

5-31-2018

Reimagining the Discourse: Media Representation of Women in Boston Public Schools' Superintendency, 1991 - 2016

Lisa M. Cullington

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REIMAGINING THE DISCOURSE: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' SUPERINTENDENCY, 1991 - 2016

A Dissertation Presented

by

LISA M. CULLINGTON

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies,
University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2018

Urban Education, Leadership, and Policy Studies Program

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ABSTRACT

REIMAGINING THE DISCOURSE: MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS' SUPERINTENDENCY, 1991-2016

May 2018

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This study examines the relationship among public discourse, power and leadership for women superintendents in Boston Public Schools. For this qualitative study, I use a feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) to examine newspaper articles from *The Boston Globe* from 1991 to 2016. Through a FPDA, I illuminate the ways in which women superintendents have been discursively produced amidst neoliberal educational reform movements. In this study, I focus on how the superintendent's role was conceptualized as a male endeavor in *The Boston Globe*, and the implications of this for current educational leaders.

Two major discursive stages frame the study's time period: *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* and *Superintendent as Collaborator* (Brunner,

Grogan, & Bjork, 2002). In the first discursive stage, superintendents focused navigating complex city politics and politicians invested in the quality of educational programs. During the second discursive stage, superintendents had to work *with* rather than *over* others. Superintendents in larger urban communities needed to collaborate and engage communities of color.

This study examines four superintendents: Lois Harrison Jones (1991-1995), Thomas Payzant (1995-2006), Carol Johnson (2007-2013), and Tommy Chang (2015-present). The findings fall into three categories: (1) superintendent as a capable leader; (2) superintendent as a politician or educator; and (3) superintendent as a community ally. For each category, gendered and racialized discourses play a key role in the superintendent's positioning. This study suggests that the discursive stages are insufficient in the depiction of a superintendent in local media. Intersections of race and gender, situated in the discursive stage's context, provide a more nuanced analysis. By understanding this intersection, superintendents can identify how these discourses impact their subject positions and use this understanding in their practice. Lastly, the analysis shows a need for a new discursive stage focused on the prominence of neoliberalism in educational reforms in order to fully address educational leadership in the twenty-first century.

DEDICATION

To my family, for your patience.

To my husband, for unconditionally supporting and loving me.

To my dogs, Winston and Charlotte, for all your cuddles.

To my mom, the first woman leader in my life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

When I talk about going to school for my Ph.D., I often say it is one of the hardest things I had ever done in my life—which is the truth. I had never experienced something that challenged me intellectually, emotionally, and physically to this *degree*, for this *length of time*. This process was both humbling and inspiring. Without the help of the following people, this most certainly would not have been completed.

To my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Francine Menashy, my gratitude covers a multitude of things: your academic insight and eternal support, your ability to see solutions when my head was clouded, and for knowing when to put the pen down and rest.

To my second reader, Dr. Zeena Zakharia. Working with you in the fall semester of 2015 became a turning point in my thinking about my work. Without you, this would be a very different dissertation.

To my third reader, Dr. Stephanie Yuhl. As an undergraduate student, you ignited feminism in my soul. This work would never be complete without your guidance and input. Thank you for always raising the bar for me and supporting me to get there.

To the 2013 Cohort, an amazing group of women who have challenged me, supported me, laughed with (and at) me, and commiserated with me. Thank you for the courage to keep going on.

To my family, you have supported me for many years, but in these past five, you have gone above and beyond. You have graced me with your understanding, your love, and your patience.

To my husband, I met you two days before my first class in the Summer of 2013. Still, you decided to stick around even though I was often off reading, writing, or thinking in some parallel universe. Thank you for your unwavering support over the past five years and for believing in me even when I couldn't. Now, it is *our* time.

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CHAPTER 1
RATIONAL FOR STUDYING WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS IN THE URBAN
CONTEXT

Introduction

Throughout much of the twentieth century, education has been discursively framed as a feminine domain and an extension of the private sphere. Although there has been a recent increase in the number of superintendents who are women in the United States public school systems, the actual number of women in the superintendent role remains remarkably low (AASA, 2015; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). According to the American Association of School Administrators (AASA), in 2015, women only comprised of 26.9 percent of superintendents nation-wide (AASA, 2015). This was only a minimal increase from 24.1 percent superintendents in 2010 (AASA, 2010). Within the 26.9 percent of women superintendents nation-wide, only 11 percent identified as a woman of color. In 2015, only 5 percent of superintendents identified as a man of color. While teaching in public schools initially began as a male only profession, education laws and the expansion of public education in the early nineteenth century brought with it an increased need for teachers, particularly women teachers (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1999; Tallerico & Blount,

2004). Yet, as women started to move into the teaching profession, the ranks of administration remained predominantly occupied by men.

The masculinization of educational administrative roles and the subsequent redefining of these roles as traditional “men’s work” mirrors the feminization of teaching roles and the subsequent definition of teaching as traditional “women’s work.” Blount (1998) argues that the superintendency, and educational leadership more broadly, masculinized to provide men a “safe, acceptably masculine” (p. 3) space in a largely feminized field. Accordingly, leadership became an endeavor only for men, with the superintendency as “one of the most heavily white and masculinized roles in our culture” (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p. 12). While 65 percent of the educational workforce was held by women in the 1990’s, women were around 14 percent of the nation’s superintendents (Blount, 1998; Glass et al., 2000; Shakeshaft, 1999). Although the number has increased marginally, the number of superintendents of color has increased at a faster rate for women than men (AASA, 2015).

Ability to enact and contribute to the creation of discourses depicting leadership mediates women’s access to the superintendency throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Participation as an “acting subject” within these discourses creates real power for women in their leadership. This participation involves women leaders impacting “the topics or the referents of discourse, that is who is written or spoken *about* [emphasis in the original]” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 86). Additionally, power is enacted through the “capacity to ‘articulate’ and to make those articulations not only ‘stick’ but become hegemonic and pervasive” (Wetherell, 1998, p. 395). These “hegemonic and

pervasive” articulations are smaller excerpts of larger gendered and racialized discourses. The interplay between gender and race provide a unique landscape in which women of color lead urban public schools. As such, this study examines the relationship among public discourse, power, and leadership for women as superintendents in urban districts. This dissertation examines the relationship between women superintendents in Boston Public Schools and local media sources through a historical feminist poststructural discourse analysis of *The Boston Globe* from 1991 to 2006.

This chapter begins by documenting historical data on women superintendents throughout the United States in the twentieth century. I discuss the arc of the data in conjunction with the specifics of each historical moment. After establishing an increase of women as superintendents nation-wide, I complicate this notion, propose several research questions that guide the study, and identify some major implications for Boston, Massachusetts (the location of this study). In Boston, busing as a vehicle of racial integration formally ended in 1989. The following year, the Boston School Committee named an African American woman as superintendent. From 1991 to 2016 (the focus of this study), two of the four permanent superintendents of Boston Public Schools were African American women. As such, chapter one identifies the data on women superintendents by race and gender. In chapter two, I review the relevant bodies of literature. First, I discuss employment related theories and previous studies focused on gender and employment. Then, to complement the history of the women superintendency, I outline the history of the discourse depicting the superintendency. I highlight the two discursive stages relevant for this study. Lastly, I apply a theoretical framework using

feminist poststructuralism. I define several key conceptual terms and explain their implications for this study. In chapter three, I outline the research methodology used to carry out this study, review the relevant approaches to discourse analysis and evaluate these approaches for this study. Then, I explain the specific decisions around data sources and the data analysis plan. In chapter four, I detail the findings of the study through three analytical themes derived from my analytical memos during the research process. In chapter five, I present a larger discussion on public discourse, power, and leadership for women as superintendents in Boston Public Schools. Finally, I detail the implications for research and practice and the limitations of the study. I end with a discussion of future research goals based on the findings of this study.

History of Women Superintendents in the Twentieth Century

The number of women superintendents throughout the twentieth century has fluctuated in response to various historical events and key policy changes. At the turn of the twentieth century, the masculinization of administrative roles coincided with the framing of teaching as an extension of the home and domestic life. By being part of the home life, teaching assumed a position in the private sphere, which was considered a feminine realm of life during this time (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). However, domestic and international events changed educational employment trends. Tyack and Hansot (1981) term the early years of the twentieth century as the “golden age” for women in educational leadership. From 1910 to 1930, the number of women superintendents increased largely due to the women’s suffrage movement and World War I. This minimal increase ranged from 9 percent of superintendents as women in 1910 to 11 percent of

superintendents as women in 1930 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Despite being considered a “golden age,” the increase was only 2 percent. Additionally, at the same time, World War I increased the number of men needed in the military branches. These changes in the home front, combined with the expansion of women’s rights through the women’s suffrage movement, transformed economic and career opportunities for women. During this time, superintendents were elected, not appointed (Blount, 1998; Gribskov, 1980; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Consequently, some politically active women’s groups associated with the suffrage movement supported women in their pursuit of the superintendency (Tallerico & Blount, 2004).

By World War II, the landscape of gender equality in the U.S. workforce started to change. In the decades after the war, it changed dramatically. The 1930s to 1970s saw a decrease in the number of women superintendents from a high of 11 percent in 1930 to a low of 3 percent in 1970 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Although there was a marginal decrease from 1930 to 1945, the most dramatic decrease occurred from 1945 (10 percent) to 1970 (3 percent) (Blount, 1998). Several factors explain this decline. First, the superintendent was no longer an elected position and the momentum built by the women’s suffrage movement fractured. The right to vote served as a unifying force and after suffrage was won, the women’s rights movement splintered in that many women’s groups began to shift their attention to a more diverse set of issues and concerns (Blount, 1998). Women’s groups advocated and fought for a whole range of issues, and the end of this unification led many groups to develop additional foci for their reform agendas.

Additionally, in the 1940s, many states created new, special training and requirements to obtain the credentials needed for the superintendency. This, combined with “an era of low quotas on the number of women being admitted into higher education programs” (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 643) created an environment that did not support women as school district leaders. Several changes influenced this “era of low quotas,” including university level policies of limiting the number of doctorates awarded to women, tremendous financial costs of obtaining such degrees (particularly difficult for lower salaried teachers who were more likely to be women), shifts of cultural gender roles in response to fears of the Cold War, and societal obstacles that negatively impacted these women (Davis & Samuelson, 1950). The introduction of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (also known as the G.I. Bill) further alienated women from the superintendency. The G.I. Bill dramatically expanded higher education for veterans (a group that was predominantly men). Federal support, in this manner, enabled men who were veterans to obtain advanced degrees in many fields, including school administration (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Finally, the 1950s brought a consolidation of school districts and, consequently, less superintendent positions. This decreased number of opportunities often led to districts selecting men over women as consolidated districts were discursively reproduced as “men’s work” (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1999; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Several scholars have debated the reason for this preference for male candidates, however, Tallerico and Blount’s (2004) conceptualization of job and labor queues, reviewed in chapter two, provide an essential analysis of this issue within

the context of this study. The consolidation of districts in the 1950s ultimately led to what Tallerico and Blount (2004) coin as “labor queues.” The decrease in the number of school districts led to a decrease in the number of superintendent positions. As such, employers ranked their candidates in a hierarchy of desirability (a labor queue), which privileged men over women in the candidate pool (see chapter two for a full discussion).

From the 1970s to present day, there has been an upswing in the number of women superintendents throughout the country. After starting at a low of 3 percent of superintendents in 1970, the number increased to 10 percent in 1998 (Tallerico & Blount, 2004), continuing to increase to 26.9 percent in 2015 (AASA, 2015). As a result, the number of women in the role has reached the highest it has ever been, throughout the United States. The expansion of women’s rights and the modern women’s movement, as manifested in legislation such as the Women’s Educational Equity Act of 1974 and its reauthorization in 1984, fueled this increase throughout the last decades of the twentieth century (Women’s Educational Equity Act, 1984). Despite this expansion of the women’s rights movement, the number of women in the superintendency has never reached more than 26.9 percent of superintendents nation-wide. Moreover, states are changing certification procedures for administrative roles and some states have eliminated teaching experience as a requirement. This has opened the door for corporate, military, and government leaders (fields dominated by male leaders) to assume roles as superintendents. Scholarship reminds us that “women have not yet attained, or ever sustained over time, equitable representation in school administration” (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). More research is needed to document whether the patterns of the twentieth

century will continue into the twenty-first century or if women will truly gain access to the superintendency in unprecedented ways. This is particularly useful as the results of an educational reform agenda dominated by neoliberal reform policies come into being in the early twenty-first century. Later in this study, I will identify how neoliberal reform agendas may influence the discursive framing of educational leaders in the twenty-first century.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

While scholars have employed certain theoretical approaches to document statistics of women as superintendents and why these women become superintendents, scholars have not presented a significant body of research in the realm of the *discourse* of public school superintendence for women. There is, however, a body of literature that investigates the discourse of public school superintendence in general (Brunner, Grogan, & Bjork, 2002; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). This review of the literature suggests the presence of three gaps regarding women and the superintendency research. First, the research lacks longitudinal data sets on the number of women who assume the superintendency. This data could document whether the patterns of the twentieth century have continued in the twenty-first century. Second, a robust conceptual framework that adequately analyzes how and why women gain access to the superintendent position is absent from the literature. Third, the literature lacks a historical analysis that focuses on the development of gendered discourses of the superintendency throughout the twentieth century. With regards to the first gap, research suggests that the number of women as superintendents is growing nation-wide (AASA, 2010; AASA, 2015; Ortiz, 2001;

Tallerico & Blount, 2004). However, more detailed information about these women is still undocumented. There is a strong call for a more nuanced understanding of where the number of women as leaders is growing, specifically looking at in which districts, in which regions of the country and to what degree it is expanding (Tallerico & Blount, 2004). This study is not designed to answer such quantitative questions. It operates on the assumption that the number of women in the role is growing (AASA, 2010; AASA, 2015; Ortiz, 2001; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). This study aims to address how discourses were constructed from 1991 to 2016 to mirror the growth during that time and how these discourses may inform the future growth of women in educational leadership. As such, this study addresses gaps two and three.

Mainstream U.S. society consistently privileges some over the many. The privileged few seem to share similar characteristics. Despite recent advancements in civil rights, and more specifically women's rights, the patriarchal systems structuring United States society permeate in even more subtle and pervasive ways. One of the most pervasive problems is that the recent increase in the number of superintendents and leaders, more generally, who are women, has caused a post-sexist understanding of leadership in U.S. public education. The incremental increase of women as superintendents has fueled the notion that sexism is no longer an issue.

In this study, I focus on how the superintendency has been conceptualized as a male endeavor in print media, and how these public gendered discourses might be explained by historical events. Print media is utilized to unearth what "public" discourses are available to the public and those working in the educational field. This is critical as

education is a public good and as such, urban educational reform may have a relationship with these public discourses of gender, power, and leadership for women superintendents. Public discourses, and the analysis of them, can “describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced and legitimized by text and talk” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 84). Due to this focus, the following research questions guide the study:

Guiding Question: What were the ways in which public discourses depicting superintendents were gendered from 1991 to 2016 in Boston, Massachusetts?

- Sub- Question 1: How were the public discourses depicting women superintendents in Boston constructed in print media from 1991 to 2016?
- Sub-Question 2: How have historical events and policy changes shaped these public discourses?
- Sub-Question 3: What do these public discourses suggest for educational leaders?

I investigated these questions by focusing on the discursive shifts present in local media during times of changing leadership in Boston Public Schools.

Urban Context and Rationale

Women have been underrepresented at the highest levels of leadership in United States public schools since the creation of the superintendency in the 1800s. This disparity is particularly important for the urban context as many educational reforms are aimed at serving low income, students of color in larger urban school districts. As a result, educational researchers, policy makers, and advocates have contributed to an increased call for “social justice” in urban education. Despite this influx of social justice “talk” about reform, normative views around the masculinization of leadership,

particularly in the superintendency, are still pervasive. While some research has been conducted in this area (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 2000; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1999, Tallerico & Blount, 2004), further research will illuminate how women gain access to the superintendent role and what potential benefits this could create for students in large urban school districts. This study unearths some of these potential benefits. The quest for a more inclusive leadership team is not solely for mere appearance. A more diverse pool of superintendents nation-wide encourages a diverse range of perspectives to be included in decision-making, ultimately leading to more effective programming and school systems for the increasingly diverse student population in United States public school systems.

This study's focus on urban schools as a location for employment of adults serves educational policy makers and educational leadership, more broadly, by illuminating larger concerns about power and leadership. Through interaction with young people, schools are sites where these notions about power and leadership can be reinforced and perpetuated to future generations. Constructions of what constitutes a leader and which groups of people have access to power is particularly important for the urban context as the number of women in higher levels of school administration is on the rise. Within the United States' largest urban school districts, women represent almost 50 percent of the school district administrators. While this number is promising, only 17 percent of urban superintendents are women (Mertz & McNeely, 1994; Ortiz, 2001; Tallerico & Blount, 2004). Gendered discourses of the superintendency are especially relevant for large, urban communities due to the increase of gender diversity in leadership, a growth

occurring at a faster rate than districts with enrollments of 300 to 2,999 and 3,000 to 24,999 students (Ortiz, 2001). Subsequently, the discourses utilized in urban districts are especially impactful in these spaces where there is a larger presence of women in leadership roles (Ortiz, 2001).

More specifically, within the urban context, the number of Black women as superintendents is growing at a faster rate than white or Latina women. The increase of Black women complicates the explanation of low numbers for women in the role. Scholars have argued that the separation of the private and public spheres has blocked women from acquiring and sustaining employment outside of the home. Hill Collins (1990) argues “this public/private dichotomy...shapes sex-segregated gender roles within the private sphere of the family” (p. 46). The private sphere, or the home, is constructed as a “space for women,” while the public sphere, or paid employment outside of the home, is constructed as “space for men.” This understanding does not, however, include Black women’s experiences. The public/private dichotomy arising as a gendered dichotomy is not “a universal institution,” but arises “only in particular political and economic contexts” (p. 47). These social policies often impacted women in gendered and racialized ways as Black women often straddled both private and public spheres. In fact, this cultural construction of a public/private dichotomy as a means of social organization produces gendered and racialized subjects within a discursive context (Naples, 2003).

Despite this dichotomy, “Black women’s work remains a fundamental location where the dialectical relationship of oppression and activism occurs” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 46). Paid Black women labor is critical in analyzing the ways in which race, class, and

gender are cloaked in power relations for superintendents who are Black women. Discourse may “organize relations...between movement actors and others,” however, these “subject positions...are [also] infused with gender, racial-ethnic, and class inequalities” (Naples, 2003, p. 91). The intersections of race and gender are critical for an analysis of the superintendency because while only 5 percent of male superintendents self-reported as a person of color, 11 percent of female superintendents self-reported as a person of color, with the highest numbers in urban districts (AASA, 2015). By focusing on the urban context, with a higher number of women of color as superintendents, this study investigates how notions of the private and public spheres’ impact Black women’s experiences as superintendents utilizing a perspective that incorporates issues of intersectionality. This analysis furthers research in educational leadership in the twenty-first century and how these conceptions of leadership might be gendered and racialized.

This study is also informative for the local media in Boston and wider public narratives of race, gender, and power in city politics. The politics of race in Boston during the 1980s and early 1990s provided a specific contextual backdrop and set the stage for the relationship between the superintendent, the mayor, and the appointed school board in the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. In 1983, Representative Mel King ran as the first Black mayoral candidate in Boston and received considerable support from communities of color throughout the city. This support largely casted him as a “racial healer” (Nelson, 2000) destined to dismantle the historic racial hierarchy of Boston and Boston politics, more specifically. To combat this racialized bloc of support, *The Boston Globe* played an active role in positioning Raymond Flynn as a racial healer

similar to Mel King. Despite both men seemingly putting issues of race at the forefront of their mayoral campaigns, King earned 95 percent of the vote in communities of color. This stood in stark contrast to Flynn's 80 percent of the White vote. Ultimately, Raymond Flynn was voted in as the city's next mayor. Voters in Boston casted their votes along the age old racial divide that would perpetuate itself in the polarization of relations between Superintendent Harrison Jones and Mayor Flynn in the early 1990s. While other factors could be at play in determining election results, the persistent division of votes along racial lines suggests that race has been a major contextual factor in Boston city politics. This study focuses on how this racialized polarization took on a new gendered form and the impact of the subsequent discourses depicting these political leaders in Boston.

The tense mayoral race of 1983 provided a unique setting for the first superintendent of this study, Superintendent Lois Harrison Jones. First, it demonstrated the capability of the Black community in Boston to mobilize around a political leader, specifically related to issues of race in school and city politics (Nelson, 2000). Second, it further fueled the tense racialized relationship between the mayor and communities of color, setting a foreground for a strong opposition to Mayor Raymond Flynn within the Black political community. It brought to the forefront the issue of a racial hierarchy within Boston. Subsequently, issues of race, gender, and politics in Boston during the study's time frame provided Boston as a worthy case study.

Lastly, this study illuminates the obstacles and opportunities for women, like myself, who are educators and educational leaders. As a feminist, I am passionate about the emancipation of women from a patriarchal society that devalues their worth and

privileges the masculine sex based on biology. Women are gaining access to higher education at an increasing rate; however, opportunities for leadership within a range of professional fields are limited. Creating inroads to positions of authority within public education is important for the future of women as leaders and the construction of school culture. Issues of bullying, gender socialization and gender disparities in public schools might be connected to how women in the most powerful role in a school district are constrained (or not) by their race and gender. As such, this research is extremely important for educational leaders focused on creating inclusive school communities that value all members in the community (students, teachers, leaders, etc.). This research is extremely significant considering the current “post-sexist” discourse that permeates United States dominant culture.

Conclusion

The history of women superintendents is clear; there have been periods of time when the number of women in the superintendency has temporarily increased throughout the twentieth century, if only marginally. While it is important to document the ebbs and flows of the number of women in the superintendency, it is even more important to document how and why these ebbs and flows are constructed within United States’ popular discourse. Within discourse, subjects and their identities are defined, constituted and constrained. It is impossible to define a leader without the referents of discourse providing the context. This is especially true for leaders in the urban context as the number of women is growing at a faster rate in urban districts. To investigate this construction, it is important to first review the current bodies of literature that exist to

explain the number of women assuming the highest leadership positions in the United States in general, and in public schools more specifically. The details of the review are outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE, THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

The following review of literature considers the range of theoretical perspectives in which women's leadership has been investigated over the past century. This chapter reviews the bodies of literature related to the topic of women in leadership, gradually focusing on women in the superintendency. First, I detail studies that have relied upon individual-level explanations such as motivation theory. Then, I present studies that utilized a more nuanced structural-level analysis such as occupational sex segregation theory. To merge the studies of women in leadership with discourse analyses, I review the literature regarding the discourse of the superintendence. I, then, situate the bodies of literature in the theoretical framework of the study: feminist poststructuralism. By situating the study in this theoretical framework, I analyze the ways in which discourses surrounding the superintendence are distinctly *gendered* discourses. Finally, I outline a conceptual framework of applying feminist poststructuralism to women in the superintendency, utilizing the work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault.

