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NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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**NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS
DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC**

By

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

This multiple case study focused on three Native American women superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs and the impact of the Indigenous culture on their decision making as they led their school district through the Covid 19 pandemic. Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory served as the underpinning theory of this study. The qualitative research design for the study relied on data gathered from individual interviews and written responses to journal prompts. All participants had at least two years of superintendent experience in public school districts during the time of the pandemic. The researcher analyzed the data through open coding/In Vivo coding. The data were then analyzed using axial coding before the data from the three participants were triangulated. The findings of this study suggests that all three participants altered their thinking to overcome their obstacles and challenges, felt validated by receiving positive feedback from staff and the school board, found success from their previous experiences, and were able to feel confident in their leadership roles through the Covid 19 pandemic. These three women did not have a single mentor figure but gathered information from many people and many sources. These Native American women were influenced by their culture to serve in these districts. The voices of these Native American women have long been excluded from education and leadership research. It is safe to say that Indigenous women will continue to play essential roles in the leadership of Indigenous people. We must better understand the experiences of these Native American women superintendents so that we can work to serve the Indigenous population better and prepare future generations of Native American leaders. I assert that studies like mine can provide essential insights into understanding leadership from Native American women's perspectives. I encourage other researchers to take steps in addressing how we can honor the experiences of these warrior women while supporting the development of future Native American women leaders in education.



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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, superintendents faced changes in their communities, schools, and school districts of a magnitude that they could not have imagined (Gouwens & Lander, 2008). The aftermath of 9/11 brought with it a shift in thinking for superintendents, as staff, students, and the communities looked to them for answers (AASA, 2021). The Covid 19 pandemic in 2020 sent school districts into crisis, and racial disparities in 2021 became a focus across America. The 9/11 attack, school shootings, hurricanes, racial inequality and the recent Covid 19 pandemic have forced increased expectations of leaders. These events required more crisis management than just facilitating an adequate response (Boin et al., 2017). Boin et al. (2017) claims that leadership during a crisis requires urgent problem solving and decision making even when the reasons/causes or circumstances for the crisis are unavailable.

These events put superintendents into situations that do not have clear-cut guidelines and procedures. These leaders must lead with knowledge from past experiences and their own set of beliefs. In these beliefs, self-efficacy is found. Self-efficacy comes through the strengthening of a belief that one can be successful at leading. Self-efficacy is a concept that Albert Bandura (1977), the developer of the Social Cognitive Theory, summarized as a person's set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in a particular situation. Bandura believed self-efficacy to be an essential concept that, when applied strategically, can enhance leadership. A belief influences a leader's motivation, behavior, and performance. According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy affects motivation, effort, choice of activities, and perseverance in the face of difficulty. A leader with high self-efficacy views a problematic task, like maneuvering through a pandemic, as a challenge to take on rather than one to avoid.

School leadership is an essential function to maximize efficiency and achieve organizational goals. Leadership in school is not a position, but a disposition for acting (ICLE, 2012). However, the importance of a leader becomes even more evident when a crisis hits an organization and the efficiency of the school district to achieve organizational goals is tested. The Education, Consulting, Research and Analytics Group (2016) found that today's superintendent must be a visionary leader with forethought and communication skills that guide a school district toward achieving shared goals in a culture where beliefs, assumptions, and expectations are diverse and divergent. These events require effective communications to school board members, students, parents, staff, and the community with varying needs, views, and experiences.

A school superintendent is accustomed to dealing with budgets, enrollment figures, safety and security, curriculum and instruction, and distance-learning platforms, health-care issues, finding ways to appropriately feed students, 1:1 technology dissemination, testing waivers, grading issues, professional development for teachers and administrators, cancellation of extracurricular activities and cancellation of classes, but not all at the same time, and without warning. The superintendent is a position with many facets, building trust and a culture of safety in the district, remaining aware of the district's financial health, implementing new ideas, working with, and supervising people, and communicating with all stakeholders (Eller & Carlson, 2009). When Covid 19 began in the early months of 2020, superintendents had to begin leading their school districts through a crisis for which they were not fully prepared and for which they had never had any training. The word *pandemic* is nowhere to be found in any standard certification program for becoming a superintendent.

School leadership has a new level of challenge since the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic, especially for Native American women superintendents who, according to Lajimodiere (2011), are already dealing with poverty, gender, and racial disparity within their school districts. Native American women superintendents became community leaders as they took on a caretaker's role as they felt it was their duty to make sure their district community was fed and had the resources necessary to comply with the 'stay at home' order (Eastman, N, personal communication, March 22nd, 2019).

Russell (2020) stated that influential leaders give stakeholders roles and a sense of purpose to focus on rather than on the crisis's chaos. As the pandemic spread across the United States, Native American women superintendents in the upper Midwest faced the challenges of the pandemic alongside all the typical responsibilities (OCR, 2021). The findings of this study suggest that the participants exhibited high leadership self-efficacy which supported their resiliency and persistence despite the challenges. We can learn from their experiences how to better identify and prepare school leaders. Of note, district leadership preparation programs might consider 1) a peer mentoring program to support potential district-level leaders; 2) specific and supportive feedback and encouragement as candidates complete authentic leadership activities; 3) attention to and development of emotional states that contribute to resiliency and persistence.

There is a need to focus on Native American women superintendents' leadership in times of crisis. For this study, I was interested in identifying how self-efficacy beliefs of Native American women superintendents impact their decision-making during times of crisis, most recently that of Covid 19 pandemic. Understanding Native American women leaders, and their reliance on their self-efficacy beliefs could impact training and development of future

superintendents. It is also vital to understand the how culture impacts decision making for Native American women leaders. Minthorn (2014) stated Native American culture instills the values that develop Native leaders to be described by three words, commitment, community, and collaboration.

Statement of the Problem

Uncovering the stories of Native American women superintendents during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic to gain an understanding of what beliefs they relied on to make decisions in the face of a pandemic which they had no previous experience, can inform educators, scholars, and policy makers alike to improve current educational leadership practices, and educate and empower a new generation of school leaders. Here it is essential to study non-mainstream groups such as these Native American women superintendents to allow their voices and perceptions to be heard and considered. It is also essential to understand how the strengths of a culture can influences decision making and serve as a model for crisis leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. The study drew attention to Bandura's (1977) four aspects of self-efficacy that include relying on prior experiences, emulating role models, using feedback from trusted individuals, and developing awareness of emotional states. The study also led to understanding what part culture played in decision making for three Native American women superintendents during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Research Questions

The following central question guided this study: What leadership self-efficacy beliefs appeared to influence the Native American women superintendents' behaviors during the Covid 19 pandemic?

The following sub-questions were also to guide the study:

1. What performance prior experiences did these Native American women superintendents rely upon during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
2. What behaviors were emulated from the modeling of others by these Native American women superintendents during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
3. What feedback and encouragement from trusted sources did these Native American women superintendents have during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
4. How did these Native American women superintendents describe their physiological emotional state during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
5. How did the Indigenous culture and beliefs of these Native American women superintendents play a part in their decision-making during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?

Theoretical Framework

Self-efficacy is a particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. A self-efficacy theory lens provided a framework to understand how Native American women superintendents' beliefs impacted their experiences during recent crisis. For example, this qualitative multiple case study developed an in-depth understanding of leadership beliefs from the perception of several Native American

women superintendents as they led a public school district during the Covid 19 pandemic. This study looked at how the superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs influenced their actions collectively.

Bandura (1977) suggested that two factors influence whether a person engages in a specific behavior: self-efficacy and outcome expectancy—possessing a sense of self-efficacy influences whether a person succeeds or not. Similarly, if a person thinks that completing the task will have good results, there is a greater likelihood that they will engage in a particular behavior (Shirey, 2020). Leadership self-efficacy is the belief that one has the capabilities and resources to perform a specific task, which in this case is leading a district during a pandemic (Maddux & Barnes, 1989). Significant academic, career, and life benefits, such as leadership aspirations, work performance, and the ability to cope and overcome challenging situations are linked with leadership self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has also been linked to the ability to manage and overcome stereotypes, as with these Native American women superintendents being women (Day et al., 2009; Hannah et al., 2008; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011).

Significance of the Study

Research by Bandura (1977) and Maddox (2013) made advancements in understanding the self-efficacy belief systems that create and predict successful leadership in organizations and mainstream society. However, compared to research on other populations in the United States, the literature on Indigenous women in leadership is sparse (Minthorn & Shotton, 2019). This qualitative study aimed to identify the self-efficacy beliefs of Native American women superintendents during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Understanding of what worked and what did not work, especially in school districts where the poverty level is high and resources were not as readily available, is invaluable information. An understanding of how their beliefs

influenced their decision making, as well as to understand what part of their culture impacted their actions decision making will help prepare future leaders and inform current leaders.

Therefore, it is essential to study non-mainstream groups such as Native American women leaders to gain a better understanding of how culture and self-efficacy impacts decision making.

Context of the Study

The multiple case study involved Native American women superintendents from public school districts in several Midwestern states. The women were interviewed about their experiences during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. In March 2020, most all school buildings around the United States were closed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Schools went from in-person learning to remote learning. Public and private schools on Native American reservations also closed their school buildings while some tribes closed their borders not allowing entrance onto reservation land. Superintendents serving in Native American public schools on or near reservations had to create safety plans for all stakeholders while developing effective ways to educate students relying on internet access to deliver instruction.

Native American reservations have experienced areas of considerable poverty along with availability issues with food and other resources. In areas of poverty, issues of food and resources for students during the start of the pandemic became a priority for school superintendents around the country (Kinsey et al., 2020). For many districts in the upper Midwest, school buildings closed in March 2020 and remained closed until the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Teachers were delivering instruction remotely from March 2020 and in some school districts it went on the entire 2020-2021 school year. However, some schools returned to in-person training in the fall of 2020 with the option for parents/guardians to have remote instruction delivered to their children.

Definition of Terms

For clarity, the following terms are defined by literature, and the researcher provides a definition for those without citations.

Covid 19 is an infectious disease caused by SSARS-CoC-2; the coronavirus emerged in December 2019 (Sauer, 2021).

Crisis in a school is any traumatic event that seriously disrupts students and school staff's coping and problem-solving abilities. It is typically sudden, unexpected, dramatic, and forceful and may threaten survival (NEA, 2018).

Cultural identity is belonging to a Native American tribe or community, sharing many common behaviors and beliefs. However, it does not mean that the group is homogenous or agrees on everything all the time (ASU, 2008).

Historical trauma is intergenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural group with a history of being systematically oppressed (Denham, 2008).

Leadership is the action of leading a group of people or an organization.

Native American is a person who is a member of an Indigenous tribe in the United States often referred to as American Indian.

Pandemic is an outbreak of a disease that occurs over a wide geographic area and typically affects a significant proportion of the population (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation (Bandura, 1977; Lopez-Garrido, 2020).

Limitations of the Study

A limitation in this study is generalizability. Generalizability is a criticism of case study research; however, generalizability is of little relevance when generalizability is not the intent of

the design for this case study. There was a limitation of having no control over how many participants responded and how much they recalled from March 2020 through the 2020-2021 school year.

Delimitations of the Study

The data were collected from two interviews, and through self-efficacy perception journal prompts within a three-month period. The study was time-bound with collecting recollections of experiences from Native American women superintendents starting in March 2020 when most schools went remote due to the Covid 19 pandemic through the 2020-2021 school year. This study is limited to three Midwestern states, school districts on or near Native American reservations, and with Native American women superintendents that were leading school district at the time of the pandemic.

Summary

Covid 19 pandemic put superintendents into situations that did not have clear-cut guidelines. Bandura (1977) stated a leader with high self-efficacy views a problem as a challenge to be overcome. Advancements have been made in leadership research by understanding the self-efficacy beliefs that create and predict successful leaders in organizations (McCormick et al., 2002). Unfortunately, many times the research is conducted with the dominant society and Indigenous voices are not heard. It was essential to study non-mainstream groups such as these Native American women superintendents to understand how their beliefs, actions and their culture impacted their leadership during such a challenging time of the Covid 19 pandemic. The Native American women superintendents' voices and perceptions will become a source of information for future researchers and contribute to the scholarly information pool.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to self-efficacy framework, leadership in times of crisis, women superintendents, and Native American women. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in this research, Chapter 4 contains findings and analysis of the research and Chapter 5 contains conclusions, contributions of the study, and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The literature review provides a synthesized analysis of the literature from several authors of books, journal articles, dissertations, and reports as it pertains to leading during a crisis, women superintendents, and then specifically, Native American women superintendents. The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Chapter Two also provides a synthesis of the literature and is organized to provide context through the lens of the self-efficacy framework. This chapter describes Albert Bandera's (1977) self-efficacy framework containing the four sources of influence: a) prior experiences, b) vicarious experiences, c) feedback and encouragement, and d) emotional states. The following themes are addressed in the following chapter: leadership during crisis, women leaders, and Native American women leaders, and challenges that Native American woman leaders face.

Information obtained in the literature review came from the I.D. Weeks library at the University of South Dakota, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest Publishing Company, South Dakota Department of Education, US Census Bureau websites, and other internet sources. *Google Scholar* was also utilized to obtain resources. The following research terms were used to narrow the search. These research terms included self-efficacy, Native American women, women superintendents, effective superintendents, Native American leadership, gender and leadership, Indigenous leadership, crisis leadership, trauma and leadership, case study and case study research were utilized. EBSCOhost was the primary database used for the search and those searches focused on recent publications from the years 2010 through 2021. However, older publications and educational philosophers were reviewed,

and some referenced for theory framework, and background information. Sources derived from scholarly journals in the field of education were given priority as were studies that pertained to self-efficacy and Native American women leadership. For clarity and consistency, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th edition) (2019) and *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches* (4th edition) (2019) were used as a guide for writing this dissertation.

Theoretical Framework

Self-efficacy is different than self-confidence or self-esteem. Self-efficacy is a judgement of capability to execute a given activity. Self-esteem is a discernment of self-worth. Confidence refers to the strength of the belief in yourself. Both terms, self-esteem and confidence are nonspecific and refer to the strength of the belief (McCormick et al. 2002). Self-esteem and confidence are about the strength of the belief. Self-efficacy is believing in one's capabilities that can produce given levels of attainment and is perceived as a level and strength of the belief. Self-efficacy is a perceived feeling about attaining success at a given skill or goal. Motivation is based on an individual's desire to achieve a certain goal, whereas self-efficacy is based on an individual's belief in their capacity to achieve a goal (Bandura, 2006).

Self-efficacy is task-specific, but there is no single standardized measure of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy expectancy is presumed to have the more powerful influence on behavior (Bandura, 1977). Most studies on self-efficacy theory have demonstrated that self-efficacy expectancies are good predictors of behavior (Bandura et al. 1977). Self-efficacy beliefs are not personality traits or self-confidence. These beliefs are relatively specific cognitions that can only be understood and defined in relation to specific behaviors in specific situations or contexts, such as leading a school district during the Covid 19 pandemic. Self-efficacy beliefs are viewed as varying along

three dimensions: magnitude, strength, and generality (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986). Magnitude of self-efficacy refers to the number of steps of increasing difficulty a person believes themselves capable of performing (Maddux, 2013).

Strength of self-efficacy beliefs refers to the resoluteness of a person's convictions that they can perform a behavior in question. Strength of self-efficacy has been related to the repeated persistence in the face of frustration, pain, and other barriers to performance (Bandura, 1986). Generality of self-efficacy beliefs refers to the extent to which success or failures influence self-efficacy beliefs in a limited, behaviorally specific manner, or whether changes in self-efficacy beliefs extend to other similar behaviors and contexts (Smith, 1989). Bandura (1977) stated that most studies rely on the strength measure of self-efficacy beliefs.

History of the Self-efficacy Theory

Social Cognitive Theory is a learning theory that provides an understanding of how people actively shape their environment and, in turn, are shaped by that same environment (Bandura, 1977). The approach emphasizes how a person learns from multiple sources and how they influence self-efficacy, translating into motivation, behavior, and performance. This personal belief can change based on different factors of function, such as self-esteem, competency, and environment (McCormick et al., 2002). It can be affected by learned behaviors throughout their development, influencing their judgment and decision-making (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy theory was initially described by Bandura (1977). He defined self-efficacy as the beliefs regarding one's ability to perform the tasks viewed as necessary for attaining valued goals. He presented that self-efficacy beliefs are among the most important determinants of human behavior and offered self-efficacy theory as a unifying theory for all types of behavior change. He made a distinction between self-efficacy expectancies, concerning one's abilities to

perform behaviors, with outcome expectancies, which are concerned with the expected results of the behaviors that one performs (Pajares, 2002). Bandura (1977) advocated that self-efficacy beliefs are the most important in influencing people's decisions to attempt or not attempt certain behaviors, and to persist in the face of obstacles. Bandura proposed that self-efficacy beliefs developed from four main sources: (1) performance attainments and failures, or what we try to do, and how well we succeed or not; (2) vicarious performances, or what we see other people do; (3) verbal persuasion, or what people tell us about what we are able or not able to do; and (4) emotional and physiological states, or how are we feeling mentally and physically and if we can be successful or not.

Bandura (1986) developed a view of human functioning that unites a central role to cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in human adaptation and change. People are viewed as self-organizing, proactive, self-reflecting, and self-regulating rather than as reactive organisms shaped and shepherded by environmental forces or driven by concealed inner impulses. From this theoretical perspective, human functioning is viewed as the creation of dynamic interactions of personal, behavioral, and environmental influences. For example, how people perceive the outcomes of their behavior informs and modifies their environments and the personal factors they possess which, in turn, inform and alters future behavior.

