Breaking Barriers, Claiming Space: A Counterstory of Black Women's Leadership in P-12 School Technology

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic led to an extraordinary increase in the use of digital technology across P-12 schools. This situation required school leaders to adapt to educational technologies that quickly supported remote learning. Technology support roles were needed more than ever before. Although they remain an essential part of P-12 school systems, technology leadership positions are mostly held by White men. The representation of Black women in educational technology within P-12 school districts in the United States is notably lacking, a disparity that also extends to the literature. In particular, the voices of Black women in technology leadership positions remain largely unheard. This imbalance has disproportionately allowed the experiences and viewpoints of White men to influence the academic discourse. By highlighting the experiences of Black women in technology leadership roles within P-12 public school districts, this study aims to shed light on how their distinct identities influence their professional experiences. This contribution is important, offering a fresh and necessary perspective to the existing body of literature. Utilizing Critical Race Theory as a framework and Critical Race Methodology, this research probes the social and professional voyages of Black women serving as technology leaders, aiming to enrich our understanding with their unique insights and experiences.

Keywords: CRT, Black Women, Counterstory, Technology, Intersectionality, Covid-19 pandemic, Critical Race Methodology

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to every Black and Brown girl who dares to dream beyond the limits placed before her, who refuses to shrink in the face of doubt, and who boldly steps into spaces where she was never meant to belong, but belongs, nonetheless. May you rise, may you lead, and may you know that your vision, your brilliance, and your presence are not just necessary, they are unstoppable. As best put by Nelson Mandela, “It always seems impossible, until it’s done” (n.d.).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered an unprecedented surge in the adoption of digital technology within P-12 schools, forcing district administrators to swiftly adapt to support distance learning and maintain academic progress for students (Pozo et al., 2021). School technology leaders who had not prioritized allocating funds for a 1:1 electronic device program found themselves at a significant disadvantage. To address the sudden shift to remote teaching, schools rapidly embraced new technologies such as Chromebooks, G-Suite applications, and webcams (Hodges et al., 2020), challenging traditional educational structures and increasing the demand for faculty and staff with technical expertise (Bacak et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2022).

Many teachers grappled with digital tools for the first time during the crisis, causing a critical need for educators to receive comprehensive guidance and ongoing training on educational technology software (Bacak et al., 2023; Pozo et al., 2021). The expanding role of technology in education emphasized the significant need for technology leaders in schools. Not only did educators require support for integrating technology into their teaching practices, but non-instructional staff also needed tools for virtual collaboration and secure access to school resources from off-campus locations.

Furthermore, the array of devices such as Chromebooks, smartboards, and webcams necessitated proficient handling. The responsibilities associated with technology roles in educational settings extended across a wide spectrum, including enhancing learning through digital means, managing the IT infrastructure, and resolving technical issues (Jaafar & Pedersen, 2021).

According to Bacak et al. (2023), school technology encompasses educational, management, networking, and security technologies, each contributing to the seamless operation of the school environment. This diverse technological landscape highlights the indispensable role of technology leaders, who ensure the effective planning, oversight, and coordination of technology to address the evolving demands of contemporary education.

The Impact of Black Women's Underrepresentation in EdTech

As implied by Cornel West (1993) and still holds, the imperative to address the crisis in Black leadership demands candid acknowledgment of its existence. Despite growing attention to U.S. school reform efforts, Black women administrators continue to face significant underrepresentation in public schools (Jang & Alexander, 2022; Johnson, 2021), particularly in technology leadership. Acknowledging the issue of Black leadership in the United States in public schools paves the way for discussions aimed at improvement.

The marginalization of Black women in educational technology is a multifaceted issue that traces its roots to systemic barriers in both education and technology sectors. Despite the growing emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education and the increasing integration of technology in educational settings, Black women remain significantly underrepresented (Allen et al., 2022; Davis, 2015; Espinosa, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2021). This disparity not only reflects the overarching societal issues of racial and gender inequality but also highlights specific challenges within educational systems, such as limited access to quality STEM education in underserved communities, implicit biases in hiring practices, and a lack of visible role

models and mentors for Black women and girls.

The impact of this underrepresentation extends beyond the individuals directly affected; it has wider implications for the development and implementation of educational technology in P-12 schools. Educational technologies often encompass tools, platforms, and methodologies that facilitate learning and improve educational outcomes (Bacak et al., 2023; Pozo et al., 2021). When these technologies are designed and implemented without the input of a diverse group of educators, including Black women, there is a missed opportunity to address the unique needs and perspectives of a significant portion of the student population. This lack of diversity may lead to the development of educational content and tools that fail to resonate with or effectively support the learning of all students, particularly those from underrepresented and marginalized communities, which reinforces and supports deficit thinking and practices (Martínez, 2016; Valencia, 2010).

Addressing the lack of Black women in educational technology requires concentrated efforts across multiple fronts. Initiatives focused on increasing access to quality STEM education in Black communities, mentorship programs that connect Black girls with professionals in the field, and efforts to combat systemic biases in hiring and promotion practices within the education system are crucial. Furthermore, creating more inclusive and supportive environments within educational technology spaces can encourage the participation and advancement of Black women in this field. By tackling these issues head-on, there is potential not only to diversify the field of educational technology but also to enrich the educational experiences of P-12 students by ensuring that educational tools and resources reflect a wider array of perspectives and experiences.

Problem Statement

The demand for educational technology support roles in P-12 public school districts has surged across the United States, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Pozo et al., 2021). Despite this growing need, Black women remain severely underrepresented in technology leadership positions, a disparity that reflects broader systemic inequities in educational leadership (Jang & Alexander, 2022). While White men continue to dominate these roles, Black women face significant barriers to entry and advancement, limiting their influence in shaping technology initiatives that impact diverse student populations. This underrepresentation not only highlights persistent racial and gender inequities but also raises concerns about the lack of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes that shape educational technology policies and practices.

The lack of Black women in technology leadership positions within P-12 school systems presents a multifaceted issue with far-reaching implications for equity, leadership, and student outcomes (Alston, 2012; Carbado et al., 2013; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Jang & Alexander, 2022; Milner & Howard, 2004). As technology becomes increasingly central to education, the absence of Black women in technology leadership positions means their perspectives and expertise are often overlooked in critical discussions about digital access, implementation, and innovation. This lack of representation not only reinforces systemic barriers but also limits the presence of role models for aspiring Black women leaders in technology, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion (Allen et al., 2022; Espinosa, 2011). Without intentional efforts to address these disparities, the decision-making processes governing educational technology risk being shaped by a narrow and homogenous leadership demographic, potentially overlooking the unique challenges and

needs of diverse student and educator populations (Jang & Alexander, 2022; McCray et al., 2002; Milner & Howard, 2004).

The consequences of this underrepresentation extend beyond leadership demographics. When Black women's perspectives are absent from research and literature on educational technology, prevailing narratives remain dominated by perspectives that do not fully capture the diverse realities of schools and students. This exclusion reinforces biases in policy and practice, limiting the development of equitable and inclusive educational technology frameworks. Moreover, the lack of Black women's voices in academic and professional discourse diminishes their visibility as thought leaders, further marginalizing their contributions to the field. Addressing these gaps requires not only increasing representation in leadership roles but also amplifying Black women's experiences and insights into the discourse on educational technology.

Black women in P-12 technology leadership navigate unique challenges shaped by intersecting systems of sexism, racism, and classism (Evans-Winters, 2019). Despite their expertise and qualifications, they often encounter systemic barriers that hinder their career advancement and limit their ability to influence key educational technology decisions (Davis, 2015). These structural obstacles contribute to the continued marginalization of their voices, emphasizing a leadership landscape that remains predominantly shaped by White men. To foster a more equitable and inclusive field, it is critical to intentionally examine the experiences of Black women in educational technology leadership and implement targeted strategies to support their representation, leadership development, and influence.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, Critical Race Theory (CRT) served as a framework for analyzing the intersections of race, class, and gender. By applying CRT, the research explored the unique experiences of Black women in technology leadership, highlighting how these factors shape their professional experiences.

Critical Race Theory

CRT traces its philosophical roots to the writings of Derrick Bell (1980, 1993), with early contributions from scholars such as Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Mari Matsuda, and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991). Originally developed as a critique of the slow progress of racial reform within the U.S. legal system, CRT later expanded into the field of education. Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV (1995) introduced CRT to education, using it as a framework to examine systemic inequities embedded within schooling structures. In this context, CRT serves as a tool to challenge and dismantle institutional barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Morris & Parker, 2019).

At its core, CRT is grounded in several key tenets: (1) normalization of racism in U.S. society; (2) social construction of race; (3) interest convergence; (4) critique of colorblindness as a form of racism; (5) acknowledgment of intersectionality and anti-essentialism; and (6) the use of counter-narratives to explore marginalized identities. CRT scholars argue that racism is deeply embedded in US society and shapes the lived experiences of people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2023). They also assert that race is a social construct rather than a biological reality, a claim supported by genetic research showing no inherent differences between racial groups (Ladson-Billings, 2013). Race is a

social construct that has been used historically as a tool for power and control. Derrick Bell (1980) and bell hooks (1992) introduced the concept of interest convergence, which suggests that racial progress often occurs only when it benefits White individuals, leading to symbolic rather than substantive change for Black communities. This perspective reveals how racism persists because it serves the interests of those in power. Furthermore, Crenshaw's (1991) theory of intersectionality highlights the complexity of identity, rejecting simplistic notions that people can be understood solely through singular categories such as race or gender.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2013) emphasized the power of counterstories in illuminating the broader legal and social injustices tied to race. These narratives provide deeper insights into the education system's impact on marginalized groups, particularly Black women, whose experiences are affected by microaggressions, intersectional biases, and systemic marginalization (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

By centering race in educational research, scholarship, and practice, CRT brings attention to the realities faced by historically marginalized populations. It provides a critical framework for examining issues of race, class, gender, and culture within education (Howard, 2010; Lynn & Dixson, 2022; Taylor et al., 2023). Through this lens, researchers can elevate the voices of underrepresented communities and challenge the systemic inequities that continue to shape educational outcomes (Martínez, 2016; Zamudio et al., 2011).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was (a) to explore the social and professional experiences of Black women technology leaders and how they believe their experiences

have been influenced by their intersectional identities, and (b) to reveal how they overcome professional obstacles perceived to stem from their race, gender, and social status

Research Questions

The following questions framed this study:

1. What are the social and professional experiences of Black women technology leaders and how do they perceive the influence of their intersectional identities on their experiences?
2. How do Black women technology leaders overcome professional obstacles that they perceive stem from their race, gender, and social status?

Significance of the Study

The United States has long been recognized as a global leader in technology, with its education system often credited for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship (Luetkehans & Omale, 2013). However, this reputation stands in stark contrast to the systemic underrepresentation of people of color in both the historical narratives of technology and the modern technology workforce. Philosopher Cornel West (1988) asserted that any meaningful discussion on race in America must address the deep-rooted inequalities and cultural stereotypes embedded within society. These systemic disparities are especially evident in the U.S. public education system, where women of color, particularly Black women, continue to face significant barriers to leadership in technology.

Examining the experiences of Black women technology leaders in P-12 schools provides critical insights into broader efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the

technology sector. Understanding the specific challenges they encounter, as well as the strategies that enable their success, can inform school systems nationwide seeking to cultivate more diverse and equitable leadership. This research not only contributes to academic discussions on representation and equity but also provides actionable data for policy reforms, professional development initiatives, and mentorship programs designed to support Black women in technology leadership. Addressing the underrepresentation of Black women in these roles is essential for building an education system that truly reflects the diversity of the students it serves.

The scarcity of Black women serving as technology leaders in P-12 school systems emphasizes the urgency of amplifying their voices. Their perspectives, shaped by the intersection of race, gender, and leadership, offer invaluable contributions to the discourse on educational technology. Increasing their presence in these leadership roles enriches conversations on equity, representation, and systemic change while fostering a more inclusive and just educational landscape (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to help the reader understand the context of each term as it is used throughout this study.

Counterstory - Stories that challenge the dominant or mainstream narratives about a culture, community, or group giving voice to those who were historically oppressed and marginalized (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Interest Convergence – Coined by Derrick Bell (1980), interest convergence is the assertion that because racism benefits both elite and middle-class Whites, they often have little interest in eradicating it. They often only have an interest in promoting equality for

Black and brown people if the result benefits them.

Positionality - The discussion around how a researcher's race, gender, class, and other identities, along with their experiences and privileges, shape their research methodologies (Massoud, 2022; Tierny, 1998)

Intersectionality – The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups, to produce and sustain complex inequities. The theory of intersectionality, as introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), is the idea that when thinking about how inequalities persist, categories like gender, race, and class are best understood as overlapping and mutually constitutive rather than isolated and distinct.