Employment Related Theories

Initially, the scholarship on women in leadership starts from a business management perspective (Baxter, 2010); a perspective that scholars have since applied to

educational leadership. Much of this literature focuses on personal choice, motivation theories, and individual-level explanations. The strong presence of studies focusing on women in *business* leadership is largely because “men continue to occupy the most powerful roles in most multi-national companies” (Baxter, 2010, p. 5). More specifically, in the United States, women still are underrepresented at the highest positions of authority in American corporations (Acker, 2006; Cook & Glass, 2014; Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005). With women holding only 16 percent of top leadership positions in United States’ largest corporations (Hesse-Biber & Carter, 2005) and women CEOs only occupying 4.2 percent of the all CEOs in the largest U.S. corporations (Catalyst, 2015), the literature thoroughly analyzes the issue of women as leaders in business.

Personal choice and motivation. Literature originally stemming from this business management perspective documents historical trends and engages with this issue on a personal choice level (i.e. psychological studies about motivation). This body of literature investigates:

beliefs associated with the individual perspective are that women are not assertive enough, do not want the power, lack self-confidence, do not aspire to line positions, are unwilling to play the game, and do not apply for the jobs. (Newton, 2006, p. 553)

Research documents possible personality theories and job motivation theories to help explain this phenomenon (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). These theories of motivation suggest why people (women in this case) behave in a specific way. Mountford (2004) explains that motivation theory “generally suggests that people are motivated to ‘act’ in some capacity for personal reasons, altruistic reasons, or some combination of the two”

(p. 707). Most recently, Sheryl Sandberg (2013) argues that women need to “lean in” to their careers and have the confidence to advocate for themselves in the workplace. Additional studies focus on women’s lack of assertiveness and other individual-level explanations as to why women do not rise to the top leadership positions in various industries throughout the United States (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Reskin, 2002). However, these theories are insufficient to truly explain the discrepancy between a feminized teaching workforce and a masculinized leadership workforce that has persisted over time. Brunner and Grogan (2007) caution against this line of investigation and call research focused on women’s motivation a “mistake” (p. 39) as this research would completely ignore the body of literature that documents the role of sexism and:

sex roles, social stereotypes...the bureaucratization of schooling that was built on separate spheres for women (teaching) and men (leadership), the conceptualization of schooling and its leadership in ways that emphasize competition and authority rather than collaboration and service, administrative employment practices. (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 641-642)

Furthermore, individual-level explanations for gender disparity ignore the issue of what scholars coin as the “glass ceiling” (Acker, 2006; Cook and Glass, 2014; Cotter Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001; Ezzedeen, Budworth, & Baker, 2015; Patton & Haynes, 2014). While individual-level explanations provide the literature with some understanding of the processes that render leadership as a male construction, these explanations fall short of addressing institutional factors at play. As a result, motivation theories do not fully illuminate the complexities of the phenomenon. Macro-level understandings are important to research further.

Glass ceiling and firewall theories. While individual-level explanations provide some understanding of barriers to elite leadership roles for women in the United States, it largely ignores structural and institutional barriers to these positions for women. In response to this gap, an extensive body of literature around the “glass ceiling” has emerged since the 1970s. Within this body of research, scholars use the “glass ceiling” as a metaphor to examine why “despite the entry of women into nearly all fields traditionally occupied by men, women remain virtually nonexistent, or present in token numbers, in elite leadership positions” (Carnes, Morrissey, & Geller, 2008, p. 1453). The glass ceiling provides a structural view of the discrimination against women in blocking them from executive leadership regardless of their qualifications or experience (Cook & Glass, 2014; Ezzedeen et al., 2015; Patton & Haynes, 2014).

Since the 1970s, other studies have refined this metaphor and argued that it is not a “glass ceiling” but, in fact, a “fire wall” (Bendl & Schmidt, 2010). By being a firewall, discrimination exists in the “whole structure of the organizations...barriers to advancement are not just above, they are all around” (p. 613). Another body of research argues that the metaphor is more adequately described as a “glass cliff” and when women take more risks to obtain the highest levels of leadership in organizations, they still are stopped at a certain level (Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen, & Webster, 2009). Regardless of the language used to describe the metaphor, many studies argue for a structural analysis of how and why women are barred from executive leadership (Cook & Glass, 2014; Cotter et al 2001; Jackson & O’Callaghan, 2009). The “glass ceiling” has been well researched and scholars have identified the processes in which this ceiling has been maintained.

These processes include issues of discrimination (Reskin, 2002); role traps (Baxter, 2010; Kanter 1977); lack of appropriate mentoring (Blake-Beard, 2001; Elacqua et al., 2009) and exclusion from the “old boys’ club” (Davies-Netzley, 1998; Elacqua et al., 2009; Patton & Haynes, 2014). The various deviations of the glass ceiling metaphor, however, fail to acknowledge how women can be both powerful and powerless as leaders. These metaphors often paint women as passive recipients of their circumstances and individual agency will fail to rectify these structural traps.

While the above analyses are useful to establish an understanding about gender disparity in the workforce, they are insufficient in shedding light on the power mechanisms behind this disparity. When considering race and gender, they fail to attend of the nuances of intersectionality and interlocking systems of oppression. Research utilizing glass ceiling theories fails to account for context and defines the glass ceiling in a “finite manner” (Patton & Haynes, 2014). The glass ceiling is not static, but is in fact, constantly constituting and reconstituting itself in various contexts and is not exclusively focused on gendered identities. It operates in ways that marginalize and mask power relationships inclusive of racism, heterosexism, sexism, classism, etc. While identifying the metaphor may “ease...communication with the public... [it does] little to advance...work as analysts of the causes of inequality” (Cotter et al., 2001, p. 656). With these critiques in mind, the glass ceiling metaphor, while useful to a degree, falls short of providing an adequate analysis of the inequalities rooted in the discursive constructs of power and leadership in the United States.

Segregation and stratification: occupational sex segregation theory and job and labor queues. To further explore a structural understanding of gender and leadership, Strober's (1984) occupational sex segregation theory provides some insight. Strober (1984) outlines the effects of the historical feminization of a profession, such as the feminization of teaching found in the nineteenth century. When women employees primarily hold a profession, three results occur: (1) re-segregation; (2) genuine integration; or (3) ghettoization. Re-segregation refers to new conceptualizations of what professions are considered traditional "men's work" versus traditional "women's work." For example, at its conception, public school teaching was a field dominated by men. "The influx of women into the teaching workforce was coupled simultaneously with the exodus of males" (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 636). What resulted was re-segregation where teaching became predominantly "women's work."

Although genuine integration, a sustained gender balance among employees in the same professional role, is often the goal of gender balance in the workforce, it rarely occurs (Reskin & Roos, 1990). The third result, ghettoization, is in fact the most common, where, "women and men are not distributed equally across the occupational hierarchy—that is, there is occupational stratification" (Strober, 1984, p. 144). Within ghettoization, one gender (usually women) is relegated to "less valued, lower paid, less desirable sub-contexts or to part-time rather than full-time hours within a...field" (Tallerico & Blount, 2004, p. 637). Such examples include women tracked into lower paid elementary principalships over secondary school positions, or women occupying

adjunct, instructor, and part-time faculty ranks more so than tenure-track full time faculty opportunities at colleges and universities (Riley, Frith, Archer, & Veseley, 2006).

How does this stratification occur? Tallerico and Blount's (2004) job and labor queues theory is useful in analyzing this question. According to Tallerico and Blount (2004), job queues result when employment candidates rank prospective occupation fields (and particularly jobs within those fields) in a hierarchy of desirability. Labor queues represent employers ranking groups of workers hierarchically from least to most attractive. When contextualized in a system of patriarchy, Reskin and Roos (1990) assert that the historical valuation of men over women render "most labor queues are so overwhelming ordered by sex that they are essentially gender queues" (p. 308). Patriarchy creates race and class restraints, along with gender constraints, for employees and employers (Strober, 1984). The power in patriarchal systems is that these systems not only create race, class and gender restraints, but also normalize those restraints into common sense notions about society.

While scholars argue that individual-level explanations and structural-level explanations help to identify certain mechanisms that construct the employment landscape for women and men, acknowledging the power of discourse is a vital yet under-researched component (Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet, 2000). "Raising linguistic awareness is as essential as legal or political action towards sustainable social change" (Baxter, 2010, p. 6). An approach to this phenomenon that utilizes discourse theory would be helpful in introducing a linguistic component to this research. "Discourse theory provides a means of analyzing the complex interactions between individual

agency and institutional level discourse, and how this often positions women leaders in competing and conflicting ways” (Baxter, 2010, p. 10). By using discourse analysis in this study, I analyze the ways in which individual-level and structural-level explanations intersect to produce a more complex and nuanced understanding of access to the superintendency for women.

History of the Discourse of the Superintendency

While there is a great deal of data documenting who became superintendents in the twentieth century and the historical context that might inform those data, there is little discussion in the literature regarding a historical construction of the discourse surrounding the superintendency from a *gendered* lens. Brunner et al. (2002) provide a thorough summary for the discourse surrounding the public school superintendency since its inception in the 1800s. A more thorough explanation of discourse and how it is applied to this study will be discussed in more detail below, but briefly, the concept of discourse refers to a “system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values.... [that] are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual’s set of ideas” (Hollway, 1983, p. 231). Brunner et al.’s (2002) summary of the discourse of superintendency gives little information about who these discourses serve, who controls their production, and these discourses framed women throughout the twentieth century in their role as superintendent.

Although public schools were first created in the 1600s, districts did not create the superintendent role until the 1800s largely due to the tremendous anti-executive rhetoric surrounding American politics and everyday life after the American Revolution

(Griffiths, 1966). In 1837, Buffalo Public Schools appointed the first school superintendent in Buffalo, New York (Brunner et al., 2002). Since the 1800s, the position has evolved in a diverse set of ways and these first superintendents were very different from the superintendents of the twenty-first century. The superintendent of the 1800s' major function was to assist boards of education with the operations of a public school district. In this regard, they functioned as logistical managers or clerks (Brunner et al., 2002). Conversely, during this time, the public supported a strong argument for public education and educational discourses focused on the conceptualization of *America as God's country* [emphasis added] (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). By this logic, the United States of America was charged with redeeming mankind and subsequently, schools informed citizens to serve the nation. School's function was to assimilate immigrants and create the "best America." In this way, the United States' citizens would receive the economic rewards afforded to God's people. Although the superintendent was not powerful during in the first half of the nineteenth century, the role was charged with a very important task: to develop "Protestant citizens of the republic who would prosper economically" (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 214).

Brunner et al. (2002) describes a transition in the discursive framings of the superintendence in the second half of the nineteenth century. While Protestant ideology framed the purpose of education and the modest beginnings of the superintendent in the newly formed republic, an influx of Catholic and Jewish immigrants towards the end of the nineteenth century created a backlash against an educational discourse defined by Protestant ideology (Brunner et al., 2002). Education's primary function was no longer to

create an informed citizenry well-versed in Protestant values and morals, but now, to form a citizenry deeply committed to the freedoms afforded by the Constitution of the United States (Brunner et al., 2002). Superintendents, now in charge of “common schools,” as created by Horace Mann in Massachusetts, were responsible for the development of free, patriotic individuals (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Educational leaders reflected this change in educational discourse through their roles in public school districts. In 1970, the National Educational Association created the Department of Superintendence (Brunner et al., 2002), highlighting an unprecedented level of leadership in the national educational stage. Only 60 years earlier, the new republic employed a specific anti-centralization and anti-executive discourse to define the organizational hierarchy of school systems. The superintendents gained more executive power fueled by the creation of the Department of Superintendence, later to become the American Association of School Administrators. The superintendent was now more closely connected to national agendas of education and a growing professional network through the establishment of a professional organization focused specifically on the role (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, & Sybouts, 1996).

Discourses of the superintendency continued to evolve well into the twentieth century, informed by larger historical events such as World War I and II and the Great Depression. The economic expansion of business very early in the twentieth century shaped the educational field. Educational reforms in the early 1900s targeted effective and efficient operations. As such, educational research defined the superintendent as a *businessman* rather than an instructional leader (Callahan, 1962). Simultaneously, nativist

and xenophobic fears juxtaposed a moral civic life against the influx of immigrants and immigrants' ability "to corrupt civic life" (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, p. 127). This juxtaposition influenced the purpose of education and educational leaders, such as the superintendents. A focus on efficient business operations, combined with the passing of restrictive immigration laws, framed superintendents as businessmen not concerned with issues of social justice, equity and diversity (Brunner et al., 2002).

Changing roles and responsibilities defined the superintendency from 1950 to 1980. The civil rights era brought a new transition for the role of the superintendency by focusing on students' rights and desegregation. Starting with the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision in 1954, educational discursive framings took on a foundation of social justice, equity and diversity (Brunner et al., 2002). The superintendents' role quickly became one charged with recreating education in response to various stakeholders. The superintendent's ability to respond to public outcry around issues of race, student achievement, and advancement in science and math framed the discourses around the superintendency until the 1970s (Grogan, 2000). However, the importance of the superintendent in communicating to the public was short lived. Beginning in the 1970s, the superintendent began to lose power in her own district: "superintendents were under great pressure to respond to various types of organizations and interest groups and to *adhere to mandates from state legislators*" (emphasis added, Brunner et al., 2002, p. 221). The strengthening of the connection between public schools and the national and state governments through the lens of accountability informed the educational discourses

of the superintendency. The superintendence became part of the political realm, vulnerable to the politics of the time.

In 1983, President Ronald Reagan's National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk* that strengthened the link between politics and education (Brunner et al., 2002). *A Nation at Risk* placed student achievement firmly in the minds of politicians and the national discourse. Since *A Nation at Risk*, educational reform and accountability have become the driving force behind superintendents' work. Superintendents, in this new environment of political accountability, were responsible for negotiating a relationship with these newly interested politicians within a discourse of neoliberal educational reform. A more thorough definition of neoliberal educational reform is presented in chapter two, but briefly, I define neoliberal educational reforms as educational reforms designed to privatize part or whole school operations and dispossess local communities of control of their schools. In an environment of political accountability, superintendents also had to focus on educational excellence for their school districts in new and more advanced ways. Superintendents, in the age of accountability, needed to act as a link between schools, state departments of education, and the broader community, including political ties (Marsh, 2000). The superintendent's efforts had to connect to accountability and reform efforts and to be effective, superintendents must have had "the ability...to build a cohesive professional community and normative culture" (Marsh, 2000, p. 15). This regime of accountability currently dominates educational discourses on the superintendency.

Superintendent as political strategist focused on excellence. As this study focuses on the years 1991 to 2016, two relevant discursive stages are essential to data analysis: *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* and *Superintendent as Collaborator* (Brunner et al., 2002). The discursive stage of *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* began in the 1980s and continued into the early 1990s. The effects of publishing *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 defined the discursive stage. This publication set a political super wave throughout the country where local and state bureaucracies became more and more interested in the excellence of public schools. Throughout the decade, school systems saw an increase in the number of large scale educational reforms and policy makers intruding on the educational field in new and diverse ways. By 1991 (the first year of the first superintendent in this study), superintendents became “under the thumb of policy makers” (Brunner et al., 2002 p. 224). The transfer of power from the superintendents to state and local bureaucracies required the superintendent to be responsive to multiple external pressures and to yield to local bureaucrats such as the appointed school committee and the mayor in the City of Boston.

Superintendent as collaborator. As the power embedded in the superintendency diminished in the 1990s, a new discursive context emerged, *Superintendent as Collaborator*, reframing the roles and responsibilities of the superintendent. In the late 1980s, educational research framed superintendents as experts that knew how to improve schools. Reaching into the last decade of the twentieth century, superintendents were now expected to know why reforms were needed and to reorganize school bureaucracies to

limit the influence the environmental factors that could lead to school failure (Bjork, 1996). Additionally, the superintendent emerged as a collaborator with a distinctly moral and political dimension (Brunner et al., 2002). Educational studies characterized the superintendent's leadership as "the perspective of working with and through others rather than commanding others" (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 226). This type of collaboration required political acuteness to garner support in the restructuring efforts that were required of the time. The school became re-casted as a central hub through which students and families received a variety of services. The 1990s required "that a superintendent must be closely involved (or at least be influential) in the instructional proceedings of the district but must at the same time view these proceedings with a political eye" (Grogan, 2000, p. 123). This combination of political and instructional leadership required that the superintendency be less of an all-powerful, effective manager and more of a leader that supports others within the organizational structure. Yet again, the discursive context in which the twenty-first century superintendent finds herself has shifted to one focused on involving the community in meaningful ways (Owens and Ovando, 2000). In fact, superintendents' connections to the community and the urgency of reform framed much of the educational literature in the twenty-first century.

Given the most recent changes in the superintendent's role and the discourse that depicts the role, Grogan (2000) argues for a reconceptualization of the superintendency. In Grogan's (2000) reconceptualization, she focuses on five tenets the twenty-first century superintendent must take: "be comfortable with contradiction, work through others, appreciate dissent, develop a critical awareness of how children are being served,

and adopt an ethic of care” (p. 132). In all five approaches, Grogan (2000) emphasizes on reform efforts grounded in the local community, social justice pedagogies and acknowledging diverse perspectives. The new challenges that the twenty-first century brought for the superintendent, particularly the accountability era and the educational reform movement sparked by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 and continued throughout both the Bush and Obama presidencies, contributed to the reconceptualization of the superintendency. As the expectations of the superintendent evolved from an efficiency-focused manager starting in the 1800s and reaching a height in the early 1900s to the politically-aware collaborator of the early twenty-first century, educational researchers and policy makers focused on instruction and the urgency of reform, particularly in urban contexts.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Poststructuralism

Conceptualization. I employ a historical feminist poststructural discourse analysis to capture an analysis which focuses on the historical construction of gendered discourses in print media. More broadly, I situate feminist poststructuralism in feminist critical practice which aims to deconstruct how “gender power relations are constituted, produced, and contested” (Weedon, 1987, p. vii). Epistemologically, feminist poststructuralists are concerned with not only the social relations of knowledge production, but also with what is constructed as knowledge (Weedon, 1987). Poststructuralism resists a definition because of its assertion that a natural essence or meaning of things does not exist, but rather would argue that people, institutions, discourses, etc., are constituted and reconstituted over time (Gavey, 1989) and continuously open to reinterpretation. While it

is difficult to provide a definition of feminist poststructuralism because of the very nature of the practice, it is important to outline several key concepts relating to feminist poststructuralism that are important for this study.

Language and signifying practices. Feminist poststructural analysis illuminates the ways in which the superintendency is deemed a man's rightful place through language. Feminist poststructuralism aims to make visible the ways in which bodies are produced through discourse, examines the functions of any structure of regularity, and analyzes the ways in which language is used in specific cultural sites and in whose interest, it serves. As discourse operates, it produces and reproduces those who speak it, and enacts a "common sense" notion of regularity within a context. Feminist poststructuralism aims to shed light on this mechanism. Lastly, it asserts that language "is productive and shapes our understandings of ourselves, others, and what is or is not possible" (Barrett, 2005, p. 81). Poststructuralism rejects the notion that "language simply names and reflects what it encounters," (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 480). Further, poststructuralism asserts that language "operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world" (p. 481) and is always situated in "cultural practice" (p. 483). Language is never neutral, and consequently, is itself a political act.

Through language, individuals engage in signifying practices that "consist of signs, which are ways of communicating meaning" (Weedon, 1987, p. 12). These "signs" are not containers of the very meaning they transmit. But rather, they only contain meaning in relation to other "signs," and their meaning is constructed through language; meaning is not reflected by language. Weedon (1987) offers up the example of the

signified “whore.” Weedon (1987) asserts that “whore” is meaningless unless it is compared to “other signifiers of womanhood, such as ‘virgin’ and ‘mother’” (p. 23). Without this language chain of signifiers, the meaning, or signified, would not exist. As a result, meaning is never an innate characteristic, but rather constituted and reconstituted through language. Poststructuralism allows me to analyze the superintendent’s role using language, as a focal point of analysis, because “all meaning and knowledge is discursively constituted through language and other signifying practices” (Gavey, 1989, p. 463). As such, there is no essential definition or understanding of the superintendency.

Discourse and subjectivity. Language is a performance of leadership and not solely a container of meaning (Barrett, 2005). The language that leaders use is an enactment of their leadership and helps construct their leadership identities. Additionally, language used to depict leaders can be perceived and understood differently by others. Perception of language depicting leaders is situated in the institutional discourses of an organization, particularly gendered discourses. Discourse is a social practice, functions as an operating structure in society, and reproduces through social institutions (Cameron, 2001; Weedon, 1987). It is a “system of statements which cohere around common meanings and values.... [that] are a product of social factors, of powers and practices, rather than an individual’s set of ideas” (Hollway, 1983, p. 231). These discourses “can have enormous impacts for a woman’s experience of leadership, and whether her leadership is deemed successful” (Baxter, 2010, p. 13) because these discourses impact the attitudes, roles, norms, and behaviors of an organization. Even more problematic is that these discourses are characterized in “predominantly masculine norms” (Holmes,

2005, p. 1781) and masculine “discourse styles have been institutionalized as ways of speaking with authority” (p. 1782). Identifying language as a unit of analysis is not unusual: “Many researchers who study in-depth interviews interpret what people say in relation to culturally familiar discourse” (Chase, 1995, p. 17). Previous studies indicate that language is worthy of study as a form of social action (Brunner, 2000; Chase, 1995).