The self-efficacy theory is the foundation of Bandura's (1986) conception of reciprocal determinism, the view that (a) personal factors in the form of cognition, affect, and biological events, (b) behavior, and (c) environmental influences create interactions that result in a correlative process. Bandura altered the label of his theory from "social learning" to "social cognitive" both to distance it from other known social learning theories of the day, and to

emphasize that cognition plays an essential role in people's capability to construct reality, self-regulate, replay information, and perform behaviors (Pajares, 2002).

Superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs are crucial for managing a school and can be referred to as a type of leadership self-efficacy that one is being confident in her knowledge, skills, and abilities (Hannah et al., 2008). There are many factors impacting school districts and their effectiveness. The superintendent of a school district is the main person responsible for creating that effectiveness (Cobanoglu & Badavan, 2017). A superintendent should have a healthy perception of being an effective administrator to create the factors that lead to an effective school district. McCollum and Kajs (2015) pointed out self-efficacy beliefs are an important factor for motivation because people tend to avoid actions that they believe they would fail. Required skills and knowledge are not enough to complete a task but having the belief they can complete the task is also necessary.

Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Leaders

Knowing who we are and what we believe is at the heart of good leadership (Palmer, 2000). According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary (2021), a belief is an idea that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion. A belief is simply an opinion that someone has held for some time. It is an acceptance that something exists or is true, even when there is no apparent proof. Core beliefs are the central part of how we see ourselves, others, the world, and the future (Taylor et al., 2020). These beliefs become triggered in certain situations. Core beliefs develop over time, usually from childhood and through the experience of significant life events or circumstances. Core beliefs are firmly held beliefs maintained by the tendency to focus on information supporting the belief and ignoring evidence that contradicts (Centre for Clinical Interventions, 2009). According to Bandura (1977), self-efficacy is defined as "the belief in one's

capabilities to organize and execute the course of action required to produce given attainment” (p. 3). When talking about leaders, self-efficacy refers to their belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation, task, or achieving a goal.

Chemers (2000) described leadership self-efficacy as a basis for understanding one's performance in organizing and leading others and asserted that one's confidence can help develop the mastery to become a better leader. In other words, self-efficacy in leadership refers to one's confidence in his or her ability to lead, and this frequently impacts whether one decides to lead (Hannah et al., 2008; Komives & Dugan, 2010; Murphy, 2002). Self-efficacy is highly related to the frequency that a person reported an attempt to lead, as shown in research (McCormick et al., 2002). However, efficacy is fluid and influenced by environmental factors that may either leverage or constrain individuals' perceptions of their leadership capacity, such as gender and ethnicity (Bandura, 1997).

Leadership in Crisis Times

Every aspect of a school district's success depends upon leaders making effective decisions (Kitamura, 2019). When school districts are in crisis, the superintendent faces many dilemmas. Superintendents pull from their experiences and their beliefs when difficulties require creative thinking (Lochmiller, 2021). Unlike most routine decisions, a dilemma is a predicament with no clear solution, unclear or nonexistent policy, and typically no precedent (Hoy & Tarter, 2008).

Leadership in the United States' educational system stands in the spotlight, primarily because of growing responsibilities for keeping their staff and students safe while still educating during the Covid 19 pandemic. "There is no guidebook for school leaders as they make decisions and try to move forward during the pandemic" (Anderson, 2020). In March 2020 as the

pandemic spread, schools across the United States moved to online or remote learning within a week. Darling-Hammond (2020) reported that fifteen percent of U.S. households and 35 percent of low-income households with school-age children did not have a high-speed internet connection at home when school closed (p. 6). In April, the scarcity of internet connectivity was a major problem for two-thirds of the leaders in high-poverty districts (Darling-Hammond, 2020, p. 6).

Superintendents participated in state-wide online meetings and phone calls to battle through changes in their districts due to the pandemic. The recognition of the variance of resources from school district to school district was apparent during the early days of the pandemic. There was a need to transform learning for all students which caused a lot of stress, especially for schools that lacked digital infrastructure as the decision to pivot to remote teaching occurred (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020).

The real test of leadership does not occur when everything is smooth sailing. A crisis tests leaders and their leadership frequently. A crisis can make or break a leader. "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). During the early months of the Covid 19 pandemic, some school leaders had been keeping their communities, teachers, staff, and students informed, pausing, and restarting a new normal, and managing the secondary effects of social and economic upheaval. Other leaders, meanwhile, were floundering with not enough experience or knowledge in how to communicate with stakeholders providing false or untimely information and failing to follow through on previous statements (Krueger, 2021).

Native American Tribal Nations

There are currently 574 federally recognized tribal nations in the United States, and the percent of Native Americans living in poverty in 2017 was estimated to be 27% compared with 15% in the United States as a whole (Hussar et al., 2020, p. 5). Currently, there are nine Native American reservations located in one upper Midwestern state with a relatively large area between most of these nine reservations, making most reservations within the state quite isolated. Roads on tribal lands are of particular importance for connecting people to essential services, such as schools, because of the remote location of some tribes. These roads are often unpaved and may not be well maintained (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2017). These reservations are also some of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the country. Before the pandemic began, it was not seen as commercially viable to provide high-speed internet across many of these Native American reservations in the state (Lowrey, 2020).

On the Navajo Reservation during the initial months of the pandemic, there was a concern for basic food for their students. At Piñon High School, over 98% of its students were eligible for the free or reduced lunch program, compared to the state average of 55% (Marples, 2020, para. 9). For some students, school is a source for basic needs including food, shelter, and safety. Closing school buildings during the pandemic created a hardship for many Native American students and their families. Perhaps while these issues challenged all leaders, women superintendents use previous challenging experiences to move forward with their districts (Barkdull, 2009).

Women Superintendents

Women superintendents have many challenges in achieving top leadership positions, especially in a predominantly male role (Bernal et al., 2017). The percentage of female

superintendents increased slightly in the past decade, from 24.1% in 2010 to 26.68% in 2020 (Modan, 2020, para. 2). Women are seemingly trying to conquer uphill battles to go where few have been before. However, principal leadership remains comparatively much more diverse with women holding most principal positions during the 2015-16 school year (Modan, 2020, para.6). The number of superintendents of color is increasing slowly, with 8.6% superintendents of color in 2020, compared to 6% in 2010 and 5% in 2000, and of this small percentage, 42% are women (Modan, 2020, p. 3).

Gullo and Sperandio (2020) found their study indicated that women taking an inside path, moving up through the ranks to the superintendents' position were able to acquire these positions more frequently than pursuing a position coming in from the outside. They also noted if the women applied for a superintendent position in an outside district, they would have to prepare themselves for possible gender bias in hiring (Gullo & Sperandio, 2020). Literature on identity and leadership development has also shown that understanding more about women's self-perception and the perceptions about their leadership may be essential to consider. How one views oneself as a leader is vital to a successful leader and influences one's motivation to pursue a leadership role (Ely & Rhode, 2010; Ely et al., 2011; Hogue & Lord, 2007). These researchers explored critical challenges for women leaders including the glass ceiling and gender stereotypes.

Under-Representation of Women in the Superintendency

The Glass Ceiling is a phenomenon that women often describe as something that prevents them from attaining high leadership positions in business (Babic & Hansez, 2021). It is not necessarily the case that women are not prevented from attaining high leadership positions in education. Women hold the most administrative roles in school districts; however, this is

excluding the superintendent position (Stuckey, 2012). While most teachers are women, it's hard for women to move up into leadership roles in the public school system. According to a 2020 study published by the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 2021), at least two-thirds of superintendents are white men; only 27 percent are women (para. 4).

Women hold most of the jobs in education, making the superintendent's position out of proportion with the rest of the data. Women make up 76 percent of teachers, 52 percent of principals, and 78 percent of central-office administrators (AASA, 2021, p. 4). The AASA (2021) report found that the share of women who led districts rose incrementally but steadily, from 24.1 percent in 2010 to 26.68 percent in 2020 (p. 4) which is more than double the percentage of female superintendents documented in 2000. However, the percentage of women who serve as superintendents is in stark contrast to the percentage of women in the teaching ranks.

Shaw and Barbuti (2010) stated that the traditional female socialization experiences had reduced women's access to the sources of efficacy information in male-dominated behavior domains. The lack of exposure reduced career-related self-efficacy expectations and perceived career options. Study results by Wang et al., (2013) disclosed that women have lower self-efficacy than men concerning male-dominated careers. Individuals who lack expectations for success in a career-related behavior domain are less likely to initiate effective choices to move into a superintendent position (Shaw & Barbuti, 2010). In that case, they are less likely to initiate effective choices to move into a superintendent position (Shaw & Barbuti, 2010).

Research is however showing that when women apply for and are hired as a superintendent, they are more likely to be hired in small school districts than men (Robinson et al., 2017). Robinson et al., (2017) study also showed that women were more likely to lead

districts with larger number of students who are homeless and have a larger number of students with disabilities, then men. Robinson et al., (2017) found that women of color are more likely than white women to lead majority of minority student filled districts although, in general, women are more likely than men to lead districts with a large percentage of people of color in the district. Women superintendents are challenged to be hired into a superintendent position, but the challenge goes deeper into the perception of how stakeholders view effectiveness a woman leader compared to a man leader.

Gender Stereotypes.

One of the challenges female leaders face that male leaders do not is a need to demonstrate both sensitivity and strength to be perceived as effective, whereas male leaders only need to demonstrate strength (Johnson et al., 2008). Women have a burden to create this duality within their leadership to move up in the ranks, whereas male counterparts, already having the male gender role, are just advised to work on their inspirational motivation (Vinkenburg et al., 2011). Women school leaders are known as more instructional leaders rather than managerial. They are also known to be communal and to work collaboratively rather than being top-down kind of leaders (Robinson et al., 2017). Gender roles have different implications for men and women concerning the way people expect them to behave and how they can succeed as a leader (Triana et al., 2017).

Robinson et al. (2017) found that school boards show hiring discrepancies between hiring men and women for superintendent positions. As women superintendents reflected on the reasons for their hiring, it was usually based on the perception of the expertise in curriculum and instruction. However, male superintendents reflected they were hired because of personal managerial characteristics (Sampson & Gresham, 2017).

There is still a fundamental challenge to women's leadership that arises from the mismatch between the qualities traditionally associated with leaders and those associated with women. Sampson and Gresham (2017) found one of the stereotypes that women leaders experience is the perception that men are more suited to management than women. Gender is also one of the most critical factors affecting self-efficacy because of social expectations and social roles. Gender stereotypes affect leadership self-efficacy, as masculine characteristics discourage women's perceived leadership ability (Huszczko & Endres, 2017). This perception is directly related to gender-specific behaviors. Leadership is a desired personality trait and considered a masculine characteristic, even though the need for both stereotypical female (e.g., interpersonal and communal) and male characteristics (e.g., assertiveness) create successful leadership (Skinner, 2006).

In the research by Nichols and Nichols (2014), they found that female principals were rated lower in their leadership skills than male principals by their staff. However, the student standardized test data were explored in terms of whether gender was related to test scores. Results indicated there was no difference in test scores and the gender of the principal. The perceptions of how effective a female is in leadership are also a barrier. Robinson (2016) found that all women participants had easily exceeded the minimum qualifications to hold the position, but they did not easily secure their superintendent positions.

Native American Women Leaders

For Native American women superintendents, the challenges are distinctive because most Native Americans have their roots in their Indigenous culture and traditions, and so they are walking in the Native world and the dominate culture world (Barkdull, 2009). Barkdull (2009) believed that Native American women may have faced gender as well as minority inequities.

According to Modan (2020), an AASA report also found that the percentage of people of color in superintendent jobs is lopsided compared to the demographics of both the students they serve and the teachers they oversee with fewer than nine percent of survey respondents identified as people of color in 2020 (p. 3). This number is up slightly from six percent in 2010 and five percent in 2000. Among Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American superintendents, approximately 42 percent are women (Modan, 2020, p. 3). The percentage of women of color are low within the position of superintendency however, the qualities of an Indigenous women leader might offer a caring and nurturing foundation for school districts in crisis.

Wolf (2015) stated there are qualities that Native American leaders possess. Leadership is shared, and everyone is empowered (Krumm, 2013). Native American leaders are compassionate about others and are self-aware. Leadership is about making relationships and caring for the people they lead. Wolf (2015) also added that Native leaders are visionaries as they see the big picture for the entire community. "Native leadership is founded on spiritual values, community, and shared responsibility...in contrast to those in Western leadership models, which are based on authoritative and hierarchical relationships" (Metoyer, 2010, p.1).

Vision and responsibilities are foundational leadership values from an American Indian perspective (Krumm, 2013; Portman & Garrett, 2005). Leadership skills of patience and listening are the characteristics of many Native American women leaders (Portman & Garrett, 2005). A traditional Native American perspective is a combination of experiences, and the pursuit of wisdom which leads to understanding one's vision as a caretaker, which is the true essence of what it means to be a leader (Portman & Garrett, 2005).

In traditional Indigenous societies, women play different roles, and historically it was common for Indigenous women to hold political, spiritual, and economic power (Lajimodiere,

2011). Triana et al. (2017) found in their research that if women work in a place where women in leadership is common, they obtain the highest levels of organizational commitment by staff (2017). Most Native tribes were a matrilineal society and have illustrated the importance of gender roles and kinship systems through their creation stories and religious beliefs (Vandever, 2003). Northouse (2016) stated that maternalistic leaders are motherly toward their followers and regards the organization as a family. The traditional Native American tribal matrilineal structure and beliefs conflict with the Western patriarchal system in current schools which presents additional challenges for Native American women superintendents (Barkdull, 2009). In the matrilineal sociality, women were involved in the decision-making process for the greater good of the people (Skyhawk, 2018).

Traditional Native American people judge themselves and their actions by how they are benefiting their community and its continued peaceful functioning (Portman & Garrett, 2005). A person's passion and generosity lead to social action in the formal, public venue, and where individuals with unique skills, energy, and enterprises can earn a living and meet the community goals (Benham & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010). Leadership from an American Indian perspective is one of service to the betterment of the community (Portman & Garrett, 2005). According to Rodriguez (2019), Indigenous women superintendents demonstrate determination and endure whatever ethical challenges the position presents and have developed a strong sense of self-efficacy as they have ascended a multifaceted educational career ladder. These strengths contribute positively to a school culture, but Native women school leaders face unique challenges.

Challenges for Native American Women School Leaders

As United States was settled, colonialism took over the Indigenous people's complex structures of government and kinship (Morrill, 2013). Education became colonized as well, and many critical roles in education excluded Native American women (Tippeconnic-Fox, 2008). Native American women have emerged as activists, educators, and scholars; however, the profile of these women and their leadership beliefs are lacking. Native American students (Minthorn, 2014; Minthorn et al., 2013; Williams, 2012), tribal college leaders (Johnson, 1997), and tribal leaders (Harris & Wasilewski, 1992) have studied Native American leadership perspectives. However, research has not fully addressed Native American women's leadership beliefs and the formation of their beliefs.

Historical Trauma

Native American women in education have had to endure a history of neglect, limited opportunities, difficulties in finding stability and support, and struggles discovering their identities and ultimately their role in education (Strong, 1998). Many older generational Native Americans experienced boarding schools. These Native American children were taken from their home, sometimes forcibly to be transferred unwillingly to boarding schools far from their families. Most Native Americans left these boarding schools torn between two cultures. They were not accepted into the White society and were punished for speaking or taking part in their Native ceremonies, which caused a loss of cultural confusion (Reyhner, 2002). Native American women superintendents have had to live in two worlds: their Indigenous world and the world of a global society. Many of these women have grown up with a lack of resources, such as a well-constructed home, internet access, nearby grocery stores, libraries, and paved roads (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2017).

According to Reyhner (2002), poverty and other social conditions have plagued Native Americans through systemic racial practices. There has been a fight for political and economic equality, and they want to regain their Native identities, including their languages and traditions that historically were suppressed in boarding schools (Reyhner, 2002). Shotton (2018) stated that women in her study saw themselves and their communities inaccurately reflected, or not reflected at all in academic research, and were motivated by a need to fill that significant gap and earn their doctorate degrees.

Poverty

One of the implications of not obtaining adequate levels of education is the inability to reduce the poverty rate, which is significantly higher among the Native American population at 27% in the United States than the national average of 15% (NCAI.org, 2020, p. 6). Studies have indicated that Native American students, on average, experience less academic success than students of other ethnicities (Humphries, 1988; Mathews & Smith, 1994; NAEP, 2019; Stone & Gridley, 1991) and subsequent higher dropout rates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2020, Fig. 3). Schools not using culturally or Indigenous relevant teaching and learning practices might be cause of these rates (National Indian Education Study 2019, p. 5). This higher-than-expected dropout rate may explain why Native Americans are deciding not to continue in activities in which they are not successful, something postulated by Bandura (1977, 1997).

Geographic isolation can also lead to underdeveloped economies and limited job opportunities on reservations (Bowker, 1992; Simms, 1999). The high unemployment rate on tribal lands, the relative paucity of job opportunities, and slow job growth rates on reservations are a few indicators of the underdeveloped economy in these areas (Ortiz & HeavyRunner, 2003). Plagued by poverty and other social problems, Native Americans still survive. By

recovering the past through a strong sense of identity and culturally relevant education, Native Americans have reclaimed their self-worth (Dhillon, 2019), however economic disparities continue. Since all Native American tribes are different, a woman may not seem traditional to some, but within the Lakota teachings, it requires a woman to do what she can with what she has (Davey, 2006). Evidence proves that when an organization gives women opportunities to succeed, its members realize significant performance benefits (Kolb et al., 2010). Nadler and Stockdale (2012) indicate that women leaders add significant economic and social value to an organization's sustainability and profitability. Native American women view leadership as a position of responsibility to take care of their people (Portman & Garrett, 2005).

