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Brokering Access, Belief and Opportunities: A Phenomenology of Black Principals' Leadership Through a Racialized Lens

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The educational landscape of the twenty-first century currently faces several significant challenges, including widening academic opportunity gaps. These gaps suggest that there is need to examine the perspectives of leaders in the role of principals more deeply. However, as leadership theories continue to develop, there has been limited research conducted on the impact of principals' racialized experiences and their approach to leadership. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to center race by exploring the essence of Black principals' understanding of their racialized experiences and its meaning to their leadership and school communities. Findings indicate that Black principals' (a) understanding of the meaning and significance of their racial identities is the vital component of their leadership within their school communities, (b) motivation for going into leadership is embedded in their belief of their ability to create change in their community, (c) characterization of their leadership experience is largely impacted by their encounters with different members within their school communities, and (d) spiritual beliefs are key foundations of their leadership. Study implications illustrate the importance of all leaders examining their racialized identities to be better prepared to work with students from diverse backgrounds to disrupt racially segregated leadership.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Changing Landscape

The educational landscape of the twenty-first century currently faces several significant challenges. While school districts across the nation are managing many realities, they are simultaneously struggling to improve the academic outcomes of all students and being held to greater levels of accountability for ensuring these outcomes. The persistence of widening academic achievement gaps between White students and Black and Latinx students, English learning students and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds are illustrative to the fact that there is a definite need for change to our current educational practices. A central challenge facing schools across the nation for this study is the struggle to meet the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse student and family populations (Knaus, 2014; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Shields, 2013; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). While student populations have continued to diversify, the teaching force has continued to remain mostly White and mostly female (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Green, 2006; Knaus, 2014; Gooden, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). This has resulted in limited diversity of the teacher forces locally and across the nation. In fact, only seven percent of principals in the United States are Latinx, while ten percent of principals in the United States are Black

(U. S. Department of Education, 2016). These glaring numbers reflect the large concern of the lack of diverse principals leading in continually diversified school communities.

In response to this growing challenge, districts are placing increasing attention on strategies to improve educator diversity in hopes of addressing the growing student diversity of schools (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Milner, 2012). The combination of an increasing diversity of students and the less than diverse representation of educators in schools poses a variety of both explicit and implicit complications (Tillman, 2004, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Gooden, 2012; Wilson, 2016). Decades of research chronicling the pervasive racial disparities in student discipline rates, misidentification in special education, and underrepresentation in gifted education for Black and Latinx youth (boys in particular) have raised concern about the correlation between the culturally responsive engagement of Black and Latinx youth and the lack of a more diverse teaching force (Ferri & Connor, 2005; Ford & Whiting, 2010; Milner & Howard, 2004). The subtle implication illustrated by these examples suggests that the majority of White teachers and leaders are not considering the impact of their racialized experiences in school environments, particularly in largely diverse school communities.

The different racialized experiences between students and educators is important and often overlooked in the literature and the practices of educational leadership (Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Faircloth, 2017; Shields, 2013; Knaus, 2014; Horsford, 2009; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Bess, 2009; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). There are several ways in which increasing the number of educators of color impacts the school experience for young people (Tillman, 2004; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Lomotey, 1990;

Delpit, 2012; Khalifa, 2013). The extant literature asserted that Black and Latinx educators are often able to connect to Black and Latinx students through a similar cultural background and understanding of themselves (Delpit, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995). The literature further emphasized that Black teachers and leaders are often more able to validate the cultural and social capital and backgrounds of some of their most challenging students (Khalifa, 2010). Others within the extant literature argued that another significance of educators of color is that they are the first to insist that students begin to critically think in a world in which race matters (Jett, McNeal Curry, & Vernon-Jackson, 2016). The significance of this work has been key to the work of both teachers and principals. The responsibility of the principalship has shifted to ensuring that teachers are able to lead classrooms that are inclusive of all students regardless of their backgrounds and different lived experiences. A significant amount of the work of principals is having to spend their energies reshaping teachers' instructional practices and focusing on improving student expectations and performance (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). However, the ability of each principal to navigate the issues of difference, and race more specifically, has made the charge of principalship even more challenging.

Background to the Problem

In this study, I center the challenge of the imbalance of an increasingly diverse student and family populations with a mostly White teacher and leader force across the nation. However, to more deeply understand the current realities of the imbalance of student diversity to educator diversity, it is important to discuss the history of several major factors that have led to this current state. Similarly, before critically examining contemporary concerns for schools across the nation, it is imperative to review several

key historical factors that have led to a decrease in the number of Black educators. The extant literature described the various ways in which Black educators—more specifically Black principals—were negatively impacted by the 1954 ruling of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Delpit, 2012, Walker, 2015. These negative impacts include practices such as being relegated to lesser positions under less-experienced White leaders, being fired without legitimate reasoning, and the feelings of loss of a strong united community (Anderson, 1988; Horsford, 2009; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2018). Extant research also demonstrated that in a segregated school system, Black teachers and principals had greater job security and opportunities due to lack of White educator interests in teaching Black-only schools (Anderson, 1988; Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Walker, 2018).

In her book *Multiplication is for White People*, Delpit (2012) described the ways in which Black educators lost their jobs because of integration. Delpit (2012) asserted that desegregation led to initially unexpected opportunities for Whites in education. By some estimates, ninety percent of Black principals lost their jobs in eleven Southern states; many were fired, and others retired (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004). Sadly, some of the experiences Black educators felt during the late 1950s are still prevalent for Black educators almost seventy years later (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2014). This and the changing working conditions of the field of education such as high-stakes testing and conflicting school priorities provide some explanation for the steady decline of the prevalence of Black educators.

The impact of high accountability is significant because as accountability efforts have increased, educational outcomes for all students have not (Wilson, 2016; Madsen &

Mabokela, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). The educational outcomes for Black and Latinx students, English learning students, and economically under-resourced students are continuing to demonstrate large gaps between them and their White peers (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Shields, 2013, 2018). Coupled with the recent history of the continued decline of Black educators and the growing diversity of student demographics in urban schools across the nation, there is considerable need to learn more about the various contributions of Black educators. Specifically, there is a need for further exploration of the racialized experiences of Black principals.

The extant literature illustrated a variety of ways in which Black principals' encounters with race have been intertwined with both their practice of leadership and their leadership experiences. The literature indicates that throughout history, Black principals' leadership experiences have been centered in their racialized understandings of race. The history of Black principals' racialized leadership spans from the ending of enslavement in the United States, when Black principals ran the first schools for Black children, to the most current educational landscape. Black principals' racialized experiences are significant and worthy of further exploration. Further, their racialized understandings may act as an example for other leaders to use when examining the role of their racialized experiences as it relates to the possible impact they may have on the school communities in which they serve.