People of Color – The American Psychological Association (2023) defines this term represents a shift from the term "minority" to refer to individuals from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds

Educational Technology - Educational technology (EdTech) is the use of digital tools, resources, and systems to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes in educational settings (Murphy et al., 2018). In this study, the terms *Educational Technology leader* and *Technology leader* are used interchangeably to refer to and encompass all individuals holding school technology leadership roles, despite their official titles.

Summary

This chapter addressed the impact of the rapid expansion of educational technology and technology support in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It contextualized this shift within the landscape of educational leadership and the

integration of technology in P-12 schools, emphasizing the critical need to investigate the underrepresentation of Black women in technology leadership roles. Additionally, this chapter highlighted the intersectional challenges Black women face, including sexism, racism, and classism, which shape their experiences and career trajectories in technology leadership. Ultimately, this chapter established the foundation for a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of Black women technology leaders, offering insights into the structural inequities and strategies for fostering greater diversity in technology.

CHAPTER II

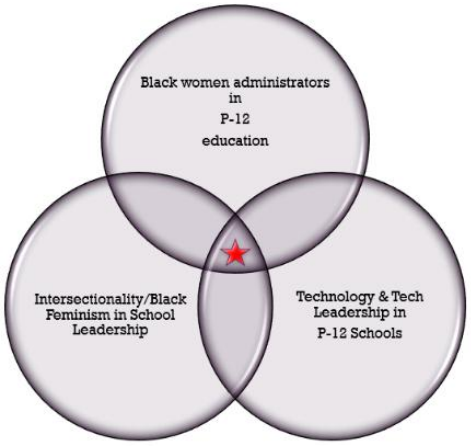
LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this study was (a) to explore the social and professional experiences of Black women technology leaders and how they believe their experiences have been influenced by their intersectional identities, and (b) to reveal how they overcome professional obstacles perceived to stem from their race, gender, and social

In this literature review, I established the rationale for investigating and comprehending the experiences of Black women who occupy technology leadership positions within P-12 school districts. As shown in Figure 1, this study is situated within the existing scholarly dialogue which encompasses (a) the historical context of educational disparities faced by Black women, (b) the exploration of Black women's roles in P-12 education, (c) the missing voices of Black women in technology and educational technology, (d) the responsibilities of educational technology leaders in P-12 education (e) Black Feminism in education, and (d) Counterstories in educational research.

Figure 1

Black Women's Technology Leadership in P-12 Education



Note. The Venn Diagram illustrates how this study is positioned within existing literature, highlighting the intersection of Black women administrators in P-12 education, technology leadership, and intersectionality/Black feminism in school leadership. The red star at the center represents the focal point of my study: Black women who lead technology in P-12 schools and how their experiences are shaped by their intersecting identities.

History of Educational Inequities for Black Women

Historically, Black women faced the greatest challenges in pursuing education, especially when compared to their White peers and men. Despite these obstacles, they are among the leaders in securing advanced degrees, notably within the P-12 education sector (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). This section seeks to shed light on the historical adversities encountered and surmounted by Black women and girls in their quest for educational equity.

During the 1800s, women who sought to further their education had limited options, with female seminaries being the most common choice. These institutions were

established in states that lacked free public secondary schools or had few opportunities for women in education. However, attendance at these seminaries was primarily limited to middle-class and elite White women, with very few Black women being admitted (Baumgartner, 2019; Case, 2017). Due to anti-literacy restrictions in slave states, which were enforced more strictly after the Nat Turner Revolt in 1831 (Davis, 1981), when Black women were admitted to these seminaries, the consequences were often detrimental for them and those supporting their efforts (Baumgartner, 2019; Davis, 1981).

In the early 19th century, the Antebellum Northeast witnessed a significant shift in the perspective of African Americans, particularly freedmen and women, regarding education. They began to see it as a critical tool for advancing Black civil rights and opposing White supremacy. Despite the segregation present in primary schools, young Black women viewed public high schools as avenues for advocating educational reform and the right to equal education. An illustrative case is that of Sarah Harris, whose enrollment in Prudence Crandall's all-white Canterbury Women Boarding School in 1832 marked a pivotal moment in the fight for educational equality. Harris's admission not only challenged societal norms but also led Crandall to devote the school to the education of African American girls and women, aiming to prepare them as teachers. This bold move sparked increased hostility from White residents, manifesting in threats, legal challenges, and violence, ultimately forcing the school to close in September 1834. This period highlighted the emerging recognition among African Americans of education's power as a vehicle for social change and resistance against oppressive structures (Baumgartner, 2019).

In a narrative paralleling the endeavors of Prudence Crandall, Margaret Douglass,

a White woman committed to the educational reform for African Americans, found herself imprisoned for the act of teaching Black children in Norfolk, Virginia. This commitment to education as a form of resistance and empowerment was not isolated. Myrtilla Miner, another formidable figure, exemplified this dedication by risking her life to educate young Black women. In 1851, she embarked on a groundbreaking mission to establish a college for training Black teachers in Washington, D.C. Despite facing relentless adversity, including evictions, arson attempts, and other aggressive acts by hostile mobs, Miner and her students persisted (Davis, 1981). Their efforts, however, were met with a tragic setback when their schoolhouse was destroyed by fire.

Despite these challenges, Myrtilla Miner's vision and resilience bore long-lasting fruits. The legacy of her courage and the principles for which she stood did not end with the fire; they lived on, paving the way for future educational reforms. Her pioneering work eventually led to the establishment of Miner's Teachers College, which became an integral part of the District of Columbia's public educational system. Through Miner's actions and the continued efforts of others like her, the path toward educational equality and reform was indelibly marked, emphasizing the role of education in challenging societal barriers and promoting civil rights.

Prominent Black Women Educators and School Founders

When examining the early stages of educational reform, it is crucial to acknowledge that while numerous initiatives aimed at educating people of color, especially Black women and girls, were spearheaded by northern Whites, the remarkable contributions of Black women in establishing schools should not be overlooked (Collier-Thomas, 1982; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). The efforts of Nannie

Helen Burroughs and Mary McLeod Bethune are particularly commendable and consequently noteworthy.

In 1909, Nannie Helen Burroughs founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in the Lincoln Heights area of Washington D.C., with the support of the National Baptist Convention and the Woman's Convention, marking a significant milestone in educational history (Harley, 1996; Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Distinguished by its status as a non-coeducational institution not founded by White patrons, the school was a groundbreaking initiative of its era. Initially welcoming 35 students, it experienced remarkable growth, boasting nearly 2,000 students 25 years after its inception. Following Burroughs' passing in 1961, the school underwent a transformation in 1964 when its Board of Trustees phased out the trade school curriculum, rebranding the institution as the Nannie Helen Burroughs school for elementary students (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). This evolution encompasses the lasting impact of Burroughs' vision and dedication to education.

Mary McLeod Bethune made a significant contribution to education and healthcare for African Americans in the early 20th century. In October 1904, she founded the Daytona Literary and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls in Daytona Beach, Florida, which marked the beginning of a profound legacy in empowering Black women through education (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Recognizing the need for healthcare training and services within the Black community, Bethune also established the Mary McLeod Hospital and Training School for Nurses, the only institution on the East Coast offering nursing training to Black women at the time. This initiative was partly in response to the exclusion of her Black students from the local Whites-only hospital,

leading Bethune to open a hospital to serve their needs. By 1922, the school had grown from an initial enrollment of 5 students to 300. In a historic move in 1923, Bethune's school merged with the Cookman Institute of Jacksonville, Florida, an all-boys school, forming the Bethune-Cookman College, a testament to her vision and determination (Thomas & Jackson, 2007).

The push for educational equity united women across racial lines, especially in the post-Civil War era. Angela Davis (1981) highlighted this unity in the battle against illiteracy in the South, emphasizing how the solidarity between Black and White women not only addressed immediate educational needs but also fulfilled a vital promise in American history. This period stands as a pivotal moment when the collective efforts of women, regardless of race, significantly advanced the cause of educational reform and laid the groundwork for future generations.

Baumgartner (2019) explored the multifaceted experiences of African American women in education, revealing how the interplay of race, class, and gender influenced their quest for equality in the Northeast. While educational experiences varied significantly across different regions, races, and social classes in America, Black women's pursuit of education was often marred by experiences of terror, fear, and oppression (Baumgartner, 2019; Case, 2017; Davis, 1981). Trailblazers like Sarah Harris, Prudence Crandall, Margaret Douglass, Myrtilla Miner, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Mary McLeod Bethune led the charge in educational activism. In an era when the notion of educational equity for all races was largely dismissed by many White Americans, these women stood firm in their advocacy for inclusive education, transcending barriers of race, gender, and social standing.

The Evolution of Black Women in Education

Black women remain significantly underrepresented in the field of education (Alston, 2012; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Jang & Alexander, 2022; Johnson, 2021; Milner & Howard, 2004), especially in technology administration roles, grappling with longstanding racial disparities entrenched within the U.S. educational system. Despite advancements, Black women continue to be outnumbered in both classroom settings and decision-making capacities within administrative realms. The pursuit of social justice for women of color in education calls for further efforts. Scholars are actively engaged in shedding light on and dismantling the barriers faced by Black women in public schools. Yet, while research endeavors seek to amplify the voices of often marginalized groups, the experiences of Black women in technology remain conspicuously absent from current discussions. This section aims to explore recurring themes in the discourse surrounding Black women in education, particularly within P-12 settings, while also drawing attention to the overlooked presence of Black women in technology roles within this discourse. It is important to note that this study's scope does not encompass a comprehensive review of all issues encountered by educators and administrators in education. Instead, it focuses specifically on the professional and social disparities faced by Black women in schools, with an emphasis on the intersections of race, gender, and class.

Black Women as Teachers

Implications of a Teacher Demographic Diversity Gap. Current literature stresses the evolving demographics within US schools, with student populations growing increasingly diverse while the teaching workforce remains largely homogeneous (Dilworth, 1990; Farinde-Wu, 2018; White, 2016). Statistics from the National Center for

Education (2023) revealed a striking contrast, with a significant majority of public school teachers identifying as non-Hispanic White, despite a student body that is notably more racially and ethnically varied. Plachowski (2019) argued that a diverse teacher workforce benefits students of color and prepares all students for success in an increasingly diverse global society.

While the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling is often lauded for advancing desegregated schooling, Milner and Howard (2004) challenged this perspective. They highlighted the unintended consequence of the *Brown* decision, namely the mass layoffs of highly skilled Black educators, which subsequently impacted the quality of education for African American students. Gordon (1994) further contextualized the need for minority teachers within the declining academic performance of minority students, socioeconomic disparities, and the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Furthermore, Stanley (2021) argued the importance of increasing the presence of Black educators, positing that their representation fosters success among minoritized students. Indeed, the absence of Black women teachers not only deprives students of color of valuable role models but also diminishes the multicultural and diverse learning experiences within schools. The literature collectively emphasizes the critical need for a teaching workforce that mirrors the diversity of the student population it serves.

Factors that Influence Black Women to Teach. Throughout history, Black women have utilized teaching as a powerful tool in the fight against racial injustice (Case, 2017; Dilworth, 1990; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Mccray et al., 2002; Stanley, 2021). Sarah Case's (2017) comparative study of the Lucy Cobb Institute and Spelman Seminary highlights the emergence of Black women in educational spaces with a clear mission to drive racial

activism and uplift Black communities in the 'New' South. Teaching, particularly within institutions like Spelman Seminary (now Spelman College), was viewed as a pathway for Black women to lead in social change endeavors. The literature further suggests that within the Black community, teaching was perceived as a significant profession capable of fostering social transformation (Farinde-Wu, 2018).

Additionally, motivations for Black women entering teaching roles extended beyond conventional career aspirations, encompassing nurturing and advocating for marginalized students (Mccray et al., 2002; Milner & Howard, 2004). Black teachers assumed multifaceted roles as mentors, disciplinarians, and advocates, playing a pivotal role in the holistic development of Black students (Milner & Howard, 2004). The literature suggests that Black women educators have a profound impact in challenging systemic injustices and nurturing the next generation of leaders within Black communities.

Black Women as Administrators

A growing body of research articles has emerged, focusing on Black women in P-12 education administration (Alston, 2012; Brown, 2014; Genao & Mercedes, 2021; Horsford & Tillman, 2012; Moore, 2013). These studies typically feature participants holding roles such as principals, superintendents, or other district-level administrative staff. However, while there exists research on Black women in various administrative positions within education, a notable gap in the literature pertains to the exploration of Black women in technology administration roles. This section aims to examine the prevailing themes in the discourse surrounding Black women administrators in P-12 education, particularly concerning the focus of this study.