Cultural Identity

Native Americans may not, as a culture, share the values of the Euro-American educational system, and Native Americans may have some disdain for the current structure (Dhillon, 2019). It is a well-documented historical fact that the United State Government made policies that displaced Native Americans from their native lands and sent Native children to boarding schools (Brown, 1991). The government relocated families to different parts of the country, which may have contributed to Native Americans, as a culture, becoming skeptical of governmental intervention (Brown, 1991). These incidences led many Native Americans to forsake their native culture to accommodate white culture. Historically, many Native American individuals experienced prejudice and overt racism at the hands of the federal educational system (AACAP, 1975).

During assimilation, the Native American women were responsible for preserving the values and culture and caring for their families (Pember, 2008). The Native American women held values and beliefs based upon their own ethnic culture and influences (Kawulich, 2009).

Portman and Garrett (2005) wrote that generosity, in a Native American worldview, is considered a sign of wisdom and humility, and the idea of seeking group harmony through cooperation and sharing takes precedence over all else. Native women must be able to work in two worlds with different expectations. Native American women leaders have adopted dual identities and acquired skills that are substantially different from the skills cultivated by the tribal cultures in which they grew up (Mueller, 1998).

In the early to mid-years of 2000, there has been research on academic self-efficacy with Native American students from the United States and Canada (Edman & Brazil, 2009; Lewis, 2011; Weenie, 2002). Klassen (2004) believed that collective efficacy might supplant self-efficacy depending on cultural contexts where there is a collective identity, group solidarity, and duty. Shotton (2018) believed that Native American women recognize the importance of receiving a doctoral degree, not viewed in terms of their own personal success but more in terms of what it means for their communities. Native American women understood that their degree came with great responsibility, a responsibility to their families, their tribe and their communities and other Native women (Minthorn & Shotton, 2019; Shotton, 2018).

Laarhuis (2016) differentiated between collective efficacy and group efficacy where *group efficacy* is the consensus of the group about their own efficacy, while collective efficacy is the individual's perception of efficacy. LaFramboise et al. (1993) proposed the concept of bicultural efficacy, which is the belief that one can live effectively within two groups without compromising one's sense of cultural identity. Klassen (2004) asserted that although self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong predictor of performance with Western populations, less is known about how self-efficacy beliefs operate with Indigenous individuals.

Summary

The Covid 19 pandemic sent school districts across the world into crisis, and the superintendents along with their regular responsibilities were faced with unfathomable challenges for which no administrator certification or credentialing program could prepare them (Hill & Jochim, 2021). Review of the literature, with the woman superintendent experiences in mind, as well as, the cultural discrepancies historically shown to Native Americans, provided insight regarding self-efficacy leadership beliefs that were portrayed during the pandemic. Illuminating these self-efficacy leadership beliefs will provide school superintendents the framework for positive action when a crisis arises again.

Self-efficacy informs the choice of action to effect a change. Efficacy beliefs are informed by assessing personal knowledge and the capability to effect change, assessing the degree to which the environment will accept the change, and the degree of effort the superintendent is willing to engage (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, the gap in the research is the practical application of building the four aspects of self-efficacy for Native American women superintendents during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic. The impact that Native American women superintendents have made within the global landscape of Indigenous education speaks to how Native American women remain the backbone of Indigenous communities (Minthorn & Shotton, 2019). The research methodology of this case study will be explained in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the Covid 19 pandemic. The study drew attention to Bandura's (1977) four aspects of self-efficacy that include relying on prior experiences, emulating role models, using feedback from trusted individuals, and developing awareness of emotional states. The study also led to understanding how culture was included in Native American women superintendents' behaviors and decision making during the start of the pandemic.

This chapter contains the methods and procedures that guided this research. The multiple case studies investigated leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the global crisis. The chapter includes the following sections: a) research design and rationale, b) research questions, c) a brief description of the literature review process, d) population, e) data collection process, f) data analysis process, g) limitations of the design, h) ethical standards, and i) trustworthiness.

Qualitative Research Design and Rationale

Native Americans have suffered a long history of mistreatment from outside researchers researching their Native territories. Literature suggests that some research in Native communities has betrayed Native American members' trust because the researchers failed to conduct the studies in a collaborative, transparent, and respectful manner (Kelley et al., 2013). Researchers using a qualitative research design to "collect data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, pg. 8) bring transparency and respect to these Native American leaders.

Collaboratively collecting data with the participants was another reason for using a qualitative research design. The researcher believed these Native American women superintendents had different perspectives and experiences. Using the qualitative approach, the researcher established a relationship of trust through personal interviews and conversations. The building of relationships helped to aid data transparency from the participants and interpretation by the researcher. However, the most crucial point in qualitatively conducting this research was to hear the voices of these Native American women superintendents.

Case studies “typically focuses on an individual representative of a group” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, pg. 15). Using a case-study method, the researcher explored specific cases of Native American women superintendents and their leadership beliefs during the phenomena of the Covid 19 pandemic. Case study research requires the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case studies for this research focused on a select group of Native American women superintendents to provide a high level of detailed data to achieve an in-depth understanding of each case.

The researcher decided to conduct a multiple case study. The multiple cases explored in this study were bounded systems over time, and through detailed and in-depth data collection involving several sources of information which then were reported through case descriptions and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Completing a multiple case study, the researcher could triangulate the data to see the similarities and differences between the cases. The multiple case study intended to discover what similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs these superintendents held that helped them persist in such an unprecedented time.

The multiple case study involved Native American women superintendents from public school districts in several upper Midwestern states. The researcher replicated the procedures for

each case to analyze the similarities among the cases to form a theory of which leadership self-efficacy beliefs emerged while the superintendents were leading their districts through the pandemic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The research questions initially focused on constructing a detailed picture collected from two sources in each case study: one interview, and a self-efficacy perception journal. The researcher created an analysis of each case individually based on thematic development. Finally, general conclusions emerged from cross-case analysis identifying significant themes and patterns common to the cases.

Qualitative researchers emphasize the use of theory in research (Creswell, 2013). These abstract ideas and beliefs can help articulate the importance of the study (Creswell, 2013). This multiple case study draws on Albert Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1997).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is a person's particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations (Bandura, 1977). A self-efficacy theory lens provided a framework to understand how Native American women superintendents' beliefs impacted their experiences during the pandemic. In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. For example, this qualitative multiple case study developed an in-depth understanding of leadership beliefs from the perception of several Native American women superintendents as they led a public school district during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The research questions for this study examined how the superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs influenced the courses of action they chose to pursue and how much effort they put forth in those endeavors. Also considered was their resiliency to adversity and whether their thought patterns were self-hindering or self-aiding as well as how much stress they experienced in coping

with unknown pandemic demands and their perceived accomplishment level of leadership. Bandura (1977) suggested that two factors influence whether a person engages in a specific behavior: self-efficacy and outcome expectancy—possessing a sense of self-efficacy influences whether a person succeeds or not. Similarly, if a person thinks that completing the task will have good results, there is a greater likelihood that they will engage in a particular behavior (Shirey, 2020).

Leadership self-efficacy is the belief that one has the capabilities and resources to perform a specific task which in this case, is leading a district during a pandemic. Significant academic, career, and life benefits, such as leadership aspirations, work performance, and the ability to cope and overcome challenging situations, are linked with leadership self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has also been linked to the ability to manage and overcome stereotypes, as with these superintendents being women, but also as a Native American person (Day et al., 2009; Hannah et al., 2008; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011).

This multiple case study looked at four primary sources that derive self-efficacy. The sources are the past experiences of personal success and the ability to recollect these occasions; emulating the modeling success from others; using constructive feedback and encouragement from people they trust; and managing how they think, feel, and behave. Also, this study looked at how the Indigenous culture of the women superintendents influenced their decision making.

Researcher's History with Topic

I have worked on two American Indian reservations in South Dakota for a total of 26 years. I started my educational career at a Bureau of Indian Education funded grant school for two years and then worked for 21 years for a public school district located on the same reservation. As I wrote this dissertation, I had completed three years at another Bureau of Indian

education funded grant school, with eight years of being a principal. I am a middle-aged Caucasian female and have been a principal for the last eight years.

When the pandemic began in March 2020, I observed my Native American woman superintendent lead the school district through Covid 19. This superintendent was a leading force for the school district and a community leader in the surrounding area with her wisdom and forward-thinking. She moved the district from in person learning to remote learning within a week, creating a reopening plan with safety protocols in place. The plan made it possible for the school district to reopen to in person learning in September 2020.

I watched this superintendent draw on years of experience from past crises. I saw her attend countless meetings and webinars, learning as much as possible from national to state to local medical and educational agencies. This superintendent was relentless in her pursuit to provide the most effective education and desperately needed food to our Native American children during the pandemic. She rallied the internet providers to give free internet access to our families, to ensure remote education was available to everyone. Living in an area where the poverty rate is very high, the superintendent made sure the delivery of food and other supplies went out weekly to our students' families.

My reason for this dissertation topic was because I was in awe of this modern-day warrior. The warrior woman spent countless nights and days under constant worry and stress, leading a school district forward. This warrior was balancing education and safety as the virus turned deadly to many tribal people. This warrior fought for her vision of academic excellence virtually and in the physical school. She fought to bring as many resources to the school and community as she could; as an example, she set up sentinel testing for the Covid 19 for our school and community. This superintendent's determination sparked the researcher's passion for

understanding and learning from a warrior woman like her and witnessing her inspirational leadership. There are lessons to be learned from these school leaders who are women, Native and superintendents.

Research Questions

The following research question guided this study: What leadership self-efficacy beliefs appeared to influence the Native American women superintendents' behaviors during the Covid 19 pandemic?

The following sub-questions also guided this study:

1. What performance accomplishments/experiences did these Native American women superintendents rely upon during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
2. What behaviors were emulated from the modeling of others by these Native American women superintendents during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
3. What feedback and encouragement from trusted sources did these Native American women superintendents have during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
4. How did these Native American women superintendents describe their emotional state during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic?
5. Did the Indigenous culture and beliefs of these Native American women superintendents play a part in their decision-making during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic crisis?

Review of Related Literature

This study's initial step was a review of the literature related to superintendent leadership during a crisis, self-efficacy beliefs of leaders, women in leadership, and finally, Native American women leadership. I located and read literature to get an overview of the purpose of

leadership. I also read through the literature on leadership in crisis, leadership self-efficacy beliefs, women leadership, and Native American women leadership. I established a specific purpose for the literature review after an overview of well-researched topics and determined where more investigation needed to occur.

The purpose of the literature review was to understand what has been studied and found about the superintendent's leadership during crisis times. The researcher also aimed to understand what it was like to be a woman in a superintendent's role. I researched how self-efficacy beliefs influence a leader's actions and how their culture might influence Native American women's leadership. Next, I evaluated, interpreted, and synthesized the literature by grouping various sources according to their similarities and differences.

Literature review information came from the University of South Dakota library, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), *ProQuest* research library, Department of Education of South Dakota, US Census Bureau websites, and other internet sources. For clarity and consistency, the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, 7th Edition (2020) and *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th Edition (2018), guided the writing for this dissertation.

Participants in the Study

This research focused on Native American women superintendents in public school districts located in several Midwestern states. Participants in this case study were Native American woman superintendents leading a public school district during the Covid 19 pandemic with at least two years of experience. Following the Institutional Review Boards' (IRB) approval, the researcher identified potential participants by first contacting the state's Departments of Education. I compiled a list of names, which matched the criteria and invited individuals to

participate in the study. The requirements for this multiple case study were a) Native American woman superintendent, b) at least two years of superintendent experience, c) employed in a public school district located in a Midwestern state, and d) led their school district during the Covid 19 pandemic, up to the date of May 2021. I contacted the individuals and described the purpose of the research and how this research might assist other Native American women leaders and other future leaders. Their participation was voluntary.

Data Collection Process

Using "a qualitative study is often more holistic and emergent, with the specific focus, design, data collection techniques, and interpretations developing and possible changing along the way" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). This study used one set of interview questions per participant and data from a self-efficacy perception journal data to provide deeper insight into the self-efficacy beliefs of the women in the study. Also, the perceptions and behaviors can be verified by comparing responses, giving a rich, well-developed picture of the self-efficacy beliefs of these Native American women superintendents (Shenton, 2004). In this multiple case study, I conducted one in-depth interviews for each participant, and looked for common themes that emerged in the data from the self-efficacy perception journals. During data collection, I was able to find the similarities of self-efficacy beliefs these women embraced (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Interview Procedures

An interview is a constructed conversation based on the research questions in this study. The researcher developed interview questions based on the research questions, phrased so that interviewees could understand them and then had a dialogue with the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 163). The reason for conducting the interviews with each of the superintendents was to investigate their self-efficacy beliefs by understanding their perceptions, motivations, and

experiences during the Covid 19 pandemic. The superintendents provided data that explained their rationales, explanations, and justifications for their actions. A focus on specific vocabulary and language used by these leaders provided the researcher with data for my study (Tracy, 2012).

The interview questions were developed to be open-ended, general, and focused on the four areas of self-efficacy and the Indigenous culture impact: a) past successes, b) emulating others, c) acting on trusted feedback and encouragement, d) connection to their emotions, and e) Indigenous culture. I refined the interview questions and the procedure through pilot testing. The pilot cases selected were based on convenience, access, and geographic proximity (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I lived and worked on an American Indian reservation and had access to a Native American woman superintendent and a Native American woman tribal education director who helped refine the interview questions and protocol. The questions were slightly changed to becoming more direct and culturally appropriate.

This study conducted a one-on-one semi-structured interviews with each of the identified superintendents to determine their perceived self-efficacy leadership beliefs. The interview was no more than an hour long. Before the interview, each participant read the informed consent documentation, and all interview questions were discussed and addressed. The participant gave consent by email after reading the email consent form (Appendix B).

I assured each participant that any information obtained during the study would be kept confidential. The Zoom recordings were destroyed as soon as each interview was transcribed. The transcriptions from the interviews are in a file on password protected personal computer and will be kept there for two years and then deleted. Upon pulling the data from the Zoom interviews, and the self-efficacy perception journals, they were destroyed as well. The auditor,

Dr. Newland, professor at the University of South Dakota, and I were the only ones to see the specific interview and journal data.

I utilized the interview protocol sheet in Appendix C. After the interviews were transcribed, I asked the participants to verify the transcribed interview draft for accuracy. The first interview helped me gain a foundational understanding as related to the five research questions. I took detailed notes and recorded the interviews.

Self-Efficacy Perception Journal

Self-efficacy “is not a global trait but a differentiated set of self-beliefs linked to distinct realms of functioning” (Bandara, 2006, p. 307). Bandara said that tailoring the scales of perceived self-efficacy to a particular functioning domain is the object of interest. In other words, the third component of data collection was a self-efficacy perception journal. The journal prompts were developed based on the research questions. This journal included self-efficacy perception prompts and pages for the superintendent on which to provide reflections. Using private records did include material produced by the Native American women superintendents which provided insights into their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017).

I constructed scales to assess self-efficacy which required preliminary work to identify the forms the challenges and impediments take through the pandemic (Bandura, 2006). The superintendents were asked in open-ended interviews and given the self-efficacy perception journal entries to describe in their own words the things that make it hard for them to perform the required activities regularly. The identified challenges or impediments are built into the efficacy items.

Through the examples given in the book, *Self-Efficacy Beliefs of Adolescents* by Albert Bandura (2006), five items portraying different task demands were based on the five research

questions. The researcher asked the superintendents to rate the strength of their belief in their ability to execute the requisite activities. They recorded the power of their efficacy beliefs on a 10-point scale. The 1-unit intervals ranged from 0-cannot do; through intermediate degrees of assurance, 5-moderately certain can do; to complete confidence, 10-highly confident/can do, as listed in Appendix C. The scale provides the perception data of the strength of the self-efficacy belief. Here is an example:

Thinking back to March 2020, please rate the following statement: I believed I could keep staff and students safe during the Covid 19 pandemic. In the column, rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 to 10 using the scale given below:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cannot do			Moderately Certain				Can Do			

Please journal any thoughts or feelings on the following few pages as you reflect on your rating. Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020 and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what has happened to make the shift in the rate?

A self-efficacy perception journal (Appendix D) was shared in a *Google* form as soon as the participants gave their permission to be included in this multiple case study. The researcher asked the participants to submit journals when they had completed the prompts or no later than two weeks after the second interview.

Data Analysis Process

The beginning analytic strategy should follow a cycle driven by the original research questions, the data, and conclusions drawn (Yin, 2009). The Self-Efficacy Theory design was the lens to categorize the data collection and data analysis. The purpose of this starting point with this analytic strategy was to link the data from the case study to the critical concepts and give

direction to the analysis. I categorized the data through these five areas: a) past experiences of personal success and the ability to recollect these occasions, b) emulating the modeling success from others, c) using the constructive feedback and encouragement from people they trust, d) reflection of the connection on how they think, feel, and behave perceived their emotional state, and e) reflection on their Indigenous culture's impact on decision making. The study's data analysis phase used the procedure of open coding, axial/in vivo, and theme selective coding, which imparts rigor and accuracy to the data analysis process. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) defined qualitative data analysis as "working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns" (p. 58).

Each Participant was sent an email, found in Appendix A, asking for their participation. Attached to the email was an informed consent form, found in Appendix B. As soon as the participant gave consent to be in the study, the link to the Google form titled Self-efficacy Journal was sent and an interview Zoom meeting was scheduled.

Immediately after the recorded interviews were completed, they were uploaded into a transcription program, *Temi.com*. Once the transcripts were received, all data passed through three stages of coding analysis. First, all transcripts were thoroughly read, and verified to be accurate by each of the superintendents. The transcripts were then examined once again and coded by hand. I looked for subcategories, took the data, and broke it up into discrete parts following the open coding system of segmenting information. Secondly, axial coding drew a connection between the open codes (Creswell, 1998). Also, In vivo coding was used within each level of coding. In vivo coding emphasized the voices of the participants. Lastly, I used selective coding, pulling together all the aspects learned about the superintendents' beliefs, and a portrait of main subthemes emerged under each of the self-efficacy and Indigenous culture themes.