Statement of Problem

In the past twenty years, there has been an emergence of different leadership theories that aim to provide frameworks for school leaders to use to aid them toward the change needed for today's educational system. As each theory develops, it strives to

provide structure and guidance on practices of leadership with hopes to better meet the needs of the ever-changing educational environments, economy, and needs of communities. The delicate nature of school environments suggests that alternative perspectives are needed in schools that reflect the diverse viewpoints and experiences of students, staff, and school communities interacting in schools each day (Williams & Johnson, 2013). As research continues to expand in the area of educational leadership, there is significant need to explore and learn more about the particular contributions that Black principals make in their practices and experiences of leadership. Research that centers on the experience of Black principals is necessary in a variety of ways. The United States and the rest of the world is becoming more diverse. Because of this, learning more about the experiences and stories of those that complete the collective narrative is important. Leaders and scholars within the world of educational leadership must continue to challenge the absent or silenced narratives of Black principals' collective experiences. Further, without the existence of a greater understanding of Black principal experiences, there will continue to be missing dialogue about the contributions that Black principals play in the field of education. Therefore, in this study, I strive to continue pushing the doors of inclusion and equity by exploring the ways in which Black principals lead differently.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to focus on race by exploring the essence of Black principals' understanding of their racialized experiences and the meaning to their leadership. Leadership theories continue to develop, but there has been

limited research conducted on the impact of principals' racialized experiences, their approach to leadership, and its impact on their school communities.

Research Question

This study's research question is: *What is the essence of Black principals' leadership as a response to their daily lived racialized experiences?*

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that I used for this study is an Afrocentric exploration of Black principals' experiences and practices through their racialized identity. Because Dr. Molefi Asante (1988) is considered the leading theorist in the field of Black Studies, the discussion of Afrocentricity is grounded in his conceptualization of Afrocentricity. Within an Afrocentric paradigm, there are several assumptions that must be described. The first and central assumption applied to this study is the assumption that agency is the key concept for freedom. Agency in this sense is defined by Asante (1988) as the ability to feel, know and act. Asante (1988) asserted that without this agency, discussion of Black people and their experiences are not genuine and honest. Asante (1988) emphasized that Blacks have not been allowed agency or validity to tell their own stories. This assertion is significant to the study because in this study I centered the experiences and voices of Black principals to provide them agency to detail their stories of leadership. Another significant assumption connected to this paradigm is grounded in African philosophy, which asserted that Black people are collectively oriented (Mbiti, 1969). This collective orientation calls for consideration of what is best for the collective or greater good and not just the individual (Mbiti, 1969; Kambon, 1999). In African

philosophy, there is an expression that says, “I am because we are, therefore we are because I am” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 11). This expression is connected to this study because it illustrates the historic and present relationship discussed in the extant literature that Black principals have with their school communities and the collective orientation that is connected to their leadership experiences and practice.

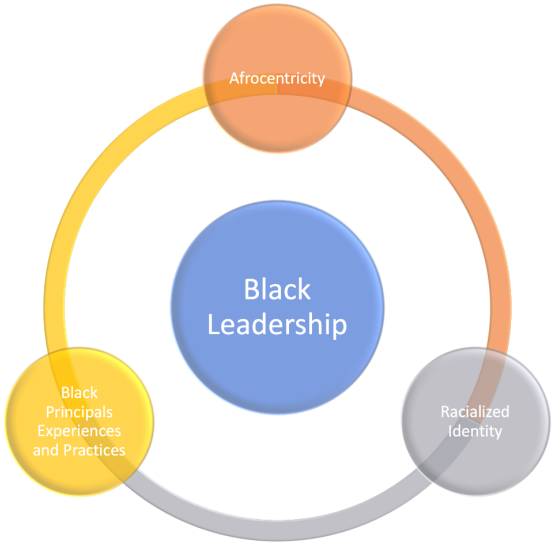

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

Within this conceptual framework, there are four primary assumptions derived from the literature (on Black principals’ experiences and practices: (a) Leading educational leadership theories—including transformative leadership, authentic leadership, culturally responsive leadership, pastoral care, and critical spirituality—focused on leadership in urban schools consistently missed opportunities to discuss and explicitly explore the differences in racialized experiences, which shape leadership styles and practice(Hoy & Henderson, 1983; Dantley, 2003, 2010; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005; Brown, 2007; Walumbwa,

Avolio, Gardener, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008; Gay; 2010; Khalifa, 2010; Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Gardner, Cogslier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011; Jun, 2011; Miller, Brown & Hopson, 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Duignan, 2014; Wilson, 2014; Fox, Gong & Attoh, 2015; Fine, 2017; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018, Shields & Hesbol, 2019); (b) a lack of understanding and discussion about the role that race plays in leadership practices (Dantley, 2003, 2010; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Faircloth, 2017; (c) missing narratives and literature on Black principals' experiences and practices left room for an omission of the skills that result from race-centered leadership practices and reflection (Asante, 1988 Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Kambon, 1999); and (d) an inclusive and race-centered model of school leadership is needed to meet the various needs of school communities (Asante, 1988 Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Kambon, 1999; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011).

From an Afrocentric / African (terms that are used interchangeably) (Norment, 2001)—worldview, there is a belief that the purpose of education is to ensure that individuals mature and come into understanding and knowing their God-given purpose (Hilliard, 2003). African philosophy also specifically says that authenticity finds its triumph in allowing people to realize themselves through their own history (Asante, 1988). This central notion of African philosophy aligns closely with the extant literature that described the historical experiences of Black principals in the United States (Anderson, 1988; Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Walker, 2018). In this study, I used an Afrocentric analysis for greater understanding of Black principals' experiences and

practices. Asante (1988) defined Afrocentricity as placing African / Black—terms also used interchangeably (Norment, 2001)—culture at the center of any analysis that involves studying African people. Examining situations, phenomena, and experiences from an African worldview explicitly means using an analysis that is different than the dominant majoritarian Eurocentric narrative.

Within this worldview, an individual does not stand merely as a representation of one's self, but of the greater collective. As mentioned, African philosophy has a tenet that says, "I am because we are, therefore, **we are because I am**," which highlights a belief that in order for a community to exist, each person must stand and be who they are (Mbiti, 1969, p. 11). In this worldview, there is a special connection between the self and others, such that the African worldview is rooted around the self's relationship with others. This represents another component of the conceptual framework that speaks to the ways in which Black principals' racialized experiences have provided a framework for them to consistently reflect upon the ways in which their leadership operates in relation to themselves and others in the school community. The third component of the conceptual framework is grounded in the experiences and practices of Black principals. The Afrocentric worldview places the experiences of Black people as the center of any point of analysis. Therefore, three primary focuses provide the structure for the conceptual framework of Black leadership: Afrocentricity (the centering of Black experience for analysis), understanding a racialized identity, and Black principals' experiences and practices.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that there was an examination of only a few educational leadership theories within the past twenty years. As discussed in this review, student achievement and outcomes are not meeting the needs of ALL students and communities. Therefore, the focus on just a few theories cannot fully address the vast challenges and strategies being developed that help address the needs and challenges within the United States. Likewise, the prioritization of educational leadership theories of the last ten years was an additional limitation of this study in that it does not speak to the other theories that have surfaced within the discussion of public education in the United States. Lastly, because the focus of this review was on Black principals, the inclusion of other theories centered and reflected on other marginalized and/or minoritized groups was another inherent limitation of this study.