Placement of Black Women in P-12 Schools. The literature affirms the disproportionate underrepresentation of Black women in U.S. public schools, with a notable concentration in urban areas characterized as high-minority, high-poverty, or hard-to-staff (Farinde-Wu, 2018; Gordon, 1994; Moore, 2013; White, 2016). Despite the negative stereotypes associated with urban communities, Farinde-Wu's (2018) research revealed that Black women were drawn to urban schools due to the rich diversity among both teachers and students. Urban schools typically have a higher proportion of students of color, particularly Black and Hispanic students. Milner (2008) echoed this sentiment in his study, which focused on the positive aspects of urban education as described by teachers through counter-narratives.

While some Black women actively choose to work in urban settings, researchers caution against the assumption that Black educators are solely suited to teaching Black students (Moore, 2013). The emphasis on urban schools and same-race affiliations may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and limit opportunities for Black educators.

Black Women as Race Experts. Research indicates that Black women administrators often face the expectation of being viewed as race experts and representatives for Black students and teachers within their schools (Moore, 2013). This phenomenon is particularly prominent in suburban settings, where Black women are tasked with prioritizing the needs of Black students over those of all students. While Black teachers and administrators are recognized for their cultural sensitivity and insight into the challenges faced by Black students (Mccray et al., 2002), efforts are underway to diversify educational settings and challenge the social stigma that suggests only White administrators can effectively lead diverse educational systems.

Missing in Action: The Lack of Black Women's Voices in EdTech

Rachelle Wooten illustrated, through her personal story, the transformative impact of diverse voices in educational technology (EdTech). Wooten's presence in her diverse school district not only influenced technological opportunities for children, especially those of color but also highlighted the significance of representation. She emphasized that her presence meant not only the representation of people of color but also the recognition of possibilities within their own voices. Wooten's assertion that educational technology necessitates change and adaptation to embrace new methods resonates throughout the EdTech community (Davis, 2015).

This narrative emphasized the profound impact of diverse voices, particularly those of Black women, in educational technology. Wooten's story highlights the implications of Black women's involvement in EdTech, as it not only signifies the representation of people of color but also validates the possibilities inherent within their own voices.

Rafranz Davis (2015) advocated for collaboration among EdTech leaders to develop cultural awareness and engage with diverse perspectives. Furthermore, Davis posited the necessity for change and adaptation in educational technology. This sentiment emphasizes the resonance of their message within the EdTech community. The call for collaboration among EdTech leaders to cultivate cultural awareness and engage with diverse perspectives speaks directly to the systemic inequities present in education, particularly for Black women (Doroudi, 2024; Gorski, 2008). Despite possessing invaluable insights and experiences derived from their classroom contexts and cultural connections (Milner & Howard, 2004; Valencia, 2010), Black women remain

underrepresented in EdTech leadership positions, reflecting broader inequities within the education system (Butler & Lockee, 2016).

The absence of Black women's voices in discussions surrounding educational technology perpetuates existing disparities and limits the potential for inclusive and equitable solutions. Thus, integrating the perspectives of Black women technology leaders into ongoing dialogues regarding the future of educational technology is not only crucial for addressing systemic inequities but also essential for fostering innovation and progress in the field.

The Role of Technology Leaders in P-12 Education

Bacak et al. (2023) conducted a comprehensive study analyzing technology usage in K12 school districts in the Southeast region of the United States. The researchers proposed a classification framework encompassing various categories of school technologies by examining 23 school district websites and conducting interviews with 12 technology leaders. Their framework, which includes educational, management, networking, and security technologies, aimed to organize and categorize the diverse array of technologies utilized in education.

The proliferation of educational technologies in schools may explain the evolving roles of technology leaders and administrators, warranting a broader skill set. While tech support personnel are common in P-12 schools, the responsibilities of technology directors, instructional technologists, and other tech personnel vary significantly across districts (Haines, 2018). Despite some standardization in certification programs for instructional technology, there remains a lack of standardization for other technology personnel (Adams, 2015).

Murphy et al. (2018) identified eight role categories for educational technology professionals. These roles include teaching/training, instructional support, technological, administrative communication, administrative development, and public relations. These diverse roles highlight the multifaceted nature of technology leadership in education and illuminate the need for comprehensive training and support structures to meet the evolving demands of technology integration in schools.

Black Feminism

Black feminist thought, rooted in the recognition of the unique realities faced by Black women, offers a critical lens through which to examine the intersectional inequalities present in education. This perspective, championed by scholars such as bell hooks (1992) and Patricia Collins (2000), challenged the limitations of White feminism and emphasized the importance of centering Black women's experiences and voices. Black women navigate intersecting systems of oppression based on race and gender, leading to unique perspectives and interpretations of their reality. Black feminism seeks to humanize visibility, empower women's sense of identity, and promote self-love within a societal framework that often marginalizes and stereotypes Black women (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1981; Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021; Evans-Winters, 2019; hooks, 1992; Toliver, 2022; Patterson et al., 2016).

Black feminist thought emphasizes the importance of recognizing and incorporating marginality into self-definition, enabling Black women to become effective agents of change in challenging societal oppression. Although it is not used as the central lens in this study, BFT is particularly relevant in the context of P-12 education and is used to inform this study.

The Unique Identities of Black Women School Leaders

The concept of intersectionality, introduced by civil rights lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), illuminates the multifaceted discrimination faced by Black women, encompassing race, gender, and class disparities. Crenshaw (1991) later applied intersectionality to analyze the vulnerabilities of women of color within social movements addressing violence against women. This framework examines the intricate layers of discrimination experienced by Black women, as highlighted by Moorosi et al. (2018) who emphasized the unique challenges faced by women while being Black.

bell hooks (1992) further elaborated on the enduring social barriers encountered by Black women, even as they achieved professional advancement and economic independence. hooks revealed the interconnected systems of oppression based on sex, race, and class, and emphasized the diversity and complexity of Black women's experiences. Other scholars explored the compounded disparities faced by women of color, as they navigated the intersecting identities of being both women and people of color, amplifying their marginalized status.

As a result of Crenshaw's seminal work, scholars across disciplines, including education, began to adopt intersectionality to understand and address systemic inequalities (Burton et al., 2020; Carbado et al., 2013; Reed, 2012; Rogers-Ard, 2016). In P-12 education, researchers have explored how gender and race intersect to shape the experiences of Black women administrators.

The historical racial inequities entrenched in the experiences of Black women, as elucidated through the lens of intersectionality are apparent in the education field (Berry& Cook, 2019). Despite strides toward equality, Black women continue to grapple

with systemic barriers and societal expectations, both professionally and socially, perpetuating a cycle of marginalization and discrimination.

Counterstories in Educational Research

In the realm of P-12 education, particularly in the context of educational technology, narratives dominated by a single perspective or those reflecting the perspectives of the majority are prevalent. These majoritarian narratives encompass more than just racial privilege; they also include privilege related to gender, socioeconomic status, and other dimensions. As such, they embed multiple layers of presumptions that individuals with racial privilege often carry into discussions about racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of discrimination (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In essence, a dominant narrative privileges the perspectives of White individuals, men, those from middle or upper socioeconomic backgrounds, and heterosexuals, treating these positions as the standard or expected reference points (Birk, 2023; Evans-Winter, 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Toliver, 2022)

Counterstories are stories that challenge the dominant or mainstream narratives about a culture, community, or group. They are especially powerful in research focused on social justice, equity, and the experiences of marginalized or underrepresented groups. Counter-narratives can unveil perspectives that are often silenced or overlooked, providing a richer and more inclusive understanding of social phenomena (Martinez, 2021; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In contexts where existing narratives do not fully capture the complexity or diversity of experiences, counter-narratives can offer alternative viewpoints that provoke thought and encourage critical analysis. This engagement can lead to a deeper reflection

on personal biases, societal structures, and the multiplicity of realities that exist for Black women in educational technology.

According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), there are three main types of counterstories, each with its own approach and purpose. First, personal counterstories are autobiographical and focus on personal racialized and sexualized experiences of the author. These narratives provide a platform for individuals to share their stories and challenge stereotypes and misconceptions that may exist about their identities. Second, other people's counterstories emerge from a biographical analysis of the experiences and struggles of people within marginalized communities. Finally, composite counter-narratives integrate multiple individual counterstories into a cohesive and comprehensive story. They highlight common themes and patterns, demonstrating the systemic nature of oppression and discrimination faced by these groups (Cook & Dixson, 2013). By weaving together diverse voices and experiences, composite counter-narratives offer a holistic view of the challenges and resilience within marginalized communities, providing a more nuanced understanding of their realities (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). By using composite characters, the focus shifts from individual participants to broader issues faced by these groups and deepens the analysis of how race and racism affect people of color collectively (Martinez, 2021).

Summary

Historically, Black women have faced the most difficulty regarding educational equity. Despite those historical challenges, they have persevered and are among the highest earners of advanced degrees. Although still limited, research suggests that Black women administrators and teachers remain underrepresented outside of urban areas.

Furthermore, Black women school leaders are prevalent in urban or high-minoritized areas, which upholds the belief that they cannot lead in diverse communities. Although Black women administrators have been studied, a focus on the field of educational technology is missing from the current discourse. This study will help fill that void by exploring the social and professional experiences of Black women educational technology leaders and how those experiences are influenced or affected by their intersectional identities. Through a composite counterstory, their stories are told.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research has shown that Black women are underrepresented in education and technology fields separately. The same holds for technology administration in P-12 education. Not only are they underrepresented in the field, but Black women are also underrepresented in the literature surrounding educational technology. For this reason, the purpose of this study was (a) to explore the social and professional experiences of Black women technology leaders and how they believe their experiences have been influenced by their intersectional identities, and (b) to reveal how they overcome professional obstacles perceived to stem from their race, gender, and social status through the use of a composite counterstory.

This study was framed and guided by the following questions:

1. What are the social and professional experiences of Black women educational technology leaders and how do they perceive the influence of their intersectional identities on their experiences?
2. How do Black women technology leaders overcome professional obstacles that they perceive stem from their race, gender, and social status?

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed, covering the rationale behind the chosen approach, details on the research sampling technique, participant context, procedures, data collection and analysis methods, ethical considerations, trustworthiness

measures, and the study's limitations and boundaries.

Research Design & Rationale

In this study, a critical qualitative research approach was utilized to explore the role of social factors in shaping individuals' perceptions of reality. According to Ladson-Billings (2013) and Merriam (2002), reality is not a constant; it is subject to multiple constructions and interpretations and changes over time. This notion is particularly relevant to the experiences of Black women, whose realities are intricately shaped by their intersectional identities. These realities are complex and distinct, reflecting the unique interplay of race, gender, and other social dimensions (Collins, 2000; Davis, 1981; Evans-Winters, 2019; Evans-Winters & Love, 2015; hooks, 1992).

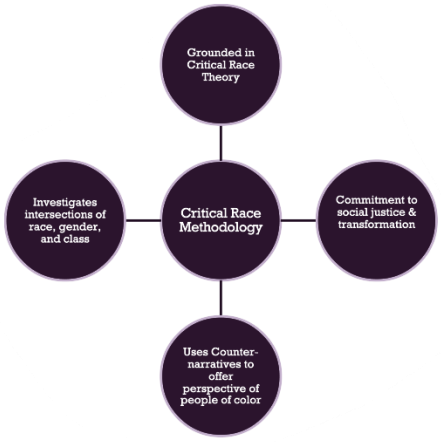
A qualitative research design was chosen because it was the best way to accurately depict Black women educational technology leaders' feelings, perspectives, and beliefs. Qualitative research was preferred over quantitative design for several reasons, primarily due to the nature of the research questions and the type of data needed to explore this complex phenomenon (Crewell & Creswell, 2018). When the goal is to explore individuals' perceptions, emotions, and experiences from their perspective, qualitative research is recommended. This is particularly valuable when understanding the human aspect is essential. Furthermore, qualitative research designs are welcomed when the aim is to understand complex phenomena, behaviors, experiences, or processes in depth and detail. It allows researchers to capture the richness and nuances of human experiences that cannot be quantified easily (Patton, 2015). Quantitative studies, aiming to explore relationships between variables, may pose limitations as they heavily rely on structured tools like surveys, designed for participants to provide responses rather than

engage in dialogue with the researcher (Kozleski, 2017). Additionally, in this situation, gathering data from large groups of people was not feasible, and qualitative research provided valuable insights through detailed analysis of a small number of cases which is outside of the characteristics of quantitative research.

A Critical Race Methodology (CRM) was selected to inform the methods in the study as it was developed to outline a way to conduct research that would answer the problems posed by critical race theorists (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This qualitative research approach also provided a platform for conducting and showcasing research rooted in the lived experiences and stories of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) people. Although other approaches such as narrative inquiry, case study, and phenomenology were considered, due to the specific aims and contexts of this study. As shown in Figure 2, CRM offered distinct advantages for exploring issues related to race, racism, and power structures.