As discourses are historically and socially situated, they provide multiple meanings in which to understand the world. Discourses provide “possibilities for constituting subjectivity (identities, behaviors, understandings of the world)” (Gavey, 1989, p. 464). When an individual assumes a “subject position,” she assumes authorship over the discourse in which she speaks (Weedon, 1987). Her subjectivity is her “conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions” that enable her to make sense of the world and “her relation to the word” (p. 32). These subject positions are also constituted and reconstituted by public discourses. As leaders do not exist solely in a vacuum, the discourses depicting them help to inform these subject positions. Each time that subjectivities are utilized or assumed, they are reconstituted in the discursive fields which give them meaning. This understanding of a subject position offers up multiple and contradictory ways of understanding the self and the self’s relation to the world. As such, subject positions provide a “contextualization of experience” (Weedon, 1987, p. 125) and “denies the existence of an essential women nature” (Gavey, 1989, p. 465).

Application of Feminist Poststructuralism: A Conceptual Framework

In establishing a conceptual framework to guide this study, I closely analyzed the work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault. Both theorists employ power, discourse,

gender and sexuality, and the performative function of language, conceptual terms essential to a feminist poststructural discourse analysis. By integrating their theoretical concepts into a conceptual framework specifically constructed for a feminist poststructural discourse analysis of texts about women as superintendents, this study more fully addresses the gaps in the literature.

Universal personhood and interpellation. According to Butler (1990), “the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated” (p. 13). Butler (1990) argues, that our discourse treats masculinity as the normative personhood and in the center; whereas discourse places femininity as “the other” and on the periphery. As Foucault (1978) argues, when a person is “sexed” that person is subjected to a set of social regulations. Sex is discursively constituted rather than created through an innate attribute or biological difference of the individuals. Foucault’s (1978) argues “power’s hold on sex is maintained through language or rather through the act of discourse that creates...a rule of law” (p. 83). The language used maintains power over sex, or power over gender as it were here. What does this power over sex and gender do? Whose power specifically? Since discourse “transmits and produces power” (p. 101), the discourse surrounding superintendents is important because it shapes the power relations that exist within the school district and within greater society.

Butler does not question the existence of men’s and women’s sex organs and body parts; however, she argues, that in discourse, these body parts are constituted as important and defining because their status is “always constitutive, always interpellated,

always performative” (Salih, 2002, p. 80). These body parts, in discourse and through language, determine how infants are interpellated, or “how subject positions are conferred and assumed through the action of hailing” (p. 78). For example, when one says, “It’s a girl,” that is an example of interpellation. It “initiates the process of ‘girling’, a process based on perceived and imposed differences between men and women” (p. 89). The same can be said of “it’s a boy.” As a result, sex and gender are conflated because “all bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence” (p. 62). Consequently, through language and discourse, gender is constituted and performed.

Butler’s (1990) interpellation of “it’s a girl!” can be useful for analyzing women superintendents. Are women superintendents interpellated in the same manner when identified as *women* superintendents? Yes, they are. *Women* superintendents are constituted through “the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms” (Butler, 1990, p. 23-24). What are these regulatory practices regarding women leaders in urban public schools? Is this matrix of coherent gender norms applicable to this setting? How might this matrix produce women as leaders within the discourse of school leadership, particularly for school districts dealing with high-stakes reform efforts? This study considers these questions in its analysis.

Speaking subject and subversion in gender performativity. Salih (2002) explains that Butler’s gendered subject is an actor that “simply gets up and performs its identity” (p. 45), because gender “is something that we ‘do’ rather than ‘are’” (p. 46). In this sense gender is performative, although the subject never “preexists the deed” (p. 50). Gender identity does not preexist the performance, but is “constituted by the very

‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990, p. 25, as cited in Salih, 2002, p. 63). Since gender is performative and a “regular process of repetition” (Salih, 2002, p. 66), it is possible to *do* gender differently. However, the subject’s choices in doing gender are limited and the subject does not have free agency to perform gender in any which way it chooses (p. 51).

Salih (2002) argues that when making choices about doing gender “you cannot go out and acquire a whole new gender wardrobe for yourself” (p. 66); individuals are constrained by a set of discursive elements that already preexist the identity of the person. Can individuals truly be subversive if there is no “I” or doer behind the action? Is subversion truly a free choice if “subversion and agency are conditions, if not determined, by discourses that cannot be evaded” (p. 66)? Countering this point, Salih (2002) also states “it must be possible to take up one’s sex in ways which undermine heterosexual hegemony” (p. 80). This binary of subversion situated in a discourse and acting in a way that undermines heterosexual hegemony is useful for this research study because it provides an avenue to analyze how women might be subversive and empowered in their roles as superintendents. Are women subversive in their gender performativity as superintendents? Are they undermining a heterosexual hegemony? Is that even possible? What aspect of gender performativity have they had to give up and for what?

Further, women, lesbians, and gay men, Butler (1990) argues, cannot act as the “speaking subject within the linguistic system of compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 157). If “women, lesbians and gay men...cannot assume the position of the speaking subject”

then where is the room for emancipatory leadership led by these individuals? Can women be the speaking subjects of their urban school districts? Discourses are extremely impactful for women, lesbians, and gay men because of these regulatory practices and denial of access to the “speaking subject” (Butler, 1990). It is these “speaking subjects” that reinforce and subvert the public discourses that structure their performativity. This study looks to identify ways in which superintendents can re-imagine these discourses to include others as “speaking subjects.”

Power and discourse. Foucault (1980) provides a careful and nuanced understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power. In many ways, his explanation deconstructs the notion that knowledge is a fixed objective entity that exists outside the body. Regardless of the type of knowledge (knowledge within the various disciplines), all knowledge is “enmeshed in social structure” (p. 109). Therefore, knowledge is always contextualized and historicized. It is socially produced (Gavey, 1989). As it is socially produced, “those who have the power to regulate what counts as truth can maintain their access to material advantages and power” (Gavey, 1989, p. 462). As such, it is important to note that the role of power within this knowledge (Foucault, 1980). Foucault (1980) argues that power plays a repressive role, but not only a repressive role. In fact, this repression function is secondary to a productive function. This is especially evident in power’s relationship with knowledge; “Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it” (p. 59). Power “doesn’t only weigh on us a force that says no, but...produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourses” (p. 119). This is also evident in the relationship between power and sexuality as

“sexuality was far more a positive produce of power than power was ever repression of sexuality” (p. 120). Foucault’s (1980) central argument regarding power informs us that power is productive even when it is trying to repress, it produces the thing it represses. For this study, the role of power as the ability to regulate public discourse is extremely important. Who can regulate public discourse and the “truth” that is accepted as “common sense” is crucial to unearthing the ways in which women leaders are constituted as subjects of these discourses.

Truth and production of truth. Foucault (1980) discusses the production of truth, but defines truth differently than what the term implies in everyday life. Truth, for Foucault (1980), is not an essential, unchangeable, objective fact. It is an “ensemble of rules according to which the true and false are separated and specific effects of power are attached to true” (p. 132). Truth is not inherently better than false, but it is attached to “effects of power” (p. 132). By being able to define what is and what is not true enables the definer to wield these “effects of power” (p. 132). Truth also plays an “economic and political role” (p. 132), and therefore, the issue is the “political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth” (p. 133) rather than the content of the “truth.” Foucault (1980) advocates that truth does not need to be emancipated from “every system of power;” however, it is the “power of truth” that needs to be detached from “the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates” (p. 133).

Conclusion

In line with a poststructural and critical research paradigm, the nature of this study is to explore power relationships embedded in discourses from 1991 to 2016 in print

media. By utilizing a conceptual framework that focuses on the conceptual terms of universal personhood and interpellation, speaking subjects, and power and discourse, I uncover the ways in which a patriarchal society discursively frames women leaders, more specifically women superintendents, in public discourses.

A historical analysis of the discourse of women superintendents is beneficial to urban schools on multiple levels. First, this study well serves women educators who aspire to senior leadership positions in public school districts because it examines the complex discursive framings of their professional careers. By having this understanding, women educators will be able to better navigate the discursive fields in which they must operate. Second, through using these findings, educators, administrators, and stakeholders can co-construct a new understanding of superintendence in the twenty-first century. By identifying the ways in which discourse has been constructed and employed for women superintendents, this study extracts the seemingly natural and common-sense underpinnings of the position, particularly from a gendered lens. The common-sense underpinnings are important because “power comes from its claim to be natural, obvious, and therefore true” (Weedon, 1987, p. 76). Since common-sense depends on “social meanings and the particular ways of understanding the words which guarantees them” (p. 77), it is crucial for educational reformers and policy makers to critically examine these common-sense understandings of power and leadership. If educational reformers and policymakers can identify how common-sense notions of power and leadership have been constructed, perhaps, they can re-conceptualize new ways of discursively framing the superintendence in the twenty-first century. This new understanding would detail what it

means to hold power, thereby helping educational leaders to work towards challenging dominant discourses.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous two chapters outlined the several key conceptual terms as well as a historical overview of the superintendency as occupied by women leaders. This chapter describes the research design and methodology I use to carry out this study. First, it identifies feminist poststructuralism as the overarching theoretical and methodological approach. Then it discusses feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) in conjunction with alternative discourse analysis approaches. After a review of popular discourse analysis methods, I discuss the principles and elements of FDPA. The chapter ends with specific information regarding data collection and data analysis, as well as challenges and limitations of FPDA. I designed this study as a qualitative historical case study utilizing feminist poststructural discourse analysis. To guide this study, I asked the following questions:

Guiding Question: What were the ways in which public discourses depicting superintendents were gendered from 1991 to 2016 in Boston, Massachusetts?

- Sub- Question 1: How were the public discourses depicting women superintendents in Boston constructed in print media from 1991 to 2016?
- Sub-Question 2: How have historical events and policy changes shaped these public discourses?
- Sub-Question 3: What do these public discourses suggest for educational leaders?

Why Feminist Poststructuralism?

As the focus of the study is public discourse depicting women urban superintendents, feminist poststructuralism as a theoretical and methodological approach was useful. More specifically, a feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) of written texts helps illuminate the ways in which women leaders are discursively framed in the context of neoliberal educational reform movements of urban schools and communities. I utilize FPDA to explore notions of power in texts to deconstruct normative views of gender and leadership. FPDA is also useful in “identifying the ways in which gender/sex is constituted through discourse practice” (Fardon & Schoeman, 2010, p. 308). Lastly, it focuses on a “rich plurality of voices and perspectives...and ultimately may prompt social and educational transformation” (p. 308). FPDA provides these benefits without “transform[ing] themselves into ‘grand narratives’” (Elliott, 1996, p. 19) and enables me to challenge the ways in which meaning was constructed in the form of a “universal subject” (p. 19). This FPDA methodology cautions against an “emancipatory discourse” as it “would in time become ‘totalising’ or an imperialist one marginalising and silencing the voices of other theorists or researchers” (Baxter, 2003, p. 53). These core elements, as well as their specific implications for this study, are outlined further in this chapter. Feminist poststructuralism is integral in not only laying out the theoretical framework, but also the study’s methodological approach. By uniting theory and methods in this manner, I more thoroughly analyze the discursive elements of the written texts.

Research Design

Studies of discourse have historically been researched using conversation analysis (CA) and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) is an emerging theoretical perspective and methodological approach to discourse analysis studies. Although the methodologies of CA, CDA, and FPDA are similar, the epistemological perspectives each approach takes becomes extremely crucial to data analysis. FPDA scholars have argued that the debate among these perspectives should never identify as one perspective worthy and the others as not. FPDA researchers do not advocate that FPDA is the next, great methodological approach and should replace the other, older approaches. Baxter (2003) argues the “FPDA approach to be intertextually linked with, and supplementary to, the methodologies of CA and CDA” (p. 43). As such, “no voice should be suppressed, displaced or privileged” (p. 43) and it is in conjunction with these other methodologies that FPDA can bring a new understanding to a research study. Despite this hesitation and cautioning against privileging one research methodology over the other, it is useful to expand upon the central tenets of these three approaches and illuminate why a FPDA approach is useful for this study.

Approaches to discourse analysis. All three theoretical perspectives approach discourse differently. While CA treats discourse as “language in use” (Cameron, 2001), CDA and FPDA identify discourse as a form of power. This knowledge is pervasive in “governing mainstream social and cultural practices” (Baxter, 2003, p. 46). FPDA specifically defines that these practices “systematically form the object of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). As such, meanings and identities cannot be constructed

outside of discourse.

Conversation analysis is particularly useful in analyzing in “how social organization is accomplished in talk” (Wetherell, 1998, p. 392). Conversation analysts often focus on a micro-analysis of spoken text within a range of private and public settings in which people participate (Qiu & Tian, 2010, Riggerbach, 1999). Furthermore, CA focuses on a North American tradition that “emphasizes the research method of close observation of groups of people communicating in natural settings” (Qiu & Tian, 2010, p. 91). Conversely, CDA and FPDA offer up an analysis “to develop more effective socialist and radical democratic political projects” (Wetherell, 1998, p. 394) and CDA, specifically, makes “an explicit sociopolitical stance” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 253). To make this stance, CDA utilizes “theories, descriptions, methods and empirical work...as a function of their relevance for the realization of...a social political goal” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). Since this study is focused on written text and critiquing sociopolitical issues in public and institutional settings, CA would be less illuminating as a methodology. Despite these differences, CA, CDA and FPDA all cast a critical eye on positivist forms of research that rely on an objective truth that is knowable outside of human interaction and social practices.

The relationship between text and context plays a role in determining which research methodology would be best for this study. Social practices, while essential to all three methodologies, play a specific role in CA as conversation analysts posit that all “social realities are socially...produced” (Baxter, 2003, p. 50). Meanwhile, CDA and FPDA ascertain that these realities are not socially produced, but are, in fact, discursively

produced and framed within varying contexts. Issues of focus and relationship between text and context provide useful information in determining whether a CDA or FPDA would be more suitable given the study's research questions. Researchers utilizing a CA or CDA framework, argue that text is created and formed within "constraints of the social situation" (p. 51). CDA utilizes this relationship between text and context in its distinctly political agenda of focusing on "the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power abuse or domination" (van Dijk, 2001, p. 96). Furthermore, CDA scholars posit that a lack of power is also measured by its lack of active or controlled access to discourse" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 256). Those in power are those who have access to controlling public discourse and can assume dominant positions. Van Dijk (1993) defines dominance "as the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality" (p. 250). Those who dominant the discourse can produce and reproduce inequalities as hegemonic, pervasive, and "common sense." Meanwhile, scholars using a FPDA understand the relationship between text and context in different terms. The interrelationship between text and context is in terms of "the operations of competing discourses" (Baxter, 2003, p. 52). FPDA researchers utilize the concept of "intertextuality that is the ways in which texts are always infused and inscribed with traces of other texts" (p. 53), to analyze a text.

Emancipatory or transformative? While researchers have utilized all three methodological approaches in discourse analysis studies, the above descriptions demonstrate the usefulness of CDA and FPDA for this study. The rest of this chapter serves as a road map to differentiate how FPDA is useful for this study. However, this

road map is not an argument claiming that FPDA is “better than” CDA. With the notion of a plurality of voices and multiple interpretations of text, FPDA should always be considered alongside other research methodologies.

While CDA is useful to illuminate ideological agendas that serve the interests of the oppressed, FPDA is useful in challenging dominant discourses that inevitably become grand narratives. To challenge these grand narratives, FPDA does not look to polarize subjects (for example those in power and those not in power), whereas CDA inevitably does so, as a side effect of its emancipatory agenda. CDA tasks itself with documenting the “relationship between discourse and social power...to explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimized by...dominant groups or institutions” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 84). Van Dijk (1996) defines social power “in terms of the *control* by one group...over the *actions* and/or *minds* [emphasis in the original] of...another group” (p. 84). FPDA does not seek to establish this dichotomy (Baxter, 2003). Lastly, FPDA resists the creation of a new "grand narrative" that is in opposition to any current grand narratives. As school districts are locally governed and context specific, this resistance of a “grand narrative” would serve superintendents well in their work. What may work in one context, may not in a different context. As a result, Baxter (2003) argues that FPDA is well suited for small case studies like this study. FPDA has been previously used in qualitative case studies that touch upon themes of gender analyzing spoken discourse in various contexts, including the classroom and senior leadership meetings in large business corporations (Barrett, 2005; Baxter, 2002, 2003, 2010; Faredon & Schoeman, 2010; St. Pierre, 2000).

One central consideration I made regarding the selection of CDA or FPDA as the research methods for this study was the role of an emancipatory paradigm. CDA often focuses on an emancipatory agenda that seeks to unearth the voices of dominated and oppressed groups and advocate on their behalf (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). When assuming a particularly feminist perspective, CDA studies utilize a critical perspective on social problems with a focus on women's rights at the heart of this research. CDA often constructs a dichotomy between men and women through this emancipatory agenda. On one side of this dichotomy, men serve as perpetrators, while conversely, women are the universal victims. These ideological and emancipatory goals are extremely vital to social justice work done throughout the United States and the world, more broadly. However, FPDA does not use this binary to organize its conceptual notions around discourse as power: "FPDA is more likely to argue that women are multiply located and cannot be so dichotomously cast as powerless, disadvantaged, or victims" (Baxter, 2003, p. 55). Theories that rest on the assumption of women as universal victims are no longer sufficient in our analysis of power and patriarchy. The role of power and the gendering effects of power are more nuanced and complicated (Baxter, 2003), especially when issues of intersectionality are taken into consideration. This does not mean that men and women interact with power in relatively similar ways. Feminist poststructuralism does, however, contend that there is "pervasiveness of dominant discourses of gender differentiation which often interact with other discourses to 'fix' women/girls in positions of relative powerlessness, despite 'breakthrough' moments of resistance and empowerment" (p. 32). As such these women are framed as powerless within certain

discourses and “relatively powerful within alternative and competing social discourses” (p. 39). This is particularly useful for women urban superintendents; by being superintendent, these women do wield considerable power within their districts. As such, FPDA research is more aptly described as a transformative quest rather than an emancipatory agenda.

Key principles of feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis. Feminist Poststructural discourse analysis relies heavily on three key principles: “self-reflexivity, a deconstructivist approach and a specifically feminist focus” (Baxter, 2003, p. 58). Baxter (2003) argues that self-reflexivity is the opportunity for researchers to explicitly identify epistemological assumptions that they make as they conduct a study. Researchers need to constantly call into question their assumptions and the knowledge that is embedded within “analytic terms” (p. 60). By utilizing specific vocabularies, researchers tap into certain forms of power and knowledge within a specific field. A FPDA study examines this relationship and identifies the study as a product of “authorial choices and strategies” (p. 60) made on the part of the researcher. By taking on a self-reflexive approach to their work, researchers will need to identify the authorial choices they made and explain the subsequent effects on the study and more broadly.

As a researcher for this study, my own biases have impacted the study. First and foremost is the issue of race. Scholars critique that feminism has left behind women of color and the intersectionality that impacts these women’s lived experiences as educational leaders. During the data analysis segment of my research, I asked questions of the data, generated themes from the data and categorized these themes. I considered

how my position, as a white feminist research, influenced what I asked or didn't ask. I was self-reflexive in these pursuits in that my whiteness might have served as blinders to different ways of understanding and interpreting the data.

It is impossible to separate self and self-interpretation from a study. A qualitative researcher must be transparent about "their biases, values, and personal background... [and how] that may shape their interpretations" (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). Our interpretations are often unstable and discursively constructed. Researchers' perspectives, experiences, value systems, and assumptions shape their analyses. Research can only be conducted and presented within their geographic and historical time period (McLaren, 2009). Using my world view, feminist and poststructural, I am committed to problematizing truth claims and established forms of knowledge. As a poststructuralist, I argue that this binary is modernist; this binary has falsely created embedded power structures that decide what "counts" as rigorous and useful research. This determination, of what "counts," is largely reinforced by "those who have power...to maintain their access to material advantages and power" (Gavey, 1997, p. 52). Still, in my worldview, problematizing truth claims is a driving force in my research. While this was not a limit inherent to the study, it is necessary to identify that generalizability and establishing a "Truth" was not the goal of this study. Does that provide a limitation within the current discursive context? The answer to that question depends much more on a person's worldview, than any sort of essential truth or a definitive yes or no.

A deconstructionist approach is the second principle of a feminist poststructural discourses analysis. Meaning can never be fixed permanently and study findings are

merely representational over factual. Written, or spoken, text is unstable and “constantly inviting multiple and opposite interpretations” (Hatch, 2006, p. 52). Within FPDA, closure is not sought after, rather continual “textual interplay or ‘double movement’ between concepts” (Baxter, 2003, p. 62) is the desired process. This is ironic given this chapter’s goal of fixing some meaning to what a FPDA study could be defined as. By outlining and defining the core principles of a feminist poststructural discourse analysis or feminist poststructuralism as a theoretical perspective, I am somewhat backtracking on my statements. As there is a strong hesitation to fix meaning, meaning must be fixed to form a theoretical and methodological foundation for the study (Lather, 2004).

Lather (2004) outlines that deconstruction involves three stages. First, a researcher must make evident the binaries that exist within the study. Next, the research must invert the relationship between these binaries. Lastly, a researcher must “create a more fluid and less coercive conceptual organization of terms that transcends a binary logic” (p. 205). It is this last step of deconstruction that emphasizes the importance of a feminist poststructural discourse analysis as opposed to a critical discourse analysis. As outlined earlier, CDA studies have a more emancipatory goal in place where the work is done to advocate for the “dominated” in the dominator|dominated binary. What a feminist poststructural discourse analysis can provide is a disruption of this binary, particularly with regards to powerful|powerless conceptualizations in public discourse depicting women superintendents.

While examining a deconstructionist approach, Derrida’s concept of *différance* is useful. When using language to communicate meaning, a signifier is used only through

understanding the meaning that it defers. Meaning is only known with reference to, whether through interconnections or supplementary, something else within a specific discursive context. Within a FPDA study, this deconstructionist approach does not establish binaries based on opposition, but rather breakdown these “hierarchies of oppositions” (Baxter, 2003, p. 63). Signifiers, and their meanings, have a transcendent relationship in which they evolve together, always open for new interpretations. A poststructuralist study would not search for a “final signified,” rather it would posit that truth claims are about access to power and “reality is constructed in power relationships” (Noblit, 2004, p. 193). Lastly, a deconstructionist approach does not purport a dominant narrative constructed by the author (Baxter, 2003). It resists the allure of “narrative closure” (p. 64) and enables space for “multiple, open-ended readings of a piece of analysis” (p. 65). There are no final understandings and meaning is constituted and reconstituted through discourse (Noblit, 2004).