Definition of Terms

Afrocentrism: A paradigm used to center the experiences and knowledges of Black people throughout the world (Asante, 1988).

Authentic Leadership*:* A leadership framework that is grounded both in a leader's deep understanding of themselves and also what that means to their followers (Gardner et al., 2011).

Black / African American*:* Terms that will be may be used interchangeable in this study to describe people of African descent (Norment, 2001)

Critical Spirituality*:* A leadership framework that is grounded in the historic meaning of the Black church and African American spirituality (Dantley, 2003).

***Culturally Responsive Leadership**:* A leadership framework that describes the work of principals to make schools places in which they meet the unique needs of each child regardless of their cultural or racial identities (Gay, 1994).

***Pastoral Care**:* A leadership framework that is comprised of the religio-spritual traditional influences of Black principals (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010).

***Racialized Experience**:* A lens through which each experience is grounded in an understanding of the racial and systemic oppression centered throughout the history of the United States (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

***Transformative Leadership**:* A leadership framework that is described as "a critical approach to leadership…that requires critical reflection of for whom the system is working and for who it is failing, of who is advantaged, privileged, and always included, and who is marginalized and excluded" (Shields, 2013).

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a foundation for this study's focus on Black principals. By discussing the impact of the changing national urban P-12 educational landscape, this I included a brief examination of five recent educational leadership theories which have been applied in urban schools. I also provided a historical overview of the practices and experiences of Black principals and centralized the racialized perspective of Black principals, which is key to this phenomenological study.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized in the following way: In Chapter Two, I reviewed the extant literature related to Black principals' experiences and practices as well as that on five leading educational leadership theories popularized in the past twenty years:

transformative leadership, authentic leadership, critical spirituality, pastoral care, and culturally responsive leadership (Dantley, 2003, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016). In Chapter Three, I discussed my choice of phenomenological methodology and the methods I used to conduct this study. In Chapter Four, I analyzed the data collected in this study. And, finally, in Chapter Five I presented my findings and conclusions.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

As schools become diverse, urban school districts throughout the nation are battling the impact of poverty, lack of diverse teaching and leadership forces, and deepening opportunity gaps for students (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Pollard, 1997; Montgomery, 2001; Brown, 2005; Brown, 2007; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gay, 2010; Khalifa, 2010, 2013; Gooden, 2012; Ogunbawo, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Knaus, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). To combat these many challenges, leadership theories continue to be developed and applied within urban school settings. The purpose of this literature review is to critically examine educational leadership theories that have shaped the leadership practice of principals in urban schools over the past decade (2009-2019). I explore the leadership theories of transformative leadership (Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Jun, 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Wilson, 2016; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2019); culturally responsive leadership (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Brown, 2007; Gay; 2010; Khalifa, 2010; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016); authentic leadership (Hoy & Henderson, 1983; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005; Wilson, 2014; Fox, Gong, & Attoh, 2015; Faircloth, 2017; Fine, 2017); pastoral care (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010); and critical spirituality (Dantley, 2003, 2010). I critically examined these leadership theories with a keen focus on systemic

racism and how asymmetries of power and privilege have shaped the experience and leadership practice of Black principals in urban school settings.

I specifically sought to understand the extent to which the leadership practices and experiences of Black principals in urban school settings converge or diverge from popular educational leadership theories. Therefore, it is critical to juxtapose current leadership theory to the experiences and leadership practices of selected Black principals who currently lead in urban school settings. Centering the experiences and leadership practice of Black principals of urban public schools honors their distinct cultural and historical experiences and provides an additional perspective and deeper understanding of the inclusiveness, reflectiveness, and relevance of the respective leadership theories (Kershaw, 1992; Asante, 1988). I began this review by delineating the methodology of the literature review that allowed me to systematically filter the extant literature to a manageable size, based on my inclusion and exclusion criteria. I explained that after the literature base was selected, I examined each of the leadership theories separately. Next, I investigated the extant literature on Black principals, and then critically examined the development and application of these various leadership theories and how they intersect with extant literature on the experiences of Black principals. Through a historically contextualized analysis using an Afrocentric conceptual framework, I investigated the extent to which each educational leadership theory was reflective, inclusive, and responsive to the experiences and leadership practices of Black principals as measured by the inclusion of Black principal narratives.

Methodology of the Literature Review

Bracketing my lived experiences as a Black woman principal. As a Black woman principal, my experience has been deeply centered and framed through my racialized experience and understanding of the principalship role. This means that I am often one of the only people of color—more specifically, Black person—sitting in a room making decisions that impact students, their families, and their communities. For the past six years, I have coached mostly White teachers on strategies to challenge, engage, and interact with students of color. I consistently push White educators to look deeply at their unseen biases that impact their ability and inability to educate all children. In addition, I challenge White families with children in the schools I serve in to think differently about their stereotypes of the roles and capabilities of Black people, as they interact with me as a school leader. Thus, a central question that guided my review of the literature is: How is race discussed in current leadership theories and are the experiences of Black principals included in the discussions?

I began my literature review process by meeting with a research librarian. I had two major constructs: Educational leadership theories and Black principalship aimed to inform the work of principals leading in urban schools. For the purposes of this review, Black principalship is defined as the experiences and practices of Black principals. I critically examined some of the most influential educational leadership theories, such as transformative leadership and culturally responsive leadership, in urban public school education over the last twenty years to understand how the experiences and leadership practices of Black principals are depicted within these theories. My central question helped to inform both my inclusion and exclusion criteria, which I discuss in the next

section. The literature selected to support and expand on these objectives comes from a multi-year review of research on transformative leadership, culturally responsive leadership, authentic leadership, pastoral care, critical spirituality, and Black principalship (Asante, 1988; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Dantley, 2003, 2010; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Gay, 2010; Khalifa, 2010; Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Jun, 2011; Miller et al., 2011; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Wilson, 2016; Faircloth, 2017; Fine, 2017; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

List of Keywords Searched

To identify articles that fit within the criteria for the review of the literature, several strategies were used. The first was to meet with a university reference librarian to create criteria for a systematic literature review, utilizing my chosen major constructs for the review. This resulted in the shaping of my research process focus on three primary databases: Education Database, PsychInfo, and Business Source Complete. I searched these databases using key terms and Boolean phrases such as "transformative leadership," "culturally responsive leadership," "authentic leadership," coupled with either "education," "educators," "teachers," or "schools." Consideration of inclusion for the review required literature to comprise of the following criteria: (1) published between the years of 1999- 2019, (2) peer-reviewed, (3) addressed leadership in American urban schools, (4) addressed leadership in the United States, and (5) included in-depth discussion about Black principal practices and experiences. These criteria helped me further narrow my focus within journals that centered on Black principals' experiences and practices.