Figure 2

Components of Critical Race Methodology (CRM)



Note. This figure outlines CRM, emphasizing its roots in Critical Race Theory, its focus on intersectionality, counter-narratives, and social justice transformation.

Critical Race Methodology is grounded in CRT and centers on understanding and challenging how race and racism impact society and individuals. It is specifically designed to address and unpack the complex intersections of race, gender, and class, making it inherently suited for studies where these issues are at the forefront (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRM integrates insights from law, sociology, history, and more, offering a multidimensional lens through which to examine issues. This interdisciplinary approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of race-related phenomena than methods that are rooted in a single discipline or perspective.

A core principle of CRM is the commitment to social justice and the aim to not only understand but also to transform the conditions of racial inequality. This proactive stance distinguishes CRM from other methodologies that might focus more on description and interpretation without an explicit agenda for change. CRM explicitly seeks to analyze and deconstruct power structures that maintain racial disparities. This

critical examination goes beyond the descriptive focus of some qualitative methods, aiming to reveal the underlying mechanisms of racial oppression and privilege. Like phenomenology, CRM values the lived experiences of individuals, particularly those from marginalized racial groups. However, CRM frames these experiences within broader socio-political contexts, highlighting how systemic racism shapes individual realities.

While narrative inquiry explores individual or collective stories, CRM emphasizes counter-storytelling or counter-narratives, as a tool to challenge dominant narratives that perpetuate racial stereotypes or inequalities (Parker, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Taylor et al., 2023). This focus on counter-narratives can reveal hidden dimensions of racism and resistance, offering powerful insights that might not be as readily uncovered through traditional narrative analysis.

Participant Selection

This study focused on individuals who (a) identified as Black women, (b) were employed for at least one year as an educational technology leader within a public school system in the United States, and (c) worked at the district level. Although titles across school systems and states differed, the following titles were deemed acceptable based on the responsibilities of the roles: Technology Director, Chief Information Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Digital Learning Officer, Director of Instructional Technology, IT Director, Chief Innovation Officer, and Educational Technology Director. Ultimately, eight participants were chosen to participate in this study.

To identify suitable candidates, I employed purposeful sampling and snowball sampling methods. Snowball sampling, as outlined by Patton (2015), starts with a few

key participants who then assist in identifying further potential candidates. This approach is particularly effective for reaching stigmatized groups or when the target population is rare or difficult to locate (Neuman, 2007).

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A), I reached out to potential participants identified through a list I received from the State Department of Education and others recommended by my network of current and former P-12 public school colleagues. Initial contact was made through emails, phone calls, and social media platforms: Facebook and LinkedIn. I also posted an IRB-approved recruitment flyer (see Appendix C) on LinkedIn and Facebook to attract additional participants from other states. Interested individuals completed a preliminary demographic survey to submit their contact details and verify their eligibility for the study. After this preliminary screening, I followed up with potential participants to discuss the study further and arrange interview times. Table 1 summarizes the selected participants' roles and professional demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant (Pseudonym)	Role/Title	Years of Experience	District Type	Educational Level
Dr. Trish	Chief Technology Officer	13	Rural	Ph.D.
Angie	Digital Learning Officer	5	Suburban	M.Ed.
Dr. Kristie	Instructional Tech. Coach	8.5	Urban	Ed.D.
Jackie	Digital Learning Coach	10	Urban	M.Ed.
Dr. Meena	EdTech Director	12	Suburban	Ph.D.
Dr. Katrina	Technology Director	15	Urban	Ed.D.
Shae	EdTech Director	17	Urban	M.Ed.
Victoria	Digital Learning Coach	9	Urban	M.Ed.

Note. This table displays demographic information of all study participants. Some of the participants' professional roles or titles were shortened to preserve formatting.

Data Collection

Patton (2015) emphasized the significance of interviews, stating, "We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe feelings that took place at some previous point in time" (p. 426). This insight highlights the unique data acquired through interviews as this was the data collection method chosen for this study.

Interviews were conducted virtually through Zoom. The interviews were recorded in Zoom and transcribed using Zoom's built-in transcription tool. I employed a modified version of Seidman's three-interview protocol (see Appendix B). Instead of conducting

three interviews, only one interview was conducted. Each interview, like Seidman's (2013) three-interview series, lasted for 60-to-90 minutes and contained 3 purposeful segments or categories of questions. The interviews were semi-structured as categories of questions were created to keep the focus within the study's defined scope. In the first segment, time was taken to understand the participant's background as it relates to the context of the study and how they became technology leaders. The goal of the second segment was to explore the participants' social and professional experiences as technology leaders within the educational context through the lens of CRT. Seidman (2013) recommended using the third interview for reflection on meaning. The participants ended the interview with a reflection on the strategies they used to navigate challenges that they believed stemmed from their intersectional identities.

During the data collection process, the participants were informed of how the data would be collected and used. The sites and participants were kept confidential as pseudonyms were assigned to both. Video recordings were deleted. Audio recordings were kept and reviewed to finalize the interview transcripts. After the interviews were fully and accurately transcribed, the audio recordings were also deleted. The final transcripts were stored securely in MAXQDA and after being anonymized, they were added to a password-protected folder for my committee members to access.

Data Analysis

The code creation and color categorization MAXQDA tools were used to apply codes to the transcripts. In the initial phase of analysis, I employed Holistic Coding to lay the foundation for a more intricate examination of the data, following Saldaña's (2021) guidelines. This approach is particularly beneficial when the researcher has a preliminary

understanding of the data's thematic elements and is dealing with large datasets, as it streamlines the coding process.

After completing the Holistic Coding, I revisited the data through a CRT lens, applying In Vivo Coding for the second round of analysis. This method was chosen to foreground and respect the participants' voices, especially valuable in educational research focusing on marginalized groups (Saldaña, 2021). By using participants' exact words, I aimed to capture the depth of their experiences, facilitating a more nuanced coding of the transcripts. I used the lumper method in which a code was applied for every three to five sentences. An important part of the coding process included using CRT principles as codes whenever applicable, a coding method recommended by Cook and Dixson (2013). The codes and phrases from both Holistic and In Vivo Coding were then synthesized and organized into broader more encompassing themes by merging categories derived from both coding stages. Through this approach, I systematically organized codes, direct quotes, and the emotional responses of the participants, ensuring that the constructed counterstory authentically represented their voices.

Data Presentation

Although Toliver (2022) and Evans-Winters (2019) do so in different ways, both scholars asserted that the traditional methods for data presentation in qualitative research require further exploration, and storytelling is a great tool for capturing the multifaceted experience of the Black woman.

In the context of this study, the composite counterstory (CCS) approach was chosen as the preferred strategy due to its ability to capture the complexity and diversity of Black women's experiences as technology leaders in P-12 schools. The work of Bell

(1980, 1993), Cook and Dixson (2013), and Solórzano and Yosso (2000) exemplified composite counterstories.

Guiding Principles for Engaging with the Composite Counterstory

To fully engage with the composite counterstory, it is important to approach it as more than just a fictionalized account; instead, it should be read as a methodologically sound and theoretically grounded representation of lived experiences (Cook & Dixson, 2013). Counterstories function as a means of exposing, analyzing, and challenging majoritarian stories, which often obscure or dismiss the realities of marginalized individuals (Cook & Dixson, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Readers should approach the counterstory with an understanding that it is not meant to be a detached or purely objective recounting of events, but a critical narrative designed to illuminate the experiential knowledge of those who are often silenced. By doing so, one can better recognize the systemic barriers that shape Black women's professional and social experiences in educational technology leadership. Furthermore, Cook and Dixson (2013) emphasize that counterstories should be read with an awareness of how race and racism function in institutional and everyday contexts, urging readers to challenge their assumptions and consider the broader implications of these narratives for equity and justice in leadership spaces.

Cook and Dixson (2013) identified key points that should guide one's reading of the composite counterstory:

Authenticity of Data – The dialogue, setting, and thoughts of the composite characters are derived directly from interviews, field notes, and other data sources. However, they are edited for narrative coherence while still preserving the integrity of

participants' lived experiences.

Separation of Analysis – The counterstory is presented first, allowing readers to engage with the narrative without immediate interpretation or academic framing. The analysis follows later in the paper, where key themes and findings are discussed in relation to existing literature.

By keeping these points in mind, readers can better appreciate the critical and methodological intent behind the counterstory, recognizing it as both a challenge to dominant narratives and a rigorous analytical tool that foregrounds the experiences of marginalized individuals.

The CCS provided a comprehensive and multi-dimensional portrayal of the challenges and successes faced by Black women in this role. Additionally, the CCS described common themes and patterns across participants' stories, enabling deeper insights into the systemic barriers and opportunities for empowerment within educational technology leadership. This approach not only honored the voices and experiences of individual participants but also highlighted the collective strength and resilience of Black women in navigating the intersectional challenges of race, gender, and professional identity within the educational technology landscape. A thematic analysis of the composite counterstory followed the narrative to demonstrate how the overarching research questions were addressed.

Trustworthiness & Credibility

Validity strategies in qualitative research are procedures (e.g., member checking, triangulating data sources) that qualitative researchers use to determine the accuracy of their findings and convince readers of this accuracy (Creswell, 2014). To ensure the

credibility of the study, I had prolonged engagement with the participants and the data. Member checking was used to follow up with the participants to verify the feelings, thoughts, and interpretations of their experiences. Additionally, the participants reviewed the codes and themes created after analyzing the data and provided guidance or clarification as desired.

Research Ethics

Ethical practices began at the conception of the study. The research proposal was submitted for review to the IRB (see Appendix A) and my doctoral committee. As recommended by Seidman (2013), I familiarized myself with 45 CFR 46 on the Protection of Human Subjects and completed the required research ethics courses.

During the zoom meeting, and as reflected in each transcript, participants were required to verbally approve an Informed Consent Statement notifying them of the details of the study, potential risks, rights, possible benefits, and information regarding the confidentiality of data, and dissemination of the study. Furthermore, a composite counterstory was chosen due to its ability to conceal the identity of the participants and individual experiences.

Positionality

Massoud (2022) highlighted a shortfall in the discussion of positionality among researchers, encouraging socio-legal scholars to more openly express their positionality to correct this oversight. He describes positionality as the discussion around how a researcher's own race, gender, class, and other identities, along with their experiences and privileges, shape their research methodologies. It is often scholars from marginalized backgrounds who are most likely to reflect on and articulate their positionality, revealing

how it influences their research.

I welcome critiques of my personal and scholarly perspectives. Tierney (1998) observed that research engages us more deeply than we might initially realize. Entering research without addressing our own preconceptions poses the risk of mischaracterizing participants. While my identity and experiences may share similarities with this study's participants, I commit to diligent self-reflection and awareness to prevent my own emotions or opinions from swaying the conversations and analysis of findings.

Tierney (1998) articulated three aspects critical to a researcher's approach in understanding life histories: the reflexive culture, the reflexive subject, and the empathetic identity. These facets shift the research focus from individual actions to the broader cultural contexts that permit such actions, from an individual-centric perspective to a collective understanding, and from a potential for shared identity to recognizing the boundaries between researcher and subjects.

The reflexive culture emphasizes understanding the cultural backdrop that allows certain behaviors or phenomena to manifest, steering the conversation towards the positive achievements of individuals within their cultural contexts rather than dwelling on systemic failures.

The reflexive subject encourages a move from focusing solely on the individual ("I") to a broader, inclusive perspective ("us"), challenging us to go beyond merely recognizing diversity as an end goal. This approach aims for a deeper understanding of differences and seeks to foster collaboration and unity amidst diversity.

The empathetic identity acknowledges the inherent limits in the relationship between the researcher and participants, recognizing that while not every relationship will

be marked by solidarity, there's a vital need for openness and vulnerability in dialogue. This approach doesn't just aim to amplify the voices of underrepresented groups, such as Black women technology directors, but also seeks to understand and appreciate diversity, paving the way for a more inclusive and unified culture.

In understanding and applying these concepts, my research journey becomes one of cultural understanding, inclusive collaboration, and empathetic engagement, aiming not only to give voice to the underrepresented but also to foster a deeper appreciation for diversity and a stronger sense of solidarity.

Summary

In summary, outlined within this chapter are the research methods employed to answer the research questions guiding the exploration of Black women technology leaders' professional and social experiences. A qualitative approach was chosen, and Critical Race Methodology was used to inform the methods used throughout the study. CRT remained the lens as data was collected using interviews and analyzed using Holistic and In Vivo coding techniques. Moreover, the results were written as composite conterstories to amplify the voices and experiences of Black women in this field.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, I presented the findings of this study, which employed Critical Race Methodology (CRM), a methodology grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT), to analyze the social and professional experiences of Black women in P-12 technology leadership. Given the centrality of counterstorytelling in CRM and CRT, the data is presented through a composite counterstory (CCS), weaving together the voices and narratives of the technology leaders who participated in this study. The participants in this study (a) identified as Black women, (b) were employed for at least one year as an educational technology leader within a public school system in the United States, and (c) worked at the district level. The CCS illustrates the systemic barriers, strategies for success, and nuanced realities faced by Black women in the technology field, particularly in P-12 public school systems. The counterstory serves as a vehicle to challenge dominant narratives and provides a rich, experiential account that centers the perspectives often marginalized in conventional discourse.