I first read over the documents gaining an understanding of the documents as the information related to the central research question. Next, a thorough examination of each document was completed, analyzing the content into categories related to the research questions. This process is called thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday et al., 2006). The process involved a focused re-reading and review of the data. I took a closer look at the selected data and performed coding and category construction, based on the data's characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to the study's phenomenon.

In this study, having multiple case studies along with two modes of data collection with each case, provided an opportunity to triangulate data, increasing the accuracy and credibility of the qualitative research and subsequent theories developed. These multiple sources of data added to the richness of the description of the context of the superintendents' beliefs and offered a means of triangulating the data gathered in the interviews. The actions and beliefs in the documents should correlate with the interview conversation and observed themes. Merriman (2009) supported this by claiming, "Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person's attitude, beliefs and view of the world" (p. 143).

Open Coding and In Vivo Coding

The process of open coding is when the data is read, taken apart, and then put back together through the self-efficacy leadership belief lens, which emerged from the interview transcripts, and the journal (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher read through the data several times and found tentative codes/themes under each of the four initial self-efficacy areas: successes, emulating others, trusted feedback, and emotional connectivity, as well as any Indigenous cultural beliefs. The code/themes were words or phrases that summarized the

perceptions that emerged from the multiple data sources. Coding data under the five areas gave the researcher a funnel to put all data through to focus on self-efficacy beliefs. This process gave the researcher an expanded number of codes/themes in each area. Codes/themes were kept intact with the way they were spoken, heard, or written.

In vivo coding is taking the participants' actual spoken words and creating a theme from them (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This form of coding helps to highlight specific words or phrases from the participants. These Native American women superintendents' voices provided authority through the power of their words, and their stories are true sources themselves (Ortiz, 1992). Hearing the voices of these Native American women is why this type of coding is beneficial. In vivo coding highlights the voices of participants and the participants themselves, giving meaning to the data. In vivo is a word or quote that represents a category of quotes that was developed through saturation of a continual theme spoken by the Native American women superintendents. The saturation was achieved through both the data from the interview transcripts and journal prompts.

Axial Coding

In the second phase, the researcher identified the relationships between the open codes. This phase involved drawing a connection called a coding paradigm, which "portrays the interrelationship of causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions and consequences" (Creswell & Poth, 2008, p. 434). The researcher then took all the open-coded themes in all five areas and ran them through another funnel to focus on redundant themes and eliminated them. This action created a final code that categorized axial coding articles back into central overarching themes.

Selective Coding

This third phase of coding for this qualitative study included creating a detailed description or a self-efficacy leadership belief portrait for each case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The third phase pulled together all the aspects learned from the categories' relationship from the axial coding model. Exploring thematic connections from the final funneling of related themes, the researcher could see a theory or central self-efficacy beliefs from what emerged from the data.

Triangulation

Creswell (2018) suggested establishing validity in qualitative research. The researcher triangulated the three sources of data: interview notes, and journal data to help assure the validity of this study. Verifying the themes will complete the triangulation process, as well as checking back with each case study participant feedback (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I completed the analysis of similarities of the self-efficacy beliefs from each case study participant. The procedure entailed corroborating codes and themes from each of the case study participants. Thus, if a statement, belief, or action was made by one participant but not found in any other interviews, or documentation, it was not used as verified data. This method ensured the accuracy of the study since the information drew from multiple sources.

Peer Review

A dissertation committee read and gave feedback on the findings within the dissertation. The researcher considered recommendations and made appropriate changes through a peer-review process with a selected committee. Peer review helped this researcher enhance the credibility of this study through the process of approval (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Limitations of the Design

The data were collected within three months by interviewing the participants once, and from responses to self-efficacy perception journal prompts. Participants would be asked about their experiences at the start of the pandemic, when most schools went remote due to the Covid 19 pandemic till now. This study was limited to three Midwestern states and the few Native American women superintendents who worked there. I tried to get participants from consistent demographics and similar sized districts.

Ethical Standards

I needed to consider what ethical issues might arise during this multiple case study (Creswell, 2013). The ethical concerns encompassed the needs of participants, the school districts and their stakeholders and publishers of this research. Leedy and Ormrod (2019) emphasized a close look during the planning stage at the study's ethical implications. I needed to be sensitive to the Indigenous population, watch for any bias I might have, and not to place any of these Native American women at risk in this study (Gachupin et al., 2019).

To maintain sensitivity to the Native American women, the researcher protected the superintendent's anonymity. Traceable details of personal specifics are masked unless otherwise permitted by the individual. I gained the institutional review board approval for the study, and I was transparent with my intent.

Each Native American community has a difference in their native cultures and beliefs. I did explore these differences to be respectful. I explained coding data to keep the anonymity of each superintendent and district. During the interview, I did not use leading questions, and I reported honestly. I also gathered the permission needed to reprint or adapt the work of others. I did provide copies of my study to all participants and stakeholders. This study provided insight

into supporting Native American women in their leadership. This research can also be a platform for future Native American women leaders and provides the groundwork for additional replicated research in other states.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Credibility deals with the focus of the research and refers to the confidence in how well the data address the intended focus (Polit & Beck, 2021). The researcher started by analyzing the best data collection method to answer her research questions. In the studies that use analysis of the content, the researcher found the collected data were unstructured, coming from interviews, observations, diaries, and other written documents (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Neuendorf, 2002). I completed pre-interview and journal help from two Native American women leaders to determine whether the interview questions and journal prompts were suitable and answered the research questions.

The researcher made use of an audit trail. An audit trail is an essential part of establishing rigor in qualitative work as it describes the research procedures (Johnson & Waterfield, 2004). The researcher made notes along the way when presented with research decisions and justifications. This transparency will allow others to critique the analysis of the study's data and create deeper trustworthiness.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the transference of the findings to other settings or groups (Polit & Beck, 2012). It is ultimately down to the reader's judgment about whether the reported results are transferable to another context (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The value of giving clear descriptions of the culture, context, selection, and characteristics of participants and the study's boundaries will increase the study's trustworthiness (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability

Conformability of findings means that the data accurately represent the participants' information and are not invented through the researcher's interpretations (Polit & Beck, 2021). The Kyngas et al. (2011) study suggested that one researcher most often analyzes data. The credibility of the analysis of this study was confirmed by checking for the representativeness of the data as a whole (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011) and also with each case study participant (Holloway & Wheeler, 2010; Thomas & Magilvy, 2011), and through the peer-review process (Shenton, 2004). Using the InVivo coding, the researcher ensured the findings would reflect the participants' voices and not the researcher's biases, motivations, or perspectives (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Dependability

Dependability refers to the stability of data over time and under different conditions. According to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for establishing credibility, researchers identified and described those participating in research accurately by gathering credible data from different sampling methods. The researcher used two sources of data collected from each case study participant through interviews and journal data to meet this requirement for dependability. To ensure the replication for each theme, the researcher analyzed the interview data before she analyzed the perception journal data. The researcher recognized which themes had data saturation and where more data were needed. Not reaching saturation leads to difficulty with grouping the data and creating concepts (Elo & Kyngas, 2008; Guthrie et al., 2004; Harwood & Garry, 2003), preventing a complete analysis and generating simplified results (Harwood & Garry, 2003).

Summary

Leadership research along with understanding the self-efficacy belief systems can create and predict successful leadership in organizations. This qualitative study method was used to identify the self-efficacy beliefs of Native American women superintendents located in mid-Western states leading during the Covid 19 pandemic. Native American women superintendents' voices were heard through the interviews and in the self-efficacy perception journal prompts. The data analysis that included both interviews and documents revealed themes described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this multiple case study was to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. The study drew attention to Bandura's (1977) four aspects of self-efficacy: relying on prior experiences, emulating role models, using feedback from trusted individuals, and developing awareness of emotional states. The study also led to understanding what part their Indigenous culture played in decision-making for three Native American women superintendents during the pandemic.

The qualitative research method used in this study was a multiple case study that utilized data from Self-efficacy Journal Google entries and individual interviews through Zoom online meetings. The State Department of Education in three upper mid-Western states initially identified eight Native American women superintendents. The qualifications for these women to be in the study were the women had to be Native American with at least five years of superintendent experience and, led a public school district during the pandemic. After failing to get three participants for the study, IRB approval was given to widen the search for participants from three to five states and to reduce the years of superintendent experience from five to two years.

This chapter aims to present the findings. This chapter includes two sections: the first section describes the three participants; and the second section includes the findings from the data analysis to address the Central Question regarding self-efficacy beliefs and their influence on Native American women superintendents' behaviors during the pandemic. The following section includes the demographics and characteristics of the participants.

Participants in the Study

The research study population is defined as all individuals or objects within a particular population, usually having a common, binding characteristic or trait (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This study identified the population as Native American women superintendents leading public school districts in the Midwest during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The three participants were from three different school districts, ranging from a 200 to a 2000 student body. The participants led school districts containing two to six school buildings. The ages of the women superintendents ranged from 44 to 55 years old. Their years of superintendent experience were between two and thirteen years. All three participants were in school districts that included a high percentage of Native American students and a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students. The following case descriptions are presented in order of when the participants were interviewed.

Case 1: Cunwe

The participant with the pseudonym Cunwe was a Native American woman superintendent leading a K-12 public school district with 2000 students and three buildings to oversee. She had the most years of experience and was the oldest of the three participants at age 55. Cunwe had experienced being a superintendent for different school districts. At the time of the study, her school district population included 96% Native American students while 96.7% of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged.

The interview with Cunwe created a picture of her leadership through the Covid 19 pandemic. Cunwe stated, "Well, it is just like any other time that you lead; you have to do the very best you can with the information that you have." She spoke about her team supporting the district's mission and vision; however, it was tough because they did not have students in the

school building. Only about 60 percent of the students came back when they could have in-person school while about 40 percent remained remote.

Cunwe stated she developed a Covid committee right from the start and had many critical people on the team. "So that helped to have that team in place to help make those decisions, and to get the background information." Cunwe had several supportive people who kept her updated with Covid information. She stated, "That helped us get through what we had to do...I had a really good team to help me."

Cunwe reflected on what she thought her accomplishments were while leading through the pandemic. She laughed and said, "We made it through; I'm still alive." She told of a situation about her partner catching the Covid 19 virus when she had just visited all the school buildings under her watch. She stated, "My name was mud throughout the district and reservation." She was adamant that she would not let any of her staff go through what she did. She created a process with better confidentiality to identify staff that contracted the virus. This superintendent built a culture of empathy toward staff, fighting to have all staff treated with respect and in other ways of showing support by giving them hazard pay.

Cunwe's past experiences were summed up with this quote. She stated, "I never really looked at it as a pandemic; I looked at it as my job every day is different as a superintendent." Cunwe pointed out that because superintendents are used to changing and making decisions that affect the whole district, going through a pandemic is not any different.

Cunwe continued to work with her school team stating, "My team and I have two [individuals] in particular that were amazing at providing information on operating safely." She went on to say that not everyone was happy with her leadership, but she did have quite a few parents and staff members thankful for keeping them safe. She received flowers from the

classified staff thanking her for supporting them. She also mentioned that the school board was proud of the things done during the pandemic. One of the items they were proud of was their reopening plan. Cunwe discussed using many resources from their state, Covid committee, administration team, and the local tribe.

The obstacles Cunwe encountered during the Covid 19 pandemic were with the school board, staff, families, and community members as they were in fear of the Covid 19 virus and of losing their loved ones. "They were scared to come to work; they were scared to send their kids to school, and some still are," she stated. Her whole district went remote, with everyone working from their homes. Cunwe said it was hard to balance taking care of people with making them accountable to provide services for the students. Cunwe kept looking for the best ways to support her students' learning through the pandemic. The district used funds to buy hot spots or jet packs for families that did not have internet services, but rural communities did not have cell service. Cunwe stated, "We just had to work with those individuals separately and provide paper packets." This superintendent's most prized action in leading during the pandemic was, "I have a heart for kids, and I want to do everything I can do to ensure that this district provides all they need to be successful in life." She was talking about supporting students both academically and socially as well as emotionally.

Cunwe felt she could not stay home and thus she came to work from the district office, although her grandson was in distance learning. She said, "So that was hard for working parents; it was hard for non-working parents; they are not teachers, you know." Cunwe was able to get through the stressors of the pandemic by having lots of faith and family to lean on. "You can't be an island to yourself," she stated. She talked about reaching out and letting people help her.

Cunwe's indigenous culture did impact her leadership during the pandemic. Cunwe took great pride in telling me that her district has had a stronger cultural identity since she has been a superintendent. She has hired more Native teachers and administrators. At the time of the study, her school district was trauma-informed to help her staff and students move forward through historical trauma. "We are leaps and bounds ahead of where we used to be as far as implementing the culture and language into the classrooms," she said. She also stated that the district continued making sure cultural identity was the main focus of the pandemic.

In sharing her thoughts on school board involvement, Cunwe stated, "At times, I think our boards and politics are most detrimental to leadership in general." She said they could be detrimental, but they can also be icing on the cake when supporting the superintendent. This Native American woman superintendent worked with both kinds of boards. She stated, "No matter if it's the pandemic or not, the toughest thing is the political realm for leadership in general."

This superintendent talked about how another detriment was being a Native American woman. She has noticed that the board will look to her male assistant superintendent to see if he agrees with what she has stated before they trust her. She stated, "That is something that we always have to overcome." Cunwe then discussed being an educated Native American woman and coming home to be a superintendent. "There is the crab bucket method, that is, you know, people want just to pull you down and find anything wrong that they can," she stated. She talked about having strong shoulders and a sound support system to thrive, along with her family to support her.

Case 2: Winona

The participant with the pseudonym of Winona was a Native American woman superintendent of a small, less than 200 students, 6th-8th grade public school district in an upper Midwestern state. She watched over two school buildings, the 6th – 8th middle school and an alternative middle school. Winona had 10 years of superintendent experience and brought 31 years of experience in education to her superintendency. Her district had 100% Native American students and 70% of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged.

The interview started with introductions and a discussion about her district's Covid safety plan. She spoke about her district's transformation and learning curve during the pandemic in March 2020. She mentioned that 30 percent of her students did not have Wi-Fi access but she worked closely with the local telephone companies to get them connected. The district paid for the WIFI services for those students until the end of the 2019-2020 school year.

Winona confidence grew while leading her school through the Covid 19 pandemic. She stated, "I was not very confident at all because it was brand new for everyone, and there wasn't anybody I could call on." At the time of the study, she was feeling more confident. Winona confided that she had been a paraprofessional right out of high school but went to college and received her teaching degree. She had been a classroom teacher for 20 years and in administration for 30 years. Winona has held every position in a school including the positions of assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent, and at the time of the study, was serving as the superintendent of the school district.

Winona had experience in her leadership position however, the pandemic was a new ball game for everyone. "I think what helped me was knowing that other schools were in the same boat," she said. At time of the study, she was a member of her state's leader association. Winona

believed the director of the leadership association was helpful as she brought together all the superintendents across the state for meetings during the pandemic. Winona said, "That kind of helped a lot!" However, she mentioned that the biggest hindrance was her school board. "When you don't have the support or the confidence from your board, it's very detrimental to leadership," she exclaimed. Winona did not have the same board as when Covid 19 first hit. She talked about how they did not see the importance of Covid 19. She was thrilled when the governor mandated going to virtual learning. However, her board was not happy about it. She stated, "We met quite a bit at the beginning [of the pandemic], you know, they would put educators down and say, they don't want to work."

Winona discussed how the pandemic created a big learning curve for everyone. "Even though I had attended some virtual team meetings, I wasn't versed in how to conduct a team meeting virtually or how to work Zoom," she stated. She admitted it was the foundation of being a classroom teacher that helped her understand her teachers' frustrations. Again, she said, "Just knowing that I wasn't confident, but knowing other schools were in the same boat, that helped a lot." Winona felt more confident by going through the process of developing a learning plan and a health and safety plan. "Just going through that process and putting it down...having something concrete...trying to predict if something goes wrong what we will do...and of course, we did not have all the answers."

Winona was aware of her accomplishments during the pandemic. "For me, it's both personal and professional [in terms of] gaining the confidence of my board," she stated. The district had an election during the spring, and a couple of former educators came to the board. She said having the board's confidence is when you as a leader can move forward in a more manageable way and faster. Winona talked about another professional accomplishment: having

her staff pull together for the students. She stated that her staff tried everything for student engagement, but it has been a struggle. This district was on remote during this interview, and she talked about how parents did not like the remote learning as they were worried about the social-emotional piece. "I agree 100 percent with them because I totally know...but at the same time...as a superintendent, you have to weigh the health and safety of everybody."

Winona had copied the attributes from the association's director. She talked about how this director would have weekly meetings with all the superintendents in the state, helped work through issues that arose, and discussed how to handle the mandates coming from the state. "So, I think that one of the attributes I learned would be to reach out to others in the same boat, where in the past, I would only rely more on local help," stated Winona.

This superintendent's experiences had impacted her leadership decisions during the pandemic. "My experience in the classroom for 20 years definitely helped me to be able to see this was going to affect our teachers...keeping the main thing." Winona went on to say that students are the priority in her district. However, she talked about how vital staff is because everyone is struggling. She remembered back to teaching when No Child Left Behind came out and as a teacher, she felt she needed to jump through many hoops.