The initial search returned over 1,250 results. Next, I evaluated the titles and abstracts against my inclusion and exclusion criteria. I excluded 1,000 titles. Of the 1,000 excluded: 221 were duplicates, 409 were articles that did not specifically address school leadership, 350 were articles that did not specifically address school leadership in the United States, and twenty were articles that focused exclusively on business leadership. Next, I did a full text screening on the remaining 250 articles that passed my initial title and abstract screening. After the full text screening, I eliminated 192, as they did not provide in-depth discussion of Black principal practices and experiences.

The analysis of the 192 eliminated articles further contextualized the fact that the experiences and practices of Black principals were often not present in applications of recent educational theories. I obtained an additional 21 articles through a backwards search. Further, I screened the references of the 79 remaining selected articles to identify frequently cited work considered seminal in the field and articles that provided historical context to Black school leadership. After my full text screening, 79 became the basis of this literature review. Collectively, these articles provided: (1) definitions of popular educational leadership theories, (2) context for full understanding of a particular leadership theory's application, (3) historical and contemporary context of these educational leadership theories, and (4) thick description of the relationship between these leadership theories and the experiences and leadership practice of Black principals. In the next section, I provide a historically contextualized analysis of each educational leadership theory and the explain the extent to which they reflect the experiences and leadership practices of Black principals.

Defining and Measuring the Constructs / Sub-Constructs

As I reviewed the extant literature, my purpose was to explore the development and application of various leadership theories in urban school settings and to understand how these theories intersect with the scholarship on Black principals. Although this review includes several educational leadership frameworks including transformative leadership (Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Jun, 2011; Miller et al., 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Wilson, 2016; Shields et al., 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020), culturally responsive leadership (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Brown, 2007; Gay; 2010; Khalifa, 2010; Horsford et al., 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016), authentic leadership (Hoy & Henderson, 1983; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005; Cooper et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Gardner et al., 2011; Duignan, 2014; Wilson, 2014; Fox et al., 2015; Faircloth, 2017; Fine, 2017), pastoral care (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010), and critical spirituality (Dantley, 2003, 2010), my focus was to critically examine each of the theories with their inclusion, reflection, and relevance to Black principals' experiences and practices.

Limitations of the Review of Literature

One of the limitations of this review was my examination of select educational leadership theories within the past twenty years. My intentional focus on the selected theories will not fully address the vast challenges and strategies currently being created to help address the needs and challenges of Black educators within the United States. I narrowed the scope of this review to sharply focus on Black principals. While the leadership theories spotlighted in this review are certainly among the most prominent within K-12 educational leadership literature, they are in no way an exhaustive coverage

of leadership theories that center other marginalized and/or minoritized groups, which is also of great importance.

History of Black School Leaders in the United States (1863–Present)

From Emancipation to Brown: The Rise of Black Principals.

This review must begin with a description of the experiences and leadership practice of Black principals in segregated schools prior to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case. I drew from the seminal texts by Anderson (1988), Walker (2018), and Murtadha and Watts (2005), which provided historical context, as they each chronicled the role of Black principals in the rural South from the emancipation of slavery in 1863 through the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Anderson (1988), Walker (2018), and Murtadha and Watts (2005) argue that in order to engage with the unique experiences and qualities of Black principals, it is important to analyze the context in which their leadership worked. The researchers stated that in spite of the conditions imposed by racism and oppression—including anti-literacy laws restricting the education of Blacks—in the North but specifically the South, Black principals within the Black community believed that education was the key to economic, political, and collective-conscious freedom for Blacks (Anderson, 1988). Blacks created and funded schools both in the North and South with a clear goal of liberation through education in mind.

Before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, most Black children in the United States, and specifically in the South, were taught and led by Black educators (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Anderson's (1988) work showed that in most places in the South, public education was not supported or funded by Whites, while the North provided more economic opportunities, as there was more White

philanthropic support of Black education. As a result, in the South, most Black agricultural laborers used their hard-earned savings to contribute to the building and operation of schools for Black children. This resulted in jobs needed for both Black principals and teachers (Anderson, 1988; Green, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2015, 2018). In both the North and the South, education was the means for advancement in the Black community (Anderson, 1988). As such, after the end of the Civil War, Blacks quickly worked to create their own schools. With the reality of segregated schooling in the Reconstruction, due in part to the help of Northern philanthropists, a system of Black education was created (Pollard, 1997). Black women such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Nannie Helen Burroughs became educational leaders that helped to build schools that responded to the needs of Black children, families, and communities (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Education acted as a tool of empowerment for the Black community.

To further understand education as empowerment, it is important to examine the literature that illustrated the conditions of schools and the meaning of leadership for Black principals during the time of segregated schools. Horsford's (2009) research described schools for Blacks in segregation as strong places of learning that had a great sense of community. Using a case study of Black superintendents that grew during the time of segregation, Horsford (2009) positioned a counternarrative to the narrative of Black schools being under-resourced and underperforming. The experiences described by the participants illustrated segregated schools as places where students felt a connection between all of the most important places to them—their schools, families and community. Horsford (2009) used rich descriptions to paint a picture of connectedness within a culture. Each of the participants in the study described ways that their Black

principals operated and set a tone of high expectations. Horsford's (2009) study used counter-storytelling to stamp belief that all things Black—in this case schools and particularly Black principals—did not equate to inadequacy or despair. In fact, the stories of love, care, and collective responsibility shown in segregated Black school environments pointed to the exact opposite (Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Walker, 2018).

Black educators, and more specifically Black principals, played a variety of roles both within and outside of the school (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012). The experiences of Black principals often meant that they served in capacities beyond that of *just* principal; in fact, Black principals often served as community leaders, fathers/mothers, guidance counselors, activists, mentors, and a variety of other roles to members of their community (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012).

Education was believed to be a way of progress and a main component of change. Black principals' leadership was key to orchestrating that change. Because of the lack of other opportunities and the integrated belief that principalship was both profession and purpose, Black principals worked steadily in the Black community and in their schools (Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004, 2008; Murtadha & Watts, 2005). The responsibilities of Black principals included administrative duties, instructional leadership, and vision setting for the role that education would play in the community in which the school existed (Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012). Black teachers, and even more so Black principals, were deemed an exalted position of authority and

reverence within the Black community, which fostered the desire for many Blacks to join the ranks (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018; Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004). The charge of being an educator amid the reality of limited advancement opportunities in other employment sectors still legally withheld from Blacks factored into the large percentage of Black educators moving into the field of education (Giddings, 1984; Tillman, 2004, 2008; Milner, 2012; Horsford, 2009). The complexity of the role and responsibilities of principals within the Black community during the time from 1863 to 1954 emphasizes the worthiness of continued exploration for understanding of Black school principals' experiences. In addition, this complexity highlights an important understanding of the positive educational experiences of Black principals, students, and communities, which provided a contrast to the less than positive accounts in our contemporary experiences.