Following the counterstory, I conducted a thematic analysis to identify the key themes emerging from the data and explained how the CCS addressed both these themes and the research questions. This approach provided a compelling narrative and a rigorous analytical lens that illuminated the intersectional challenges of Black women in EdTech.

This study was framed and guided by the following questions:

1. What are the social and professional experiences of Black women educational technology leaders, and how do they perceive the influence of their intersectional identities on their experience?
2. How do Black women educational technology leaders overcome professional obstacles that they perceive stem from their race, gender, and social status?

The Panel: A Counterstory

It was a crisp autumn morning, and the state's annual Educational Technology Leadership Summit was in full swing. The conference center buzzed with discussions on emerging technology trends, infrastructure improvements, and digital learning initiatives. Dr. Trish Parker walked into the conference hall, her confidence radiating despite the unspoken tension in the room. As a 42-year-old Chief Technology Officer in a rural school district for the past eleven years, she had grown used to the side glances and the surprise in people's eyes when she confidently spoke about infrastructure, cybersecurity, and digital equity. She spent her career challenging assumptions that Black women didn't belong in high-level technology roles, and today was no different. She adjusted the strap on her bag and scanned the room for familiar faces.

Across the room, Angie Nelson, a 27-year-old Instructional Technology Director, hesitated before checking her name tag one more time. She had been working in a diverse suburban district for the past five years, starting her career at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, she had been essential in transitioning classrooms to remote learning, proving her expertise. Yet now that schools were back in person, she felt overlooked and underestimated. Unlike Trish, she was still trying to find her voice in

spaces where she wasn't always seen as an authority.

In the heart of the bustling conference center, Dr. Kristie Wallace felt a different set of pressures. At 35 years old, she had spent 8.5 years as the Director of Digital Learning in an urban district. In contrast to Trish and Angie, race wasn't always at the forefront of her challenges; her district was filled with people who looked like her. Instead, gender and social status played a greater role in her career journey. Many of the school leaders she worked with were Black, yet she still found herself navigating power dynamics where her ideas were occasionally dismissed in male-dominated technology meetings.

Spotting each other near the registration table, the three women gravitated toward one another instinctively, their shared experiences forming an unspoken bond. "I swear, sometimes I feel like I'm speaking a different language," Angie said, shaking her head. Angie continued, "I'll suggest a strategy, and my supervisor will nod, but then turn to my older White colleague for validation. Like, sir, I literally just said that." Kristie nodded knowingly. "Oh, I've led entire professional development sessions, but someone still assumes the male tech coach in the room is in charge." Trish chuckled and took a sip of her coffee. "Welcome to the club, sis. If I had a dollar for every time someone looked surprised when they realized I was the Chief Technology Officer and not someone's assistant, I could personally fund my district's 1:1 Chromebook initiative." They laughed together, but each of them understood that these experiences were far from amusing. They were exhausting, frustrating, and, at times, isolating. But in moments like this, sitting together, sharing stories, they felt seen.

Their panel was set to start in 20 minutes, so they ran through their discussion

points. Trish, as the seasoned leader, was set to talk about network infrastructure and cybersecurity concerns in rural schools. Kristie planned to discuss professional development and instructional coaching strategies surrounding technology in urban districts. Angie was to focus on the challenges of integrating technology in suburban districts where leadership often resisted change.

"You know what frustrates me the most?" Kristie asked. "Even in my district, where people look like me, gender still plays such a huge role. I had a male colleague repeat what I said in a meeting last week, and suddenly everyone thought it was a brilliant idea." "That's the classic amplification problem," Trish said. Trish continued, "Men aren't used to seeing Black women as tech leaders, and when they do, they either ignore us or feel threatened. It's why I've made it a habit to back up other women in meetings. If I hear a good idea from a woman, I immediately agree with what she says." "That's smart," Angie said, writing a note in her planner. "I should start doing that too."

"I'll tell you something else," Trish added. "When I first got my director position, I knew people were going to question me. So, I over-prepared and backed up all of my decisions with data. I knew more about infrastructure, cybersecurity, and budgeting than anyone else in that district. They couldn't deny my expertise and certainly couldn't deny the data." Kristie sighed. "I did the same thing. I got every certification I could, Google Certified, Microsoft Certified, and EdTech Leadership. But sometimes, I wonder… why do we have to be overqualified just to be considered equal?" "It's exhausting," Angie agreed. "But I remind myself that every step I take makes it easier for the next Black woman behind me." Trish nodded. "Exactly. And that's why I mentor and connect with younger women in the field. We need each other." Angie smiled. "Well, you two are

mentoring me today, that's for sure."

As they took their seats at the front of the packed conference room, the moderator welcomed them and introduced the topic of "Equity and Leadership in K-12 Educational Technology." Trish took the first question: "What has your experience been as a Black woman in EdTech leadership?" She adjusted the microphone and said, "Let me be blunt: It's a constant game of proving yourself. I work in a rural district, and people assume I don't know what I'm doing. But I've built partnerships, secured funding, and improved infrastructure in ways they never imagined. You can't argue with results." Kristie added, "Even in diverse districts, there are barriers. Gender is a huge one. I've had to learn how to assert myself in meetings and advocate for my ideas." Angie took a deep breath before speaking. "And as a younger professional, I've had to fight for my voice to be heard. I started my career during the pandemic, and I was instrumental in shifting our schools to remote learning. Yet now that things are back in person, I'm constantly having to remind people of the value I bring."

As the panel wrapped up, the moderator asked a final question: "What advice do you have for Black women breaking into the P-12 tech space?" Trish leaned forward first. "Know your worth and prepare to defend it. The reality is that people will underestimate you, so you have to be over-prepared. Get the certifications, learn the systems inside and out, and make sure your expertise speaks louder than their doubts." She paused and then added, "And find a mentor. Someone who has been in the trenches and can guide you through the obstacles." Kristie nodded. "Advocate for yourself and amplify other women. Too often, we sit in rooms where our voices are diminished. I've learned that if you don't speak up, someone else will take credit for your ideas. Call it out

when it happens. And when another Black woman is speaking, back her up. Make sure her ideas get the recognition they deserve." Angie, still finding her way in leadership, had a different take. "Build your support system and protect your peace. This work can be exhausting, and imposter syndrome is real. I remind myself daily that I belong here. Surround yourself with people who see your brilliance even when you're doubting it yourself." Trish added, "And that includes self-care. This work isn't just mentally taxing, it's emotionally draining. Burnout is real. Take breaks, go to therapy, and unplug when you need to. You can't fight for change if you're running on empty." Kristie smiled. "And remember, you are not alone. There is a whole network of us out here. Lean on your community, lift as you climb, and never dim your light."

The room was silent for a moment as the words settled in. Then, one by one, the attendees began nodding, some even wiping away tears. A young woman in the audience raised her hand. "Thank you. I really needed to hear that."

Angie beamed. "So did I."

Summary

The counterstory above captured the collective experiences of Black women who work as technology leaders in P-12 school settings. It offered a powerful narrative that challenges dominant perspectives. It reflected the emotional, professional, and cultural realities these women navigate, including isolation, resistance, resilience, and the pursuit of belonging in predominantly White and male-dominated spaces. Through this composite narrative, the counterstory gave voice to often-overlooked truths and centered the agency and insight of Black women in educational technology leadership. The following section presents a thematic analysis of the story and identifies key patterns and

meanings that emerged from their shared experiences.

Thematic Analysis

In this analysis, I presented the recurring themes, evidenced by the data, and explored how the narratives of composite characters, Dr. Trish Parker, Angie Nelson, and Dr. Kristie Wallace reflected the real-world experiences of Black women technology leaders. Their experiences provided insight into the challenges faced, yet overcome by Black women in leadership roles within P-12 educational technology.

Theme 1: Power and Persistence in the Face of Barriers

Black women technology leaders navigate a landscape marked by systemic barriers, heightened scrutiny, and persistent challenges to their credibility. The data revealed that the intersection of race, gender, and social status creates unique obstacles that shape their social and professional experiences. These challenges manifested in three interconnected ways: the need for overqualification, the constant navigation of bias and questioned authority, and the persistent experience of isolation. These barriers not only influenced their day-to-day work but also shaped their career trajectories, leadership styles, and interactions within their districts.

Subtheme 1: Thriving Beyond Expectations. This subtheme highlighted how the participants often found themselves exceeding qualifications only as a choice, but as a necessity to gain recognition and respect. Rather than merely meeting expectations, they consistently outperformed standards to break through systemic barriers. However, instead of viewing overqualification as a burden, this theme reframes the narrative. It becomes a testament to resilience, expertise, and the undeniable value Black women bring to leadership roles.

All of the participants held advanced degrees and most of them reported that they were compelled to pursue additional certifications, advanced degrees, and specialized training to gain recognition and be considered for career advancement in technology leadership. They frequently encountered doubt and skepticism regarding their qualifications, which led them to adopt a proactive approach to credentialing as a means of establishing credibility.

Dr. Meena explained the pressure she felt to obtain a Ph.D. stating, "I pursued a Ph.D. to establish credibility and eliminate doubts about my expertise. As a Black woman in tech leadership, I've always felt an unspoken pressure to be overqualified just to be seen as qualified." Shae echoed this sentiment as she discussed feeling compelled to overprepare:

> I have a bachelor's degree in education, and I later earned a master's in educational technology. I've also completed certifications like Google Certified Educator and Microsoft Innovative Educator. I felt like I had to overprepare to be taken seriously in my role. There's this unspoken rule that as a Black woman, you can't just be good, you have to be exceptional.

These experiences highlight the reality that progression into leadership is rarely straightforward for Black women in technology spaces. Despite holding advanced degrees, certifications, and extensive professional experience, many still encounter systemic barriers that delay or limit their advancement. They often must navigate environments where their expertise is questioned, their authority is undermined, and their presence is exceptional rather than expected. As a result, their paths to leadership frequently involve overcoming a combination of racial bias, gendered assumptions, and

institutional gatekeeping.

Subtheme 2: Leading Through Bias and Doubt. In spaces where their expertise is often questioned, Black women technology leaders demonstrate resilience as they assert their authority. Participants consistently encountered racial and gender-based biases, including having their expertise questioned, their ideas overlooked, and their authority challenged, particularly in male-dominated spaces. Several of the participants described situations where their technical expertise was disregarded or dismissed, even when their knowledge surpassed that of their colleagues.

Dr. Katrina described an experience in which her expertise was overlooked in a district leadership meeting:

> We were discussing a major cybersecurity initiative, and I laid out a well-researched, strategic plan. Instead of engaging with my recommendations, a senior leader turned to someone else in the room, who had zero background in technology and asked for their opinion. It was one of those moments where I could've either let frustration take over or used it as a teaching moment.

This anecdote captures the systemic underestimation of Black women's expertise in technology leadership. The tendency for non-experts to be given more authority or credibility than a qualified Black woman is a recurring challenge.

Kandice reported a similar instance of gendered bias in which she was mistaken for an assistant. She explained, "A major challenge is breaking through stereotypes. For instance, I've had colleagues assume I'm an assistant rather than the director." This experience reinforces the persistent nature of gendered and racialized assumptions in professional spaces, where Black women leaders are often misidentified, underestimated,

or excluded from positions of authority.

The composite counterstory mirrored this reality through Trish's experiences, where she was met with skepticism and doubt despite years of proven success in her district. Angie's struggle to have her contributions acknowledged and Kristie's need to assert herself in decision-making spaces further reflected these experiences. This pattern emphasized the additional, emotional and intellectual labor that Black women must perform to prove their expertise. They are not only expected to deliver results but also to continuously justify their presence and credibility in leadership spaces.

Subtheme 3: Resilience in the Midst of Isolation. Black women in technology leadership often face persistent isolation. However, using a CRT lens, I shifted focus to their strength and perseverance in navigating this challenge. Participants reported experiencing professional and social isolation as a result of being "one of the few" or, in many cases, "the only", Black women in their technology spaces. This isolation displayed in various forms, including a lack of colleagues who shared similar experiences and also limited mentorship opportunities. Jackie described the instinct of Black women to seek out a sense of community and connection when entering a space where they are one of the few. She stated, "I'm quite sure you know the feeling when you walk into a room and 99.9% of the people are White in the space, and you find that one Black person." Jackie's quote captured the deep awareness Black women often experience in predominantly White spaces, where isolation is an unspoken but constant reality. Her words highlighted the instinctive search for familiarity and solidarity; the silent acknowledgment of shared experience when navigating environments where they are one of the few, which further demonstrates the significance of representation and belonging.