Lastly, a FPDA study focuses specifically on discourses of gender and how they are “negotiated and performed within specific localised contexts” (Baxter, 2003, p. 66). Within these contexts, women speakers are signified as powerful, powerless or both. This nuanced understanding and complication of the powerful|powerless binary is crucial for this study focused on women employed as superintendents. Their sex initiates a gendering process on them as leaders based on specific discourses of gender, race, leadership and power. There is not just one discourse that women or leaders are produced within, “but a multiplicity of discursive elements” (Foucault, 1984, p. 100). As a result, individuals are shaped by multiple subject positions and an individual’s experience is

impacted by “discursive practices within a specific context” (McNae and Vali, 2015, p. 6). It is this difference between a CDA and a FPDA that specifically suits FPDA for my study. It would be difficult to construct women superintendents as “universal victims” or always powerless. By the nature of their employment within the organizational structure of their localized contexts, they are embedded with some power. However, how gendered discourses and leadership discourses converge formed a different understanding of power within their contexts.

Data Collection Procedures

Data sources. FPDA was initially created to analyze spoken text to identify how speakers constitute and reconstitute themselves within discourse (Baxter, 2003). Baxter (2003) argues that a FPDA approach is suitable to spoken discourse because of the “interactive ways in which speakers shift between competing subject positions” (p. 2). Baxter (2003) calls for future practitioners of FPDA to apply it to written, printed, or electronic texts (p. 2). As FPDA is an emerging methodological approach within discourse analysis and qualitative research methods, it is essential to apply this approach to a variety of sources. By doing so, practitioners can elicit multiple voices and ways of knowing different conceptual terms and lived realities within discursive contexts.

Following Baxter’s (2003) call, I applied a feminist poststructural discourse analysis to a new type of data source: newspaper articles. The newspaper articles were publicly available documents. To start, I utilized the United States Newspaper Program, a federally funded program that has preserved newspapers from 1991 to 2016. After locating Massachusetts within this program, I identified major newspapers for Boston,

Massachusetts. As the most widely circulated newspaper in Boston during the study's entire time period, I selected *The Boston Globe* to identify newspaper articles for this study. This qualitative case study utilized *The Boston Globe* newspaper articles from 1991 to 2016. At the focus of current accountability reform efforts in public education, Boston, Massachusetts provided a significant locus of study. *The Boston Globe* played an essential role in the political landscape of Boston, particularly regards to racialized politics of the early 1990s (Nelson, 2000). Additionally, *The Boston Globe* serves as the largest regional newspaper and in 1993, was acquired by *The New York Times*, connecting it to a national reputable news organization (Mizner, 2009). In the mid-1990s, *The Boston Globe* had a daily circulation of approximately 500,000 and a Sunday circulation of approximately 810,000. While circulation numbers into the twenty-first century have declined slightly due to larger issues in newspaper circulations, *The Boston Globe* remains the largest newspaper in the geographic area (larger than the Boston Herald and the Bay State Banner) and is in the top 15 largest in the nation (Mizner, 2009). *The Globe* is an actor in discursive history. However, there is never a singular actor. For the purposes of this study, I use *The Globe* to represent the reporters, editors, contributors and stakeholders quoted in the articles. Using *The Globe* in this way gives it a great deal of power and responsibility in shaping the discursive context in Boston. *The Globe* is all but one actor in this discursive landscape. In this study, I rely on one newspaper publication as the data source which proves to be an inherent limitation in the research design. Utilizing other sources, especially *The Bay State Banner* given the prominence of the role of race in this study, could provide useful insights in my data

analysis. However, due to its high circulation numbers, *The Boston Globe* is a key player in the discursive context and the news coverage of political and educational events in Boston. I argue that determining the ways in which *The Boston Globe's* coverage of the superintendent interact with educational leadership discourses of the time is important to outlining the context of the city.

Race also played an important role in my decision to focus on Boston. Between 1991 and 2016, two African American women became superintendents of Boston Public Schools. Given the statistics on the number of women employed as superintendents, this occurrence made Boston a unique and interesting case study. Additionally, the role of race in this case study was integral as the study's time frame was directly following the "integration" of Boston Public Schools via busing. Busing in Boston ended in 1988. As this study began with the first African American woman beginning her tenure as superintendent in 1991, the legacy of segregation provided an important contextual element to this case study.

Thirdly, the presence of neoliberal educational policy shifts in Massachusetts, and more specifically Boston, provided a unique setting to carry out this research. Neoliberalism is "a positive conception of the state's role in creating the appropriate market by providing the conditions, laws and institutions necessary for its operation" (Olssen, 1996, p. 340, as cited by Apple, 2004, p. 20). Johnson (2012) explains that it focuses on free competition of individuals and organizations, safeguarded by a "regulatory state" (Apple, 2004). In neoliberalism, a school district is reconstituted as a "marketable commodity" (p. 24) that must meet certain criteria and "standardized

performance indicators” to be deemed “worthy” (p. 21). Within neoliberal thought, there is a focus on standardized that enables a regulation of “content and behavior through such things as national curricula, national standards, and national systems of assessment (p. 23). Critics of neoliberal reforms often identify the gendered implications of redefining school systems and their purpose through these initiatives. Reconstituting school districts as private commodities highlights “the gendered nature of the ways in which the management of schools is thought about as masculinist business models” (Whitty, Power, & Haplin, 1998, as cited by Apple, 2004, p. 24). Scholars further argue that these masculinists theories can impact “what knowledge is of most worth and how institutions should be thought about and run” (Fraser, 1989, as cited by Apple, 2004, p. 24).

School choice and options of charter/pilot schools in Boston officially began with the passage of the Massachusetts (MA) Educational Reform Act in 1993. In 1991, Boston became the first large urban school district to come under mayoral control in contemporary times. Cities such as Chicago (1995), Baltimore (1997), New York (2002), and Washington DC (2007) (and others), soon followed suit. In 1991, the Boston School Committee changed from an elected to an appointed committee. The political context of the Boston Public Schools directly after the passage of the MA Reform Act and the shift of control to the mayor’s office, provided Boston as a special case in which to examine the relationship between public discourse, power and leadership for women employed as superintendents in urban public school districts.

Since 1983’s *A Nation at Risk*, urban schools and communities have experienced an emergence and expansion of neoliberal educational reforms. Neoliberal policies

require not only structural changes to the educational context, but also discursive shifts (Hursh, 2007). These shifts required that educational policy be re-envisioned as neoliberal in nature, rather than socially democratic. As such, societal institutions were “recast as markets” and corporate interests were prioritized over democratic ones. These shifts have dominated the last quarter of the twentieth century within many sectors of United States society (Harvey, 2005; Hursh, 2007; Lipman & Hursh, 2007; Tabb, 2002). In the economic sector, neoliberal policies have roots in the 1960s. As “corporate profits began to fall...the United States and other developed countries implemented monetarist and neoliberal policies that supported corporations over workers” (Hursh, 2007, p. 496). Within the educational context, “neoliberal ideals, although rarely explicitly stated, form the basis for most of the education reform proposals since *A Nation at Risk*” (p. 498). By utilizing newspaper articles from 1991 to 2016, a feminist poststructural discourse analysis illuminated the ways in which women leaders were discursively framed in the context of neoliberal educational reform movements of urban schools and communities.

The last 25 years of the twentieth century ushered in a period of great change regarding discourses of gender in United States’ society. The modern women’s movement and the establishment of *Roe vs. Wade* constructed a discursive context quite different from before the passage of such a monumental court case. During this period, feminist attitudes liberalized, apart from abortion, which had remained relatively stable (Bolzendahl & Meyers, 2004). Additionally, the “roles associated with women in the U.S. society” (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004, p. 759) have also undergone shifts within the employment sector. There has been “a strong movement for gender equality, the

increased presence of women and especially mothers in the public workforce...have all contributed to a dramatic and widespread liberalization of gender role attitudes” (p. 759). In 2017, movements such as #MeToo and Time’s Up brought issues of gender disparities and sexual harassment in the workplace to the forefront of our public discourse. While, at the time of this study, it is too early to measure the impact of the movements, they are evidence of the changing roles of women in society. Throughout the last twenty-five years, movements such as these have discursively rewritten the positioning of women in society’s culture and structure.

Data Analysis Process

To analyze the newspaper articles, I utilized a synchronic approach. A synchronic approach worked to “capture a moment or sequence of moments when discursive power shifts occur” (Baxter, 2003, p. 73). Within this approach, I focused on three conceptual terms to influence my methods. They were: intertextuality (Kristeva, 1984), and Bakhtin’s (1981) polyphony and heteroglossia (Baxter, 2003). With intertextuality, “a text only gathers meaning because it is ‘woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, and cultural languages’ and is ‘caught in a system of references to other books, other texts and other sentences’” (Barthes, 1977, p. 23, as cited in Baxter, 2003, p. 78). Texts do not exist alone and all texts “take part in a larger discourse” that “provide some of their meaning” (Hatch, 2006, p. 202). Intertextuality was especially useful in the analysis of print media sources because these sources contained references to other texts as well as cultural language specific to the historical time period.

Second, Bakhtin’s (1981) concepts of polyphony, or the co-existence of a

plurality of voices in a text, guided my methodology. Baxter (2003) outlines three ways that a researcher can analyze texts with a polyphonic approach. First, researchers can “aim to produce multiple perspectives upon a single, centralized event, text, or textual extract” (p. 68). This approach is complementary to a synchronic approach because it focuses on a single, centralized event or text where “discursive power shifts occur” (p. 73). The second way to utilize a polyphonic approach is that “*one* author might produce *multiple* [emphasis in the original] and perhaps competing versions of the same act of discourse analysis, so in a sense there would be no ‘original’ or authorised version” (Baxter, 2003, p. 68). According to Baxter (2003) and Foucault (1984), individuals are often subject to competing and multiple subject positions within one discursive context. As they are subject to multiple discourses, producing multiple interpretations could be the presence of the powerful|powerless dichotomy. The last way to adopt a polyphonic approach is to create a first draft of a discourse analysis and then have the subjects of the research review the draft to make edits, clarify meanings and provide feedback (Baxter, 2003). While this is useful for spoken text as a data source, this approach was less useful for my study. As a historical research study, I focused solely on print texts to tease out FPDA’s applicability to written texts. It was outside the scope of the study to elicit feedback from study participants. While, through analysis, I looked to identify where “discursive power shifts occur” (Baxter, 2003, p. 73), I did not, however, only identify one centralized event or text. As a result, I determined the first method to be inadequate. I found the second method to be the most helpful in this study. In my analysis, I produced multiple and potentially competing versions with a focus on changes in discursive power

shifts (particularly shifts between powerful and powerless).

I incorporated Bakhtin's (1981) concept of heteroglossia into my analysis because heteroglossia further explores polyphony in that it is the "act of making visible the non-official viewpoint, the marginalised, the silenced, and the oppressed from other more dominant viewpoints" (Baxter, 2003, p. 70). This complements the selected polyphonic approach in that within these multiple versions, alternative viewpoints can be made public and available. However, I did not focus on "marginalised viewpoints" in the sense of a binary between the dominant viewpoint and marginalized viewpoints. I did, however, focus on multiple alternative understandings of the same act of discourse analysis.

Coding methods. To incorporate multiple alternative understandings of the data, I established a preliminary set of codes and themes within the data sets. These codes served as a starting point. As such, they were refined and adjusted through a memo system (detailed below). They included: gender roles, mother, assertive, aggressive, norms, leadership, immigration/immigrant, achievement, social justice.

My data collection and data analysis plan involved several thematic identification techniques based on an open coding perspective (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I utilized the preliminary codes to identify their general applicability to the newspaper articles. To ensure my own biases and assumptions did not cloud my interpretation of the data, I, then, developed themes that were "induced from empirical data" (p. 88) using observational and manipulative techniques. These techniques included word repetition, key word in context (KWIC), cutting and sorting, and comparing whole texts. I divided

the newspaper articles by year. First, I utilized NVivo software to generate reports based on word repetition throughout the documents. These enabled me to develop descriptive codes and general themes regarding the data. However, this method was insufficient. Word repetition, while an efficient method, remove words from the context in which they were produced in. The epistemological underpinnings of my study asserted that the discursive context is important therefore, I utilized key words in context to derive subthemes within the general themes induced.

In this technique, researchers identify key words or phrases and then systematically search the corpus of text to find all instances of each key word or phrase. Each time they find an instance, they make a copy of it and its immediate context. Themes get identified by physically sorting the examples into piles of similar meaning (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 97).

I, then, cut and sorted key words and phrases into various subthemes for further analysis. Lastly, I compared whole texts with a chronological framework in place. I asked questions such as “How is this text different from the preceding text[s]?” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 91). Utilizing this approach to my data collection and data analysis enabled me to develop a chronological order to my themes. Additionally, ending with whole text comparison, enabled me to develop overarching and metathemes for my study.

Self-reflexivity and memos. My method for approaching self-reflexivity utilized two approaches. I created two distinct memos about the same set of newspaper articles. First, I utilized an analytical style to create memos. Then I utilized a self-reflexive style to create memos. As I analyzed the newspaper articles, I went back and forth between analytical memos and self-reflexive memos to allow my understandings from either memo inform my analyses. Using the analytical style, I made connections, comparisons

and linked different codes together and used theory to inform them (Speziale and Carpenter, 2007). For my self-reflexive, I reflected on why I came to these conclusions, how my identity, assumptions and worldview influenced me to see these connections. I identified the processes used to come to the different conclusions in my analytical notes (Corbin and Strauss, 1998). Using these two approaches was complementary to a FPDA study because as I built versions of “truth,” I constantly checked my own biases.

This system of memos was particularly useful in refining and adjusting the codes I used for the data. Through my analytical memos, I paid attention to the usefulness of my preliminary set of codes. I utilized the self-reflexive memos to pay attention to why I focused on this set of codes. I asked myself questions such as: Are there codes I am overlooking? What happens if I focus on this aspect rather than this one? Can these codes be combined? Should there be a different code to describe this action or process in the data? I created analytical memos after every chronological section of data in data analysis. I created self-reflexive memos once a week during data analysis to reflect on and synthesize the analytical process I have been doing throughout the week.

Validity and reliability. Internal validity when defined as determining a definite truth or finding that explains the phenomenon of the study is inappropriate for a feminist poststructural discourse analysis. Rather, validity is established through explanation building strategies (Creswell, 2009). This issue was handled through triangulating the data through the multiple analysis techniques of word repetition, key word in context, cutting and sorting, and comparison across texts. Creswell (2009) argues that it is crucial to “triangulate different data sources...by examining evidence from the sources and using

it to build a coherent justification for themes” (p. 191). Through using multiple years of newspaper articles, various themes emerged that needed to be justified throughout the research process. A second validity strategy I employed was using rich and thick descriptions to “provide many perspectives about a theme” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192). By producing results that were more realistic and richer, the validity of the findings was substantiated. Several explanations or alternate viewpoints were developed from the data sources. These explanations or alternative viewpoints were analyzed together within this discursive context. Another strength with regards to validity of this study, was the use of “negative or discrepant information” (p. 192). By adding this contrary information, I added credibility to my findings. Generalizability was not the goal of this study. However, given the goals of this study, it is important to use multiple methods of analyzing the data sources to generate these various viewpoints.

Challenges and Limitations of FPDA

The major limitation of the study was the exclusion of spoken discourse. FPDA is uniquely applicable to spoken discourse because it is adept at “identifying and interpreting the fluid and interactive ways in which speakers shift between competing subject positions with the course of a conversation, discussion, or debate” (Baxter, 2003, p. 2). Additionally, interviews and observation are popular data sources for qualitative researchers. These sources can be rich with spoken discourse and opportunities to analyze spoken language data. If this is the case, why did this study exclude spoken language data and was this exclusion a limitation of the study? Baxter (2003) identifies a clear need for applying FPDA to written discourse. As an emerging methodological approach, it is the

responsibility of researchers to apply the approach to a diverse set of areas and on a diverse set of data sources. Secondly, the polyphonic approach examines when and where “discursive power shifts occur” (p. 73). Publicly available written documents are particularly useful in identifying when and where these shifts occur. As a result, applying a FPDA approach to written language data, rather than spoken language data, was unique, necessarily, and innovative.

Conclusion

The realm of public school superintendence in United States urban communities has rarely been studied from a feminist perspective. When it has, these studies have failed to adopt a historical lens. This study filled tremendous gaps in what we know about women employed as superintendents who were leading a large urban district during a time when neoliberal educational reforms gained peak popularity. Additionally, this study further advocated for the use of a feminist poststructural discourse analysis as an appropriate and applicable methodological approach to educational research studies.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

As discussed in Chapter 2, the framework for this analysis is a feminist poststructural discourse analysis. By using a feminist poststructural discourses analysis, I focus on the intersections and interplays between performative acts of gender, race, class and the resulting subject positionality of four Boston Public School superintendents from 1991 to 2016. In this chapter, I first laid out the key background information for each superintendent and chronologically match each superintendent with the two relevant discursive stages of the superintendency: *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* and *Superintendent as Collaborator*. After situating the data in this context, I provide an analysis of each superintendent. I divide each analysis into three major themes: superintendent as a capable leader, superintendent as a politician or educator, and superintendent as a community ally. While these themes are hardly revolutionary to the study of educational leadership, it is the feminist poststructural theoretical frame to understanding the multiple subject positions that problematizes these common-sense notions of what a superintendent should (or should not) do, say, think, and act.

Throughout this chapter, I argue that elements of race and gender situate the superintendents within the educational discourse of their time. Based on this process, a complex web of power relations positions each superintendent. In addition to issues of

race and gender, neoliberal educational reforms may have informed these power relations. As the study focuses specifically on the discursive production of superintendents who are women, I reference the superintendents who are men for comparative and contextual purposes. Previous research has argued that conceptions of leadership in public discourses are mainly androcentric (Grogan, 2014). Using this as a premise, the main analysis focuses on the construction of superintendents within public discourses and how these discourses are gendered for superintendents who are women. I construct this chapter to mirror my philosophy behind this study and to be a physical manifestation of the goals for which this study works towards. I situate the two women superintendents in the study in the centrality of my analysis and argument. I also provide them with significantly more space in the written text. To mirror my beliefs about the centrality of women in changing discursive understandings of educational leadership, I consider the men the “other” and the alternative. As such, I spend more of the actual pages in this study discussing the women.

Background on Boston Public Schools’ Superintendents, 1991 to 2016

Boston Public Schools (BPS) had four superintendents during this study’s 15-year time frame. Although there were interim superintendents, I only use permanent superintendents in this study. They are as follows: Lois Harrison-Jones (1991-1995), Thomas Payzant (1995-2006), Carol Johnson (2007-2013) and Tommy Chang (2015-present). Table 1 outlines basic background information about each of the superintendents.

Table 1

Background on BPS Superintendents, 1991 to 2016

Superintendent	Race	Gender	Tenure in Boston	Previous Educational Leadership Roles
Lois Harrison Jones (1991-1995)	Black	Woman	1 st African American woman superintendent in Boston Appointed by an elected school committee in 1991 School committee changed from an elected to an appointed committee in 1991 Contract was not renewed in 1995	Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent, Richmond Public Schools, VA Associate and Deputy Superintendent, Dallas Independent School District, TX
Thomas Payzant (1995-2006)	White	Man	Contract renewed in 2001 for 5 additional years Stepped down in 2006 to become a senior lecturer at Harvard University	Superintendent, San Diego Unified School District, CA Superintendent, Oklahoma City Public Schools, OK Superintendent, Eugene Public Schools, OR Superintendent, School District of Springfield, PA Assistant Secretary of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education
Carol Johnson (2007-2013)	Black	Woman	Unanimously voted to become superintendent after a previous candidate rejected the offer Retired in 2013 after the death of her husband	Superintendent, Memphis Public Schools, TN Superintendent, Minneapolis Public Schools, MN

Tommy Chang (2015-present)	Asian	Man	Current superintendent at the time of this study	Instructional Superintendent and Local Instruction Area Superintendent, Intensive Support and Innovation Center, Los Angeles Unified School District, CA
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Relevant Discursive Stages

The discursive stage of *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* begins in the 1980s and continues into the early 1990s. The legacies of this discursive stage frames Lois Harrison Jones’ entrance into Boston in 1991. Harrison Jones is superintendent during a transitional period between two discursive stages. However, the framing of the superintendency upon her entrance is largely influenced by the discursive stage preceding her time as superintendent.

After Harrison Jones, the three subsequent superintendents fall within the *Superintendent as Collaborator* discursive stage. However, gendered and racialized discourses of the time impact situating each superintendent within this discursive context. In general, collaboration and who superintendents should and could collaborate with evolve from the mid-1990s to 2016. For Payzant, collaboration is organized as a political action, whereas for Johnson and Chang, collaboration took on a more community-oriented focus. Still, who and what defines “community” is constituted differently for Johnson and Chang.

Findings on Boston Public Schools’ Superintendents, 1991 to 2016

To identify relevant documents for coding, I generated a list of search terms. These terms included the specific superintendents’ names (“Lois Harrison Jones,”

“Thomas Payzant,” “Carol Johnson” and “Tommy Chang”), “school superintendent,” “leadership,” “educational reform,” “hiring,” “administration,” “Boston Public Schools” and “school committee.” Using these search terms, I collected documents from each date range listed on my timeline. I summarized the number of available documents by year in Table 2, as detailed below. I identified documents that were irrelevant to my research questions. This included documents that were not about Boston Public Schools, specifically, or documents that were about leaders in Boston Public Schools, but not the superintendent.

Table 2

Available Documents by Year, 1991 to 2016

Date Range	Event	Rationale	Number of Available Documents
1991-1992	Lois Harrison Jones begins superintendency (1991)	Hiring moment of a new superintendent	271
1993-1994	Massachusetts Educational Reform Act (1993)	Landmark educational reform policy in Massachusetts that required the creation of high standards, a state assessment system (the MCAS), and an accountability system. Authorized Charter schools (up to 5) in Boston	233
1995-1996	Lois Harrison Jones ends superintendence (1995) Thomas Payzant begins superintendence (1995)	Lois Harrison Jones' contract was not renewed for a fifth year causing a new superintendent search.	233
2000-2002	No Child Left Behind (2001)	Landmark educational reform policy nation-wide	374
2005-2007	Thomas Payzant ends superintendence (2006)	Hiring moment of a new superintendent	192
2007-2008	Carol Johnson begins superintendence (2007)	Hiring moment of a new superintendent	312

2009-2011	OCR and DOJ Investigation (2010)	OCR and DOJ investigation of BPS as to whether BPS and DESE violated the EEOA for ELLs. The RETELL initiative results as an outcome.	480
2012-2014	Carol Johnson ends superintendency (2013)	Carol Johnson resigns from the superintendency two years before her contract is complete.	251
2015-2016	Tommy Chang begins superintendence (2015)	Hiring moment of a new superintendent	288
Total Documents			2,443

Note. MCAS = Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System; OCR = Office of Civil Rights; DOJ = Department of Justice; BPS = Boston Public Schools; DESE= Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; EEOA= Equal Educational Opportunities Act; ELLs = English language learners; RETELL = The Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners.