The history and experiences of Black principals revealed that they had a deep understanding of what it meant to be responsive to the different needs of their school communities. Often, these needs were connected to the socio-economic position given to them because of living in a racially oppressive system. In many ways, the research showed that their responsiveness was due to their racialized experience as a Black principal. The extant literature shows that they learned to navigate in both a world of "ours" and "theirs." The experiences of principals like Ulysses Byas (Walker & Byas, 2003) and Ethel Thompson Overby (Ward Randolph, 2012) are just two examples that highlighted the experiences of Black principals during segregation. Ward Randolph's (2012) historical qualitative research of the life of Ethel Thompson Overby, the first Black woman principal in the city of Richmond, Virginia, provided a strong example.

Ward Randolph (2012) described Overby's working class background and her subsequent struggles of having navigated her own education, a path that included receiving a Master's degree from Columbia University. She used her own struggle and perseverance throughout her own education as a model and bar for high expectations for students within her school (Ward Randolph, 2012). Overby's leadership continued in spite of the challenges of voter suppression, poll tax, and illiteracy that plagued her community (Ward Randolph, 2012). In fact, she used her school leadership to create a space, both within the school building and in her community, in which she encouraged students to thrive and combat the oppression that they experienced in their daily lives.

Walker and Byas' (2003) qualitative case study of the leadership of Ulysses Byas of Gainesville, Georgia illuminated Byas' experience as a Black principal in the segregated South. The case study used interviews with Byas, interviews with teachers that worked with him, as well as notes and other documentation that illustrated and described his leadership during the tumultuous time (Walker & Byas, 2003). Byas' account portrayed the moments when he as a Black principal had to galvanize the support of his school community for the initiatives that he believed were important (Walker & Byas, 2003). In particular, he detailed the moments when he had to explain to families that were struggling to put food on the table the importance of their children staying enrolled in and attending school each day, as well as the possibilities that school provided for future opportunities (Walker & Byas, 2003). Through Byas' persistence, he ensured that 400 students graduated from his school, and many of whom matriculated into institutions of higher education (Walker & Byas, 2003).

In the case study, Walker and Byas (2003) provided a thorough examination of the specific examples in which Byas' leadership practices were grounded in a shared or similar lived experience of his students and community. Byas pointed out that he grew up in a family situation similar to students in his school (Walker & Byas, 2003). In the interviews Walker and Byas (2003) conducted, Byas discussed his own challenges with going to school and living in poverty. He expressed the difficulties he faced during his time in high school, when he wanted to be a financial contributor to his family while simultaneously endeavoring to meet the needs of his mother who wanted him to finish school (Walker & Byas, 2003). He specifically named the ways that he used language as a means to demonstrate his shared experience with Black community members, illustrated in the following passage:

> But I wouldn't go out there talking about your "children," giving (the teachers) difficulty. I'd say your "chillen"... because the purpose of speech is to establish rapport with people. (Walker & Byas, 2003, p. #)

Principal Byas described the way in which his leadership practices acted as a bridge between the Black community and the White school superintendent and school board (Walker & Byas, 2003). This depiction of Byas facing the challenges of a state and educational community that did not want to integrate asserted the difficulties that Byas and other Black principals had to maneuver in order to counter the hurdles of educational limitations and future outcomes of their students and members within their communities (Walker & Byas, 2003).

As Walker and Byas (2003) exemplified, the extant literature illustrated the many methods that Black principals used to embrace challenges and make decisions that they believed were best for their school communities (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997;

Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012; Walker, 2018). The literature highlighted that their experiences and leadership practice are interconnected to the reality of their Black identities. The descriptions within the literature illustrated a climate of racial segregation before the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which regularly reminded Black principals that they had to lead on behalf of the interests of their own communities, which forced them to face the challenges that existed in policies at the local, state, and national levels (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker & Byas, 2003, 2018; Tillman, 2004; Murtadha & Watts, 2009; Horsford, 2009; Ward Randolph, 2012). During this period, education as a sector particularly formalized public Black education, as it was continuing to develop as an institution in American culture that resulted in a lack of educational leadership theories.

From Brown to the Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)

Effects of Desegregation: Job Elimination for Black Teachers and Principals. Black people, especially those in the South, continued to experience political and financial struggles in effort to formalize a public system which funded Black education, even after *Brown v. Board of Education* (Anderson, 1988; Walker, 2018). However, Black principals continued to dedicate themselves to the betterment of their students and communities. Black schools in Black communities were under-resourced and advocates of segregation saw the potential of desegregation as providing equal resources and a possibility of increasing opportunities for the future (Green, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2015). However, desegregation led to some major unintended consequences for Black educators (Green, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2015). After the *Brown* verdict, the implications and impacts on

Black educators were large in number and variety (Green, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2015). The literature described the steady decline of Black educators during the time of desegregation (Green, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004; Tillman, 2004). In Walker's (2015) research, she investigated the impact of desegregation on Black educator labor unions in the South. In the case study, Walker (2015) explored the issues raised by Black educators using the Georgia Teachers Education Association (GTEA) to launch their concerns to the Nation and other public educational advocates during the desegregation period from 1968 to 1970. The study illuminated the challenges that Black educators explicitly stated they experienced during desegregation from local Whites in a variety of institutionalized ways.

Walker's (2015) research emphasized that Black educators attempted to use their educational organizations, more specifically their union membership as platforms to spotlight the inequitable treatment of Black education. Walker (2015) stressed the ways in which Black educators' educational organizations provided a shield of collective anonymity within the larger group, protecting them from individual retaliation. Walker's (2015) work details the ways in which Black educators' educational organizations prioritized and advocated for the advancement of Black education. Walker (2015) asserted that often, Black educators stayed more loyal to their smaller, local organizations because the larger organizations did not represent their interest, access, and opportunities for Black students. In fact, the literature revealed that the national mergers of the much larger and mostly White National Educational Association (NEA) and the American Teachers Association (ATA) had negative implications for Black educators (Walker, 2015). The national merger (1966) meant that state and local "mergers" often

misrepresented the interests and forced decisions upon Black educators (Walker, 2015). The merger and the decisions that then followed confirmed the fears held by many Black educators at the time: That Black education was not a priority for the national, state, and local educational organizations (Walker, 2015).