Wynonas' principal did not sign their contract to return to the school district in May 2020. The school board decided not to rehire the position, or offer a pay raise, or any other assistance. The school board combined the superintendent's job and the principal's job. Winona stated she had tried to get the board to understand that these are two different positions. She stated, "I knew that I couldn't do both equally good or well...I tried to convey that to my board, and they just did not see...they thought I should be able to do both...it was extremely hard." She was thankful when the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER), and

American Rescue Plan Assistance (ARPA) monies came in, and the board allowed her to hire a principal for the 2021-22 school year.

Winona had trouble with her school board, not only with her position and duties but also with all the mandates and issues dealing with the pandemic. She stated, "They thought everyone should have just kept working...they didn't believe we should have to sanitize anything." New people elected to her school board made her thankful. With this unique mix of people on her board, she could move forward more favorably. "I think what really helped me was my classroom experience, and my experience as an administrator certainly helped as well," she said. She also reflected on her ability to talk to most people and build and establish relationships. At the time of the study, Winona had excellent positive relationships with her staff and board. "Just being able to communicate and make sure everyone was on the same page, I think that's what really helped with that time."

Winona received feedback from her staff and her new board. She believed that the feedback validated her. Winona told of her days extending from six o'clock in the morning and often working until midnight to get a job done. "I know I'm working hard...I know what I'm doing, but it really helps to have others recognize that as well," she claimed. She felt that she was more validated after hearing feedback from her staff as she worked with these people every day and saw the school board once a month. She exclaimed, "Knowing that the staff feels like they have a leader they can trust and depend on, to me, that's worth a lot."

Winona worked with her team to develop a reopening plan. Her team was comprised of all stakeholders including staff and students who completed surveys. Her team consulted with their local community, the state education department, county health officials, and her education leaders' association about the reopening plan. All the superintendents that were apart of

education leaders' association were able to see everyone else reopening plans. As a result, struggling districts had help in putting a restart plan together. "We did put a lot of work and effort into our plan, but if we can help somebody else that's great," she said.

Superintendent Winona shared insights about the obstacles she encountered during the pandemic and how she overcame them. "My biggest obstacle at the beginning was my school board," she stated. She had seven members on her board. They were from occupations other than education and had an ideology that this virus was made up. She explained that it was tough to have her school board understand the importance of the safety protocols to keep people safe, like a bottle filling station, touchless toilets, and going virtual. Winona stated, "It was a big challenge, with the governor mandating really helped us a lot." She also said, "It's sad that we have to let politics come into play when we're talking about student and staff safety." This superintendent exclaimed that she and her staff stepped up to do what they had to for their students, and it just came naturally. Winona asserted, "They're challenges, but they're not so big that we're not going to be able to accomplish them...but having that board, the school board, was a huge, huge challenge."

Winona wanted to inform me of what it was to be a Native woman in a leadership role. She stated, "Being a Native educated woman was a detriment to me." She also added, "First of all, I'm Native, second of all, I'm a woman, and third of all, I'm the most educated woman in the school...and they still won't listen to me...even though I've got 35 years of education experience. They still won't listen to me." She told of a story about her board listening to her male business manager with a bachelor's degree, and whatever he asked for or stated, they backed him up. Her staff noticed the disrespect and banded together to support her. She exclaimed again, "I really think that being a Native educated woman was detrimental to me with that board."

Winona was able to cope with her stresses during the pandemic. She stated, "There were lots of stressors, and mainly it was about safety." She talked about making sure any decision made wasn't detrimental to somebody's health or safety. Another stressor was financial stress for this Native American woman superintendent. Since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, her student enrollment numbers dropped a lot, and she was not sure the state and impact aid would cover the increasing costs in the district. She stated, "Those ESSER and ARPA dollars really were lifesavers for our school." Things related to the Covid 19 virus kept constantly changing, an added stressor. She continually revised their health and safety plan to reflect her state's health department recommendation and the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control.

There was a restored trust between the superintendent and the school board when Winona's board changed. "Finally, when the board changed, we had one of the board members say, you know what you're doing; that's what we pay you for...you make the changes, and we will just give you blanket approval for whatever changes need to be made." Winona gave credit to her safety committee, which was comprised of staff and community members, and declared that it was all about collaboration.

Winona's Indigenous cultural beliefs did impact her leadership during the pandemic. Winona commented, "It's (Indigenous culture) not so much a belief, but a practice." She started talking about delivering food during the remote learning time. "Knowing we would double up or sometimes even triple up on what supplies we would give them... That's part of what your belief is, looking out for your people, your tiospaye," Any food or supplies given to the families was not reimbursed through the state back to the school district. However, Winona was determined to do what she called was "the right thing." A quote this Winona gave was, "Our kids have to Maslow before they bloom," meaning we must meet their needs before they can learn. This

superintendent was aware of where her students live, family history, who reside in their family, and what their needs are, "looking out after those very basic needs."

Winona continued another cultural piece in her school district, the practice of smudging. She said, "Every once a week, we have two male staff members go through and smudge the whole school...it is not just for bad vibes, but it is also to the belief is that it kills that virus as well." At the time of the study, they smudge their school whether anybody has been in the building or not because of the belief.

Winona prided herself in creating deeper relationships with others while leading her school district during the pandemic. "I'm a firm believer in relationships," she stated. Winona reminisced about being a classroom teacher for 20 years and was a Teacher of the Year for her state. "Knowing that I have all that under my belt, telling teachers it's important for you to have a relationship with your student...Telling teachers that you can still establish a relationship with somebody...and still have that mutual respect," This superintendent also established that her school district was a restorative justice school at the time of the study Restorative justice is not just for students but staff as well. It is building relationships by looking at a problem from somebody else's perspective. The final thoughts from Winona were, "I think it's just resiliency and perseverance, especially for Native women who are in leadership roles, it's not easy, but you know, not everybody can do it either!"

Case 3: Mitan's

The participant with the pseudonym of Mitan was a Native American woman superintendent of a K-12 public school district with a student population of slightly over 600 students. The district was also located in the Midwest. At the time of the study, Mitan managed six buildings, two high schools, two middle schools, and two elementary schools. She had just

over two years of experience and was the youngest of the three participants at age 44 years old. Her district had over 95% of the population were Native American students and a 93% of the students were identified as economically disadvantaged.

Mitan stated that she was very confident in her leadership as she stepped into the superintendency role two years ago. She brought with her prior experiences and vast knowledge gained from experienced administrators and a top-notch state department. Most of her previous educational experiences had been in public school districts working with primarily Native American students. "I was able to learn from that experience and then bring that here...and so I really felt, like I said, comfortable with the role and responsibilities that entailed," Mitán said. Being comfortable with her superintendency was partly due to her excellent rapport with the community. The other part was empowering the school board with the information they needed to make wise decisions for the district. "They're the conduits to the community, public dissemination of information, that's really what their role is," she stated. This superintendent utilized her school board, involving them and then allowing them to be the speakers and representatives of the school. Mitán felt that her school board had faith and confidence in her ability as a leader, trusting that she could lead all staff ensuring that the school district was safe for students.

Mitan stepped into this organization, which was not prepared for virtual learning or did not have effective technology. However, she came into a system that had years of experience. She had teachers who had been in the system for 30 years but also new teachers on their first year of teaching. "It was neat to see teachers working side by side, venturing into the unknown because it was unknown to anybody...so we're all in the same boat... let's keep the boat afloat, and that was the approach we took and continue that today," Mitán said.

Resourceful and resilient were two attributes that Mitan relied on and adopted. Mitan mentioned that she felt many things were out of her control with the pandemic, but she could always control how she approached issues. She pulled in past experiences of working with great administrators. "You always have to pick and pull and learn what you can, because there is always a learning opportunity, you can learn something from it." Another two attributes she equated herself with were tenacious and focused. She entered the state mentorship program for new superintendents and joined a superintendent certification cohort. "Being willing to soak in as much as I can from any resource, everybody has experience, everybody's got something to learn from," stated Mitan.

The type of leader that Mitan saw herself being became clear as she stated, "My leadership style is servant leadership." Building the capacity by bringing teachers, food service workers, custodial and facilities crews, and transportation workers to the table to have a voice was important. Mitan explained, "I think by instilling that sense of purpose and really cultivating that within people, growing their skill sets and confidence has been monumental."

Like most school district superintendents during the pandemic, keeping the school going and ensuring the environment was safe for everyone was a priority. However, Mitan's school district was technology poor, making technology also a priority. This school district was in the state's third year of a five-year school improvement process. Superintendent Mitan stated, "I think it's been an amazing opportunity to seek out ways to fix our system beyond what is required...from the pandemic or beyond our school improvement plan." Finding those ways to squeeze the most productivity or return on educational investment was important. Mitan's focus was not just on today's student outcomes but those who will be students 10 years from now.

Mitan wanted quality education for all students now and in the future. Mitán stated, "I strive to be really good at what I do for all the right reasons."

She commented that she received feedback from school board meetings, committee meetings, surveys from students and parents, and the evaluation process with the state mentorship. This superintendent also alluded to having many side conversations with her administrative and district office team that provided valuable feedback. As a new superintendent, Mitán talked about the balance within a system, such as how much a system can handle change and all that comes from being intuitive, listening, and aware. Mitán believed that feedback helped her become a better superintendent. "If you're not asking how you're doing, if you're not out there feeling what the needs are, the dreams and desires of your stakeholders, then you're wasting your time," Mitán said.

There were some obstacles during this time of the pandemic. The biggest obstacle for this superintendent was keeping school doors open and in session. "I'm a staunch let's be in school," stated Mitán. This superintendent knew they were not health professionals but took every consideration recommended for health and safety reasons. She talked about the local tribe wanting to have stay-at-home orders, which also became an obstacle. She stated, "You work around it, you work through it...it happens sometimes, but you've got to have a plan in place."

For Mitán, uncertainty was her most significant stress. With the pandemic, many uncertainties happened and there were different variables in the day-to-day operations of running a school district. "You hang on and put your game face on. You remain calm, and above all things, you work through it," Mitán stated. One way of coping with the uncertainty and stress it brought was to create a better home/work balance, making sure she had time with her daughter and new puppy. Mitán said, "I don't know if it's coping, but just really appreciating what gifts I

have and separating the work stress from not letting it flow into my personal life... I'm really big on quality of life."

Mitan used the term "human-oriented" when I asked her how her Indigenous culture had impacted her leadership. "I really don't put a lot on people's backgrounds or their cultures; I appreciate and respect them," she said. She grew up both on and off the reservation and was fortunate to travel around the United States. Through this experience, she gained an appreciation of different types of people, cultures, and the qualities from the other parts of our country. Mitán stated, "When it comes to my culture in particular, I think the only thing that I could say in relation to the pandemic would be having respect or knowing how to work within and around the tribal perspective when it came to running the school, public health, and politics throughout the pandemic."

Mitán would like to leave a legacy of a significant transformation within this school district. She would love to see this district run with efficiency and see resiliency in her staff, students, families, and the community. She would like to be able to say, "Look how far we have come and look how better we are for it. We had to be flexible when it wasn't comfortable being flexible." She would like to make it a common practice in her district to turn the uncertain situation into strengths. Part of building those strengths would be growing future teacher leaders and having both experienced teachers come into leadership roles as well as the less experienced. Mitán stated, those "who [have] been trained in how to be more innovative with technology...that has opened up a huge door for our younger teachers' leadership to really dig in and shine...to have a voice at the table."

Mitán's goal was to have a Blue Ribbon school one day. She believed that quality teaching was what will turn her school district around. Mitán is a hometown girl that has come

full circle and believed she was ready to give back to her community through her capacity as a school leader.

Findings

This multiple case study research generated data from both interviews and journal prompts. The information from interviews and journal entries led to the case descriptions and provided data for analysis. Through the data from these interviews and journal entries, I got a sense of the self-efficacy beliefs of these Native American women superintendents and how these beliefs played a role in how they approached leading through the Covid 19 pandemic.

The data analysis provided evidence of the following five categories which are the study's self-efficacy and Indigenous culture themes: *Past Experiences, Modeling, Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources, Emotional State, and Indigenous Culture*. Table 1 provides an overview of how many times a theme was identified in each of the five different sections corresponding with the five research questions. The *Emotional States* theme and *Feedback or Encouragement from Trusted Sources* theme were coded at the highest frequency. The *Modeling from Others* theme was at the lowest frequency with all three participants.

Table 1

Coding by Self-efficacy Framework

Native American Women Superintendents	Past Experiences	Modeling from Others	Feedback or Encouragement from Trusted Sources	Emotional States	Indigenous Culture Impact
Mitan	26 Times	3 Times	24 Times	54 Times	10 Times
Winona	13 Times	14 Times	41 Times	58 Times	30 Times
Cunwe	15 Times	2 Times	19 Times	39 Times	15 Times
Average	18 Times	6.3 Times	28 Times	50 Times	18.3 Times

Table 2 shows how the Native American women superintendents rated their confidence levels for each of the five journal prompts with the rating scale of 1 - "I cannot", to 10 - "I can". Prompt 3 was, "I was confident in my ability to keep our district's vision during the Covid 19 pandemic." Mitan, with two years of experience, had rated 8's for each prompt. Winona and Cunwe, with ten or more years of experience, rated the different prompts from 3 up to 10. All three participants had the highest ratings with Prompt 4 and 5, which was, "As a leader, my Native American culture has influenced my leadership role during the pandemic;" and "As a leader, I can affirm my beliefs and values through my actions during Covid 19 pandemic." Mitan rated all her journal prompts as 8 with only two years of superintendent experience.

Table 2

Self-efficacy Journal Prompt Ratings

Participant	Mitan	Winona	Cunwe	Average Score
1. I knew who could help me.	8	10	8	8.6
2. My past experiences helped me lead.	8	10	8	8.6
3. I was confident in my ability to lead.	8	6	3	5.6
4. My actions affirmed my beliefs.	8	10	10	9.3
5. My Native American culture influenced my leadership.	8	10	10	9.3

Table 3 shows the sequence of the coding from the main topics of Leadership Self-Efficacy and Indigenous Culture to the next level of the next level of themes that emerged from the data and then the lowest level includes the subthemes. The table shows the relationships

between Bandura's theory, the themes, and the subthemes. The self-efficacy subthemes frequented at the highest rate in the research were: *Overcome, Collaboration, She Was There to Help, It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent, and Taking Care of my Tiospaye.*

Table 3

The Sequencing of Coding

Themes	Past Experiences	Modeling from Others	Emotional States	Feedback from Trusted Sources	Indigenous Culture's Impact
Sub Themes	*It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent *Resourceful and Resilient *Human Oriented	*Top-notch Structures and Resources *She Was There to Help Me	*Overcome *Servant Leadership * Faith and Confidence in My Abilities and My Teams	*Collaboration *Feels Like it's Validation * Well-Seasoned Professional * Resourceful and Resilient * We Got Things Done	*Resilience and Perseverance *Taking Care of My Tiospaye

Self-efficacy can be particularly salient in a crisis as a person's overall estimate of their ability to achieve requisite performance in achievement situations (Ross & Gray, 2006). Bandura (1997) found that self-efficacy influenced several forms of performance, such as decision-making, organizational functioning, and stress tolerance.

Theme 1: Past/Prior Experiences

Superintendents in the study relied on prior performance experiences during the Covid 19 pandemic. The *Past/Prior Experiences* theme was identified 54 times among the three participants. The information from data found that past experiences helped these participants

build their confidence. The subthemes under *Past/Prior Experiences* that all participants shared were: *It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent*, *Resourceful and Resilient*, and *Human Oriented*. *It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent* subtheme was identified 26 times, more than the other two subthemes. The information from the data found that women superintendent's past experiences helped build their confidence for leading through the pandemic.

It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent

All three participants had prior experiences that helped them lead through the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan stated, "These prior working experiences provided me with the confidence, tools, and resourcefulness to be as successful as possible, no matter the parameters provided throughout the pandemic." "I think what helped me, really helped me, was having that foundation of being a classroom teacher, and understanding the frustrations that our teachers were facing with the pandemic." Cunwe explained, "In the superintendency, every day is different, so that helps you when you have something like the pandemic, or anything like that because you've already used to change"

Resourceful and Resilient

All three participants believed their prior experiences built their confidence to lead during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan stated, "Instead of focusing on what I can't control, you've got to focus on how do I make this work...that was something that I learned from most of my experiences." Winona said, "I have been an administrator for 10 years, and by then I had 20 years of teaching under my belt, so my confidence level in myself and my staff was in a good place." Cunwe said, "The toughest thing, no matter if it's the pandemic or not, is the political realm of leadership in general." Cunwe mentioned that she had worked with some school boards that "had her back," and some that were not as supportive. Her experiences working with both

kinds of school boards helped her move forward through the pandemic when the political realm got heated.

Human Oriented

All three participants had past experiences that helped them build deeper relationships with staff and students during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan stated, "I was fortunate enough to spend my twenties traveling the United States...gaining an appreciation of different types of people, different cultures...an experience I hold really close to my heart and rely on and pull from those learnings every day." Winona said, "I was a classroom teacher for 20 years...I was the teacher of the year and knowing that I have all that under my belt, telling teachers, it's important for you to have a relationship with your students." Cunwe stated, "I guess that wasn't really an accomplishment, but it helped our district move forward, to where people were going to be treated with respect."

Theme 2: Modeling from Others

Superintendents in this study emulated from the modeling of others during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic. Bandura (1997) stated that vicarious experiences are when an individual observes another successfully perform a given task. The *Modeling from Others* theme was identified 19 times among the three participants. The subthemes under *Modeling from Others* that all participants shared are: *Top-Notch Structures and Resources* and *She Was There to Help Me*. *Modeling from Others* theme was the least identified section in the study. *She Was There to Help* subtheme was identified 15 times. All three participants found a person or a small team they watched, learned, and modeled after during the pandemic.