After I reviewed the total number of documents and uploaded to NVivo the documents relevant to the study’s focus and research questions, I eliminated documents focused on interim superintendents as the focus on this study is on permanent and confirmed superintendents. I summarized the number of documents relevant to the study’s focus and research questions in Table 3, as detailed below.

Table 3

Relevant Documents by BPS Superintendent, 1991 to 2016

Boston Public Schools’ Superintendent	Number of Relevant Documents
Lois Harrison Jones	233
Thomas Payzant	131
Carol Johnson	201
Tommy Chang	54

Note. The number of available and relevant documents relating to Tommy Chang is much lower than the other three superintendents because the study only covers his hiring as superintendent and his first six months in the position.

Lois Harrison Jones (1991 – 1995)

Superintendent as a capable leader.

It is ironic that Mayor Menino noted in his State of the City address that he has achieved small wins and maintained steady progress since becoming mayor. He has received more compliments than criticism for his candor. If anything, Harrison-Jones has also had small wins while maintaining steady progress. But she has received more criticism than compliments for her efforts (*The Boston Globe*, January 21, 1995).

The Boston Globe often framed Lois Harrison Jones as a superintendent without the capability to lead the Boston Public Schools. From the beginning of her superintendence, Harrison Jones' relationship with the Mayor became a proxy for her leadership capabilities. Her relationship with Boston City Mayor, Raymond Flynn, was well documented throughout *The Boston Globe*. This framing followed Harrison-Jones into 1994 and 1995 when Thomas Menino became the mayor of the city. As early as January of 1992, articles in *The Globe* scrutinized Harrison Jones' ability to lead. At the earliest stages of her leadership, political actors in Boston, including members of the school committee, questioned her salary and length of her contract. At the same time, community leaders praised Harrison Jones for her ability to reach out to parents and community leaders, especially parents of color. Mayor Flynn often received much blame in that he did not "fully appreciate, if not fully accept, Harrison-Jones as a partner in the quest for educational progress" (October 10, 1992). This political relationship played out in very public terms in *The Boston Globe*. Over time this line of questioning and relationship with the mayor materialized to personal attacks on Harrison Jones' personality, leadership style, and ability to live up to specific standards. Harrison Jones

left the superintendency in 1995 after receiving many criticisms of her steady progress in Boston Public Schools.

Harrison Jones became Boston's school superintendent at the end of the first discursive stage of the superintendency in this study. The *Superintendent as a Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* discursive stage was coming to an end, but its framings were far reaching and impactful in Harrison Jones' positioning as superintendent in Boston Public Schools. The responsiveness required on behalf of the superintendent to multiple external pressures and the influence of the mayor seems to have rendered Harrison Jones as relatively powerless in her capacities as superintendent. However, in other moments, Harrison Jones drew large support from the community.

Personality conflicts and victimization. Harrison Jones' relationship with Mayor Flynn placed her often as his adversary in the public discourse. However, the public did not vilify her. Although Boston political actors often questioned her capabilities, she was consistently framed in media as a victim of Mayor Flynn "constantly lambasting the School Department's central administration" (January 12, 1992). The impact of gender in the public discourses of the time can be seen most poignantly in that "Harrison-Jones described herself as a victim of an unreachable standard of perfection" (January 17, 1995). Furthermore, *The Globe* constructed her as one who had an "overly defensive style of management" (December 27, 1994) that alienated even her own supporters. *The Globe* depicted Harrison Jones ability to respond to "personal attacks" (December 21, 1994) as a proxy for her gender's ability to respond to these personal attacks. It is in this example, that the characterization trope of the *angry Black woman* materializes. Harrison

Jones' gender and race collided within the discursive context of the *Superintendent as a Political Strategist Focused on Excellence*, rendering her accountable to local bureaucrats. This provided a subject position unable to subvert androcentric ways of leading urban school reform as a superintendent, as evident in the comparison between her and Mayor Thomas Menino in the opening quotation. Despite *The Globe's* urging that these criticisms were "self-serving" to those who made them, there were numerous "political roadblocks" (January 21, 1995) that plagued her tenure. Both Menino and Harrison Jones had slow, methodological reforms. However, Harrison Jones received more criticism than compliments, particularly for her pace of reform.

The newspaper articles presented a pervasive adherence to gender norms.

Harrison Jones was often depicted as "overly sensitive" (January 30, 1992).

Furthermore, *The Boston Globe* employed specific language to position Superintendent Harrison Jones within the texts. For example, on April 3, 1992, *The Globe* reported that:

Mayor Flynn ignited a controversial debate by supporting the notion of giving headmasters and principals the power to expel students. Harrison Jones, who was *irked* [emphasis added] by Flynn's intervention into school matters, adamantly opposed extending the power to expel beyond the superintendent.

Rather than using a verb that demonstrated reasonable disagreement, the author chose to use "irked," most closely defined as "annoyed." Superintendent Harrison Jones' response was coded as an *emotional* response of annoyance rather than a logical disagreement within a professional setting.

Additionally, the text placed Harrison Jones in a reactionary relationship with educational reform in Boston Public Schools. Often sentences utilized passive voice

constructions and verbs of passivity to denote Harrison Jones as the receiver of the action, rather than the doer behind the action. In instances when she acted, it was at the request of the school committee or the Mayor's office. For example, "Boston school Superintendent Lois Harrison-Jones, *responding to a request by the Flynn administration* [emphasis added], has convened a task force to examine ways to reduce the system's \$35 million transportation cost" (February 8, 1992). Only once the Flynn administration had requested Harrison Jones to create the task force, did it happen. *The Globe* reported that Harrison Jones' implementation of educational reforms was often at the request of other public officials. In 1992, *The Boston Globe* reported that "City Hall asked Harrison Jones to organize the task force" (February 8, 1992) regarding school discipline. Not only was Harrison Jones responding to the request of others in her actions, but she was "attempting to *assuage* [emphasis added] the concerns of the headmasters" (April 3, 1992) with her implementation of educational reforms. In the end, it was Harrison Jones' responsibility to make the headmasters' feelings less unpleasant about school discipline reform. Once again, the superintendent provided emotional responses to professional dilemmas. *The Globe's* use of these verbs indicating passivity that is often gendered as "feminine," further illustrates the superintendent's positionality related to her gender.

Community leadership capabilities. One of the hallmarks of feminist poststructural discourse analysis is identifying the contradictions and problematizing common-sense notions of "truth." Although, Harrison Jones was often depicted as relatively powerless, a victim of a gendered standard of perfection and unable to respond in a professional (and not overly defensive manner), her ability to work within the

community, particularly with parents of color, positions her within different relations of power.

Throughout her tenure as superintendent, the public admired Harrison Jones for “reaching out to parents, particularly Black parents whose children make up nearly half the school population” (June 1, 1993). Feminine stereotypes of working with others rather than commanding others signified her leadership style. While the discourse of the superintendent of the time focused on political strategy and excellence in the classroom, Harrison Jones’ strengths and capability were in community involvement and connecting to parents of color. These qualities may have served her better had she been superintendent in the twenty-first century when a reconceptualization of the superintendency included a focus on these capabilities (see discussion below). However, the discursive framing of the superintendency, in her moment, required that she excel at developing her political relationships with the mayor and other local bureaucrats, mainly the appointed school committee.

Compliments of her community involvement, while yielding her support particularly among the Black community in Boston, did not afford her the opportunity to enact real and lasting educational reform within Boston Public Schools. Her compliments were often couched in concerns of her other capabilities as seen in this extract from *The Boston Globe* on December 27, 1994:

But others, although also unclear about her accomplishments, said they were impressed that Harrison-Jones has routinely set aside time to attend evening and weekend parent meetings, even uninvited, to hear their concerns.

Here, her race and gender, play an essential role in her ability to perform these roles and her depicted ability to perform these roles of the superintendent. While “overly sensitive” (January 30, 1992), in political matters, through this sensitivity she could develop relationships with community members. Although impactful in her ability to partner with community leaders, Harrison Jones was often described as a victim of the political maneuverings of the city during her time. In some ways, this gendered and racialized victimization enabled her to garner community support. While “the Black community in particular has been fiercely supportive, and protective, of her” (June 1, 1993), this support re-inscribed a position of femininity and expert educator, submissive to the dominant White political actors and the Black community leaders of the city. As such, Harrison Jones operated in a complex matrix of gendered and racialized discourses that enabled her in some moments, to garner community support and be empowered by that support, but also in other moments, restrained her, in that her race dictated which community support she could garner and what political circles she could enact real authority within.

Superintendent as a politician or educator.

But as with so many bad marriages, political and otherwise, there’s often an effort, by one party, to make the relationship work. Harrison-Jones made an effort to work, in effect, in a social and educational environment that was not the best the city could offer. And it certainly was not a healthy political environment for her (*The Boston Globe*, January 21, 1995).

As superintendent, articles in *The Globe* often compared Harrison Jones as an educator versus a politician. During Flynn’s time in office, *The Globe* often presented actors in the political environment as attackers of Harrison Jones. The community rallied

behind her in support as she was not considered a politician who could handle the extremely complicated political tasks.

Political acuity and the old boys' network. The opening quotation of this section framed Harrison Jones as a devoted wife attempting to save her marriage and putting in the “work.” Alas, she failed at saving this “marriage” in a “political environment” that she could not navigate. This wouldn’t be the first time that Harrison Jones would be framed as either in a political marriage or a devoted wife working for the mayor. While politics has always been a component of the superintendent in larger urban communities, political acuity was at the forefront of the superintendency in Boston in the early 1990s. Acceptance in to and ability to work in the old boys’ political network was a necessary trait of any successful superintendent of the time and Harrison Jones was “falling prey to Boston’s brand of old-boy politics” (December 22 ,1994). As evident by a series of statements in *The Boston Globe* in 1994, the old boys’ political network defined Harrison Jones’ ability (or lack of ability) to be successful as a superintendent. These statements framed her as someone deeply devoted to the children of Boston but unable to handle the political dimension of the job: “In Boston, politics is a very real part of the job and the politics have been very difficult for her to manage. But I do think she is an exceptional individual and has tried hard” (December 21, 1994). Previous framings of her as a victim of an unreachable standard interplayed with her race and gender. This led to a considerable amount of support from the Black community as discussed earlier.

Controlling images of African American womanhood were pervasive in constructions of Harrison Jones in the public discourse while serving as superintendent.

Descriptions in *The Globe* characterized Harrison Jones as having a “prickly personality” (March 19, 1994), “defensive and difficult” (January 17, 1995), “overly sensitive” (January 30, 1992), “a prickly proud woman” (June 1, 1993), and “uncooperative” (December 22, 1994). Harrison Jones argued that the city of Boston did not “respect the role of superintendent” (January 19, 1995). These controlling images and issues of respect for the position carry a unique racialized and gendered frame in their constitution. In her role, Harrison Jones “contradict[ed] elite white male definitions of femininity” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 107). The production of the controlling images enabled Harrison Jones to be controlled, especially when her behavior was to destabilize the status quo (Hill Collins, 1990).

The feminine educator. As she was discursively produced as the “non-politician” and an outsider to the old boys’ political network, she was simultaneously discursively produced as an expert educator, a subject position, that as superintendent, she could extract considerable power and authority. In this framing, Harrison Jones was described as “the epitome of what a teacher is” (January 24, 1995) and “deeply committed to children” (June 1, 1992). Further, her role as a “warm person, unlike previous superintendents” (all men except one) and a “superintendent that a parent can call up on the phone” (June 1, 1993) as if she was their child’s teacher helped to garner community support, but did little to help garner political capital in the city politics. A male school committee member further reproduced her as a distinctly *feminine* educator leading the school, “I said, ‘Because you always make me sit up straight when you come into a room’ he laughed” (January 24, 1995). Feminizing her role as an expert educator, and

later a community leader, was integral to discursively producing Harrison Jones' subject position along racialized and gendered lines. Not doing so, would result in a depiction of a superintendent that did not mold to constructions of white femininity; a conceptualization that Harrison Jones could never embody.

Critics did applaud Harrison Jones for “work[ing] on behalf of all kids in the city” (January 11, 1992) and being “one of the best we’ve had in terms of the children’s education” (March 23, 1995). Still, despite these statements of support, Harrison Jones was overwhelmingly depicted as the non-politician and incapable of fulfilling the job of superintendent. Although instructional leadership was a component of the discourse of the superintendent during the 1990s (Brunner, et al, 2002), Harrison Jones did not reap the same benefits of this characterization. More often, the school committee, as represented in *The Globe*, criticized her for not being experienced enough as a manager and her reform strategy was considered too slow for some. Her reform strategy was characterized as “building a school system one child at a time, which was stated to be ‘the job of a teacher, not the superintendent’” (December 21, 1994). Additionally, while considering candidates to replace Harrison Jones, the school committee criticized educators’ preparation in assuming the role of superintendency. A move towards including candidates from outside of the education field to fill the superintendency can be seen in the criticism that “traditional superintendents have a tendency to be educators, which is good. But their business is also management, and they often have no training in that” (March 21, 1995). As Harrison Jones served as superintendent at the end of the discursive stage of the *Superintendent as Political Strategists Focused on Excellence*, in

her moment, labeling Harrison-Jones as a gifted or expert educator was made to undermine her ability to be a superintendent (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 222). However, in a different discursive stage, this statement would identify Harrison Jones as a capable and exemplary superintendent.

Superintendent as a community ally.

‘I love all your children,’ she declared. ‘I care too much about your children to let them waste their lives uneducated. I care too much about your children to roll over and play dead because someone says I should’ (*The Boston Globe*, January 17, 1995).

Former state Rep. Melvin H. King declared on Monday that the Black community would not allow Harrison-Jones to be ‘lynched’ and explained yesterday that he believes she is being persecuted (*The Boston Globe*, January 18, 1995).

One of Harrison Jones’ strengths was her ability to work as a community leader.

This strength, however, was produced through a complex web of racialized and gendered constructions that defined leadership. Throughout her tenure as superintendent, the Black community often advocated on her behalf and showed a form of solidarity behind her. Community members, whether members of the Black community or the larger community in Boston, deployed racialized language to either support or disempower Harrison Jones as a formidable leader. In the opening quotation, Representative Melvin King argued that the Mayor and the school committee were lynching and persecuting Harrison Jones (January 18, 1995). King’s choice of language set a rallying call for the Black community to support Harrison Jones against the school committee’s racist actions. King further connected the tense political situation between Harrison Jones and the school committee with neoliberal educational reform initiatives and the racialized impact

of these initiatives on educational leaders in Boston, like Harrison Jones, and the students. King stated that by persecuting Harrison Jones, “the mayor and an appointed [school] committee controls minds [of children]” (January 18, 1995). When there should be “an elected committee and superintendent that is about liberating minds” (January 18, 1995). According to King, the emergence of charter schools in 1993 and the subsequent, “lynching” of Harrison Jones was “about putting the minds in the hands of white males in ways that end up with the youth being controlled” (January 18, 1995). In this context, the attempt of the Black community to use racialized language such as “lynched” attempted to combat larger policies of dispossession within the educational landscape. Despite her efforts to “routinely set aside time to attend evening and weekend parent meetings” (December 27, 1994) and intense support of the Black community, she eventually left the superintendency in 1995.

Community othermothers. Hill Collins (1990) explains that arenas of political activism, Black women are constructed as “community othermothers” in which they care for all Black children. Harrison Jones often assumed the role of this “community othermother,” particularly towards the end of her superintendence. Her strength in community leadership drew on her “connectedness with others” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 131). This connection to the community was evident in the continual support of the Black community and Black community leaders in meeting with Mayor Menino “to express their support for the embattled school superintendent” (January 13, 1995) and Mayor Flynn’s reception of “calls from Black clergymen to mend his relationship with the school superintendent” (January 12, 1992).

Harrison Jones as a community othermother further enhances the caricature of an expert educator. She was portrayed as always having “the best interests of the children in our city” (January 11, 1992) and caring “deeply about children and understand[ing] a great deal of their needs” (December 21, 1994). She tapped into her connection with the community, her role as a feminine educator, and commitment to children in the opening quotation of this section; “I care too much about your children to roll over and play dead because someone says I should” (January 17, 1995). Harrison Jones working as a “community othermother” enabled her to be subversive in her performance within the discourse. While the discourse dictated a superintendent ruled by the political elite, Harrison Jones made strong connections with the community and used her role to advance a reconceptualization of what the superintendent should be framed as: one based on “a very different value system, one whereby an Afrocentric feminist ethics of caring and personal accountability move[s] communities forward” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 132). This ethics of care and personal accountability relinquished control over others and positioned the superintendent as one who “bring[s] people along...to uplift the race” (p. 132). She utilized the discursive shifts from the superintendent as “commanding others” to one “of working with and through others” to her advantage (Brunner et al., 2002, p. 226). While this characterization as a community othermother positioned Harrison Jones as a powerful actor within the Black community, it juxtaposes against the discursive stage as a political strategist focused on excellence. While embodying a role as a community othermother enabled her to operate political levers within the Black community, it undermined her authority in Boston’s larger political context. It reinforced Harrison Jones

an educator, not a politician and not up for the job of the superintendent. Still, she was able to use these framings subvert preexisting discourses and push the discourses of the superintendency towards a role focused on collaboration with the community.

Unfortunately, this subversion did not prove to be effective enough in overcoming the obstacles presented by the political arena of the time.

Thomas Payzant (1995-2006)

Superintendent as a capable leader.

But the steely Payzant was unmoved, anticipating that the committee members would provide their customary backing (*The Boston Globe*, December 21, 2001).

Thomas Payzant became superintendent at a time when the superintendency was being discursively reconstituted and reproduced. However, the shift away from the superintendent as a political strategist towards a collaborator did little to undermine Payzant's capability and framing as a superintendent in the city of Boston. Despite his failings as a collaborator, Thomas Payzant received little criticism for his slow, methodical reforms to the Boston Public Schools. He was frequently thought of as a capable superintendent drawing from a wealth of experiences and a strong partnership with Mayor Thomas Menino. Descriptions in *The Globe* often depicted him as "tough" (April 13, 2000), "aggressive" (June 3, 2000), "methodical" (June 13, 2001), "steely" (December 21, 2001), "not afraid" (June 17, 20002), "mild-mannered" (June 11, 2005), and having "tough skin" (July 1, 2006). The school committee rarely questioned his capability and often the "[school] committee members would provide their customary backing" (December 21, 2001) of his initiatives and "tough managerial choices" (August

26, 2002). Butler (1990) argues that “gender is a cultural interpretation of sex” (p. 10). Gender then is a performance of expressions of gender that are cultural constructed and discursively produced. Situating Payzant in the categories of “tough,” “aggressive,” “methodical,” “steely,” “not afraid,” “mild-mannered,” and having “tough skin” in *The Boston Globe* discursively produced him as masculine and in line with the androcentric understandings of leadership, power, authority and capability. The limits of masculinity “are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse predicated on binary structures [tough vs. weak, methodical vs. emotional, etc.] that appear as the language of universal rationality. Constraint is...built into...the language” (p.12). The language used to categorize Payzant was “no way misogynist in its structures, but only in its application” (p. 36). This application of language within the very public domain of *The Boston Globe* presented Payzant as the masculine subject. These statements produced the masculine subject as “body-transcendent universal personhood” (p. 13). By ascribing these normative ideals in agreement with his sex, Payzant was positioned within a “heterosexual matrix” that rendered him as not only embodying universal personhood but as the “universal leader.”

Throughout his tenure, *The Globe* positioned Payzant as the task-oriented leader and the expert manager. Rather than a focus on his emotionality, a focus on specific actions taken by the superintendent was pervasive throughout the data set. Payzant was applauded as “an effective reviewer of principals and headmasters” (July 15, 2001) and as a take action type of leader as seen in April of 2000 when he sent “intervention teams

into underperforming high schools (April 13th). This was a departure from the highly emotionally laden language used to depict Harrison Jones' tenure.

Superintendent as a politician or educator.

If a person wants to come to Boston, probably one of the most politicized school systems in the country and in a city where politics is blood sport, if they're worried about that, they're going to be eaten alive (*The Boston Globe*, May 26, 2006).

Although discursively the 1990s provided a landscape for changes in the subject position of the superintendent, this had little effect on the superintendency of Thomas Payzant. While Harrison Jones' identification as an educator (instead of a politician) had detrimental impacts on her ability to enact district wide educational reforms and garner political support for these reforms, *The Boston Globe* represented Payzant in relatively positive terms and adept at politics. He was never represented as an expert or gifted educator or an instructional leader in *The Boston Globe*. A relatively public process appointed Payzant to superintendent that re-inscribed "white male conceptualizations of the political process" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 140). This reproduction of the political process conferred in Payzant the ability to focus on "public, official, visible political activity" (p. 140) like his pleasant relationship with Mayor Thomas Menino. Payzant was often depicted as being in "lockstep" (August 9, 2005) with the Mayor and his School Committee. When credit was due for positive reforms, Menino and Payzant were often referred to together as a team.

Hill Collins (1990) argues this reliance of "power, activism, and resistance" being solely defined in legitimate, public and official terms silenc[es] Afrocentric and feminist

way of conceptualizing political activity as “unofficial, private, and [in] seemingly invisible spheres of social life and organization” (p. 140-141). These androcentric and racialized ways of neutralizing politics proved to situate Harrison Jones in a way that drew less legitimacy and capability from her political activist approach of community othermothering, as I will also discuss with reference to Carol Johnson’s superintendency. Harrison Jones positioning as a victim of the political landscape in Boston during the 1990s stands in stark contrast to Payzant as an active player within that same landscape with access to more legitimate and traditional ways of leading, engaging in the political arena and instituting reforms.

Superintendent as a community ally.

Boston School Superintendent Thomas Payzant is sometimes tone deaf when it comes to community relations, but he is an effective reviewer of principals and headmasters (*The Boston Globe*, July 15, 2001).