A qualitative study by Lyons and Chelsey (2004) confirmed this fear of desegregation. Their study of recently retired high school principals in North Carolina and Alabama determined their perceptions of the legacy of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision for both Black educators and high school students (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004). Lyons and Chelsey's (2004) study participants asserted that due to the large decrease of Black educators (both teachers and principals), a whole generation of Black educators were lost. They pointed out that because so many Black schools were closed, Black principals were delegated or reassigned as assistant principals (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004). They further described that in most cases, they were forced to serve as assistant principals to less experienced White principals (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004). Lyons and Chelsey's (2004) research highlighted the fact that because tenure laws and reduction in force (RIF) policies were not in place in the states forced to desegregate, Black principals and teachers did not have the ability to fight their displacements and dismissals. By the 1970s, over 38,000 Black educators were displaced and replaced by White educators after desegregation efforts were made (Walker & Byas, 2003; Milner & Howard, 2004; Green, 2004; Delpit, 2012). This example provided a counter to the most common stories of great efforts and rewards made in the United States as a result of desegregation, and instead centered the missing narratives. After the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, not only were Black educators removed from service of schools in their communities, but

Black children began to be educated in greater numbers by people who did not look like them, did not live in their communities, and did not have the context or understanding of Black family or community life. This reality resulted in literature focused on attempting to describe Black culture and Black values related to education, rather than on leadership theory (Anderson, 1988).

From the Civil Rights Movement to A Nation at Risk *(1968-1983)*

In spite of the Civil Rights movement, the counternarrative of Black educators prevailed. The effects of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision on Black educators continued even after the Civil Rights Movement. As a result of the replacement of Black educators with White educators, often the values, beliefs, and shared experience between leaders and students went missing in Black communities (Lomotey, 1989; Tillman; 2004). The lack of narratives and examples of Black principals' strength and resilience to oppression, their shared experiences, and modeling significantly impacted many Black communities during this time.

The limited or absent perspectives, experiences, and leadership practices of Black principals was even further spotlighted with the release of the 1983 President's Commission on Excellence in Education report entitled *A Nation at Risk.* The Secretary of Education, T. H. Bell, created the National Commission on Education in August 1981 to examine the quality of education in the United States. A summary of the findings of the *A Nation at Risk* report were: (1) students in American schools were underperforming, (2) illiteracy rates of American adults were significantly high, (3) academic achievement for high school students were declining, (4) teachers were poorly trained, and (5) American superiority would be challenged by international countries with

better prepared students (U. S. Department of Education, 1983). The implications of the report caused a national panic and drew attention to some of the most challenging aspects of the condition of public education (Lomotey, 1989),

The *A Nation at Risk* report brought great attention to urban schools, which, at this time, were most commonly defined as schools and school districts located larger inner cities (Phelps, 1997). Lomotey's (1989) study of the implications of the *A Nation at Risk* report included an examination of The Carnegie Foundation's (1988) report entitled "An Imperiled Generation: Saving Urban Schools," which stated:

> America must confront with urgency the crisis in urban schools. Bold aggressive action is needed now to avoid leaving a huge and growing segment of the nation's youth civically unprepared and economically unempowered. (as quoted in in Lomotey, 1989, p. 85)

The report continued with a focus on what was then the then largest minority population at the time, African Americans representing 12.1% of the population of the United States (United States Census Bureau, 1990). Lomotey (1989) described the report's presentation of the underachievement of African Americans as "persistent, pervasive and disproportionate" (p. #). States throughout the country were scrambling to find data to show that students were learning and making academic gains. By 1990-1991, only a handful of states did not require some sort of statewide test that aimed to gather achievement data for the states' school districts (Phelps, 1997). Lomotey (1987) asserted that since the introduction of standardized tests, African American students had not done well and continued to perform behind their White peers. He further stated that the absence of Black principals had significantly impacted the success of Black students (Lomotey, 1987).

To counter the negative narratives and portrayals of Black children and Black communities, Black people, including scholars, sought to find more positive depictions of Blacks that included looking to more historic models and highlights within Black history (Asante, 1988; Mazama, 2002; Norment, 2001, Lomotey, 1989; Karenga, 1992). This period was significant in that it led to an effort amongst Black scholars to highlight the benefits of Black educators to Black students. This period also saw the rise of Black parents demanding better educational options for their children, as seen in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (Fuller, 2002, 2015). After the *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report, there was a surge of research disrupting deficit narratives of the education of Black youth and demonstrating the impact of Black principals on Black communities (Lomotey, 1987, 1989, 1993; Fuller, 2002, 2015). Lomotey's (1993) research argued that Black principals in predominantly Black schools share three distinct qualities: A commitment to the education of all students, confidence in the ability of all students to do well, and compassion for and understanding of all students and the communities in which they live. However, as the rise in research of Black principals by mostly Black scholars continued to assert the benefits of Black principals' experiences and practices, the national educational policy continued to approach education and particularly Black children's education from a deficit mindset (Lomotey,1989, 1993; Loder, 2005).

From **A Nation at Risk** ***to*** **No Child Left Behind** ***(2002)***

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002), spearheaded by the President George W. Bush administration was an educational policy that emphasized accountability toward stronger student learning outcomes. The stronger expectations outlined in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) were: Greater attention to disaggregated student data including

English language learners, students in special education, and poor and minority children. The rationale was to more closely analyze the data in hopes of increasing the identified groups achievement. With goals to respond to the continuing achievement decline of American students and the growing achievement gaps between White students and socio-economically disadvantaged Black and Latinx students prioritized by the *A Nation at Risk* report, national educational policies became more regimented toward school accountability and oversight. With the reality of the historic legacy of the displacement of Teachers of Colors, the challenges of a rapidly diversifying student population, and the pressure of increased student expectations and greater school accountability, the stakes were raised for all school leaders including Black principals.

However, while the United States' student demographics were becoming increasingly more diverse, the teaching and leader forces were becoming more White (Ogunbawo, 2012; Knaus, 2014; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Even with a slow and steady increase in recent years in the numbers of Blacks in principal positions, Black school leaders continued to experience many challenges related to their aspirations and climb up the school leader ladder and often felt stagnant in their roles as assistant principals with limited opportunities for advancement to full principalship (Lyons & Chelsey, 2004; Pollard, 1997; Brown, 2005; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gooden, 2012; Ogunbawo, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Knaus, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). Nationally, Black teachers were often overlooked and not provided opportunities to advance or be developed (Coleman & Campbell- Stephens, 2010; Knaus, 2014; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; U.S. Department of Education, 2016) as evidenced by their declining numbers

represented in principalship. Black leaders were commonly last to be considered for promotion or advancement to principalship (Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014).