Top-Notch Structures and Resources

The three participants received mentoring from either an organization, a department, or a program during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan commented, "I think the state department has provided for schools, they have a top-notch department...they provided high quality ...structure for the school district." Winona stated, "I belong to the educational leaders' association." Winona told how this organization of leaders was supportive of her during the pandemic. Cunwe said, "They had provided us suggestions." She was talking about the state department guidance during the Covid 19 pandemic.

She Was There to Help Me

All three participants looked for guidance from either a mentor, a trusted person, or a small group of people during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona told about the director of a School Leaders Organization who supported her during the pandemic. She said, "Mandates were coming down from the state, you know, and so much paperwork that we had to submit...so she was very helpful with that." Cunwe spoke, "You have to reach out and have people help you." This superintendent, after reflecting on what she learned from leading through a pandemic, said she needed to have people help guide her through a time when everyone was in the same boat. It was an all-new experience for everyone. Mitan stated, "I worked under the direction of a seasoned and experienced superintendent, in addition to working closely with a network of colleagues, and the state department."

Theme 3: Emotional State

Native American women superintendents described their emotional states during the Covid 19 pandemic. Emotional state is how the person is feeling mentally, and if they can be successful or not. Emotional state is the intensity of a significant emotional reaction and how the

emotion is perceived and interpreted (Bandura,1997). The *Emotional States* theme as identified 151 times among the three participants. The subthemes under *Emotional State* are: *Overcome*, *Servant Leadership*, *Faith and Confidence in My Abilities*, and *My Team*.

The *Emotional State* theme was the most frequent of all themes with the *Overcome* subtheme identified 77 times. All three participants came up against obstacles but mentally chose to move forward. All three participants used their leadership to serve staff and students by keeping them safe, educating, and finding financial support for staff. All three participants received feedback from staff that gave them a feeling of validation as a superintendent.

Overcome

All three participants struggled against obstacles but mentally moved their district through the Covid 19 pandemic. "The biggest stressor would have been uncertainty... you're faced with an uncertain situation, and you've got an uncertain variable that is thrust at you on a day-to-day basis...you put on your game face and remain calm and work through it," stated Mitan. Cunwe said, "So an obstacle, of course, is, I guess, the threat of losing their family members...so they were scared...they were scared to come to work...the obstacle was the fear factor... but we still provided services for our kids." "Trying to maneuver through all those changes and then trying to get them into your policy, that was a huge stressor...I think what helped was a collaboration with my local administrative and statewide team," stated Winona.

Servant Leadership

All three participants used their leadership to serve their staff and students during the Covid 19 pandemic. "I think safety was the first and foremost stress, making sure any decision we made wasn't going to be a detriment to somebody's health or safety...however, our belief of keeping the main thing is a guiding factor in decisions as well," stated Winona. Her priority was

educating students to the best of her ability. Cunwe said, "We had more empathy towards any staff that has those issues [sick with Covid] we had hazard pay, we did a lot of bonus pay...we did a lot for our staff to help them through." Mitan said, "If I can build up the capacity of others, then that is the greatest thing you can do as a leader...you know, through this pandemic, that's really what it's been all about."

Faith and Confidence in My Abilities and My Team

All three superintendents' staff members gave feedback that helped them feel validated in their position during the Covid 19 pandemic. Cunwe stated, "Our staff appreciated how we provided that leadership during the pandemic." Winona said, "I think just knowing that the staff, you know, feel like they have a leader they can trust and depend on to me, that's worth a lot." Mitan said, "Getting cards from teachers...people come into my office, thanking me... it's just completely unsolicited, and gosh, it's kind of one of the best things ever."

Theme 4: Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources

Superintendents in this study were given feedback and encouragement from trusted sources during a crisis such as the Covid 19 pandemic. Verbal persuasion or feedback is the source of efficacy information by which an individual believes they can complete tasks in a specific domain through verbal suggestions (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The theme of *Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources* was identified 84 times among the three participants. The subthemes for this theme were: *Collaboration*, *Feels Like It's Validation*, *Well-Seasoned Professional*, *Resourceful and Resilient*, and *We Got Things Done*.

Collaboration subtheme was identified 24 times. *Well-Seasoned Professional* subtheme was identified 22 times which took second place in this section. *Feedback/Encouragement from Others* theme placed top second in the highest frequency of themes. All three participants

received feedback from outside entities, and all three participants received feedback from either staff, parents, school board, or community. All three participants received feedback from professional individuals outside their school districts. All three participants received challenging feedback from the school board and school community and continued to move forward. All three participants received feedback from a variety of people about their leadership.

Collaboration

All three participants received valuable feedback from outside entities during the Covid 19 pandemic. "The state department had scenarios that they provided for us, and we used the tribal resources they put out," Cunwe stated. Mitan said, "I think the state department had provided resources for schools... high-quality structure and resources for the school district." "More guidance from the state department was a guiding force through the remainder of 2021 and now this year," stated Winona.

Feels Like It's Validation

All three participants received feedback and encouragement from staff, parents, school board, or community during the Covid 19 pandemic. Cunwe commented, "You can never please everyone, but there is a lot of parents out there that thanked me for the safety offered, our staff for being appreciative of how we provided that leadership" (12:59). Winona stated, "I've received feedback from my staff as well as my board now, and it validates...I know I'm working hard, and I know what I'm doing, but it really helps to have others recognize that as well." Winona went on to say, "I think what, for me, what validates that even more, or what holds more weight is hearing that feedback from staff." Mitan said, "I've got a wall of thank you cards, and I get people coming into my office, thanking me for bringing a breath of fresh air, you know you're doing great."

Well-Seasoned Professional

All three participants received feedback from professional individuals outside their school districts during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan said, "I jumped at the opportunity to join a mentorship program...I relied on mentorship with seeking out resources...I relied on mentorship opportunities and mentors in the field." Cunwe stated, "You can't be an island to yourself; you have to reach out and have people help you." "I liked the fact that she did weekly calls so we could say, I need help on this, and not to be afraid to ask for help, because, like I said, everybody's in the same boat," mentioned Winona.

Resourceful and Resilient

All three participants received feedback from their school board or community, but they kept moving forward during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona stated, "I tried to convey that to my board, and they just did not see...it was really extremely hard." Winona was talking here about how her school board would not hire the principal position, and she was left doing both superintendent and principal jobs. "When it comes to what a system can handle, or what the system can bear, being intuitive in practice and listening is a super strength," Mitan said. She talked about knowing the balance with people in how much change they can handle and when she needs to back off. Cunwe stated, "We did a survey before school started, and we knew which direction we were going to go, but the board was adamant that we did not have school and that we do remote." She talked about the parents being ready to send their kids back to school, but the school board did not allow that, so she had to change direction with her staff to prepare for remote schooling.

We Got Things Done

All three participants received feedback either from the school board, staff, students, parents, or community on how these superintendents did their job during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona commented, "My beliefs and values are affirmed daily due to strong relationship building with staff and the school board." Cunwe stated, "Most of the board was really kind of proud of the things that we got done during Covid...parents and students were thankful for the things we could provide." Mitan mentioned, "You really have to have a rapport with the community." This superintendent talked about the different views from her community if school should be closed or open.

Theme 5: Indigenous Culture's Impact

The Indigenous culture and beliefs of these superintendents played a part in their decision-making during the Covid 19 pandemic. Indigenous culture's impact is the knowledge and understanding these Native American women have of their personal histories, attitudes, and perceptions that informed their priorities, decision-making, and leadership. *Indigenous Culture's Impact* theme was identified 55 times among the three participants. The subthemes under the *Indigenous Culture's Impact* theme are: *Taking Care of My Tiospaye* subtheme and *Resilience and Perseverance* subtheme. *Taking Care of My Tiospaye* subtheme was identified 42 times. All three participants believed they needed to care for their staff and students during the Covid 19 pandemic. All three participants also felt a need to help build resiliency in their staff and students.

Taking Care of My Tiospaye

All three participants believed they needed to care for their staff, students, and families during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan said, "If I can build up the capacity of others, then that is

the greatest thing you can do as a leader, you know, through this pandemic, that is what it has been all about.” Winona stated, “You know, that is part of your belief, looking out for your people, your tiospaye, making sure everyone is taken care of.” Cunwe said, “I guess my legacy is that I care about the kids...I want to do everything I can to ensure that we provide all that they need to be successful in life.”

Resiliency and Perseverance

All three participants believed they could build resiliency in their staff and students by what they bring to the position of superintendent. Winona stated, “My Native American culture has and continues to influence my leadership role as the superintendent of this district with strong familial connections and relationships which are vital to my leadership.” This participant was a firm believer in relationships that build people up, and that is what she believed she brought to the position. Mitan said, “Seeing that a notable transformation within the system, that goes down to the efficiency of how things are run to the resiliency of our staff and our students and our families or community.” This superintendent also added, “To provide a model which others can aspire to within my community.” Cunwe mentioned, “I’m a strong proponent in our Native American culture, and our district has made huge strides in ensuring that our language, history, and culture are utilized across the district.” She went on to say, “During the pandemic, I continued to advocate for our Native children and want them all to develop that self-identity.”

Conclusion

My findings indicate that self-efficacy and Indigenous culture plays a part in these Native American women's superintendent's leadership. The findings of this study suggests that all three participants altered their thinking to overcome their obstacles and challenges and felt validated after receiving positive feedback from staff and the school board. These three women found

success from their previous experiences and were able to feel confident in their leadership roles. It was found that these three women did not have single mentor figure but gathered information from many people and many sources through the Covid 19 pandemic. The Indigenous culture of these women prompted them to take care of and build the resiliency of their school community. I assert that this multiple case study provided essential insights into understanding leadership from these three Native American women's perceptions within the findings.

NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS' SELF-EFFICACY BELIEFS DURING THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC

ABSTRACT

This multiple case study focused on three Native American women superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs and the impact of the Indigenous culture on their decision-making as they led their school districts through the Covid 19 pandemic. The qualitative research design for the study relied on data gathered from interviews and written journal responses. All participants had at least two years of superintendent experience in public school districts during the pandemic. The findings suggest that all three participants persevered to overcome their obstacles and challenges, felt validated by positive feedback, gathered information from many sources, and relied on previous experiences to lead through the pandemic. Also, these women felt a need to serve their districts. Understanding the self-efficacy beliefs of these three women shows it is a time to call for social initiatives that build self-efficacy to influence the conditions that shape all superintendents' lives and those of future generations.

Introduction

School leadership has faced a new challenge since the arrival of the Covid 19 pandemic, especially for Native American women superintendents who, according to Lajimodiere (2011), were already dealing with poverty, gender, and racial disparity within their school districts. Native American women superintendents became community leaders during the pandemic as they took on a caretaker role. They felt it was their duty to ensure their district community was fed and had the resources necessary to comply with the *stay-at-home* orders. As the pandemic spread across the United States, Native American women superintendents in the upper Midwest

faced the challenges of the pandemic alongside all the typical superintendent responsibilities (OCR, 2021).

In March 2020, most school buildings in the United States were closed due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Schools went from in-person instruction to remote learning. Public and private schools on Native American reservations also closed their school buildings, while some tribes closed their borders, not allowing entrance onto reservation lands. Superintendents serving in Native American public schools on or near reservations had to create safety plans for all stakeholders while developing effective ways to educate students using internet access to deliver instruction. Long before the pandemic, Native American reservations experienced areas of considerable poverty, including availability issues with food and other resources. During the pandemic, food and internet access for families with students became a priority for school superintendents around the country (Kinsey et al., 2020) as schools were ordered closed, and teachers were instructed on how to deliver instruction to students remotely. Many Midwestern schools on reservation lands continued remote instruction through the 2020-2021 school year.

The increased challenges brought on by COVID 19 pandemic forced heightened expectations on school leaders. These events required more crisis management than simply facilitating an adequate response (Boin et al., 2017). Boin et al. (2017) claimed that leadership during a crisis requires urgent problem solving and decision making even when the reasons or circumstances for the crisis are unknown. Covid 19 put superintendents into situations that did not have clear-cut guidelines and procedures. However, for schools to carry on during this time, school leaders had to function with maximize efficiency and achieve organizational goals. Leadership in schools is not a position but a disposition for taking action (ICLE, 2012). The importance of a leader becomes even more evident when a crisis hits an organization and the

efficiency of the school district to achieve organizational goals is tested. The Education, Consulting, Research and Analytics Group (2016) found that today's superintendent must be a visionary leader with forethought and communication skills that guide a school district toward achieving shared goals in a culture where beliefs, assumptions, and expectations are diverse and divergent. These events require effective communications to school board members, students, parents, staff, and the community with varying needs, views, and experiences.

Leadership in Crisis Times

Leadership in the United States' educational system stands in the spotlight, primarily because of growing responsibilities for keeping their staff and students safe while still making sure students are learning during the Covid 19 pandemic. School leaders had no guidebooks as they made decisions to move forward during the start of the pandemic (Anderson, 2020). In March 2020, as the pandemic spread, schools across the United States moved to online or remote instruction within a week. While many households had internet connections to support online instruction, Darling-Hammond (2020) reported that 15 percent of U.S. households and 35 percent of low-income households with school-age children did not have a high-speed internet connection at the start of the pandemic (p. 6). In April, the scarcity of internet connectivity was a significant problem for two-thirds of the school leaders in high-poverty districts (Darling-Hammond, 2020, p. 6). The lack of connectivity caused a lot of stress, especially in school districts that lacked digital infrastructure when the decision to pivot to remote teaching occurred (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020).

Women Superintendents

During the early days of the pandemic, superintendents all dealt with unforeseen issues and mounting concerns from stakeholders. Women superintendents also faced the same

challenges brought on by the pandemic on top of what Bernal et al. (2017) describes as challenges just achieving top leadership positions, especially in predominantly male roles. As of 2020, the percentage of female superintendents increased slightly in the past decade, from 24.1 percent in 2010 to 26.68 percent (Modan, 2020, para. 2). While women are seemingly trying to conquer uphill battles where few have been before, principal leadership remains comparatively much more gender-equal, with women holding most principal positions during the 2015-16 school year (Modan, 2020, para. 6). The number of superintendents of color for both genders is slowly increasing from 6 percent in 2010 up to 8.6% in 2020. Of the 8.6% of superintendents of color, less than half are women (Modan, 2020, p. 3). Women continue to hold most of the jobs in education, with 76% of teachers, 52% of principals, 78% being central-office employees, and 26.68% of superintendents in 2020 were women (AASA, 2021, p. 4). The percentage of women who have been serving as superintendents is in stark contrast to the percentage of women in the teaching ranks.

Reasons for the gender differences in superintendent positions have been investigated. Wang et al. (2013) disclosed that women tend to have lower self-efficacy than men in male-dominated careers. According to Shaw and Barbuti (2010), individuals who lack expectations for success in a career are less likely to initiate effective choices to move into a superintendent position. Furthermore, women hired as superintendents are more likely to be employed in small school districts than men (Robinson et al., 2017). Robinson et al.'s (2017) study also showed that women were more likely to become superintendents in districts with more significant numbers of homeless students and have a larger number of students with disabilities than men. Robinson et al. (2017) found that women of color are more likely than white women to lead a majority of minority student-filled districts. In general, women are more likely than men to lead districts

with many people of color in the district. Women superintendents are challenged to be hired into a superintendent position. Still, the challenge goes deeper into the perception of how stakeholders view the effectiveness of a woman leader compared to a man leader.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender roles have different implications for men and women concerning the way people expect them to behave and how they can succeed as leaders (Triana et al., 2017). Robinson et al. (2017) found that school boards show hiring discrepancies between hiring men and women for superintendent positions. While men are viewed as effective managers, women school leaders are thought to be instructional leaders, communal, and collaborative (Robinson et al., 2017). According to Sampson and Gresham (2017), women superintendents reflecting on the reasons they were hired perceived it to be based on their expertise in curriculum and instruction, while male superintendents believed they were hired because of personal managerial characteristics.

Gender is also one of the most critical factors affecting self-efficacy because of social expectations and roles. Gender stereotypes affect leadership self-efficacy, as masculine characteristics discourage women's perceived leadership ability (Huszczko & Endres, 2017). This perception is directly related to gender-specific behaviors. For females, these gender-specific behaviors tend to be accommodating and emotional, while males are perceived to be self-confident and aggressive. For a female leader to be perceived as effective, both sensitivity and strength are expected. In comparison, masculine leadership includes risk-taking, task-oriented, and agentic behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Leadership is a desired personality trait and considered a masculine characteristic, even though the need for both stereotypical female characteristics (e.g., interpersonal and communal) and male characteristics (e.g., assertiveness) create successful leadership (Skinner, 2014).

Native American Women Leaders

For Native American women superintendents, the challenges are unique because most Native Americans have their roots in their Indigenous culture and traditions and walk in the Native world and the dominant culture (Barkdull, 2009). Barkdull (2009) believed that Native American women face gender and minority inequities. According to Modan (2020), the percentage of people of color in superintendent jobs is lopsided compared to the demographics of the students they serve and the teachers they oversee, with fewer than 9% of survey respondents identifying as people of color (p. 3). Among Black, Latino, Asian, and Native American superintendents, approximately 42% are women (Modan, 2020, p. 3). The numbers of women superintendents of color are significantly smaller, with only 2% identifying as American Indian or Alaska Native (Healy, 2019, p. 9).

Wolf (2015) stated that Native American leaders possess qualities, including care and compassion for others, self-awareness, and importance placed on relationships and connections with others. Wolf (2015) also added that Native leaders are visionaries as they see the big picture for the entire community. "Native leadership is founded on spiritual values, community, and shared responsibility...in contrast to those in Western leadership models, which are based on authoritative and hierarchical relationships" (Metoyer, 2010, p.1).