Baxter (2003) argues that feminist poststructuralism does not situate men as solely villains and women as solely victims. In fact, this polarization renders women as powerless and “the other” which does not serve the nuances of systems of oppression in a patriarchal society along lines of race, class and gender. Baxter (2003), instead argues for multiple subject positions and for leaders to be simultaneously powerful and powerless. However, consolidation of power is discursively reproduced over time and space to provide specific institutional advantages to men. Payzant received relatively positive remarks in *The Boston Globe* throughout the tenure of his superintendent. As discussed previously, he was adept at politics and enjoyed a relatively positive relationship with Boston’s major and official public actors.

Despite the power embedded in the superintendent position, Payzant failed to connect with the community in which the Boston Public School serves. However, his failings did not seem to affect his ability to continue consolidating power within his role as superintendent. Payzant was described as “tone deaf when it comes to community relations” (July 15, 2001) and yet, still received a contract renewal of five years. Under Payzant’s leadership, “the Boston Public School system [did] a poor job of engaging parents” (December 19, 2001). Furthermore, articles in *The Globe* claimed that Payzant “ignored parent input” (August 18, 2000) and marked his leadership within the community as a “dictatorial leadership” (August 26, 2002). As the superintendency became discursively produced as a collaborator and one that focused specifically on community relations into the twenty-first century, Payzant’s subjectivity, while criticized in *The Boston Globe* for his lack ability to connect with the community, remained overall positively produced in the public discourse of the time. What advantages did Payzant have to overcome this inconsistency between his own leadership abilities and the discourses of educational leadership at the time? The fact that Payzant did not embody the current discursive stages of the superintendency seems to matter less to his overall evaluation when compared to that of Harrison Jones.

This shift in discourse resulted in new criteria and priorities of the next superintendent search. After Payzant’s retirement, the Boston School Committee looked for a someone who “will...protect and deepen them [associations with the community]” (May 20, 2005) and “focus on getting more families involved” (June 11, 2005).

Ultimately, the school committee, focused on finding a candidate “who can accelerate

academic improvements...but can connect with parents and community members” (June 26, 2006). These shifts signified discursive constitution of the superintendent marked by being an expert educator with positive community relations experience.

Carol Johnson (2007-2013)

Superintendent as a capable leader.

It is the same kind of leadership mission that a previous search panel identified more than seven years ago that led to the hiring of Johnson, whose tenure garnered mixed reviews (*The Boston Globe*, April 21, 2014).

The opening quotation signifies some of the challenges and opportunities that Carol Johnson experienced as superintendent from 2007 to 2013. During this time, a discourse of collaboration marked the superintendency, however, the role of discourse in producing the superintendency in the twenty-first century is ever-changing. This is evident in that, on paper, Carol Johnson, seemed to be exactly what was called for in a superintendent. However, her “tenure garnered mixed reviews” and the same criteria were chosen in the search for her replacement in 2013 and 2014. If Carol Johnson exemplified the positioning of the superintendent within twenty-first century educational reforms, why then the mixed reviews? Scholars argue that superintendents need to be collaborators and be skillful in distributed leadership models in the twenty-first century to be successful (Brunner et al., 2002; Harris, 2004; Spillane, Halverson and Diamond, 2004). However, Carol Johnson’s tenure demonstrated that this conceptualization is insufficient and there was a need for a new understanding of the superintendency.

Management abilities. The discourse in print media frequently framed superintendents as instructional leaders/expert educators and efficient managers. The

degree to which the superintendents found success in these roles depended upon many things. Harrison Jones and Johnson were consistently framed as having weak managerial skills. Starting with the 2000s, the discursive rhetoric of the time shifted towards a focus on instruction (Brunner et al., 2002). An instructional focus permeated the discursive subjectivity that Carol Johnson embodied. In the case of Carol Johnson, constructing her as a “weak manager” mattered less because of her ability to connect with the community and raise the achievement levels of students of color. Although “she was criticized for her weak management skills and lack of oversight into the operations of that 115,000-student school system” (June 28, 2008), she was still selected to head the Boston Public School system.

While “the quality of schools remain[ed] erratic” (May 13, 2013) and Johnson made “administrative mistakes over the years” (April 28, 2013), her “calm demeanor helped smooth the way” (April 28, 2013) for educational reforms such as the school reassignment plan. When compared to the trope of the *angry Black woman* that Harrison Jones embodied, Johnson demonstrated a “calm demeanor” adhering to normative views of femininity, a desired leadership trait especially for Black women. Embodying a strong and assertive persona, similar to Thomas Payzant’s leadership style just a few years prior, would “contradict white male definitions of femininity” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 107). By adhering to gendered norms, Johnson derived success. Still, criticisms appeared in *The Globe* of Johnson not embodying a strong and assertive leader. She was criticized for often being thin skinned, reactive, and having “a tendency to pitch proposals and then pull them back amid public backlash” (April 25, 2013). While public discourses

suggested her to be a calming and submissive leader that was responsive to others, the public discourses of the superintendence required that the “school superintendent...push back, when necessary, against school board members, union strongmen, and educational advocates” (February 8, 2007). By pitching proposals to only be retracted once she encountered push back, the articles in *The Globe* reproduced her as lacking aggressiveness. These two contradictory notions caught Johnson in a tense relationship between normative conceptualizations of femininity and the androcentric framings of leadership and the superintendency.

Approaches to leading. In response to this discursive tug of war between notions of femininity and an androcentric framed superintendency, Johnson’s approach of leading enabled her to reposition herself within the discursive context to garner considerable political and community support. Immediately, she was described as “an attentive listener with a pleasing manner” (June 21, 2007). While both these qualities were helpful to the role of superintendent, they also coincided with cultural constructions of femininity. Additionally, Johnson was characterized as “not being in charge of, but being with, a partner in the work” (April 6, 2014). This adherence to the collaborative discourses of the superintendence aligned with normative ideas of femininity.

In the example of Johnson, there was a convergence of normative understandings of femininity (and therefore, masculinity as situated in a heterosexual binary structure), the discursive stage of superintendents as collaborative, and an Afrocentric feminist ethics of care. The role of collaborator required that Johnson be a partner with stakeholders and work with them, reinforced by gendered norms.

Hill Collins (1990) argues that Black women lead as “community othermothers.” Black women leaders “subordinate our interests...to the allegedly greater good of the larger African-American community” (p. 86). When transitioning into her role, Johnson refused to take the spotlight from the interim superintendent. After being asked to join a picture with the interim superintendent and Boston Public Schools students, Johnson declined stating “this will be good for John [the interim superintendent]” (August 8, 2013). Instead of publicizing herself and her own interests, Johnson recognized that she was not the superintendent yet and it was better for the school district that the current superintendent have the support of the community.

Professionalized wife. Towards the end of her tenure Carol Johnson’s husband passed away after a long illness. Resultantly, her capability as superintendent was often questioned when her family demands increased. Feminist scholars often integrate the concept of the second shift into their analysis of career trajectories for women (Hochschild, 1989; Wharton, 1994). Most often, this second shift, caring for children and the home after work, prevents women from climbing the corporate ladder and advancing their careers. This second shift relies upon “a dichotomous split between the public sphere of economic and political discourse and the private sphere of family and household responsibilities” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 46). In this separation, the public sphere is reserved for male actors whereas the private sphere is reserved for female actors. This conceptualization relies upon an “archetypal white, middle-class nuclear family” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 46). Although not caring for her children, caring for her ill

husband enabled others to question her capability to perform all the roles of the superintendent. Rumors emerged about her resigning and her capability was questioned.

While for some an increase demand of her home life “raised questions about her continued tenure in her post” (February 2, 2013), for others these circumstances only reinforced Johnson as an expert educator, wife, and a community-based leader. While “she [was] faced with a challenge with her husband who [was] in Memphis and her work being here” (February 2, 2013), this experience garnered more support throughout the community. This experience, in many ways, humanized Johnson for the community. Johnson became more relevant to the community as she fulfilled both roles as a superintendent and a caregiver and wife. For the community, “family for everyone comes first” and facing “a challenge with her husband who is in Memphis and her work being here [Boston]” (February 2, 2013) only repositioned her as a professionalized wife but that was in sync with broader understandings of women actors in public spaces and conceptions of femininity.

Superintendent as a politician or educator.

Her dream, she said was always to be a classroom teacher. ‘I’ve never decided I wanted to be a superintendent’ (*The Boston Globe*, June 22, 2007).

Carol Johnson came to Boston as an expert educator and academic leader. Her experiences and reputation as this expert educator in Memphis and Minneapolis well positioned her to take the position of superintendent in Boston in 2007. Through the example of Johnson, the feminized educator and images of motherhood collided as the natural teacher. Johnson’s political awareness enabled her to identify the gendered

discourses of being a teacher and tap into those discourse to accumulate power. For example, she personalized her journey to becoming a schoolteacher by reinforcing the image of the women in her family. *The Globe* quoted Johnson as commenting “my mother was a schoolteacher; my grandmother was school teacher” (June 22, 2007), uniting the images of motherhood and teaching. Even in descriptions of her after attaining the superintendency, Johnson was still compared to a school teacher. Her actions in and out of the school buildings were described as “much like a teacher checking on her students’ progress” (September 1, 2008). A superintendent defined by the unification of being a mother and teacher took a racialized form in Carol Johnson. Johnson was described as “calm,” (April 28, 2013), “an attentive listener,” (June 21, 2007) who brought “compassion” (August 15, 2007) to her role as the “mother superintendent.” This compassion fit well within the new discursive stage of *Superintendent as Collaborator*. In this discursive stage, the superintendency took on a distinctly moral component. By being constructed as this caring, attentive and compassionate listener, Johnson could tap into the discursive productions of power within Boston city politics. This was not, however, without a discursive repositioning of her as a Black woman in different ways than Harrison Johnson was just years prior.

The mother superintendent. Controlling images of Black womanhood, particularly as matriarchs, have “been essential to the political economy of domination fostering Black women’s oppression” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 67). While within the Black community, the matriarch is often one of the most powerful positions, within the larger political economy, these racialized understandings of Black women’s roles in society and

the workforce further perpetuated classist, racist and sexist systems of domination. By fostering a discursive production of Carol Johnson as the matriarch of Boston Public Schools and as an expert educator, these discourses normalize racism and sexism as natural and inevitable (Hill Collins, 1990). This image of the “matriarch” emerged in the post-World War II era and resulted in “proscribed roles in white patriarchal institutions” (p. 75) as more white women entered the employment sector. As a result, assertive or aggressive women were penalized and casted as “unfeminine” (p. 75). While she “avoided grand pronouncements or bold changes” (September 1, 2008), she worked to create lasting education reform through other avenues. As a result, Johnson tapped into her political acuity that she brought with her from Minneapolis where she was described as a “superintendent with a halo for her calm and caring manner and political acumen” (June 17, 2007). Her actions reinforced the ideal mother superintendent, but by recognizing these discourses and leveraging them in her favor, Johnson was able to subvert these tight restraints through “quietly transforming Payzant’s system into her own” (September 1, 2008).

Johnson’s knowledge of the political networks at play in Boston and how her race and gender collided to provide her a specific subject position, afforded her the ability to adhere to racialized notions of femininity and make lasting impact as a superintendent. In the cases of Harrison Jones and Payzant, it seemed that they were either a politician or an educator. In the case of Johnson, she occupied both subject positions. Her construction as a Black woman and the discursive stage of the superintendent as collaborator largely influenced the degree to which she was successful and her ability to consolidate power

within these subject positions. Johnson was identified as an “academic leader” (August 8, 2013), with a “forte...in instructional leadership” (January 28, 2008) and “notable success in bolstering academic opportunities for students across the city” (April 25, 2013). She was described as this expert educator as a fulfillment of her womanhood and motherhood. By adhering to these normative views, Johnson gained acceptance into Boston city politics. She was not seen as an adversary to the old boys’ network in Boston city politics, but rather a community ally who “loved teaching” (June 22, 2007), supported “good quality education for *all* [emphasis added] children” (October 3, 2008), and was “incredibly committed to the youth [of Boston]” (April 25, 2013).

Superintendent as a community ally.

I think she clearly has a better understanding of the cultures, the needs, and the challenges of the children and families that make up a majority of the BPS (*The Boston Globe*, October 3, 2008).

Despite the overall positive review of Thomas Payzant, the superintendency was changing in the years after him. From one that was constructed as an expert manager, the discourse of the superintendency required that superintendents be adept not only at managing people and engaging in political relationships, but also having a unique understanding and connecting with the community in which the school district was situated. As a result, the search panel for Payzant’s replacement was “especially interested in someone who can accelerate academic improvements begun by Payzant, but can connect with parents and community members in a way that Payzant did not” (June 26, 2006). Carol Johnson proved to be the community agent that Boston Public Schools wanted in 2006. Her production as a community leader was not without confinements by

her race and gender. Race and gender collided as “interlocking systems of oppression” rooted in “Eurocentric, masculinist thought” (Hill Collins, p. 225).

While race and gender (along with class, sexual orientation, etc.) created a matrix of domination, Harrison Jones’ production as an angry community othermother and Johnson as the “hard-working,” but passive and “good listener” (April 25, 2013) focused their work at the community level of this matrix. Johnson’s continual re-inscription as a community advocate situated her within this level. Hill Collins (1990) argues that the matrix of domination exists on three major levels; “the level of personal biography; the group or community level...; and the systematic level of social institutions” (p. 227). While Harrison Jones and Johnson appeared to be working on the systematic level of social institutions by nature of their employment as superintendents, their race and gender constrained them in the political contexts of their time. As they experienced relative power from their race and gender in making community connections, this same race and gender limited their ability to enact change at the institutional and political level. Throughout this matrix of domination, women are “multiply located” with the ability to “adopt relatively powerful positions within certain discourses and... resist, challenge and potentially overturn discursive practices that conventionally position them as powerless” (Baxter, 2003, p. 55). Johnson, within the discourse of superintendent as collaborator, was applauded for “her warmth and openness” (June 20, 2007) with the community and for “building...community trust” (September 1, 2008). By making community relations a priority, Johnson situated herself within the discourses of the superintendency and

gendered discourses of femininity and operated at the community level (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 227).

Racialized city politics. Throughout Johnson's previous roles as superintendent and her time in Boston, she "include[d] parents and community leaders in decision-making" (June 17, 2007) and built "community trust" (September 1, 2008). Johnson became a "popular figure in parts of the Boston's Black community" (September 13, 2013), who often came to her defense in larger Boston city race politics. In 2013, Johnson failed to fire a principal who was issued assault charges, an act that caused her "forceful criticism" (October 17, 2013) by John Connolly, a city councilor and candidate for mayor. By calling for Johnson to be fired, Connolly was "cast[ed] as a racist" (September 13, 2013) by some and "Johnson's defendants railed against Connolly during a rally at Bethel AME Church, using racially charged language" (September 13, 2013). In this rally, Johnson's supporters "compare[d] him to opponents of court-mandated school integration in the 1970s" (September 13, 2013). Johnson's race constrained her to act within the community level of resistance (Hill Collins, 1990). However, by tapping into the support of a racialized community, she subverted racist and sexist discourses that disempowered her within city politics. Resultingly, her subversion gained her access to resisting in the systematic level of Hill Collins' (1990) matrix of domination.

Champion of the black community. As "subjected to and a willing agent of...dominant ideologies" (Taylor, 2011, p. 831), Johnson was depicted as having an innate ability "of connecting with the community," "appeasing community anger with her deft touch," "build[ing] trust with parents and community" and "reaching out to

seemingly every corner of the city” (September 1, 2008). The legacy of race and segregation is strong for Boston Public Schools. Busing in Boston to integrate the schools ended in 1988, almost 20 years before Johnson took office as the leader of the school system. Still segregation plagued the system throughout the last decade of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. Engaging parents from disenfranchised communities became a hallmark of Johnson’s tenure as superintendent. She “hosted a series of community forums...on how to help those at greatest risk of leaving school” (January 30, 2008) and engaged parts of the community “with only a passing interest in schools” (September 1, 2008). By being described as someone who was with the community, Johnson engaged the school district in ways that her predecessor could not.

Racialized and gendered discourses situated her superintendency in a binary relationship with her predecessor, Thomas Payzant, within a heteronormative regime of power. Baxter (1990) argues that gender is “regulatory practice that sees to render gender identify uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality” (p. 43). As such, the “feminine terms” is differentiated from the “masculine term...through practices of heterosexual desire” (p. 31). This impacts the regime of discourses at play in Boston school superintendence in that this compulsory and heterosexual binary involves polarizing genders and races. Johnson as a Black woman, in effect, was “marked” and “differentiated” from her predecessor, Payzant, as a White man. By Boston selecting Johnson as the next superintendent, she was considered “someone who can accelerate academic improvements begun by Payzant, but can connect with parents and community members in a way that Payzant did not” (June 26, 2006). This was not as much as a

reflection of Payzant's shortcomings, but more of a dog whistle for racialized and gendered politics at play in the Boston city politics. Through this compulsory binary structure, Johnson connected with the community through her performative acts of her gender and race. Through "citations...of normative gendered practices" (Taylor, 2011, p. 831), Johnson fulfilled the promise of a Black woman as an advocate for the Black community. While not "needing" the same protection of this community as Harrison Jones was just over 10 years prior, Johnson did gain considerable relationships of power through being a collaborator focused on the school community.

Johnsons' subject position as a Black woman leading Boston Public Schools was "formed in and by the prior power of discourse" (Taylor, 2011, p. 827). Gendered and racialized discourses of the early twenty-first century provided a "multiply contested site of meaning" (p. 827) that enabled Johnson to be subversive "within existing discourse[s]" (p. 827). As superintendent Johnson was "subjected to...dominant ideologies" and racialized discourses, but her subversion of these discourses enabled her to "transmit and produce power" (Foucault, 1978, p. 101) in Boston's Black community. Performativity of her gender situated Johnson as a champion of the Black community.

Tommy Chang (2015-present)

Superintendent as a capable leader.

It's sort of a balance of finding a visionary and a really capable administrator (*The Boston Globe*, January 12, 2015).

The balance from the opening quotation would become the call for a new superintendent after Carol Johnson retired in 2013. Johnson, while deeply connected to

the parents and family of Boston Public School students, garnered mixed reviews of her tenure. Due to these mixed reviews, the new superintendent search committee was looking for the antidote in Tommy Chang. Throughout the interviewing process, Chang prevailed as a professional collaborator who could be assertive without violating gender norms. *The Globe* described him as an administrator who would be unafraid to “shake it up” (March 1, 2015) to improve instruction for students. Chang was described as a leader who had a vision and if “you’re not open to embracing change, you’ll definitely be turned off” (March 1, 2015). While assertive actions complicated Harrison Jones and Johnson’s tenures as superintendents, this assertive approach to leading a school system seemed to place Chang as the front runner in the superintendent search. Chang’s assertive leadership was only reinforced by the androcentric leanings of leadership that privilege assertive men over assertive women. While the superintendent was discursively produced as a person who needed to be assertive, Payzant and Chang had more of an opportunity to tap into this discourse than Harrison Jones and Johnson.

While some articles in *The Globe* criticized Chang because he had never “been the boss” (March 1, 2015) and was someone who, before Boston, “has never led an entire school system” (April 13, 2015), his track “record of taking on the toughest challenges and succeeding” (March 5, 2015) encouraged the school committee to vote in favor of Chang in 2015. *The Boston Globe* reported that Chang had a “unique, open perspective [who] wants you to think outside the box” (March 1, 2015). While working in Los Angeles, community stakeholders asserted that Chang was responsible for sparking several improvements in that “graduation rates have jumped, suspensions are down, and

more students are going to college” (March 1, 2015). He was described as the behind the scenes educational reformer who was “not a manager of schools” (March 1, 2015). However, he was someone “trying to move them [the schools] forward” (March 1, 2015). While the Los Angeles Superintendent, John Deasy, received “a lot of credit for the reforms,” others argued that the changes in Los Angeles’ schools “never would have happened without Tommy” (March 1, 2015).

Overall, prior to coming to Boston, *The Globe* depicted Chang as well equipped to be a capable leader in the superintendency, but not a person who had successfully worked as a district superintendent previously. While this led to some questioning of his capabilities in the public discourses, his reputation as a collaborative instructional superintendent fit well with the discursive stage just preceding his time as superintendent. As such, androcentric understandings of leadership of assertive men and the discursive stage leading into his superintendency positioned him as relatively powerful. He was depicted as a leader who had the capabilities inside of him to “jump-start the process of taking the system to the next level” (April 13, 2015). He had to do less in establishing himself despite not ever serving as a superintendent before his post in Boston.

Superintendent as a politician or educator.

He's worked in big cities before and understands how things operate (*The Boston Globe*, March 5, 2015).

At the time of Johnson’s exit from the Boston superintendency, the Boston school and political community was looking for their next leader to be both a politician and an expert educator. Chang did not have the experience of working as a superintendent in

previous districts, but he was mostly described as a “diplomat” (January 21, 2014) who knew how to “navigate both the school system and the politics of the city” (April 23, 2014). Chang did not have experience as an actual superintendent and yet, he was presented as experienced, especially in the discursive positioning of the superintendent as a politician. Meanwhile, both Harrison Jones and Johnson faced criticisms for not being experienced or capable enough despite having served as superintendents in previous districts. Afrocentric and feminist scholars alike argue that valuing “our own concrete experiences and understanding “experience as a criterion of meaning...is fundamental epistemological tenet in African-American thought systems” (Hill Collins, p. 209). Hill Collins (1990) argues that this is true even after “substantial mastery of white masculinist epistemologies” (p. 209). Within Afrocentric feminist discourses, knowledge of concrete experiences situates Harrison Jones and Johnson in ways that benefit them. Prioritizing concrete experiences enabled them to draw upon their roles as expert educators. However, when subjected to white masculinist epistemologies, Chang did not necessarily need the experience of being a superintendent to gain support due to his gender. With regards to gender, Chang was endowed with certain protections and advantages in power relations not afforded to Harrison Jones and Johnson as political and educational leaders in Boston. While this was mitigated by his race, the privileges that Chang derived from his gender enabled him to access the label of “experienced.”