The experiences were similar for Blacks that led in mostly Black and/or large school populations of communities of color and Black principals that led in White schools (Pollard, 1997; Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Milner, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). In a qualitative study, Knaus (2014) interviewed participants to gain a deeper understanding of the role of racism in Black teachers' ability to progress in urban teacher leadership development. His study included interviews with three White principals, as well as a Black and a White teacher from each school (Knaus, 2014). His study revealed that of the three White principals who he interviewed, all believed that they had deep value for equity (Knaus, 2014). However, the practices that they implemented toward the advancement of their Black teachers illustrated something completely different: The three White teachers who were interviewed all believed that they had been treated just and fairly in the opportunities that were given to them for advancement (Knaus, 2014). Their responses indicated that they believed they were better performing and that the Black teachers in their schools did not meet the "criteria" for advancement (Knaus, 2014). The three Black teachers interviewed demonstrated through their responses that they felt they were not treated with equity and the actions of members of the school community (principal, teachers and families) often made them feel that perhaps they were not worthy of being given the opportunities to advance (Knaus, 2014). Their feelings of inadequacy did not seem warranted, because their literacy and math achievement data collected by Knaus

(2014) during his research demonstrated that they were effective not only with Black children, but with all of the students that they served in their classrooms. The inconsistencies presented by Knaus' (2014) study further described the challenges that Black teachers experience when seeking advancement into leadership.

Madsen and Mabokela's (2014) qualitative study of Black leaders in a school district also reflected upon some of the challenges Black school leaders have experienced in trying to lead for diversity. The principals in the study discussed the difficulties they had when trying to ensure equitable experiences for teachers (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). In the study, the researchers did not have access to Black principals, because there were no Black principals in the district; so, they included Black assistant principals (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Similar to Knaus' (2014) study, the experiences described between Black and White school leaders were strikingly different. The White principals in Madseon and Mabokela's (2014) study spoke frequently about their desires to not see race in terms of the decision making within their schools, which included the hiring of new teachers. However, each of the White principals described the ways in which they included Black teachers on hiring committees, which aimed to leverage their Black teachers for the recruitment of more Black teachers (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Each of the Black assistant principals in the study described themselves as educators who started out at later points in their lives and were currently hoping to advance toward the principalship; however, they were unsure if there were ready or if they had or would be given enough development opportunities (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Madsen and Mabokela's (2014) study highlighted the similarities of experiences between Black

teachers and school leaders in their lack of access to opportunities of advancement and development.

There were other various examples in the literature that showed that Black principals were not given equitable opportunities for advancement. There is a history of a pervasive narrative of Black principals that says Black principals are most effective with Black and Latinx children. Because of this, often Black principals are sent to underperforming schools in communities of color (Pollard, 1997; Loder, 2005; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). Respondents in several studies stated that they believed they were being sent on a mission to go to schools with students that looked like them because perhaps they had the secret answer to make the schools perform better. Black principals were often asked to make the most out of limited resources and extreme disadvantage (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). They were sent to school communities with a last hope mentality (Bess, 2009). In spite of the challenging circumstances, Black principals focused hard and looked for strategies to best approach leading their schools toward success (Bess, 2009; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015).

Although Black principals regularly tried to meet the needs of their school communities, they were at times met with moments of mistrust. In Loder's (2005) qualitative study of African American women principals in Chicago, research participants described their experiences coming into school communities in which students and families were unsure of their motives and expectations. Loder's (2005) study centered on the principalships of Black women that grew up before the Civil Rights timeframe. Her respondents discussed the challenges that they faced after desegregation and after changes were made in school policies (Loder, 2005). They discussed the feelings of

mistrust they felt from Black families and Black students, when they first arrived in the school community (Loder, 2005). The principals explained that Black families and students were unsure of the intentions and motives behind the moves that they made in the school. Loder's (2005) respondents explained this mistrust was a result of the differences of values and beliefs of educators that followed desegregation. The respondents' reflections illustrate that the keys to their leadership were not their racial similarities, but instead their ability to be responsive and thoughtful about creating opportunities to listen to the needs and voices of their communities (Loder, 2005).

In the research conducted by Madsen and Mabokela (2014), participants discussed their challenges fighting stereotypical roles and perceptions of why they were hired. Participants detailed the ways in which mostly White staff and school communities believed that they are "diversity" hires (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). They also expressed the ways that White teachers perceive them to have a special ability to deal with "those" kids and their behavior concerns (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). A respondent described an added layer of complexity when he noted his experiences with often having to address discipline inequities in order to ensure that Black children were treated fairly (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). In Knaus' (2014) study, one of the Black teachers aspiring to leadership narrated the various experiences of having her classroom disrupted by White teachers that brought her their own Black students who they could not handle in their classes. This common practice reflects unintended consequence and displaced responsibility given to a Black teacher that should be shared by all educators through having received capacity building professional development on ways to support culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Yet another subtle idea surfaced in the extant literature regarding Black principals having to regularly prove their worth. A respondent in Madsen and Mabokela's (2014) study identified the process as "image management" (p. #). He described the challenges of having to prove daily that he was worthy of his job and its authority, as well as consistently having to promote a positive image as a Black male school leader (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). Participants in Coleman and Campbell-Stephens' (2010) research described how they as Black principals often felt as though they were stuck in the same jobs and were only given opportunities to do jobs that White employers allotted to them. The extant literature showed that Black principals needing to "prove their worth" happened in mostly White schools rather than schools with mostly Black and Latinx children (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Knaus, 2014). Here again, the narrative that Black principals are most effective with children of color because of racial connections resurfaced. However, the literature about Black principals demonstrated that their understanding of their racialized experience has contributed to their experiences and practices in both dominantly White and dominantly children of color schools.

Various examples in the literature further asserted that regardless of school demographics, Black principals were deeply committed to their school communities and their leadership was demonstrated outside of the confines of the school building (Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). Loder's (2005) description of care—which she referred to as "othermothering"—furthered the example of commitment to their school communities; othermothering is a way in which Black principals love and care for the students as if they were their own children (p. 314). One of her respondents further explained "that sometimes these kids

don't have a mother at home that shows them love and gives them direction" (p. 314). This respondent believed that othermothering was an offering of the love and care that they may or may not have received prior to entering school (Loder, 2005). This is just one example of how Black principals' practices are central to understanding their contributions to the narratives of school leadership in many different school contexts.

Pastoral Care. This review of literature detailed the impact of leading with care as a central part of Black principals' practices (Pollard, 1997; Tillman, 2004, 2008; Loder, 2005; Bess 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). In most cases, when asked to describe their practices, Black principals discussed the substance of their leadership as grounded in the care of their students, staff, and greater school communities (Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). To further the discussion of care, I critically examined one of the theories that rose during this time about pastoral care, which was coined by scholars within the field of educational leadership. It was first developed by Witherspoon and Arnold (2010), who used the theoretical framework to describe the approaches these Black principals take when leading for social justice. The dominant theme associated with pastoral care practices of Black principals is attention to care for the students and communities served. Their research further defined pastoral care as one that is concerned with the spiritual development in the concept of caring for the whole child (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). They developed their theory of pastoral care from their qualitative study and analysis of literature that inquired into the distinct

leadership practices utilized by four Black women principals, whose intersectional identities as being both Black and women were examined.