The composite counterstory further illustrated this theme through Kristie's experiences. Even in districts where race was not the primary factor influencing isolation, gender and social status still played significant roles. Kristie, for example, worked in a predominantly Black district, but she faced challenges related to gender-based power dynamics. She described instances where male colleagues took credit for her ideas, which reflects a broader issue in which women, particularly Black women, must assert themselves to be heard. Each of these examples highlighted how isolation is compounded by the need to constantly prove oneself, creating an additional layer of stress for Black women in leadership. However, instead of framing isolation as solely a struggle, it becomes a catalyst for resilience, self-reliance, and the creation of intentional support networks. Despite being one of the few, or the only, Black woman in leadership spaces, they continue to thrive, build community, and carve out spaces where their voices are heard and valued.

Theme 2: Champions for Digital Equity

Black women technology leaders serve as powerful advocates for diversity and equity using their leadership to drive systemic change within P-12 public school districts. Their work goes beyond simply implementing technology; they actively seek to dismantle long-standing barriers that have limited access to digital resources for marginalized communities. Understanding that technology can either widen or close opportunity gaps, they take deliberate action to ensure that students from historically underrepresented backgrounds are not left behind in an increasingly digital world.

These leaders understand that equitable access to technology warrants making sure students have the support, training, and culturally responsive resources needed to

participate fully in digital learning. They work tirelessly to provide schools with infrastructure, funding, and policies that promote digital equity, which guarantees that students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and those in rural areas are not at a disadvantage. They advocate by pushing for curriculum changes that integrate diverse perspectives in technology education, so students see themselves represented in the digital tools and content they engage with every day.

Additionally, these women are at the forefront of advocating for more inclusive hiring practices within the field of educational technology. They understand that representation in leadership matters and that students benefit from seeing professionals who look like them in influential positions. By pushing for greater diversity in hiring and promotion, they challenge the traditional structures that have long excluded Black women and other minorities from leadership roles in education and technology. Their leadership is not just about gaining a seat at the table but about reshaping the table itself to be more inclusive, ensuring that all voices, especially those historically silenced, are heard and valued.

Dr. Smith's experiences illustrated this commitment. She stated, "Being a Black woman in leadership means I don't just accept the status quo. I push for systems that work for everybody because I know firsthand what it's like to navigate systems that weren't built with me in mind." Her words captured the essence of what it means to lead with purpose and intention. Rather than simply working within existing structures, Black women in educational technology leadership actively work to transform those structures so that they serve all students equitably. Their experiences shape their leadership, allowing them to identify inequities that others might overlook and push for changes that

create meaningful, lasting impact.

Similarly, Victoria's approach to leadership reflects an awareness that representation in technology is just as important as access:

> For instance, when selecting new technology tools for my district, I don't just look at the flashiest or most popular options. I consider accessibility. Will students with disabilities be able to use this tool seamlessly? Is it designed with multilingual learners in mind? Will students from low-income households, who may not have reliable internet at home, still be able to engage fully? Too often, these considerations come as an afterthought, but for me, they're at the center of decision-making.

Her perspective highlighted the importance of designing and implementing technology initiatives that not only provide students with digital tools but also affirm their identities and experiences. She, like many Black women leaders in technology, understands that when students see themselves represented in technology, they are more likely to engage with it, see its relevance in their lives, and consider future careers in the field.

Through their dedication to equity in access, representation in leadership, and the cultivation of future leaders, Black women in educational technology are reshaping the landscape of digital learning. Their leadership is not just about implementing technology but about ensuring that technology serves as a tool for justice, empowerment, and inclusion. By challenging inequities, advocating for meaningful change, and mentoring the next wave of leaders, they are paving the way for a more equitable and inclusive future in education.

Theme 3: Cultivate Strength Through Community

Participants emphasized the essential role of professional networks and support systems in navigating the challenges they face as Black women in technology leadership within P-12 public school districts. Several noted that their experiences of isolation, bias, and the need to constantly validate their expertise made it imperative to build intentional connections with other women who understood their unique struggles. These networks provided a foundation for mentorship, strategy-sharing, and emotional reinforcement. They created a sense of belonging that countered the exclusion often experienced in predominantly White and male-dominated leadership spaces.

Victoria captured this sentiment, stating, “First and foremost, my professional network of other Black women in educational leadership has been invaluable. These women understand the unique challenges we face and provide a safe space for sharing strategies, celebrating wins, and navigating difficult moments.” This shared experience and mutual understanding fostered a space where participants could be their authentic selves without fear of judgment or misinterpretation. Through these relationships, they were able to exchange insights into handling workplace microaggressions, advocating for necessary resources, and asserting their authority in leadership spaces that often questioned their legitimacy.

Dr. Smith reinforced the deeply personal and sustaining nature of these connections:

> There’s nothing like having a circle of other Black women in leadership who just get it. Whether it’s a text thread, a monthly Zoom check-in, or an impromptu ‘Girl, you won’t believe this’ vent session, these relationships have been a

lifeline.

This quote illustrates how these networks extend beyond formal mentorship into everyday survival mechanisms, that offer strategic advice and an emotional outlet. In an environment where they often found themselves as the "only" Black woman in the room, these relationships counteracted feelings of invisibility and exhaustion. They had a space to be seen, heard, and affirmed.

Beyond peer support, participants also recognized the importance of cultivating relationships with allies who could advocate for their leadership within their districts. They understood that having champions in influential positions was crucial for gaining access to opportunities and ensuring their contributions were recognized. In the counterstory, Kristie and Trish both emphasized the significance of mentorship and sponsorship, particularly in combating professional erasure. They highlighted real-world strategies used by Black women leaders, such as amplifying each other's voices in meetings, intentionally crediting one another's ideas, and pushing back against the appropriation of their work.

Theme 4: Leverage Data to Conquer Challenges

The participants strategically employed data-driven decision-making to counteract subjective biases and challenges to their professional expertise. In environments where their leadership was often scrutinized or questioned, they recognized that empirical evidence provided an irrefutable foundation for their authority. By systematically presenting clear metrics, performance outcomes, and evidence-based strategies, they reframed discussions to focus on measurable impact rather than personal perceptions or assumptions about their capabilities. This deliberate use of data not only reinforced their

credibility but also prompted a shift in organizational culture, encouraging colleagues, administrators, and stakeholders to adopt a more objective lens when evaluating leadership effectiveness.

Victoria's experience exemplified this approach. She articulated the importance of preparation and the strategic use of data to validate her insights, asserting, "I come to every meeting thoroughly prepared, armed with data, research, and clear objectives. Once people see the tangible results of my work, like improved teacher engagement or higher student achievement, they quickly recognize the value of my perspective." Her testimony emphasizes how presenting concrete evidence transformed the way her contributions were perceived. She positioned herself as an authority by consistently demonstrating the direct, positive outcomes of her initiatives instead of engaging in subjective debates about her expertise. Her success in shifting perspectives highlights a pattern among participants: data was not just a tool for analysis, but a powerful mechanism for advocacy, legitimization, and influence within their professional spaces.

Theme 5: Challenge Bias in Real Time

For Black women in technology leadership, addressing bias as it happens is a necessary strategy for change. The participants in this study described how they actively push back against discriminatory narratives and practices in their professional spaces. They did not let microaggressions or systemic inequities go unchallenged. They actively challenged it by dismantling stereotypes, asserting their leadership, and refusing to be sidelined. By standing firm in their knowledge and commanding respect, they reshaped perceptions and redefined what leadership looks like in tech.

Trish illustrated this approach through a personal experience where a colleague

remarked, “You’re surprisingly tech-savvy for someone with your background.” This comment, laden with implicit bias, reinforced stereotypes about who is expected to excel in technology leadership. Trish channeled her frustration into an opportunity for learning. She did not internalize the slight or allow it to go unaddressed. By reframing the moment as a teaching experience, she not only asserted her expertise but also disrupted the colleague’s underlying assumptions.

Similarly, Victoria took a proactive stance in confronting bias across various aspects of decision-making, whether it involved resource allocation, hiring, or technology adoption. She affirmed, “Another practice I’ve embraced is calling out bias, whether it’s in decision-making, resource allocation, or even in the types of technology tools we choose to adopt.” Her words stress the necessity of addressing inequities beyond interpersonal interactions, highlighting how biases can be embedded in institutional choices. By challenging these disparities in real-time, she ensures that Black women’s perspectives and expertise are not overlooked in shaping the technological landscape.

As displayed in the composite counterstory, Kristie, too, exemplified real-time advocacy by refusing to allow gender bias to silence her in professional settings. She actively called out colleagues who dismissed or appropriated her ideas in meetings, an experience echoed by many women in this study. This practice of timely confrontation affirms her presence as a leader and disrupts the pattern of erasure that often sidelines women, particularly Black women, in technology leadership. The experiences shared by Kristie and others reinforce the importance of vocalizing concerns instead of allowing bias to persist unchallenged.

These firsthand accounts illustrated that addressing bias as it occurs is not just

about individual self-advocacy. It is a critical practice for reshaping the culture of technology leadership. By turning moments of exclusion into opportunities for education, calling out inequities in institutional decision-making, and asserting their voices in leadership spaces, these women actively dismantle the barriers that seek to limit their influence.

Theme 6: Embrace Self-Worth and Own Your Space

A recurring theme among the voices of Black women in technology leadership was the importance of embracing one's self-worth and confidently taking up space in professional settings. Too often, women, especially Black women, are conditioned to shrink themselves to accommodate others' comfort or to avoid being perceived as "too much." However, the reflections shared by Dr. Smith, Dr. Meena, and Kandice emphasized the necessity of rejecting self-doubt and fully stepping into leadership roles with confidence and conviction.

Dr. Smith's statement, "Don't dim your light to make others comfortable. Trust your voice and know that your perspective is valuable," demonstrated the importance of self-assurance. Black women in leadership often navigate environments where their expertise is questioned or minimized, but Dr. Smith's advice reinforces the idea that they should not suppress their brilliance to conform to others' expectations. Instead, standing firm in their knowledge and insights is crucial to shifting narratives and influencing change.

Similarly, Dr. Meena urged women to "believe in your worth and don't let self-doubt hold you back." The imposter syndrome that many Black women experience in the technology field can lead them to second-guessing their abilities. Dr. Meena's words

serve as a powerful reminder that confidence is essential, not just for personal success, but for breaking systemic barriers. Her emphasis on surrounding oneself with people who uplift and encourage speaks to the value of community and mentorship in overcoming self-doubt and sustaining resilience.

Kandice's perspective further reinforced the necessity of pushing past fear: "Don't let fear of rejection hold you back. Build a strong network, stay curious, and remember that your perspective is valuable and needed." Her statement highlights both the personal and collective aspects of empowerment. Fear of rejection can be paralyzing, particularly in spaces where Black women remain underrepresented. However, by cultivating curiosity, fostering relationships, and remembering their unique contributions, they can navigate these challenges with greater confidence and purpose.

Together, these insights form a powerful call to action: Black women in technology leadership must resist the urge to shrink themselves, embrace their worth, and confidently take up space. Their voices, ideas, and leadership are not only valuable, but they are also essential.

Summary

The findings of this study highlight the significant yet often overlooked contributions of Black women in technology leadership within the P-12 sector. Through the narratives of composite characters, Dr. Trish Parker, Angie Nelson, and Dr. Kristie Wallace, this research reveals the systemic barriers these women face, including heightened scrutiny, questioned expertise, and professional isolation. They demonstrate remarkable resilience and innovation, consistently exceeding expectations to establish credibility and drive change. They navigate bias and doubt while leading with

confidence, using data-driven strategies and real-time advocacy to assert their authority in spaces where their expertise is repeatedly underestimated. Despite the isolation they often experience, they cultivate strength through community, building professional networks that provide mentorship, validation, and support, ensuring their continued success in the field.