In traditional Indigenous societies, women play different roles, and historically it was common for Indigenous women to hold political, spiritual, and economic power (Lajimodiere, 2011). Triana et al. (2017) found that when women work in a place where women lead, they obtain the highest levels of organizational commitment by staff (2017). Most Native tribes were a matrilineal society and have illustrated the importance of gender roles and kinship systems through their creation stories and religious beliefs (Vandever, 2003). Northouse (2016) stated

that maternalistic leaders are motherly toward their followers and regard the organization as a family. The traditional Native American tribal matrilineal structure and beliefs conflict with the Western patriarchal system in current schools, which presents additional challenges for Native American women superintendents (Barkdull, 2009). In matrilineal sociality, women were involved in the decision-making process for the greater good of the people (Skyhawk, 2018).

Traditional Native American people judge themselves and their actions by how the efforts benefit their community and its continued peaceful functioning (Portman & Garrett, 2005). A Native leader's passion and generosity can lead to social action, where individuals with unique skills can earn a living and meet the community goals (Genham & Murakami-Ramalho, 2010). Leadership from a Native American perspective is one of service to the betterment of the community (Portman & Garrett, 2005). According to Rodriguez (2019), Indigenous women superintendents demonstrate determination and endure whatever ethical challenges the position presents and have developed a strong sense of self-efficacy as they have ascended a multifaceted educational career ladder. These strengths contribute positively to a school culture.

Challenges for Native American Women School Leaders

Native American women in education have had to endure a history of neglect, limited opportunities, difficulties in finding stability and support, and struggles discovering their identities and, ultimately, their role in education (Strong, 1998). Many older generational Native Americans experienced boarding schools. It is a well-documented historical fact that the United States government made policies that displaced Native Americans from their native lands and sent Native children to boarding schools (Brown, 1991). These Native American children were taken from their homes, sometimes forcibly to be transferred unwillingly to boarding schools far from their families. Most Native Americans left these boarding schools torn between two

cultures. They were not accepted into the White society and were punished for speaking or taking part in their Native ceremonies, which caused cultural confusion (Reyhner, 2002). The government also relocated families to different parts of the country, which may have contributed to Native Americans, as a culture, becoming skeptical of governmental intervention (Brown, 1991). These incidences led many Native Americans to forsake their native culture to assimilate white culture. According to Reyhner (2002), poverty and other social conditions have plagued Native Americans through these systemic racial practices. Nevertheless, Native Americans have fought for political and economic equality and continue working on regaining and sustaining their Native languages and traditions that historically were suppressed (Reyhner, 2002).

Native American women superintendents have had to live in two worlds: their Indigenous world and the global society. Portman and Garrett (2005) wrote that generosity, in a Native American worldview, is considered a sign of wisdom and humility, and the idea of seeking group harmony through cooperation and sharing takes precedence over all else. Native American women leaders have adopted dual identities and acquired skills that are substantially different from the skills cultivated by the tribal cultures in which they grew up (Mueller, 1998). Shotton (2018), in her study on Indigenous students, found that women saw themselves and their communities inaccurately reflected or not reflected at all in academic research and were motivated by a need to fill that significant gap and earn their doctorate degrees. According to Shotton (2018), Native American women recognize the importance of earning advanced degrees, not viewed in terms of their success but more in terms of what it means for their communities with significant responsibility to their families, the tribes, their communities, and other Native women (Minthorn & Shotton, 2019; Shotton, 2018).

One of the implications of not obtaining adequate levels of education for Native Americans is the inability to reduce the poverty rate, which is significantly higher among the Native American population at 27%, above the national average of 15% (NCAI, 2020, p. 6). Studies have indicated that Native American students, on average, experience less academic success than students of other ethnicities (NAEP, 2019; Stone & Gridley, 1991) and subsequent higher dropout rates (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2020). The higher-than-expected dropout rate may explain why Native Americans decide not to continue in activities in which they are not successful, something postulated by Bandura (1977, 1997). According to Reyhner (2002), while poverty and other social conditions have inundated Native Americans through systemic racial practices, they continue to fight for political and economic equality and work on regaining and sustaining their Native languages and traditions that historically were suppressed (Reyhner, 2002). By recovering the past through a strong sense of identity and culturally relevant education, Native Americans have reclaimed their self-worth (Dhillon, 2019). This is especially true for the Native American women leaders who view leadership as a position of responsibility for their people (Portman & Garrett, 2005). This leadership view became clear as three Native American women superintendents shared their stories about the increased challenges brought on by COVID 19.

Research Design and Methodology

Three Midwestern Native American women superintendents took part in the study. All three women served as public school superintendents from different size school districts with student populations ranging from 200 to 2000 students. The women's ages ranged between 44 to 55 years old, with superintendent experience between two to thirteen years. At the time of the study, all participants worked in districts that included high percentages of Native American

students as well as high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. The women superintendents were interviewed about their experiences leading their school districts during the Covid 19 pandemic. The central question that guided this study focused on the similarity of leadership self-efficacy beliefs that influenced three Native American women superintendents' behaviors during the pandemic.

Data collected came from the participants' responses from interview questions and written responses from a self-efficacy perception journal. The self-efficacy perception journal entries provided participants with opportunities to describe in their own words what made it difficult for them to perform the required activities during the pandemic. Through the examples provided by Bandura (2006), five items portraying different task demands were developed, and the women superintendents were asked to rate the strength of their belief in their ability to execute the requisite activities. The women recorded the power of their efficacy beliefs on a 10-point scale with 1-unit intervals ranging from 0-cannot do; through intermediate degrees of assurance, 5-moderately certain can do; to complete confidence, 10-highly confident/can do.

The process of open coding was employed as data was collected. The data were read, taken apart, and then put back together, relying on Bandura's (2006) self-efficacy leadership beliefs and Indigenous culture as a lens to view the data. Data was reviewed several times and coded with relationships established, which portrayed the "interrelationship of causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions and consequences" (Creswell & Poth, 2008, p. 434). The final phase of data analysis included creating a detailed description of each case. The data analysis provided evidence of the following five categories which are the study's self-efficacy and Indigenous culture themes: *Past Experiences, Modeling, Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources, Emotional State, and Indigenous Culture.*

Findings

This qualitative multiple case study was intended to develop an in-depth understanding of three Native American women superintendents' perceived leadership beliefs as they led their public-school districts during the days of the Covid 19 pandemic. Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory provided a framework to understand how Native American women superintendents' beliefs impacted their experiences during the recent crisis. The self-efficacy theory is a particular set of beliefs that determine how well one can execute a plan of action in prospective situations. In other words, self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to succeed in a particular situation. The four aspects of self-efficacy theory include relying on prior experiences, emulating role models, using feedback from trusted individuals, and developing awareness of emotional states (Bandura, 1977) helped to understand the leaders' stories.

Maddux and Barnes (1989) described leadership self-efficacy as the belief that one has the capabilities and resources to perform a specific task, which in this case is leading a district during a pandemic. Significant academic, career, and life benefits, such as leadership aspirations, work performance, and the ability to cope and overcome challenging situations, are linked with leadership self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has also been related to managing and overcoming stereotypes, as with these Native American women superintendents being Native and being women (Day et al., 2009; Hannah et al., 2008; Machida & Schaubroeck, 2011). An understanding of how their self-efficacy beliefs influenced their decision making, as well as understanding what part of their culture impacted their actions and decision making was the focus of this study

The first theme is *Past Experiences*. Bandura (1998) described *past experiences* as successful experiences and personal accomplishments that can boost a person's self-efficacy.

When an individual is successful at a task or experiences a sense of personal accomplishment, they will likely believe they can succeed at the task again in the future (Bandura, 1998).

Under the *Past Experiences* theme were three subthemes that developed from these women's voices. The first subtheme was *Resourceful and Resilient* subtheme. These women superintendents found success from their previous experiences and were able to feel confident in their leadership roles. Mitan stated, "These prior experiences provided me with the confidence, tools, and resourcefulness to be as successful as possible, no matter the parameters provided throughout the pandemic." All three participants believed their prior experiences built their confidence to lead during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona said, "I have been an administrator for ten years, and by then, I had 20 years of teaching under my belt, so my confidence level in myself and my staff was in a good place."

The next subtheme of *It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent* came from Cunwe, "So a pandemic isn't any different...I never really looked at it as a pandemic...I looked at it as this is my job and every day is different as a superintendent." All three participants had prior experiences that helped them lead through the Covid 19 pandemic. Cunwe explained, "In the superintendency, every day is different, so that helps you when you have something like the pandemic or anything like that because you've already used to change."

The last subtheme was *Human Oriented*. All three participants had past experiences that helped them build deeper relationships with staff and students during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan stated, "I was fortunate enough to spend my twenties traveling the United States...gaining an appreciation of different types of people, different cultures...an experience I hold really close to my heart and rely on and pull from those learnings every day." Winona said, "I was a

classroom teacher for 20 years...I was the teacher of the year and knowing that I have all that under my belt, telling teachers, it's important for you to have a relationship with your students.”

The second theme is *Modeling from Others*. In Bandura's (1998) self-efficacy theory, he calls *modeling* a vicarious experience which is observing others performing specific tasks successfully. *Modeling from Others* theme had the least number of identified codes, with little data supporting this part of Bandura's (1998) self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1977, 1997) identified three main factors that create good role models: age and expertness, the similarity between models and observers, and the difficulty of performing tasks. Two subthemes emerged: *Top-Notch Structures and Resources* and *She Was There to Help Me*.

Under the first subtheme of *Top-Notch Structures and Resources*, it was found that the three participants received mentoring from either an organization, a department, or a program during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan commented, "I think the state department has provided for schools, they have a top-notch department...they provided high quality ...structure for the school district." Winona stated, "I belong to the educational leaders' association." Winona told how this organization of leaders was supportive of her during the pandemic. Cunwe said, "They had provided us suggestions." She was talking about the state department guidance during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Under the second subtheme, *She Was There to Help Me*, and it was found that all three participants looked for guidance from either a mentor, a trusted person, or a small group of people during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona told about the director of a School Leaders Organization who supported her during the pandemic. She said, "Mandates were coming down from the state, you know, and so much paperwork that we had to submit...so she was very helpful with that." Cunwe spoke, "You have to reach out and have people help you." After

reflecting on what she learned from leading through a pandemic, this superintendent said she needed to have people help guide her through a time when everyone was in the same boat. It was an all-new experience for everyone.

The third theme is *Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources* Bandura (1998) defined *feedback* as verbal persuasion, which is understood as an individual being persuaded of capabilities to perform certain behaviors or activities. Bandura also believed that it is easier for a person to gain efficacy if the feedback is conveyed through a person they trust. Under *Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted Sources* theme were five subthemes.

Collaboration subtheme emerged from the data through these women's voices. All three participants received valuable feedback from outside entities during the Covid 19 pandemic. All three women voiced how their state department provided guidance and resources. Mitan said, "I think the state department had provided resources for schools... high-quality structure and resources for the school district."

Feels Like It's Validation subtheme was identified from the data. All three participants received feedback and encouragement from staff, parents, school board, or the community during the Covid 19 pandemic. Cunwe commented, "You can never please everyone, but there are a lot of parents out there that thanked me for the safety offered, our staff for being appreciative of how we provided that leadership." Winona stated, "I've received feedback from my staff as well as my board now, and it validates...I know I'm working hard, and I know what I'm doing, but it really helps to have others recognize that as well." Mitan said, "I've got a wall of thank you cards, and I get people coming into my office, thanking me for bringing a breath of fresh air; you know you're doing great."

The third subtheme was *Well-Seasoned Professional*. All three participants received feedback from professional individuals outside their school districts during the Covid 19 pandemic. Mitan said, "I jumped at the opportunity to join a mentorship program...I relied on mentorship with seeking out resources...I relied on mentorship opportunities and mentors in the field." Cunwe stated, "You can't be an island to yourself; you have to reach out and have people help you." "I liked the fact that she did weekly calls so we could say, I need help on this, and not to be afraid to ask for help, because, like I said, everybody's in the same boat," mentioned Winona.

The fourth subtheme was *Resourceful and Resilient*. All three participants received feedback from their school board or community and kept moving forward during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona school board would not hire for the open principal position, and she was left doing both superintendent and principal jobs. Mitan talked about the feedback she received from her stakeholders, letting her know how much change they can handle and when she needs to back off. Cunwe stated, "We did a survey before school started, and we knew which direction we were going to go, but the board was adamant that we did not have school and that we do remote." She talked about the parents being ready to send their kids back to school, but the school board did not allow that, so she had to change direction with her staff to prepare for remote schooling.

We Got Things Done subtheme was the fifth subtheme under *Feedback From Trust Sources* theme. All three participants received feedback either from the school board, staff, students, parents, or community on how these superintendents did their job during the Covid 19 pandemic. Winona commented, "My beliefs and values are affirmed daily due to strong relationship building with staff and the school board." Cunwe stated, "Most of the board was

really kind of proud of the things that we got done during Covid...parents and students were thankful for the things we could provide." Mitan mentioned, "You really have to have a rapport with the community." This superintendent talked about the different views from her community if school should be closed or open.

The fourth theme is *Emotional State*. Emotional state as defined by Bandura (1998) is the amount of emotional arousal or anxiety a person feels about performing tasks. When a person experiences negative thoughts and fears about their capabilities, these affective reactions can lower self-efficacy. One way to raise self-efficacy is to improve emotional well-being and reduce negative *emotional states*. Individuals have the capacity to alter their thoughts and feelings so that enhanced self-efficacy can influence their *emotional state* (Bandura, 1986).

Emotional state had the highest frequency of codes, with three subthemes emerging from the data. *Overcome Subtheme* was the first subtheme to be identified. All three participants struggled against obstacles but mentally moved their district through the Covid 19 pandemic. "The biggest stressor would have been uncertainty... you're faced with an uncertain situation, and you've got an uncertain variable that is thrust at you on a day-to-day basis...you put on your game face and remain calm and work through it," stated Mitan. Cunwe said, "So an obstacle, of course, is, I guess, the threat of losing their family members...so they were scared...they were scared to come to work...the obstacle was the fear factor... but we still provided services for our kids." "Trying to maneuver through all those changes and then trying to get them into your policy, that was a huge stressor...I think what helped was a collaboration with my local administrative and statewide team," stated Winona.

The second subtheme that emerged was *Servant Leadership*. All three participants used their leadership to serve their staff and students during the Covid 19 pandemic. "I think safety

was the first and foremost stress, making sure any decision we made wasn't going to be a detriment to somebody's health or safety...however, our belief of keeping the main thing is a guiding factor in decisions as well," stated Winona. Her priority was educating students to the best of her ability. Cunwe said, "We had more empathy towards any staff that has those issues [sick with Covid] we had hazard pay, we did a lot of bonus pay...we did a lot for our staff to help them through." Mitan said, "If I can build up the capacity of others, then that is the greatest thing you can do as a leader...you know, through this pandemic, that's really what it's been all about."

Faith and Confidence in My Abilities and My Team Subtheme was the third subtheme to be identified under the *Emotional States theme*. All three superintendents' staff members gave feedback that helped them feel validated in their position during the Covid 19 pandemic. In one way or another, All three women stated that the staff appreciated their leadership during the pandemic. Winona said, "I think just knowing that the staff, you know, feel like they have a leader they can trust and depend on to me, that's worth a lot."

The fifth theme is *Indigenous Culture*. The cultural impact on these Native American women's leadership was evident as the women shared their stories of leading during the pandemic. All three participants led a public school district with a high percentage of Native American students and students in poverty. In the findings, the subtheme: *Taking Care of My Tiospaye* was mentioned numerous times. Winona said, "We would double up on what supplies we would give them... that's part of your belief, looking out for your people, your Tiospaye, making sure everyone is fed, not just going to give one person food and ignore everybody else." Mitan said, "I am fortunate to serve within my home community...the need to live up to and

provide a model which others can aspire to within my community.” Cunwe said, "Parents and students, I think, quite a few of them, we're thankful for the things that we could provide.”

Another subtheme under the *Indigenous Culture theme* was *Resiliency and Perseverance*. All three participants believed they could build resiliency in their staff and students by what they bring to the position of superintendent. Winona stated, "My Native American culture has and continues to influence my leadership role as the superintendent of this district with strong familial connections and relationships which are vital to my leadership.” This participant was a firm believer in relationships that build people up, and that is what she believed she brought to the position. Mitan said, "Seeing that a notable transformation within the system, that goes down to the efficiency of how things are run to the resiliency of our staff and our students and our families or community.” This superintendent also added, "To provide a model which others can aspire to within my community.” Cunwe mentioned, "I'm a strong proponent of our Native American culture, and our district has made huge strides in ensuring that our language, history, and culture are utilized across the district.” She went on to say, "During the pandemic, I continued to advocate for our Native children and want them all to develop that self-identity.”

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to understand three Native American women superintendents perceived self-efficacy beliefs as they led their school district during the Covid 19 pandemic. The findings indicate that self-efficacy and Indigenous culture played a part in these women's superintendent's leadership during the pandemic. These findings show that these Native American women's self-efficacy beliefs came by being validated through feedback, knowing success from previous experiences, finding guides and resources, and knowing they had

conquered much and will continue to conquer through challenges, as well as being sustained through their Indigenous culture.

The findings from this study are relatively consistent with the literature review. Superintendents' self-efficacy beliefs are crucial for managing a school and can be referred to as a type of leadership self-efficacy that one is being confident in their knowledge, skill, and abilities (Hannan et al., 2008). These women superintendents found success from their previous experiences and were able to feel confident in their leadership roles. Cunwe stated, "You're already used to change...so that helps you when you have something like the pandemic." Successful experiences and personal accomplishments can boost a person's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1998).

Superintendents pull from their experiences and their beliefs when difficulties require creative thinking. Unlike most routine decisions, a dilemma is a predicament with no clear solutions, non-existent policy, and no precedent (Hoy & Tarter, 2008). It was found that all three participants stated how they altered their thinking to overcome their obstacles and challenges. Mitan said, "I was able to learn from my prior experience...so I felt comfortable with the roles and responsibilities that entailed [leading through the pandemic]."