His race as an Asian American and his positioning as a speaker of other languages, fit well within the context of educational reform in Massachusetts at the time of his hiring. Just before Chang’s entrance into Boston, educational reform in

Massachusetts focused on changing instruction for linguistically and culturally diverse students of color. In September 2010, Boston Public Schools and the U.S. Department of Justice filed a settlement regarding noncompliance on behalf of Boston Public Schools to adequately identify and serve English language learners since 2003 (United States of America vs. Boston Public Schools, 2010). The U.S. Department of Justice issued a successor settlement agreement in 2012 to establish long-term policy changes regarding instruction for linguistically and culturally diverse student in Boston (United States of America vs. Boston Public Schools, 2012). In the 2014 - 2015, superintendency search that yielded Chang as the next superintendent, three out of the four superintendents spoke at least one language other than English. The three multilingual candidates all spoke Spanish. Chang spoke Mandarin and Taiwanese. Throughout the superintendent search, articles in *The Globe* focused on the importance of selecting “someone who has experience dealing with English language learners” (January 19, 2015), commenting the difficulty of finding a quality candidate given the changes in training from the 2010 court settlement. New “mandatory training for teachers who deal with non-English speakers, have raised the bar for administrators in recent year” (January 12, 2014). Race, ethnicity and language capabilities seemed to play a new role in the superintendent search, with the English learning school community playing a new role in school-community relations.

Still, Chang was labeled both the expert politician and teacher, drawing benefits from a variety of educational leadership discourses and discourses of gender. Chang was described as “foremost a teacher” (March 1, 2015) and fulfilled the role of “academic visionary” (March 4, 2015). This “intense focus on instruction” (February 25, 2015)

permeated the call for a new superintendent that ultimately lead to Chang's appointment as well as the first few months of his tenure. The previous discursive stages of *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence* and the subsequent *Superintendent as Collaborator* fell short of situating Chang within the political and educational landscape of the city of Boston and Boston Public Schools. Grogan (2000) argues that a new reconceptualization of the superintendent in the twenty-first century is needed. This reconceptualization must emphasize the local and the community in its educational reforms and approaches to educational leadership. Historically, this focus on community leadership was understood in a gendered lens as an adversary to political acumen in leadership. Through Chang's superintendency, it is evident that superintendents must be politically aware, but also connected to the community, adopting an ethics of care, and working through others not over others.

Superintendent as a community ally.

But he can't figure this out on his own, nor does he want to (*The Boston Globe*, September 11, 2015).

The superintendent search that ultimately led to the appointment of Chang emphasized the need for collaboration and community partnership. In 2015, community partnership and engagement became a specific priority in the reconceptualization of the superintendency in Boston. Grogan (2000) suggests that concepts of distributed leadership and shared governance within the school and larger community must be a part of this reconceptualization. Chang's construction as this community ally from Los Angeles largely benefited from a refocus on these priorities. *The Globe* described him as

having a “vision and a track record of collaborating well with parents and stakeholders” (March 4, 2015), “worked closely with parents...while administrators in two other districts had fought parents’ reform efforts” (March 1, 2015). Consistent with Grogan (1996), “work...owned by the school community” (March 9, 2015) became the rallying call for the appointment of Chang. The community wanted to “own their ideas...and for the shared decision-making” (Grogan, 1996, p. 162). These conceptions of the superintendency positioned Chang as relatively powerful in his experiences working with community members in Los Angeles. While he did not receive the same powerful support from the Black community as Harrison Jones and Johnson, Chang’s ability to speak other languages and connect with other sections of the Boston school community enabled him to draw support as a community ally at the very beginning of his tenure in Boston.

While the focus on community involvement was hardly new or revolutionary for Chang’s superintendency, there was a new prioritization of the role of the business community in partnering with the superintendent to create education reforms within the city of Boston. While for Johnson, the superintendent was tasked with “partnering schools with community-based organizations and city agencies” (January 30, 2008), *The Globe* depicted Chang as an expert community ally, but one who needed to engage the business community, potentially leading to a new discursive stage focus on public-private partnerships. For both Harrison and Johnson, “community” meant the Black community or other community-based organizations that provided direct service to people of color living in Boston. For Chang, “community” became code for the business community. While Chang had considerable experience engaging parents in Los Angeles, the refocus

on the superintendent's ability to engage the business community in school-based decisions took a new precedence. Chang needed the business communities' support to "prepare the workforce of tomorrow...[with] ideas from the business leaders of today" (September 11, 2015) because "he can't figure this out on his own" (September 11, 2015).

Business agendas infiltrating educational reforms was not unique to Boston in 2015. Neoliberal reform efforts with a goal of introducing school choice, privatization and free markets into the U.S. public school system had been taking hold in cities through the United States since the 1980s. However, with the turn of the century and new legislation, neoliberalism developed a strong hold in the educational reform movements carried out by local, state and federal agencies, local school districts, and non-profit and philanthropic organizations. Neoliberal globalization produced a changing relationship between cities and the economy. The dynamics of this changing relationships was "manifested in struggles over urban development strategies" (Pedroni, 2011, p. 203-204), such as urban educational reform. The vision of cities as a "gleaming, dynamic, hip (and discursively white) global hub of emergent mobility technology" (p. 204) depended upon restructuring education for current city residents, predominately students of color and students living in poverty.

Chang's relationship with the business community, and the importance placed on the economic purpose of education, echoes neoliberal marketization of public education. From the beginning of his tenure, *The Globe* depicted Chang's leadership as closely tied to the business community. The School Committee's decision to offer Chang the position

“elicit[ed] applause from about 200 business leaders” (March 5, 2015) in the initial announcement. This support continued in Chang’s first few months as superintendent. In Chang’s 100 Day Plan, “Chang speaks the language of business” (September 11, 2015) with a focus on “innovation, and a focus on job skills” (September 11, 2015). As depicted in *The Globe*, Chang took a “broad view of education” with reference to public-private partnerships. In taking this “broad view,” Chang could focus on enticing the business community to support traditional public schools and “restore confidence that [they] can be transformed” (September 11, 2015). Lastly, *The Globe* positioned Chang as a leader who was passionate about the intersections of education and the workplace. *The Globe* quoted Chang in wanting “their [the business community] intellectual capital to help us redesign what the high school experience is” (September 11, 2015). Part of this redesigning would require pathways for students into the workforce and shifting the purpose of education to an economic one focused on career readiness.

While shared responsibilities with community stakeholders emulates Grogan (2000)’s definition of the superintendency involving shared governance, perceptions of his race could potentially mitigate Chang’s abilities as he assumes the role of superintendency. Sy, Shore, Strauss, Shore, Tram, Whiteley, and Ikeda-Muromachi (2010) contend that race-occupation fit impacts leadership perceptions for Asian Americans. More specifically, stereotyping “Asian Americans as technically competent and their perceived fit with technical occupations” (Sy et al, 2010, p. 913) make them less likely to be promoted to leadership positions involving business. Liang, Lee and Ting (2002) argue that harmful stereotypes of Asian Americans being positioned as

“unassertive and docile” (p. 81) excludes them from traditional understandings of leadership. Yammarino and Jung (1998) further explain that traditional understandings of leadership in the United States and are in direct contrast with traditional values found in Asian American cultures such as humility, submission, respect, and a focus on the group over the individual. These normative understandings of what it means to be a leader in U.S. culture are reified in economic systems such as capitalism, where a focus on individualism is so strong. As such, a construction of the superintendency as one that needs ties with the business community might situate Chang as relatively powerless and provide a challenge in the future.

Conclusion

Various factors and resources had the ability to impact public perceptions of the superintendent’s performance in this study. Throughout this chapter, I laid out how specific racialized and gendered discourses interacted with discourses of educational leadership to position four Boston Public Schools superintendents. The themes of the superintendent as a capable leader, politician or educator, and community ally identified the ways in which these superintendents were discursively produced within the context of changing educational landscape and power relations. Discursive conceptualizations of superintendents as either political strategists or collaborators collided with racialized and gendered public discourses to position the superintendents in varying ways. Although both Black women, Harrison Jones and Johnson experienced this collision differently from each other. For Harrison Jones, she was more often positioned as an “angry Black woman,” while Johnson was described as the “mother superintendent.” Both these

caricatures limited the superintendents' ability to leverage the power enshrined in their position. While both drew support from the Black community, the gendered relations with the Black community produced Harrison Jones and Johnson in more passive roles. Payzant, on the other hand, experienced this collision in a very different manner. Payzant, as a white man, could successfully access and play a key role in the old boy's political network that ostracized his predecessor, Harrison Jones. Lastly, Chang's collision provided a more nuanced landscape to emerge regarding racialized politics in the city of Boston. By colliding with neoliberal policies that seek to privatize public sector goods such as public education, Chang's position was rewritten as a partner with business community as opposed to parent communities, the Black community, or the immigrant community. It was this context, not just the discourses emerging in educational leadership during each superintendent's tenure, but how these discourses interacted with public discourses of race and gender that provided the contextual backdrop in which each superintendent situated their position and subsequently, their agency to enact progressive educational reforms within the city of Boston.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

The political landscape throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century provided a complex web in which school superintendents navigated. During this time in Boston, discursive framings situated the superintendents as racialized and gendered bodies. Much like the discourses that “provides the network by which dominant forms of social knowledge are produced” (Baxter 2003, p. 25), their positions were “neither uniform nor stable” (Foucault, 1990, p. 100). Competing discourses of femininity and androcentric framings of the superintendency consumed Harrison Jones and Johnson. Interacting through racialized and gendered discourses often positioned them within certain lenses. At times, they seemed more closely aligned with normative ideas of femininity and at other times, they were aligned with the discursive stage of the school superintendency in educational leadership literature.

Harrison Jones and Johnson were not only subjected to gendered discourses. As identified as women, “being...female is but one effect of the multiple ways in which individual identities are constituted through discourse” (Baxter, 2003, p. 26). Most notably, race proved to play an integral role in the superintendent’s subjectivity and performativity within and across these competing discourses. Racialized discourses provided the backdrop, the landscape, the context. This “range of institutional

discourse[s]” (p. 25) provided a context for the superintendency to be “produced, reinforced, contested, or resisted” (p. 25) throughout the study. The discursive nuances of the interactions between these larger social constructs produced Harrison Jones and Johnson as subjects of the discourse, but also actors of these same discourses.

Racialized discourses not only impacted the role of the superintendent for Harrison Jones and Johnson, but Payzant and Chang as well. Payzant’s role as a white man reinforced his access into the Boston city politics and the old boys’ network. It suggested that, at times, the androcentric leanings of the superintendency combined with normative conceptions of masculinity, positioned him in powerful ways. While receiving overwhelming positive remarks regarding his tenure as superintendent, Payzant’s lack of a collaborative approach, in a time when educational studies were specifically calling for this type of leadership, created a circumstance where the discourse of the time disempowered him. Still, the momentum gained by the institutionalized gendered and racialized discourses of leadership prevented Payzant from losing control. Access to power only granted to white men in a patriarchal society institutionalized his momentum.

However, feminist poststructuralists argue that people are produced through discourse in varying ways. In certain discourses, these superintendents have access to arenas of power. In other discourses, these superintendents are relatively powerless. This does not, however, negate the experience of communities of color and/or women in Boston from 1991 to 2016. Feminist poststructuralists further argue that, although all people are actors of these discourses and therefore are powerful and powerless, women and communities of color experience a specific reification and institutionalization of

discourses that disempower them in more and lasting instances than white men. While Payzant might not have aligned exactly with the discursive stage of the superintendent, the power effects of being a white man enabled him to still hold on to a central role of Boston city politics; as opposed to one that operated from the periphery like Harrison Jones and Johnson.

Lastly, Chang's experience with the racialized and gendered discourses of the time produced a nuanced and complicated circumstance for educational leadership. Chang's being an Asian man influenced his role as superintendent. The educational reform context set the stage for a more "worldly" superintendent who spoke a variety of languages and could reach out to different parts of the community. Chang served as superintendent starting in 2015. Throughout the twenty-first century, the wave of accountability era reform and the neoliberal educational reform movement set the stage for the insurgence of business interests in education. While during the tenure of Johnson, community became code for the Black community, for Chang, community involvement meant engaging the business community for answers to educational problems and issues. His network involved his access to this community, an expectation that aligned with neoliberal educational reform movements. Given the racialized and gendered discourses relating him as an Asian man, this may position Chang as he assumes his role as superintendent. At the time of this study, Chang was only beginning his superintendency. The degree to which Chang can access roles of leadership in the business community may be impacted by his race and gender. The findings of this study suggest that this will play a role in how Chang is positioned throughout the rest of his tenure in Boston.

Lipman (2004) argues that urban educational policy and reform is at the center of urban renewal and global economic restructuring. “Neoliberal urbanism...[excludes] urban populations that are already among the most educationally and socially disposed” (Pedroni, 2011, p. 205) and necessitate the marketization of education (Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen, and Murrillo, 2002). By applying business models of reform to public education, a school’s purpose is reconstituted as an economic one (Johnson, 2012). Through a form of “shock therapy” (Johnson, 2012), neoliberalism implements drastic interventions that include market reforms to reduce the “public and democratic control over resources” (p. 235). Privatizing public school operations and overlaying entrepreneurial principles on urban educational reform seeks to strip away democratic ownership of public goods (in this case, public education) and further marginalize disenfranchised communities. As such, the intense need for stakeholders from the business community providing input to Chang could serve as one lever of the neoliberal reform movement’s goal of “purifying” the system and creating a “blank slate” to provide a space for incentivizing profits in public education (Johnson, 2012). The interplay of neoliberalism may be useful in future research as the benefits (or lack thereof) of this type of reform come to fruition in the twenty-first century.

Summary of Chapters

While effects of the discursive landscape were varied and wide reaching for the superintendents in this study, I illuminated certain key arguments on the impact of race and gender in this context that weave throughout the study. To discuss these key arguments, first I detail the purposes of each chapter.

In the first chapter, I documented the trends in the number of women superintendents during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and situated the study in the city of Boston. While the number of women superintendents has fluctuated throughout the twentieth century, it has never increased more than 11 percent nationwide. Based on the arc of this data, I presented several research questions that focused on the relationship between women superintendents, representation in the media, the historical context, and implications for educational leadership.

In chapter two, I reviewed the relevant literature including employment related theories previously used to analyze how and why women gain access to the superintendency. These theories included a range of epistemological perspectives that included individual-based explanations and structural-based explanations. To better understand the historical data on the number of women superintendents, I reviewed the discursive stages of the superintendency. Lastly, in chapter two, I fleshed out my theoretical framework of feminist poststructuralism by providing some discussion of several key conceptual terms drawn from the literature.

I focused on the methodological implications of feminist poststructuralism in chapter three. To do so, I reviewed previously used methods of discourse analysis such as conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis to provide a rationale of the unique advantages to using a feminist poststructural discourse analysis for this study. I, then, detailed my data sources and provided a robust rationale for using *The Boston Globe* as the primary data source. I ended chapter three by detailing the components of my data

analysis plan, including the coding techniques I employed and the memo system I used to analyze that data.

I presented the findings of my study in chapter four. To begin, I provided background information for each superintendent and revisited the relevant discursive stages that were originally presented in chapter two. The study's findings included an analysis of each of the four superintendents, presented in a chronological order. Within each superintendents' section, I organized the data using three themes: superintendent as a capable leader, superintendent as a politician or educator, and superintendent as a community ally. I concluded by summarizing how discursive conceptualizations of the superintendency collided with racialized and gendered public discourses for each superintendent in the study.

In chapter five, the final chapter of this dissertation, I provide key arguments to answer the study's research question. I use those key arguments to detail the relationship between discourses informed by neoliberalism and superintendents of public school districts. I, then, draw several key implications for educational leadership and research methodologies. I connect these implications to future research goals within this field.

Discussion of Key Arguments

To summarize the findings of this study, I present three key arguments. Together, these arguments weave together the analytical themes and concepts of the study.

Argument one. *Discourses of educational leadership matter, but alone are insufficient in describing the success or failure of a superintendent.* The superintendents in this study were subjects of and perpetuated the educational leadership discourses of the

time. However, these discourses were insufficient in fully capturing the impact and legacies of each superintendent. The discursive stages provide general trends in educational leadership literature and a cohesive outline to in which practitioners can ground their work. They are not designed to provide an exhaustive summary for how educational leaders operated during the time frame they span. The discursive stages point to general trends in educational leadership. A range of discourses inform educational leaders and their actions. As such, this range of discourses provides a complex web for the superintendents to navigate based on a variety of factors, with race and gender being the focus of this study. It is the interactions between discursive stages of the superintendence and racialized and gendered discourses that provide a more nuanced understanding of these superintendents.

Harrison Jones came to the helm of Boston Public Schools at the end of the discursive stage *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence*. Harrison Jones was often criticized for her lack of political acuity; one that was informed by gendered discourses. It was not an innate inability to operate political levers, but rather a collision of Boston city politics of the time and normative views of gender. Adversely, Harrison Jones was more often depicted as an angry Black woman who provided emotional responses to professional dilemmas. She engaged in a reactionary relationship with the first Mayor during her tenure. During her time, a new discursive stage emerged in educational research. Although Harrison Jones was not well cited for her collaboration skills, her connection to the community was evident in the newspaper articles. Still, this connection was framed as the Black community feeling the need to protect Harrison

Jones from racist criticisms. Racialized discourses in a city long plagued by segregation, particularly in the school system, informed her connection to the community. As Harrison Jones became superintendent, the era of busing in Boston was coming to an end. The legacies of segregation and the complex racial tensions were at fever pitch in Boston city politics. As such, racialized discourses were forefront in shaping public image of Harrison Jones as the school superintendent. Therefore, Harrison Jones' work as superintendent is not adequately informed by either superintendent discursive stages.

Payzant's tenure in Boston was from 1995 to 2005 during the *Superintendent as Collaborator* stage. While superintendent, Payzant received remarkably high evaluations despite being criticized for a lack of collaboration with the community. Although, a focus on superintendents as collaborators came to the forefront of educational leadership during his tenure, his inadequacies in this area seemed to matter less for him.

Carol Johnson was everything that people of Boston said they wanted, according to the newspaper articles. Although she met the criteria of the discursive stage of the superintendent as a collaborator, she was still criticized based on the standards of the *Superintendent as Political Strategist Focused on Excellence*. While applauded for her strong collaboration and community relations skills, these skills were seemingly not enough. She was often cited as not being an assertive manager and not embodying a political acuteness needed to be a school superintendent in Boston. Still, she gained high marks regarding her connection to the community and was considered in a favorable light. However, community involvement was changing by forces outside of educational leadership discourses. While it was important for Johnson to engage the Black

community in Boston, “community involvement” was evolving in the twenty-first century due to neoliberal educational reforms. These reforms required something different of educational leaders, as found in Tommy Chang’s introduction to Boston.

Chang began his superintendency in 2015. The current discursive stage of the superintendent is influx and ever-evolving. As such there is less of an outline of what the discourses of leadership were for Chang and how it impacted his entrance into this Boston. As this study only covers up to 2016, there were considerably fewer newspaper articles regarding Chang as opposed to the other superintendents.

Argument two. *Teasing out race and gender for superintendents is a complex process and issues of how these constructs intersect are more informative for educational leaders.* Black feminist thought urges against “starting with gender and then adding in other variables” (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 222). Instead, these constructs provide an “overarching structure of domination” (p. 222). Feminist poststructuralists argue the opposite, that women and men, as subject positions produced through discourse, are multiply located as powerful and powerless. While this is connected to an interlocking system, it deviates in that the focus of analysis is “how they [race, gender, class oppression, among others] interconnect” to provide moments of oppression and moments of liberation. It is not helpful to attempt to identify moments when superintendents were subjected to racialized discourses or gendered discourses. It is more useful to look at the specific moments of intersectionality that provides a complex moment of discursive production in relatively powerful and powerless subject positions.

Harrison Jones was often criticized for her management style and her inability to respond to personal attacks. These criticisms often took on both a racialized and gendered dog whistle. As proxy of her gender, *The Globe* often reported Harrison Jones as giving emotional responses that were uncooperative, defensive and difficult. She was in a failing relationship with the mayor, largely due to her real or depicted inadequacies. Through the political component of the superintendency, Boston city politics, and more specifically Mayor Flynn, targeted Harrison Jones. This target worked to control Harrison Jones in ways to support the status quo along racialized and gendered lines. Hill Collins (1990) argues that to “ridicule strong, assertive Black mothers...reflects an effort to control a dimension of Black women’s behavior that threatens the status quo” (p. 107). By being “aggressive [and] assertive,” Black women “are abandoned by their men” (p. 75). While she may have been abandoned by the political actors in the wider political landscape, when taken from a more Afrocentric political perspective that includes an ethic of care and the role of Black woman in Black community advocacy, Harrison Jones was central to the political landscape of the Black community. However, this role was feminized in ways that subverted her leadership role in the Black community’s relationship with city politicians and the mayor. Although central to the Black community leadership, this process gendered Harrison Jones by constructing her as a victim who needed the Black community’s leadership (mostly male actors) to protect her.

At the same time, articles in *The Globe* as also feminized her as an expert educator and care giver of children. While these characterizations are seemingly gendered in nature, they take on a specific racialized role of constructing Harrison Jones as an

angry Black woman not capable of accessing the old boys' political network in Boston city politics. By being feminized into this expert educator, Harrison Jones' access (or lack thereof) to the "old boys' political network" was re-inscribed in the political landscape. The attempt to feminize Harrison Jones into this expert educator and care giver was a failure. Harrison Jones did not "conform to the cult of true womanhood" (Hill Collins, 1990, p. 75) and, as a result, became targeted as the *angry Black woman* identity in her tenure. By not conforming, Harrison Jones failed to "model appropriate gender behavior" (p. 75) and therefore, became constructed a "fundamental source of Black cultural deficiency" (p. 75). This production became a rallying call for the Black community in supporting and protecting Harrison Jones. This attempt to construct Harrison Jones as needing protect from the Black male actors, combated an emasculation of Black men because of Harrison Jones "failing to be [a] submissive, dependent, 'feminine' [woman]" (p. 75). Harrison Jones was caught in a tense game between normative notions of femininity at one end of the spectrum, including the feminization of Harrison Jones as an expert educator, weak manager, and requiring the Black community's protection (specifically the protection of Black male actors within that community), and androcentric leanings of the superintendent taking the form of the superintendent as a political strategist.

The Globe reported Johnson, on the other hand, as a passive and pleasing *mother superintendent*. While still lacking access to the old boys' political network, these forms of controlling images of Black womanhood coincided with the discourses of the superintendent of her moment. Johnson's relationship with Boston city politics feminized

her as an expert educator; one who deeply cared for the children of Boston. Johnson received positive evaluations on her ability to engage parents of all children who attended Boston Public Schools. During her moment as superintendent, the discursive stage incorporated normative notions of femininity and a more Afrocentric perspective on ethics of care in educational leadership. As such, Johnson gained considerable advantages due to this collision of public discourses on leadership, race and gender.