Beyond overcoming barriers, these leaders are powerful advocates for digital equity and inclusive representation in educational technology. They work tirelessly to dismantle structural inequities, to ensure that students from historically marginalized communities have access to technology, digital literacy opportunities, and culturally responsive resources. Their leadership extends beyond their own success, as they actively mentor and uplift the next generation of Black women in technology leadership, highlighting the importance of self-worth, confidence, and ownership of one's space. By challenging exclusionary practices, leveraging data to make impactful decisions, and embracing their value as transformative leaders, these women are not only reshaping the landscape of educational technology but also redefining what leadership looks like in a field that has long overlooked their contributions. Their stories are a testament to the power of resilience, advocacy, and the pursuit of equity in education.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS

Overview

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Race Methodology (CRM) as guiding frameworks, through this research, I sought to amplify the voices of Black women in technology leadership, in a space where their representation remains disproportionately low. The study explored Black women technology leaders' social and professional experiences in P-12 education, examined how their intersectional identities influenced their leadership journeys, and described how they overcame issues they felt stemmed from their race, gender, and social status. A composite counterstory was employed to present the data, which allowed participants' narratives to be interwoven to present a collective perspective on their experiences.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study's key findings, highlighting the central themes that emerged from the data and how they reflect the experiences of Black women in P-12 technology leadership. Next, I offer an in-depth interpretation of these findings and connect participants' insights to broader social, cultural, and institutional dynamics. This discussion also situates the study within the existing literature and demonstrates how it builds upon, challenges, or extends current research in educational leadership, technology, and Critical Race Theory. By doing so, I highlight the significance of centering marginalized voices in academic discourse. Additionally, I

explore the practical implications of the findings for educational policy, leadership development, and equity-focused practices. Finally, I offer recommendations for future research that can further examine the complexities of race, gender, and leadership in educational technology, and continue the work of amplifying underrepresented perspectives in the field.

Summary of the Findings

This study sought to explore the social and professional experiences of Black women technology leaders in P-12 public school settings, with a particular focus on how they perceived the influence of their intersecting racial and gender identities on those experiences. Through a Critical Race Theory (CRT) lens, six overarching themes emerged from the data, offering insight into the challenges these women face and the strategies they employ to persist and lead effectively.

The first theme, Power and Persistence in the Face of Barriers, revealed that participants frequently encountered identity-based challenges in technology spaces. These challenges were organized into three subthemes: Thriving Beyond Expectations, where participants emphasized the need to be overqualified, and often held advanced degrees and certifications to gain access to the field; Leading Through Bias and Doubt, which captured the constant questioning of their authority and expertise, often rooted in racialized and gendered assumptions; and Resilience in the Midst of Isolation, highlighting their experiences as "the only one" in professional spaces, resulting in emotional and professional solitude. Despite these barriers, participants demonstrated agency and resistance, reframing their experiences as sources of strength rather than deficit.

The second theme, Champions for Digital Equity, emphasized the pivotal role Black women technology leaders play in advancing equity and access in schools. Their work extends beyond technology; it is deeply rooted in social justice, as they challenge systemic inequities in digital access and advocate for marginalized communities.

In addressing how they overcome obstacles related to their intersecting identities, four key strategies (themes) emerged. First, Black women technology leaders Cultivate Strength Through Community by building professional networks that offer affirmation, support, and shared understanding. Second, they Leverage Data to Conquer Challenges, using evidence-based practices to assert their leadership and counteract bias. Third, they Challenge Bias in Real Time, by confronting discriminatory behaviors and narratives as they occur and using their voices as tools for resistance and change. Lastly, Black women technology leaders Embrace Their Self-Worth and Own Their Space, by rejecting deficit thinking and asserting their right to lead with confidence and authenticity.

Together, these findings illuminated the complexity, resilience, and transformative leadership of Black women in educational technology, while contributing to a broader understanding of intersectionality, equity, and representation in K-12 leadership contexts.

Interpretation of the Findings

Power and Persistence in the Face of Barriers

This theme aligns closely with Critical Race Theory, which explains how racism operates within the core structures of social institutions including education and professional leadership. Black women in technology leadership actively navigate systems that impose structural barriers and subject them to intense scrutiny, yet they also embody

a spirit of emancipation, liberating themselves from these imposed constraints and asserting their rightful authority. Critical Race Theory emphasizes the significance of intersecting identities such as race, gender, and class in producing layered and compounding forms of marginalization while simultaneously highlighting the resilience and empowered agency of those who overcome them.

The data revealed that these dynamics emerge in three distinct yet interconnected ways. First, participants frequently feel compelled to be overqualified to gain recognition and legitimacy, a testament to both the systemic challenges they face and their relentless quest for emancipation and equality. Second, they continually confront bias and need to defend their authority and expertise with a resolve that challenges traditional power structures and paves the way for self-liberation. Third, professional isolation is a recurring issue as they often find themselves as the only Black person, the only woman, or both in leadership spaces which further stresses their determination to break through the confines of systemic oppression.

These challenges extend beyond the minutiae of daily work; they fundamentally shape how the participants form their leadership identities, build professional relationships, and navigate long-term career advancement. Viewed through the lens of Critical Race Theory, these patterns illustrate not only how structural inequality produces and sustains racialized and gendered power imbalances within educational technology leadership but also how these very participants are emancipating themselves from such inequities and forging a path toward more inclusive and empowered leadership practices.

Thriving Beyond Expectations. All participants in this study shared that they needed to be overqualified to advance or even be considered for roles in educational

technology. Their accounts demonstrate that career progression rarely follows a straightforward path for Black women in this field. This finding aligns with Critical Race Theory (CRT), which challenges deficit-based narratives that frame marginalized individuals as lacking skill or value. Instead of viewing overqualification as a drawback, this theme positions it as a reflection of resilience, determination, and capability. This interpretation supports CRT's emphasis on asset-based perspectives that recognize the strengths within communities of color. Participants' experiences also reveal how institutional norms continue to uphold systemic bias and racial inequity. The pressure to exceed expectations in order to gain recognition illustrates how professional environments hold Black women to a different and often higher standard. CRT also explores how whiteness operates as a form of unacknowledged power and privilege. The participants' accounts support this claim, showing how their performance had to counter deeply ingrained assumptions about who belongs in leadership roles. As Raymundo (2021) argued, perfectionism reinforces White supremacy, racism, and anti-Blackness by demanding unrelenting excellence from those outside the dominant group.

Leading Through Bias and Doubt. Participants reported that colleagues frequently challenged their authority and questioned their expertise. These experiences demonstrate that technology leadership environments remain shaped by racial and gender bias. CRT rejects the idea that institutions function as neutral systems and instead exposes the ways they reinforce dominant power structures. The participants described how they carried the burden of constantly validating their qualifications, which mirrors CRT's concept of "racial labor." This term refers to the additional emotional and intellectual work that people of color must perform to navigate and resist racism. In this

context, Black women leaders must expend energy to prove their competence, which detracts from the time and focus needed to fulfill their professional responsibilities. The participants also explained how their authority often received less respect than that of less qualified peers. These insights illustrate how organizations distribute power unequally and how those imbalances suppress the voices of Black women in leadership roles.

Resilience in the Midst of Isolation. The participants frequently found themselves isolated in their roles, often being the only Black person, the only woman, or both. Their stories reflect a lack of representation and inclusion within technology leadership. CRT critiques the dominance of White and male perspectives and challenges the false neutrality of colorblindness, which denies the ongoing impact of racism. Participants described how they sought out connection and solidarity, which reflects their need for culturally responsive and affirming environments. While CRT examines the harms of systemic oppression, it also highlights the resilience and agency of marginalized individuals. These women did not allow isolation to diminish their leadership. Instead, they created informal support systems and developed strategies for sustaining themselves. Their actions exemplify resistance, which CRT identifies as a critical tool for transforming oppressive structures.

Champions for Digital Equity

Black women technology leaders work to dismantle digital inequities by advocating for marginalized students and communities. They recognize that technology alone cannot close equity gaps and that, without thoughtful implementation, it may worsen existing disparities. Their leadership approaches prioritize access, inclusion, and culturally responsive practices. Gorski (2008) emphasized that technology does not

automatically serve as an equalizer and called for a focus on eliminating the root causes of digital inequity. The participants embodied CRT's concept of "transformative resistance" by using their lived experiences to reimagine and rebuild systems that never accounted for their needs. Dr. Smith, for example, described how her leadership draws directly from her experiences as a Black woman, motivating her to lead with equity at the center. This aligns with Rafalow's (2021) view that schools must evaluate success by how well they serve the most marginalized, not the most privileged.

Cultivating Strength Through Community

Participants described how they built strong professional communities to navigate the isolation and bias they encountered in predominantly White spaces. These networks offered emotional support, strategic guidance, and a sense of belonging. CRT scholars refer to such environments as "counterspaces," which allow marginalized individuals to share experiences, affirm their identities, and access culturally relevant resources. The women used these spaces to validate their expertise and be fully themselves without fear of judgment (Lisle-Johnson & Kohli, 2020). These communities empowered them to lead with confidence and sustain their professional growth.

Leveraging Data to Conquer Challenges

Participants used data strategically to challenge bias and affirm their leadership. In environments where colleagues often questioned their decisions, these women relied on empirical evidence to support their choices. By using performance metrics, measurable outcomes, and data-driven strategies, they shifted the focus away from subjective perceptions and toward documented results. CRT points out that systemic racism often operates through practices that appear objective or neutral (Delgado &

Stefancic, 2023). The participants' reliance on data reveals how they navigate these dynamics by turning a system's tools into instruments of advocacy and credibility (Kressler et al., 2019).

Challenging Bias in Real Time

Participants consistently addressed bias as it happened. They shared how they refused to remain silent in the face of microaggressions, discrimination, or disrespect. Instead, they directly challenged stereotypes and asserted their authority in professional settings. This approach reflects CRT's emphasis on resistance and the power of naming and confronting injustice. By addressing bias in the moment, these leaders modeled a proactive strategy for change and empowered others to do the same.

Embracing Self-Worth and Owning Their Space

Participants described a strong commitment to affirming their self-worth and claiming space in environments that often sought to marginalize them. This theme reflects CRT's challenge to deficit narratives and its insistence on centering the voices and experiences of people of color. Rather than internalizing negative stereotypes, the participants actively resisted messages that questioned their value. They embraced confidence, leadership, and authenticity. This act of self-affirmation counters the silencing effect of dominant norms and helps redefine what leadership looks like in educational technology. Their presence and persistence reshaped spaces that were not initially built for them and paved the way for future leaders to do the same (Lisle-Johnson & Kohli, 2020).

Literary Connections

While previous research has well established the persistent underrepresentation of Black women in educational leadership, particularly within technology (Alston, 2012; Farinde-Wu, 2018; Jang & Alexander, 2022; Johnson, 2021; Milner & Howard, 2004), this study offers a critical expansion of that narrative. This research moves beyond solely documenting exclusion to foreground the strategic ways Black women lead, resist, and transform educational technology spaces. Through their stories, this study illuminates how Black women are not only challenging structural barriers but also redefining what leadership looks like through intentional and equity-focused practice. This shift from deficit-based framing to an asset-based, counter-narrative approach is one of the study's most significant contributions.

A particularly novel insight that emerged from the data is the extent to which these leaders view overqualification not as a burden but as a strategic necessity. In contrast to mainstream leadership literature, which often assumes a linear or meritocratic pathway to leadership, participants in this study described an unspoken expectation to be exceptional, often holding multiple advanced degrees or certifications to even be considered for roles. This finding reinforces Critical Race Theory's critique of meritocracy and neutrality in professional advancement, showing how standards of excellence are not equally applied. Yet, rather than being diminished by these expectations, participants embraced their expertise as a source of power. This nuanced perspective deepens our understanding of how Black women leverage credentials not only for validation but also to disrupt racialized assumptions about who is qualified to lead in technology.

Equally important is how this study documents the strategic use of data by participants to establish credibility and drive institutional change. While existing scholarship supports the value of data-informed leadership (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016; Marsh & Farrell, 2015), few studies examine how Black women use data as both a protective mechanism and an advocacy tool. In this study, participants did not simply comply with data mandates; they led with data. They used it to affirm their decisions, defend their leadership, and shift conversations from subjective bias to objective outcomes. This extends the discourse on data-driven leadership by centering its use as an instrument of resistance and systemic accountability, which aligns with Critical Race Theory's assertion that what is deemed neutral is often imbued with bias unless intentionally interrogated.

Another unique contribution of this study lies in its examination of how participants cultivated peer networks and informal support systems to mitigate professional isolation. Prior literature acknowledges the lack of formal mentorship for Black women (Moore, 2013), but this study highlights how participants proactively built what Critical Race Theory scholars refer to as counterspaces (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), spaces of shared experience, affirmation, and leadership development. These networks were not merely supportive; they were sites of strategic collaboration and empowerment where participants shared resources, elevated one another's work, and modeled sustainable leadership practices. This community-based leadership challenges traditional hierarchical models and emphasizes the transformative potential of collective agency.

Perhaps most compelling is how participants framed their work as inherently tied to justice. Their leadership extended beyond technical implementation to address

systemic inequities in digital access, policy, and pedagogy. This expands on existing scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010) by shifting the lens from culturally responsive teaching to culturally responsive leadership in digital equity. Participants described how their lived experiences as Black women sharpened their awareness of marginalization and informed their approach to decision-making. In doing so, they exemplified what Critical Race Theorists define as transformative resistance, not simply navigating inequity but intentionally working to dismantle it.