It was challenging to find enough Native American women in the public school superintendent position to participate in this study. I believe that the sparseness of the women in the role of superintendent was related to why there were the least amount of codes identified under the *Mentoring* theme. I think this quote from Mitan sums it up. "I'm willing to soak in as much as I can from any resource ... everybody's got something to learn from and offer." As a researcher, I was asking for a particular mentor or model, and I found it wasn't as clear-cut as I thought it would be, as these women learned from all experiences and people they encountered.

Not many Native American women have been in these positions to help other Native women leaders navigate these waters, according to Rodriguez (2019).

Robinson et al. (2017) found that women of color are more likely than white women to lead a majority of minority student-filled districts although, in general, women are more likely than men to lead districts with a large percentage of people of color in the district. I found this to be true among our three Native American women superintendents. All three participants led a public school district with a high percentage of Native American students and students in poverty. I believe these Native American women were influenced by their culture to serve in these districts. According to Portman and Garrett (2005), leadership is viewed as a position of responsibility, of care-taking for people. In my findings, the subtheme: *Tiospaye* reoccurred frequently. Winona mentioned, "We would double up on what supplies we would give them... that's part of your belief, looking out for your people, your Tiospaye, making sure everyone is fed, not just going to give one person food and ignore everybody else." According to McCall (2020), "American Indian leaders focus on the techniques it takes to serve the community" (p. 2). All three women were similar in their beliefs in serving their communities by either feeding, getting resources, or creating resiliency among the people.

Native American women have faced many challenges in which they build self-efficacy: historical trauma, poverty, and cultural identity. Rodriguez (2019) stated that Indigenous women superintendents demonstrate determination and endure whatever ethical challenges the position presents and have developed a strong sense of self-efficacy as they have ascended a multifaceted educational career ladder. These self-efficacy beliefs were seen clearly in these women's statements as they overcame obstacles during the pandemic. Mitan said, "I've become more than ever, resourceful and resilient...that's just my attitude towards life." Cunwe said, "The obstacle

was fear [of catching Covid 19] ...we made sure that we were still providing services for our kids.” Winona said, “Yes, they were challenges, but they were not so big that we could not accomplish what we needed to do.” Moreover, the voices of these women demonstrated that they indeed had many similar self-efficacy beliefs and were able to ascend to the superintendency because of their willingness to improve their well-being; and, in their own words, be resilient and persevere, which helped them lead through the Covid 19 pandemic.

The voices of these Native American women have long been excluded from education and leadership research. It is safe to say that Indigenous women will continue to play essential roles in the leadership of Indigenous people. We must better understand the experiences of these Native American women superintendents so that we can work to serve the Indigenous population better and prepare future generations of Native American leaders. I assert that studies like mine can provide essential insights into understanding leadership from Native American women's perspectives. I encourage other researchers to take steps in addressing how we can honor the experiences of these warrior women while supporting the development of future Native American women leaders in education.

Recommendations for Practice

This study provides insight through the perspective of these three Native American women superintendents and helps us better understand Indigenous women in educational leadership. The results of this study are intended to add to the research and provide insights into current practices to support and guide more indigenous women in leadership roles. Based on the researcher's observations, three recommendations for action are being suggested. One recommendation is to form a Native American woman advisor/advisee program to bring together women to help mentor future leaders. Based on the research conducted, these women began

building their leadership self-efficacy with every position they held. If future Native women leaders from various colleges and universities could have access to the wealth of these women's experiences and knowledge, I believe it would help future leaders immensely.

Another recommendation is to gather information from these Native American women on their best practices with working with state and tribal agencies. All three women gained guidance and resources from both entities because they knew how to work with the nuances of both agencies.

The third recommendation is for colleges and universities to administer a self-efficacy survey to all superintendent program candidates at the beginning of their program to assess their leadership self-efficacy. Leadership self-efficacy plays a significant role in being able to overcome obstacles and challenges that come when holding a superintendent position. Based on the leadership self-efficacy assessment results, professors and the candidates will have an insight into program planning for differentiated instruction to increase leadership self-efficacy.

Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the research that has been conducted on self-efficacy, little research exists on leadership self-efficacy, Native American women superintendents, and ways to increase both. This was a small study conducted with three Native American women across three Midwestern states; therefore, results cannot be generalized to the larger educational population. Further research could offer a deeper analysis of practices for increasing leadership self-efficacy with more Native American women leaders.

Further research could be conducted concerning Native American women superintendent's determined best practices for increasing leadership self-efficacy. With this research, the researcher could interview Native American women superintendents at tribal and

public schools to determine personal experiences with the strategies used within preparation leadership programs. This research would provide insight into Native women leaders' perceptions of best practices for increasing their leadership self-efficacy and the effectiveness of their practices.

Additional research might include quantitative data concerning the effectiveness of the implemented strategies. This research could be achieved using the self-efficacy perception journal used in this study to gain a *before strategies* data. Then researcher could gather the journal data again for selected Native women leaders *after* using the suggested instructional strategies. The researcher could gather end of the year data to determine growth of leadership efficacy over the course of one school year.

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Appendix A

Email To Ask for Participation

Dear Mrs., Ms., or Dr. _____,

My name is Jeannine Metzger, and I am currently a doctoral student at the University of South Dakota. I am also a principal at Enemy Swim Day School in Waubay, SD. I am inviting you to participate in a research study. The purpose of my dissertation research study is to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the Covid 19 pandemic. Because you are a Native American woman superintendent who was leading a school district at the start of the Covid 19 pandemic, you are an ideal candidate for this research study.

Your involvement in the study is entirely voluntary and will include individual interviews via Zoom and written reflections. The first interview is expected to take an hour, if a follow up interview is needed, it will take approximately 60 minutes. You will be asked to reflect on your experiences leading through the start of a pandemic in a Google form titled, *Self-efficacy Perception Journal*. The journal includes five prompts. You will be asked to write a written reflection in response to each prompt. It is estimated that each journal entry will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Total time commitment is approximately 3 hours over the course of approximately 2 months.

Results of the study will add to what is already known about leading school districts through a crisis and may lead to improving leadership practices and the development of self-efficacy beliefs in inspiring future leaders, especially in districts that serve Native American students across the United States.

Before agreeing to participate, please read the Informed Consent Statement attached for additional details about the study. If you agree to participate in the study, please contact me at Jeanninemetzger@gmail.com or call me at 605-415-3967.

Thank you,

Jeannine Metzger
Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
University of South Dakota

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA Institutional Review Board Informed Consent Statement

Title of Project: Native American Women Superintendents' Self-Efficacy Beliefs during the COVID 19 Pandemic

Principal Investigator: Kristine Reed, Delzell Education Center, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD 57069. Kristine.Reed@coyotes.usd.edu

Student Investigator: Jeannine Metzger, Delzell Education Center, University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD 571069. Janet.Metzger@coyotes.usd.edu

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be a Native American woman and hold the position of school superintendent for at least the last five years leading your school district during the start of the Covid 19 pandemic. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of this multiple case study to identify and describe the similar leadership self-efficacy beliefs held by Native American women superintendents during the Covid 19 pandemic. Three Native American woman superintendents will take part in this research.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews and provide your thoughts and perceptions in writing. As a participant, you will be asked to verbally consent before the interviews. If you consent to participate, you will be asked to provide time for a one-on-one initial interview. Interviews will be done on Zoom. The total expected time of the initial interview will be 60 minutes. A follow-up interview may be requested for further clarification about your experiences, and will not be more than 60 minutes. Initial interviews will take place in December. The follow-up interview will be requested about three weeks following your initial interview.

Lastly, if you consent to participate, you will be asked to reflect about your experiences in a Google form titled, *Self-efficacy Perception Journal*. The journal includes five prompts. You will be asked to complete a written reflection in response to each prompt. It is estimated that each journal entry will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

What risks might result from being in this study?

The risks from participating in this study are not viewed as being in excess of your experiences in everyday life. If you become frustrated or upset by a question, you may choose not to answer the question. You also have the option to discontinue your participation in the study at any time.

How could you benefit from this study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because information can impact by improving leadership practices and the development of self-efficacy beliefs in inspiring future leaders, especially in districts that serve Native American students across the United States. You might benefit from being in this study because you may reflect on the leadership self-efficacy beliefs that help you lead schools effectively.

How will we protect your information?

By consenting, I agree to be digital recorded during this study.

By consenting, I agree to allow *my quotes to be used in the research; however, I will not be identified.*

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Any report published with the results of this study will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. To protect your privacy, we will not include any information that could identify you. We will protect the confidentiality of the research data by using a pseudonym as an identifier for each participant. Identifiers will be deleted once the data analysis is complete. All data including transcripts from interviews and reflection data from the *Self-efficacy Perception Journal* will be saved in a password-protected file on my computer.

As data is collected, it will be placed in a separate electronic folder within a larger electronic folder labeled “research data”. Transcriptions will be typed and stored along with the digital recording file in participant’s own folder. All interview folders will be labeled with the participant’s pseudonym name for security purposes. Once research is transcribed and I have checked the transcription for accuracy, all interview recordings will be destroyed.

The Google form will only be able to be accessed by a password. Passwords will be assigned to the participants. Submitted Google reflections will be placed in the password-protected file in the folder assigned to the respective participant titled by the pseudonym name for security purposes. Once the reflection data is retrieved from the Google form and moved to a Word document identified with your pseudonym, the Google form assigned to you will be deleted.

It is possible that other people may need to see the information we collect about you. These people work for the University of South Dakota, and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in this study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

The researchers conducting this study are Dr. Kris Reed and Jeannine Metzger. You may ask any questions you have now. Contact Jeannine Metzger at Janet.Metzger@coyotes.usd.edu If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Kristine Reed at kristine.reed@usd.edu.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of South Dakota- Office of Human Subjects Protection at (605) 658-3743. You may also call this number with problems, complaints, or concerns about the research. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is an informed individual who is independent of the research team.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. Keep this copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Interview Questions:

1. How confident did you feel in being able to lead your school district through the Covid 19 pandemic? What helped you feel more confident?
2. What are some accomplishments, personal or professional, you had while leading your school district through the Covid 19 pandemic?
3. What attributes have you adopted from other's leadership that were helpful during the Covid 19 pandemic?
4. How did your feel your background or experiences impact your leadership decisions during the Covid 19 pandemic? What were your top priorities in terms of your time during the Covid 19 pandemic?
5. Have you received any feedback or encouragement on your leadership during the Covid 19 pandemic? If so, how did it make you feel?
6. Did you develop or help develop a pandemic plan/reopening plan, and what resources did you use?
7. What was the obstacle during the Covid 19 pandemic, and how did you overcome them?
8. We can identify stress through emotional changes. Think about your stress during this period and tell me how you coped with the pressure during the Covid 19 pandemic.
9. How did Indigenous cultural beliefs impact your leadership during the Covid 19 pandemic?
10. What will be your legacy? What do you think will be your most prized action in leading this school district during the COVID 19 pandemic?

Closing the Interview

As we are coming to the closing of our interview, is there information you feel is essential for this research?

I would like to thank you for participating in the study, and you can expect the information in this study will remain safe and confidential.

My contact information is jeanninemetzger@gmail.com or jmetzger@esds.us, and my phone number is 605-415-3967, or my school cell number is 605-265-0886.

Appendix D

Self-Efficacy Perception Journal

1. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 - 10 using the scale given below with this thought in mind: I knew who I could count on to help me lead my school district during Covid 19 pandemic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please journal any thoughts or feelings this prompt, "I know who I could count on to help me lead my school district during Covid 19 pandemic," has brought up for you. Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020, and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what happened to make the shift in the rate?

2. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 - 10 using the scale given below with this thought in mind: I used my strengths and past experiences to lead my district during Covid 19 pandemic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please journal any thoughts or feelings this prompt, "I used my strengths and past experiences to lead my district during Covid 19 pandemic," has brought up for you. Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020, and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what happened to make the shift in the rate?

3. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 - 10 using the scale given below with this thought in mind: I was confident in my ability to keep our district's vision during Covid 19 pandemic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please journal any thoughts or feelings this prompt, "I was confident in my ability to keep our district's vision during Covid 19 pandemic," has brought up for you. Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020, and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what happened to make the shift in the rate?

4. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 - 10 using the scale given below with this thought in mind: As a leader, I can affirm my beliefs and values through my actions during Covid 19 pandemic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please journal any thoughts or feelings this prompt, "As a leader, I can affirm my beliefs and values through my actions during Covid 19 pandemic," has brought up for you.

Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020, and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what happened to make the shift in the rate?

5. Please rate your degree of confidence by recording a number from 0 - 10 using the scale given below with this thought in mind: As a leader, my Native American culture has influenced my leadership role during the pandemic.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please journal any thoughts or feelings this prompt, "As a leader, my Native American culture has influenced my leadership role during the pandemic," has brought up for you. Please include where your degree of confidence was in March 2020, and where it is now. If the rating has changed, what happened to make the shift in the rate?

Appendix E

Code/Theme Definitions

Meaning for Bandura's Self-Efficacy Codes:

Feedback/Encouragement from Trusted People: What people tell us about what we are able to do.

Past Experience: What we have try to do, and how well we succeed.

Modeling from others: What we see other people do and learn from them.

Emotional State: How are we feeling mentally, and if we can be successful or not.

Indigenous Culture's Impact: Identifying and engaging in Indigenous cultures has been linked with enhanced self-assessed health, improved educational and employment outcomes, and greater life satisfaction, as well as, taking care of your own.

Meaning for Researchers' Themes for Mitan:

Being Mentored: Learning from Others.

Team Work: Working together within the school as teams.

Past Experiences: Experiences that provided tools, resources, and information the Native American woman superintendent could rely on during the pandemic.

Emotional State: How the person is feeling toward the situation.

Leadership: Quotes that talk about leadership skills, or on the role of a leader.

Moving Forward: Quotes that talked about a detrimental or challenging situation , and where she found the positive silver lining.

Feedback: Information given from a variety of sources.

Stressors: An obstacle or challenge the superintendent faced that included the emotion.

Meaning for Mitan's Voice Themes:

Well-Seasoned Professionals: Model the participant learned from.

Top-Notch Structures and Resources: Agencies and resources that the participant leaned on or learned from.

Prior Experiences: Past experience information participant relied on. Prior working experiences provided confidence, tools, and resources to be successful through the pandemic (#1, Journal).

Faith and Confidence in my Ability and my Team's: Superintendent had confidence in her ability and her school district's teams to lead through the pandemic (7:21).

Resourceful and Resilient: Having a growth mindset. A willingness to pivot or be flexible as need to overcome challenges.

Servant Leadership: A leader that servers, and builds the capacity of others.

Human Oriented: The superintendent having a deep respect and appreciation for different cultures and backgrounds.

Meaning for Researchers' Themes for Winona:

Confidence: The superintendent mentioned confidence or alluded to not having or gaining more confidence in her quotes.

Past Experiences: The past experiences the superintendent told about or influenced their leadership during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Networking: Working with other people outside of the school district.

Challenges: Any obstacles the superintendent came across while leading during the pandemic.

Taking Care of Others: Any quotes that included taking care/supporting staff and students.

Team Work: Working with people inside the school district.

Stressor: Stressor were obstacles with an emotional state attached.

Relationships: The superintendent's relationships with staff and students.

Feedback: Information from educational books, outside entities, staff, students/parents, school board or community.

Emotion: Quotes that created a positive feeling for the superintendent.

Culture: Refers to Native American culture or cultural practices.

Meaning for Winona's Voice Themes:

Resiliency and Perseverance: A theme of pushing through a difficult situation, emotional state is attached in the quote.

Experiences: Past positions within the schools, Paraprofessional, Teacher, Principal, Etc., that gave information to the superintendent to help her lead through the pandemic.

Reaching Out: Superintendent found help and guidance outside her school district.

She was There to Help: A mentoring type person or small group of people that helped support the superintendent in her leadership during the pandemic.

Detrimental to Leadership: An obstacle or challenge that made leading her school district tough.

Taking Care of my Tiospaye: Taking care of student, staff and community with resources, education and other supports.

Collaboration: Finding help and guidance/support from people within her district.

Relationships: Positive relationships between staff and students, and the superintendent.

Feels like it's Validation: Feedback from school board, staff, families and community.

Indigenous Practices: Quotes that mention Native American culture or practices.

Meaning for Researchers' Themes for Cunwe:

Past Experiences: Past experiences that help give the superintendent information to help her lead during the pandemic.

Team Work: Staff that work together at school.

Obstacles: Difficulties the superintendent ran into during the pandemic.

Taking Care of Others: Taking care of both people in her school district and community.

Culture: All quotes that contained information about spirituality, Native American culture, language or history, and historical trauma.

Emotion: Superintendent's statements that had feeling words in them.

Feedback: The superintendent getting information from any source during the pandemic.
Collaborating: With outside of the school District agencies.

Meaning for Cunwe's Voice Themes:

It's Just Another Day as a Superintendent: It is just like any other time that you lead, you do the very best you can with the information you have (2:23).

You Can't Be an Island Onto Yourself: Superintendent needed to reach out and have people help her (22:13).

Empathy Toward my Staff: Being supportive of her staff, treating with respect (17:26), emotionally, financially, and with the frustrations of teaching remotely (7:26).

We Used the Resources: Use resources to produce needed plans from the state, health department and tribe.

Cultural Identity: Strong proponent for her Native American culture (#5, Journal).

I Care About Kids: Providing education and other supports to her students (10:55, 12:59).

We Get Things Done: The superintendent and staff created safety plans and other needed protocols during the pandemic (12:59).

Overcome: The superintendent would run up against an obstacle, but yet manage through it (16:54).