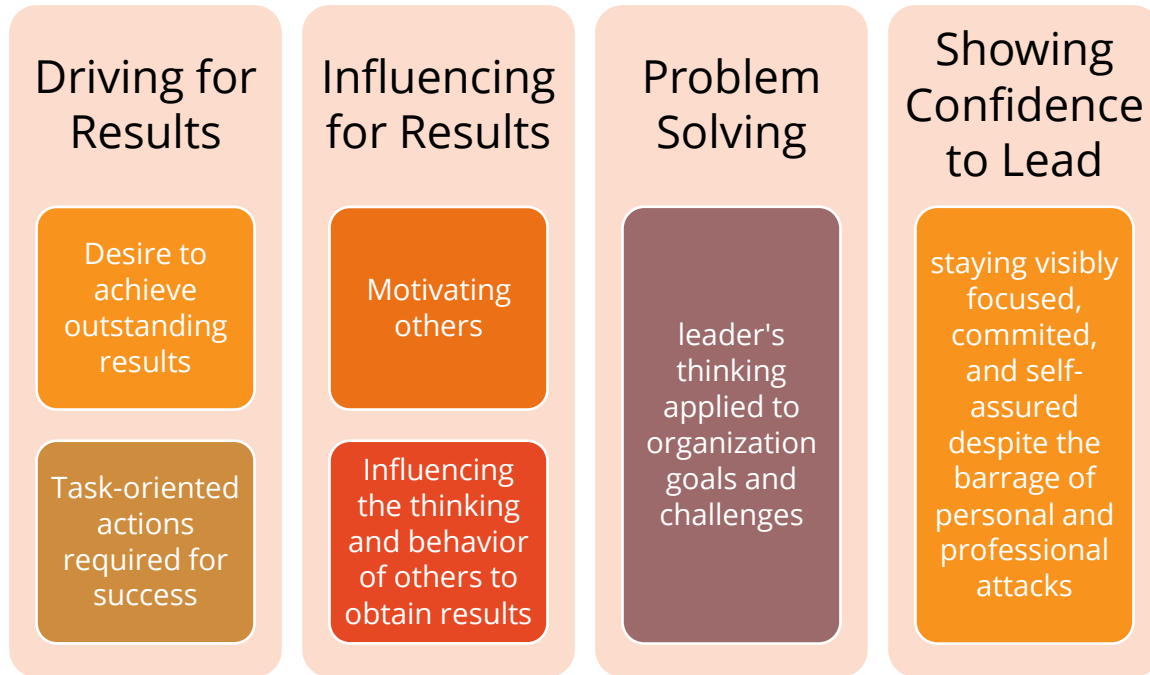Peabody College of Education

Appendix F: Campus Turnaround Data - Texas

Year	Number	Percent (%)
2015	603	7.0
2016	445	5.1
2017	358	4.1
2018	339	3.9
2019	412	**

Source: 2016 & 2018 Biennial Reports on Texas Public Schools Retrieved from: https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-performance/accountability-research/comprehensive-report-on-texas-public-schools

**2019 Number was retrieved from https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/accountability/academic-accountability/performance-reporting/2019-accountability-rating-system. It is the raw data and not an accountability report.

Appendix G: School Turnaround Leader Competencies

Driving for Results	Influencing for Results	Problem Solving	Showing Confidence to Lead
Desire to achieve outstanding results	Motivating others	leader's thinking applied to organization goals and challenges	staying visibly focused, commited, and self-assured despite the barrage of personal and professional attacks
Task-oriented actions required for success	Influencing the thinking and behavior of others to obtain results		

Source: School Turnaround Leaders: Competencies for Success Retrieved from:
http://www.publicimpact.com/publications/Turnaround_Leader_Competencies.pdf