This study also sheds light on how Black women technology leaders address bias not only through long-term advocacy but also in the immediacy of day-to-day interactions. Participants described confronting microaggressions and stereotypes in real time, using these moments to assert their expertise and educate others. These acts of resistance were not isolated; they were habitual, practiced, and purposeful. By documenting these moments, this study surfaces a critical dimension of leadership that often goes unrecognized: the emotional and intellectual labor required to consistently resist marginalization while still performing and excelling in one's role.

Finally, this study stresses the significance of self-worth and identity affirmation as foundational to leadership. Participants did not separate their personal identities from their professional lives; instead, they led from a place of confidence and cultural clarity. This directly contributes to the literature by emphasizing that empowered leadership is not about assimilation but about authenticity. The participants' reflections challenge institutional norms that often silence or suppress the voices of women of color and suggest that cultivating leadership environments where identity is affirmed can strengthen not only individual leaders but the systems they serve.

In centering the voices and strategies of Black women technology leaders, this study fills a critical gap in educational technology and leadership literature. It moves beyond documenting exclusion to highlight how these women resist, reimagine, and reshape leadership from within. Grounded in Critical Race Theory, this work contributes a compelling and much-needed reframing of leadership that honors intersectionality, advances equity, and recognizes Black women not as exceptions but as experts, change agents, and architects of transformative practice.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The findings of this study present critical implications for practice and policy in educational leadership and technology. The experiences of Black women technology leaders highlight the urgent need for intentional and equity-focused transformation in how school systems cultivate, support, and retain diverse leadership. State education departments and public school districts should focus on creating leadership development programs that not only promote diversity but also address the systemic barriers that prevent equitable access to technology leadership roles. For example, districts can establish targeted leadership pipelines for women of color, offering structured mentorship, sponsorship, and coaching to support their advancement into roles such as Chief Technology Officers or Directors of Educational Technology. These programs should include professional learning communities that encourage peer support and provide opportunities for visibility, skill development, and participation in strategic decision-making. By doing so, districts support the advancement of Black women while also creating pathways for other qualified candidates from underrepresented backgrounds, enriching the leadership landscape with a broader range of perspectives.

In addition to leadership development, educational institutions must embed intersectionality into their technology and digital equity policies. This means recognizing how race, gender, and social identity influence access to technology and participation in professional learning. Instead of relying on surface-level solutions such as distributing devices or offering generic training sessions, schools should critically examine how disparities in resources, opportunities, and implementation reflect broader structural inequities. For instance, school systems can conduct equity audits that disaggregate data by race and gender to identify which educators are excluded from advanced digital training or decision-making roles in technology planning. They can then implement targeted support and resources to close these gaps. Furthermore, technology policies should prioritize culturally responsive practices, inclusive curriculum integration, and equitable infrastructure investments. Integrating intersectionality into leadership and technology strategies ensures that decisions reflect the realities of diverse communities and promote digital learning environments that are both inclusive and innovative.

Finally, the field must prioritize increasing representation in educational technology research and decision-making processes. A central insight from this study is the importance of amplifying the voices and perspectives of Black women in shaping policy, practice, and research agendas. Institutions and organizations should establish mechanisms for Black women leaders to participate in policy development, serve on advisory councils, and contribute to academic and practitioner research. This also includes funding and supporting studies that center their experiences and expertise, as well as ensuring their inclusion in professional conferences, publications, and leadership forums. Without representation in these influential spaces, educational technology efforts

risk reinforcing the very inequities they aim to address. By ensuring that Black women are actively shaping the future of educational technology, schools and systems can create more just, responsive, and impactful approaches to leadership and learning.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into the experiences of Black women technology leaders, it is important to acknowledge two limitations. The first limitation was the sample size, as the study focused on a small group of Black women in P-12 education. I argue that the depth and richness of their narratives ensured that the findings remained meaningful and impactful. Rather than aiming for generalizability, the study prioritized an in-depth exploration of lived experiences, making it a strong contribution to qualitative research. However, future studies with larger participant groups could build on these insights to further expand the understanding of Black women's leadership experiences in educational technology, particularly in the P-12 public schools.

The second limitation was the study's regional focus, which primarily included participants from southern states. It is possible that due to this limitation, the study may not fully capture the experiences of Black women technology leaders in other regions. Nevertheless, by centering participants' narratives within a strong theoretical framework (CRT) and identifying recurring themes, the key findings remain relevant beyond the geographic locations studied. Expanding future research to include a more geographically diverse participant pool could further enhance the understanding of how regional factors influence the leadership experiences of Black women in educational technology. Scholars may consider rural and urban districts, different states, or even international contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the results of this study, future research should explore leadership pathways beyond P–12 education to examine how the experiences of Black women in educational technology leadership compare across higher education, corporate edtech, and government policy roles. Investigating these trajectories can provide a deeper understanding of the systemic barriers and opportunities that exist across sectors, as well as the transferable strategies that support career mobility and influence across educational ecosystems.

In addition, future research should examine the motivations and entry points that guide Black women into technology leadership roles within P-12 education. While much of the existing literature focuses on challenges and underrepresentation, relatively little is known about what inspires and sustains Black women's interest in educational technology. Understanding their pathways**,** from early exposure and academic interests to professional transitions and credentialing**,** can illuminate the structural supports, cultural influences, and personal aspirations that shape leadership development in this field. Such research can help create more accessible and inclusive pipelines into technology leadership by informing the design of targeted recruitment and preparation programs.

Research should also continue to investigate the critical role of mentorship and sponsorship in supporting the advancement of Black women in educational technology. Examining the structure and impact of both formal and informal support networks may reveal promising mentorship models and guide the creation of sustainable systems that foster leadership growth. In particular, exploring how peer mentorship, affinity-based networks, and cross-sector collaborations contribute to career resilience would extend

current understandings of support in leadership trajectories.

Another vital area for inquiry involves organizational culture and leadership style, particularly in relation to the retention, satisfaction, and effectiveness of Black women in technology leadership. Exploring how workplace climate, institutional norms, and leadership approaches influence their ability to lead and innovate could identify conditions that foster inclusive environments. Similarly, evaluating how Black women leaders shape and drive digital equity initiatives would offer critical insights into how leadership diversity enhances the effectiveness of technology policy and implementation, particularly in historically marginalized school communities.

Beyond structural and organizational factors, future scholarship should also engage with the psychological and emotional dimensions of leadership. Investigating the emotional labor, coping mechanisms, and wellness strategies employed by Black women in educational technology roles could inform district policies that promote well-being, psychological safety, and sustainable leadership. A more holistic understanding of the personal toll and resilience strategies embedded in their experiences would enrich the discourse on leadership equity.

By expanding research in these directions, scholars can continue to amplify the voices and contributions of Black women in educational technology leadership while informing policies and practices that promote equity, inclusion, and innovation. Advancing these lines of inquiry will deepen the field's understanding of leadership as an intersectional and relational practice and will ensure that the future of educational technology reflects and responds to the needs of diverse communities.

Conclusion

This study makes a critical contribution to the expanding discourse on the intersection of race, gender, and technology leadership in P-12 education by centering the experiences of Black women who serve in these roles. Historically, the voices of Black women in educational technology leadership have been marginalized, and their contributions overlooked in predominant discussions. By highlighting their narratives, this research not only challenges majoritarian frameworks that often depict technology leadership as race- and gender-neutral but also exposes the systemic barriers that shape the professional experiences of Black women in this space.

The results of this study reveal the multifaceted challenges these leaders encounter, including racial and gender biases, limited access to professional advancement opportunities, and the constant need to prove their expertise in predominantly White, male-dominated spaces. However, instead of solely focusing on adversity, this research also sheds light on the remarkable resilience, strategic innovation, and community-driven leadership that Black women bring to educational technology. Their ability to navigate institutional constraints while driving meaningful change emphasizes their role as transformational leaders who reimagine technology's impact on student learning, equity, and inclusion.

Moreover, this study situates these narratives within the broader context of systemic change. The need for educational institutions, policymakers, and technology organizations to recognize and dismantle the structural barriers that hinder Black women's full participation and advancement in leadership is critical. Addressing these inequities requires intentional efforts, such as equitable hiring practices, mentorship

programs, leadership development initiatives, and culturally responsive policies that acknowledge and support diverse leadership experiences.

Moving forward, the scholarly conversation must amplify these perspectives and actively work to disrupt exclusionary practices that perpetuate inequities in educational technology leadership. A truly inclusive and equitable approach to technology leadership must reflect the diversity of the students it serves. We must ensure that decision-making power is distributed across a representative range of voices and experiences. By sustaining and expanding this discourse, we can move closer to a future where Black women in technology leadership are not only visible but fully empowered to shape the policies, innovations, and educational transformations that define 21st-century learning.

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Appendix A

Protocol Exemption Report

Institutional Review Board (IRB)
for the Protection of Human Research Participants

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04504-2024

Responsible Researcher(s): Senica Troutman

Supervising Faculty:
Drs. Regina Suriel, James Martinez, & Nicole Gunn

Project Title:
Daring to Belong: A Composite Counter-Narrative of Black Women's Experiences as P-12 School Technology Directors.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research study.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS & REMINDERS:

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** the recording of interview sessions provided recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings. Therefore, upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview session must be deleted from all recording and storage devices used.*
- *In keeping with established consent guidelines, audio/video recordings must include the researcher reading aloud the consent statement, confirming participant understanding, and establishing their willingness to take part in the interview. Participants must be provided with a copy of the research statement. The transcript must document the researcher reading and obtaining consent.*
- *Upon completion of the research study all data (e.g. data, pseudonym list, email list, transcripts, etc.) must be securely maintained (e.g. locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a **minimum of 3 years**. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

☒ ***Please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at tmwright@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth W. Olphie *04.29.2024*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-259-5045.

Revised: 06.02.16

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Understanding the Social and Professional Experiences of Black Women Technology Directors

Objective: The objective of this interview protocol is to gather in-depth insights into the social and professional experiences of Black women serving as technology directors/leaders. This includes exploring their career trajectories, experiences of diversity and inclusion within their roles, challenges faced, strategies for success, and the impact of their identity on their professional journey.

Interview 1

Duration: 60-90 minutes

- **Introduction**
  - Ask the participant if I can record.
  - Read consent statement.
  - Present a brief overview of the study's purpose.
  - Present a brief overview of the interview's purpose.
  - Reiterate the confidentiality and use of data.
- **Background Information**
  - Tell me about your career journey leading up to your current technology.
  - What inspired you to pursue a career in technology?
  - Tell me about any individuals who may have encouraged your trajectory towards the educational technology space.
  - Technology is a space dominated by White males. What concerns related to your gender or race did you have when applying for your current technology leadership position?
  - Please describe your educational background.
  - What, if, any, additional certifications did you obtain for the position?
  - Do you feel that your identity (being a Black woman) applying for a leadership position required that you have an advanced education? Please expand on your answer?
- **Professional Experiences**
  - How do you feel now that you have been working as an EdTech leader for some time?
  - Do you feel that your voice is heard, and other school leaders value your decisions and input?

- What are some of the significant challenges you have faced in your position, and how have you addressed them?
- How do you perceive your identity specifically, your race, gender, and social status has impacted your experiences and professional relationships? Please share an example.
- Share any instances of bias or discrimination you've encountered and how you dealt with them?
- Tell me how your identity (being a Black woman) has affected the decisions you make?

❖ **Support and Strategies for Success**
- What types of support systems or networks have you found most beneficial in your position?
- Share any strategies or practices that have helped you succeed in your role?
- How do you advocate for diversity and inclusion within your team or organization?

❖ **Reflections and Advice**
- Looking back, what advice would you give to your younger self or other young Black women aspiring to leadership roles in technology?
- What changes do you hope to see in the EdTech industry to support the advancement of Black women and other underrepresented groups?

❖ **Conclusion**

❖ Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered?

Thank the participants for their time and insights.

Discuss the next steps, including how the information will be used and any follow-up actions.

Ethical Considerations:

This protocol is designed to be adaptive and sensitive to the needs and experiences of each participant, recognizing the diversity of experiences among Black women in technology leadership roles.

Appendix C

Participant Recruitment


Research Participants Wanted!
NEEDED:
Black Women
Technology Director
Chief Information Officer
Chief Technology Officer
Digital Learning Officer
Director of Instructional Technology
IT Director
Chief Innovation Officer
Educational Technology Director
Brief Description:
This study seeks to explore the social and professional experiences of Black women working as Technology Directors in P-12 public school systems in the U.S.
Participant Criteria:
• Self-identifies as Black or an African-American woman
• Currently works as a Technology Director in a public school system in the U.S. or worked as a Technology Director in a public school system in the U.S. within the last 5 years [Note: Official Title may vary]
• Must currently or have previously worked at the district level
• At least one year of experience as a Technology Director
Contact me at
sntroutman@valdosta.edu
I'M INTERESTED
Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Senica Troutman at sntroutman@valdosta.edu. This study has been approved by the Valdosta State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Research Participants. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.