Argument three. *Educational leaders can leverage and re-imagine discourses on gender and race as instruments of power.* Butler (1990) argues “the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated” (p.13). Masculinity is treated as a normative, universal personhood whereas femininity is treated as *the other* and on the periphery. In the contexts of educational leadership research, this normative personhood of the leader is masculine. Foucault (1978) argues, when a person is “sexed” that person is subjected to a set of social regulations. Sex is discursively constituted rather than created through an innate attribute or biological difference of the individuals. It is constituted through “the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms” (Butler, 1990, p. 23-24). This matrix is bounded by discourses of gender and race as seen in the examples of the Boston school superintendents in this study. Harrison Jones and Johnson had a separate set of social regulations and operated in a different set of regulatory practices than Payzant or Chang. A regime of public discourses transmitted and produced meanings of gendered and racialized bodies. By recognizing the racialized and gendered discourses that exist, particularly in public discourses as present in this study, women leaders can work within

those discourses and disrupt them. These racialized and gendered discourses are not static, but they are “ongoing discursive practices[s]...open to intervention and resignification (Butler, 1990, p. 43). As such, these discourses can be reproduced to recast and redefine women’s subject positions as superintendents.

Butler’s (1990) subject is an actor that “simply gets up and performs its identity” (p. 45), particularly for gender identity because gender “is something that we ‘do’ rather than ‘are’” (p.46). In this sense gender is performative, although the subject never “preexists the deed” (p. 50). Gender identity does not preexist the performance but is “constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (p. 25). In the context of this study, the superintendents “did” gender in varying ways. How they “did” gender often was influenced by the operating discourses of their superintendent tenure, including discourses of the superintendent in educational literature, racialized and gendered public discourses, and political discourses encompassing neoliberal educational reform initiatives, policies and programs. Oftentimes when discussing gender in terms of masculinity and femininity, certain characteristics, attributes, and behaviors are described as innately feminine or innately masculine (i.e. strong and aggressive is deemed masculine, while soft and understanding is deemed feminine). When an individual does not possess specific characteristics, attitudes, or behaviors, exclusionary practices categorizes and labels individuals as gendered subjects. Butler (1990) argues that women as subjects are produced through exclusionary practices that are hidden in the structure. These essential characteristics, attributes, and behaviors are identified as truths of gender or gender identity in U.S. public discourse.

The examples of Harrison Jones and Johnson shed light on these exclusionary practices. Harrison Jones did not perform the innately feminine characteristics, attributes or behaviors. As such, she experienced exclusionary practices that casted as an outsider to Boston city politics and inadequate as superintendent. Harrison Jones failed to successfully perform “citations...[or] repetitions of normative gendered practices [that] legitimize a presumed prior model of authoritative (that is, ‘nature’ and ‘normal’) gendered practices” (Butler, 1993, p. 26). Harrison Jones didn’t “do gender” as prescribed by patriarchal conceptions of femininity, but she was redefined as feminine in a racialized way (with the Black community). Johnson “did” femininity in that she had a “pleasing manner” and was an “attentive listener” (dominant conceptions of what it means to be feminine). She still, however, was barred access to the political network.

Since gender is performative and repetitive, it is possible to ‘do’ gender differently. However, the subject’s choices in doing gender are limited and the subject does not have free agency to perform gender in any which way it chooses (Butler, 1993). By being able to ‘do’ gender differently, subjects exercise discursive agency. This agency “may produce interpellative failures” (Taylor, 2011, p. 830), providing for moments of subversion. Harrison Jones and Johnson both attempted to exercise this discursive agency through their leadership as superintendents. They were, oftentimes, constrained by public discourses of the time. All superintendents were constituted through these public discourses. Discursive productions of their race and gender largely impacted their ability to exercise agency. Even in the case of Payzant, discursive elements limited him in some ways with regards to community advocacy and collaboration skills.

In this study, there were no prevailing dominant discourses, nor were there corresponding alternative or unaccepted discourses. Payzant and Chang were not categorically considered part of the “accepted discourse” because of their sex nor was Payzant solely because of his race. Conversely, Harrison Jones and Johnson were not excluded solely because of their race and gender. Foucault (1978) argues that actors are produced through a range of discursive elements that “can come into play at various stages” (p.101). Throughout the tenures of the superintendents in this study, these discursive elements rendered them in powerful and powerless ways. All the superintendents were subjected to and agents for this matrix of oppression as produced through discourse. While this range of discursive elements was present throughout the entire study, the discursive elements took on a specific meaning for Harrison Jones and Johnson. By operating at the intersection of race and gender in an androcentric field, Harrison Jones and Johnson had more discursive constraints from competing and often, contradictory directions.

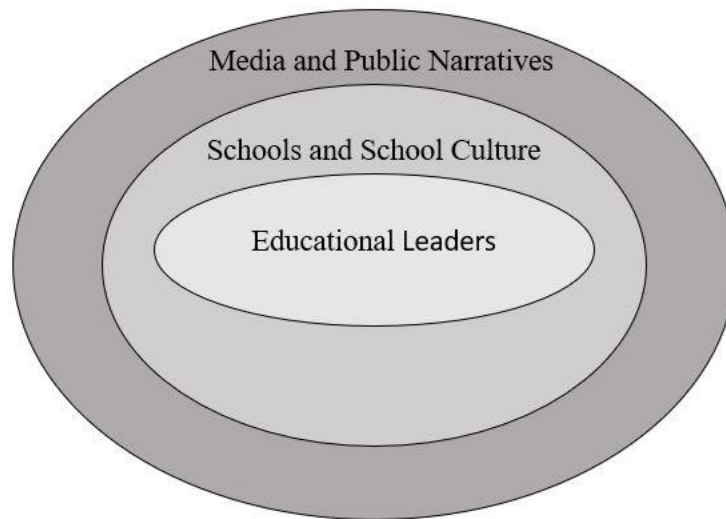
Implications of Key Arguments

The above key arguments have implications for research methodologies, educational leadership, schools and school culture, and the media and wider public narratives. The organization of these four audiences is important to the philosophical backing of this study. First, I begin detailing the implications for research methodologies because a central component of my research design was to test this type of analysis on written text. The implications for research methodologies details theoretical and abstract philosophies of knowledge and truth. After detailing these implications, I then move

towards practitioner-based implications which are central to this work. I take an ecological perspective on my implications as they are intertwined with each other. The audiences for my practitioner-based implications are part of a discursive context and inform each other. Figure 1 outlines the three levels of the practitioner-based implications.

Figure 1

Ecological System of Implications for Practitioners



I start with implications for educational leaders because these specific individuals are the focus on this study. They are the individual level of my implications. Schools and the school cultures in which these individuals work, as well as larger public narratives of leadership, frame these individuals. As such, I, then, move my discussion of implications to schools and school cultures. Finally, I end with implications regarding the media and

public narratives of leadership. These implications connect this study to the larger study of women in leadership in a range of professional fields.

Implications of key arguments for research methodologies. Feminist poststructural discourse analysis (FPDA) was initially designed for spoken discourse. Baxter (2003) argues that feminist poststructural discourse analysis can unearth the power relations within a specific field. It unites an “emancipatory stance of feminism” with “the deconstructive purpose of post-structuralism” to provide a “productive contradiction” (Soper, 1993b, as cited by Baxter, 2003, p. 2). This is especially useful for research with a gendered focus in the twenty-first century. As the number of women gain higher leadership positions in U.S. society and subvert the pillars of patriarchy, a more nuanced approach to research is needed. While, in many ways, women are still subjected to harsh realities built on misogynistic and sexist framings, it will be even more useful to identify ways in which women and men have resisted these framings and transformed patriarchal structures within U.S. society. Feminist poststructural research has the epistemological and methodological foundations to enable researchers to view this complexity with multiple perspectives.

Secondly, FPDA focuses on the “interactive ways in which speaker shift between competing subject positions” (Baxter, 2003, p. 2). In the context of this study, I use FPDA to investigate the ways in which local media sources shift superintendents’ subject positions through a focus on language. Baxter (2003) calls for future research to apply FPDA to written texts. Written texts are taking new and creative forms. With the advent of social media networks such as Twitter in the twenty-first century, more people have

access to creating public discourses as opposed to just mere consumption. While this study only focused on newspaper articles, this research provides an opening for applying FPDA to all types of written texts that may or may not contribute to public discourses of leadership for women in a range of employment sectors.

By focusing on shifting subject positions, this study has specific implications for future research. First, this study complicates the notion of a universal perspective. It emphasizes the need to analyze power relations within current research, regardless of the specific methodology. Future research needs to consider the sociopolitical stance that the researcher is operating from. This is particularly useful for methods in which the data analysis is filtered through the researchers' interpretations. Additionally, by focusing on sociopolitical stances, a researcher can identify and disrupt her own biases about specific communities.

Implications of key arguments for educational leadership. Utilizing feminist poststructuralism to analyze discourse has tremendous implications for educational leaders. Discourse is a major operating structure in society and reproduces through social institutions (Weedon, 1987). Race and gender can mitigate how successful a superintendent is depicted within these discourses. These depictions of success may influence various stakeholders' beliefs and actions regarding an educational leader. Discourse is essential to our understandings of the world in that ideas shape reality. Language may influence one's understandings of what is possibility and what is not. It can limit or expand our perceptions of others (Barrett, 2005). Foucault (1980) reminds us that power plays a productive role in that it produces knowledge and discourses to give

meaning to the world. While power and discourse can open new possibilities of being, they also can close off new ways of being a leader and a woman. In the context of this study, power can regulate public discourses regarding educational leadership. *The Globe* used language that complicated the discursive stages of educational leadership from 1991 to 2016. By filtering these discourses through public gendered and racialized perspectives, media organizations can potentially reconstruct what “truth” can be accepted as “common sense” for educational leaders and subsequently, potentially influencing who is depicted as successful or not successful in the larger community. As school districts are increasingly held accountable to the larger community and, in some cases such as New York City, coming under direct control of the local government, these depictions of success and who can fulfill them along gender and racial lines may reconstitute access and opportunity to the most powerful role in public school systems.

With advent of neoliberal reform efforts, a new discursive stage of the superintendency may be emerging. Neoliberalism’s stake in public education, and urban education more specifically, can have larger impacts on the discourses that constitute who can and cannot be a superintendent. Privatization of education and the insurgence of market-based principles in school and district-based management attempt to alter the democratic principles that serve as the foundation of U.S. public education. As seen most poignantly in the example of Tommy Chang, these changes may impact the focus of reform agendas and subsequently who has the “expertise” to carry out these reform agendas. Although *The Globe* situated Chang as the collaborator required by the discursive stage of the superintendency, the emergence of the business community as one

of the prominent stakeholders in the twenty-first century may shift the discursive stage to incorporate stronger focus on skills important to private industry. This new discursive stage would require the superintendent to be adept at not only reaching out to the community (whether defined as communities of color, parent community, business community, etc.), but also public-private partnerships, philanthropic community organizations and for-profit businesses. If the purpose of education transforms from a democratic one to an economic one, who can lead these school systems will also be discursively reconstituted as neoliberal reform movements not only require structure shifts, but also discursive shifts (Hursh, 2007).

Gavey (1989) asserts that language “operates to produce very real, material, and damaging structures in the world” (p. 481). These discursive shifts may have a material application in the selection and retention of public school superintendents nation-wide. School committees would be well served in understanding these shifts in their candidate searches. When the purpose of education shifts towards to an economic one, school committees could select superintendents with business experience or experiences outside of the educational field. Boards of Education could use these understandings to alter superintendent credentialing processes and licensure requirements to increase applicants from outside of the traditional teaching to administrator pathway. These educational leaders, and their respective school committee and educational governing bodies, do not exist in a vacuum; they are subjected to the historical, cultural and social contexts of their time. As such, these contexts have the possibility to provide multiple ways to understand being a leader in public school systems.

Implications of key arguments for schools and school culture. Schools and school culture can also be informed by the findings and key arguments from this study. As the most powerful role in the school district, if a woman is still constrained in complex ways by these discourses, what are we teaching our young people about gender dynamics and power relations in society? How are issues of race and gender impact school communities and school cultures? The second half of 2017 news reporting brought an increase in the number of examples of prominent powerful men who have sexually assaulted and raped women (Almukhtar, Gold and Buchanan, 2017; Ford, 2017). While it is crucial to bring these atrocious examples to light, it is also important to bring smaller microaggressions of misogyny to light as those acts, behaviors, and norms operate as the foundation to larger transgressions.

Society's social institutions, such as schools, can perpetuate common understandings of constructs such as race and gender. Gendered discourses that restrain women leaders in public school systems suggest a larger operating structure relies on gendered understandings of power is at play. Every level within a school system has the possibility to reinforce specific expectations of groups of people based on their gender or race. As such, expectations of others that do not support bullying and harassment in U.S. schools should be created (Meyer, 2015). According to an unpublished report by the U.S. Department of Justice, sixty-eight percent of high school girls were sexually harassed at least once (Anderson, De La Rue, Espelage and Low, 2014). When schools are situated within a system of patriarchy that reifies normative views of gender, they can become "incubators for all the values and belief systems that allow cultures of sexual harassment

to exist” (Meyer, 2017). School districts can disrupt the teaching of normative views of gender and leadership. This is particularly true for large urban districts where there are larger groups of students of color and therefore the ways in which constructs, such as race, class, and gender, interlock create a complex web through which students will need to navigate throughout their lives. By not identifying the misogynistic and racist undertones in public discourses surrounding educational leadership, institutions can perpetuate misogynistic cultures in their school communities.

In identifying these cultures, intersectionality renders bodies as products of discourse in increasingly powerful ways. Teasing apart race and gender leaves us with inadequate understandings of racialized and gendered bodies. Discourses of educational leadership intermingle with issues of intersectionality to provide a nuanced discursive landscape in which educational leaders navigate.

Implications of key arguments for media and public narratives. The key arguments can shape how the media covers educational leaders and the type of public narratives that emerge based on this coverage. The findings suggest that educational leadership theories and discourses merged with gendered and racialized discourses in *The Globe*. This complex interaction represented the superintendents in varying ways. Despite scholars in educational leadership and educational leadership programs advocating for one set of qualities, *The Globe* depicted women against traditional masculine ways of understanding leadership. In the literature, qualities such as collaboration and working with others became increasingly more relevant from 1991 to 2016. However, *The Globe* still judged all four superintendents based on if they were “tough,” “political” and “expert

managers.” In instances when Harrison Jones and Johnson failed to measure up to those discursive labels of androcentric leadership, *The Globe* depicted them as failing and lacking capability. Public discourses of how society understands leadership shaped the depiction of the superintendents more so than the literature on the superintendency. As such, need to re-imagine in our public discourses, not just in scholarship, how to lead and what qualities define a leader.

This discursive reproduction of leadership needs to account for real, material lived experiences of women in leadership positions in a variety of sectors. How do women lead and work in their workplace, in their families, in their communities and in public office? And how does the media cover these leaders? The media’s coverage of leaders may not be isolated to the educational field. In the case of the 2016 election, Hilary Clinton was positioned as a female version of a president, who could do the job of any man. Did public discourses of the presidency and leading transform or was she positioned as “equally masculine” in her leadership capabilities? She may not have been able to fulfil those masculine ways of understanding the presidency and leadership, as we know it. The outcome of the election provides us with an opportunity: to either continue the understanding of the presidency and leadership on masculine terms or redefine and re-imagine how women interact in leadership positions. The movements that have come out since the election results came in, such as the Women’s March, #MeToo, and Time’s Up, provide some hope that in our shared discourses, we are redefining what leadership means. Discursively re-imagining leadership is an iterative process that could open up

leadership to more complex nuances that do not dichotomize masculine and feminine ways of leading, but enhance and complicate these ways of knowing and being.

When covering the superintendents in this study, reporters in *The Globe* may not have taken all of this into account in their reporting. They may not have referenced what the literature suggests about educational leaders. Still, their reporting had tremendous implications for the superintendents of this study, the nature of educational reform from 1991 to 2016, what public narratives suggest about women and men in public spaces, and how educational leaders were discursively produced along racialized and gendered lines in Boston. The findings of this study suggest that the media can shape the process of providing (or not providing) new opportunities for women in leadership.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to Boston Public Schools over a 25-year period. During this time, there were four superintendents. There was one interim superintendent who was omitted from this study as this study focused on permanent superintendents. Baxter (2003) argues that poststructural theory is especially useful for studies that are “small-scale, context-bound, purposeful, critically-tuned and short-lived” (p. 11). FPDA, specifically, focuses on disrupting the ‘grand narrative’ (Baxter, 2003). As such, generalizability is not the goal of this study and therefore, generalizable findings cannot (and should not) be applied to alternative locations. The relationships between discourses and gender are “fluid and context-specific” (p. 11). Therefore, the operating discourses within the Boston location may be very different in various regions of the United States and internationally. Second, Tommy Chang was just at the beginning of his leadership.

The identified newspaper articles were about the search process and his first six months on the job. Therefore, they might have been biased because he was just starting. As a result, there was a limited number of newspaper articles to include in this study. If the study included a longer time frame, then a more nuanced understanding of Chang's tenure as superintendent could be incorporated into the study. Lastly, this study limited its data to newspaper articles from *The Boston Globe*. *The Boston Globe* is only one newspaper publication. Newspaper publications are only one type of media source. If the study incorporated other types of media sources or newspaper publications, the findings could include an alternative perspective.

My worldview guided my analysis. Despite an explicit attempt to be cognizant of my biases, the findings I present in this study are a product of my world experience. I became a feminist from a critical paradigm. Most of my previous work involved an emancipatory goal that sought to empower the dominated group break from the restraints of the dominator|dominated binary. I did not question the binary, but only questioned the presence of women as the sole group positioned as the dominated. This is especially problematic given my standpoint as a *White* critical feminist. By only focusing on women as powerless and the patriarchal structures in society that disempower them, I ignored the reality of White privilege, even for women. In the first round of data analysis, as documented in my memos, I only focused on how the women superintendents were located as submissive or passive recipients of power in their positioning. I rarely focused on opportunities when Harrison Jones and Johnson wielded considerable power. The role of power in certain themes were subjected to my personal bias as a White feminist

researcher. I largely portrayed the role of motherhood as a negative positioning for Harrison Jones and Johnson. Often in my analysis, I constructed motherhood as a detriment to their role of superintendent. Although I attempted to use Black feminist thought carefully in my analysis, I entered the research from the perspective that motherhood was in a direct opposition to power and leadership. Now while some of these positionings were in fact true; motherhood was used to relegate Harrison Jones and Johnson to second status in the political arena. Motherhood also can be constructed as a position of power. While in many White spaces, motherhood lives in the private sphere of the public and private division, in Black communities the role of a matriarch is a powerful one.

This is as much of an epistemological shift as it is methodological. In my research methods, I needed to identify search terms, codes and themes that illuminated the powerful and powerless subject positions, including connotations of these codes based on racialized understandings and perspectives. Epistemologically, I needed to switch from the underpinnings of a critical discourse analysis to that of a poststructural discourse analysis. By working from an epistemological stance with a specifically sociopolitical goal, it would be difficult to ascertain how women, as superintendents, embody tremendous power. By working from a perspective as a White feminist researcher, it would be difficult to ascertain how Black women, who were constructed as matriarchs, wielded considerable power from that position. While power abuse is a hallmark of a patriarchal society, it is important to reflect a more nuanced understanding of how power operates through racial and gendered lines in the twenty-first century.

Future Research

Applying FPDA to written texts is a relatively new way to utilize this research methodology. As a result, the opportunities for future research are numerous and varied in their approach. Because meaning of texts can never finally be fixed as knowable, additional research should be conducted on the role of race and gender in educational leadership discourses, and leadership discourses more broadly. Interviews of the four superintendents presented through this project could be a second phase of this research study. By interviewing the superintendents, I could incorporate another type of primary source. Secondly, this research methodology could be applied to various locations throughout the United States as representations of the geographic diversity. As FPDA is uniquely designed for context specific investigations, additional research in alternative locations could further disrupt grand narratives in dominant discourses of race, gender, and educational leadership.

More specifically, this study establishes future research goals for Boston Public Schools. This study's findings illuminated the impact of segregation's legacies on gendered and racialized discourses of leadership for Boston's superintendent. Additionally, these legacies collided with neoliberal reform movements and its privatization of public goods, to provide a unique context for Boston Public Schools' superintendent at the turn of the twenty-first century. More research is needed to investigate the ways in which neoliberal ideology transform leadership discourses in the educational field and what impacts, if any, these discourses have on gendered and racialized bodies.

More broadly, this study establishes a need for future research in how schools can reimagine gendered norms and roles within their structures and policies. The lack of women in educational leadership, specifically in the role of superintendent, is pervasive throughout the country. In this study, Boston, is used as a smaller case study of a larger phenomenon that has been substantiated throughout the data (AASA, 2015). It is of the utmost importance that researchers focus their research agendas on how school serve has a primary socialization force in gender norms in the twenty-first century, including women in executive leadership roles.

Concluding Thoughts

As an educational leader and a person who identifies as a woman, this research is especially powerful in a personal way. A long standing foundational piece of feminist research, thought and political action has been making the personal political. By making the personal political, feminist researchers reposition women as “the *subject* [emphasis in the original] rather than the object of the study” (Baxter, 2003, p. 19). This study aimed at redefining superintendents, particularly those who are women, as subjects with discursive agency who can disrupt powerful grand narratives framed by discourses of race and gender. Why does this matter? What impact does this have on students, communities and society, in general? Neoliberal reform movements have taken hold in a variety of public sectors. Neoliberal ideology polices who has access to resources and power and this policing operates along racialized and gendered lines. Through a systematic demonization of entire communities, school communities and their leaders are increasingly being dispossessed and disenfranchised as “others.” Through this

privatization, democratic processes have come under siege and the causalities are too often racialized and gendered bodies without the political capital to participate in this new globalized economy. These gender dynamics, that begin in schools and are perpetuated throughout our institutions, have long infiltrated the U.S. workplace. However, movements such as #MeToo and Time's Up are currently turning the age old sexual politics of workplace on its head. By not also addressing these issues in schools, the issues seen in the workplace will fail to be resolved. Schools have a unique opportunity to create a community that values its members, inclusive of race and gender (among other constructs), subsequently paving a path towards a more inclusive society as today's youth becomes tomorrow's leaders. By not educating the future generations of the gravity of racialized and gendered power relations, this cycle that dispossesses and disenfranchises marginalized communities will continue to prevail.

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