The title of pastoral care came from its connection to the Black church community and the essential role that pastors play in Black communities (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). Given the tensions felt by school leaders due to growing school accountability, this framework's attention to the role of the leaders' identities and what that meant for the application (practice) of pastoral care was significant. However, the analysis of pastoral care centered around the religio-spiritual connections that showed up in these leaders' practices (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). When the principals were asked about their practices, their responses focused on their belief that they were doing the work of God (Withersoon & Arnold, 2010). One respondent made mention of race, but it was referenced as her connection to God, "So much of who I am as a Black woman means living with integrity" (quoted in Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010, p.225). This priority of God's work was a significant one; therefore, pastoral care as a theoretical framework illustrated the prioritization by these Black principals to their deep desire of alignment to God's work and purpose for their lives.

Critical Spirituality. Purpose and deep commitment are prevalent in school leadership theories and school leadership looks different in different contexts (Pollard, 1997; Bess, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Khalifa, 2013; Milner, 2012; Ward Randolph, 2012; Shields, 2013; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016; Knaus, 2014). This was a substantial factor as it related to examining of another leadership framework that came from Black educational leadership scholarship. Similar to pastoral care, critical spiritually developed as a theoretical

concept during the increasing time of school accountability (Dantley, 2003). Critical spirituality is grounded in the historic meaning of Black church and African American spirituality. Its religio-spirituality takes a central role in this theory on school leadership practice. Dantley's (2010) research on care is described as critical spirituality, which he explains as:

> …the transformative educational leader, grounded in African American spirituality and critical theory will examine carefully the dissonance between what presently happens in schools that perpetuates the status quo and what could happen in schools that would bring about marked change in these institutions. (p. 215)

Dantley (2010) further emphasized that critical spirituality is composed of four elements: (a) A psychology of critical self-reflection, (b) deconstructive interpretation, (c) performative creativity, and (d) transformative action. Dantley's (2003, 2010) theorizing of critical spirituality placed a heavy charge on principals to utilize practices that strive for and challenge systems that maintain the status quo for students and communities. These four elements of critical spirituality are believed to be components that empower a principal to make changes that challenge the external and internal factors which impact a school community, including the need for greater accountability and push toward achievement in student outcomes, such as testing (Dantley, 2003, 2010).

Critical spirituality aimed to provide a framework for all principals who wanted to fight against the implicit biases and oppressive systems that plague urban schools (Dantley, 2003, 2010). Like the analysis of pastoral care, critical spirituality originated in the roots of African American spiritual practices, and, as such, does not explicitly center the role of race. A limitation of this framework comes in one of the four elements, self-reflection. Within this framework, self-reflection has an absence of discussion and/or

reflection on the significance of one's race in the process of reflection. This missing component exposes a more sizeable flaw in the theory to address the many ways that race impacts the school experience for both leaders and the greater school community.

Authentic Leadership. Authentic leadership also developed during this time in response to major events that were occurring across the nation. During the early 2000s, the Nation was battling the economic fallout of poor decisions made by self-interested businesspeople. This period was epitomized by what was known as the Enron Scandal (Gardner et al., 2011). The Enron corporation became the symbol for self-interested businesspeople who made abusive and misleading decisions that negatively impacted financial markets across the world (Gardner et al., 2011). As a result, alternative business leadership models were rising, with hopes of restoring the public's image of business. With its roots in positive psychology, authentic leadership entered the scene with its focus on leadership values and beliefs (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Since education was also experiencing its own version of scrutiny, the application of authentic leadership into educational leadership seemed natural. Authentic leadership is grounded in the Greek notion of authenticity; in fact, "authenticity" has etymological roots in Greek philosophy's concept of *authento*, which means to have full power (Triffling, 1972). Authentic leadership is grounded both in a leader's deep understanding of themselves, but also in what that means to their followers. This definition suggests that in order for one to understand herself, she must be in full control or power of herself, which alludes to the modern understanding of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). Leadership and its delicate relationship with power are part of the growing interest in authentic leadership.

Especially in the challenging reality of schools—specifically urban schools—the idea of a leader that had a strong disposition toward positive moral leadership, leading with their values, set the stage for the rise of authentic leadership (Sparrowe, 2005; Cooper et al., 2005; Gardner et al., 2011; Wilson, 2016). With its heavy reliance on values and morals, educational leadership scholars Duignan and Macpherson (1992) were among the first to bridge the mostly positive psychology theory into educational leadership. Because schools are places in which individual, collective, and societal values meet daily, the application of authentic leadership theory transitioned smoothly. Duignan (2014) published an article by himself which stated that the two most difficult questions in educational administration (leadership) are: "(1) How should leaders in education decide what is important? and (2) How will they know they are morally right, when they act?" (p. 2). These two questions have continued meaning contemporarily, which is riddled with high stakes testing and increasing under-resourced environments of urban public schools.

In Sparrowe's (2005) essay which is used to build the theoretical basis for authentic leadership, he describes the ways that narratives help to explain and understand the actions of self and others. He asserted that in order to develop authentic leadership, a deep understanding of the many components of the narrative self is essential, including moments of self-awareness and triggering events that determine the leader's authentic story. Shamir and Eilam's (2005) contribution to the theoretical foundation of authentic leadership championed that performing a leadership function and related activities are self-expressive acts for authentic leaders. Therefore, this furthered the notion that

authentic leaders do not take on leadership roles for status or personal accolades (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

The research of Walker and Shuangye (2007) further developed the idea of self-reflection and narrative self by presenting authentic leadership in the intercultural contexts of schools. Their research stated that there are three primary ways that authentic leadership can happen within intercultural context: (1) Leaders seeking authenticity increase their cultural understanding through learning in ways that lead to improved practice in schools, (2) leader authenticity can be developed by understanding the cultures which comprise the school, and (3) leader authenticity can be developed through understanding and valuing other cultural perspectives, which in turn models similar behavior throughout the school (Walker & Shuangye, 2007). The research furthered that authentic leaders are caught in a continual balancing act of utilizing the skills and thoughts they previously learned with new concepts and learnings of the intercultural context.

Leadership is authenticated by followers, as the followers are a central element in verifying the leader's authenticity (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Wilson (2014) discussed that authentic leaders must conceptualize authentic leadership in what he describes as three interrelated dimensions of values in action: Personal authenticity, or being true to one's self; ideal authenticity, or aspiring to professional ideals and using ethical leadership; and social authenticity, or being faithful to meeting the expectations, values, and beliefs of both the school and wider social community being served by the school. Walker and Shuangye (2007) spotlight the notion that authentic school leadership necessitates that

leaders deeply understand their school community and themselves, as their actions and behavior become the example to follow.

Authentic leadership has come under criticism for presenting as acontextual and problematic. The literature shows that there are several researchers that maintain that authentic leadership cannot be separated from the context in which it is being practiced and that the freedom to utilize it as a practice is contingent upon a variety of factors (Fine, 2017; Faircloth, 2017; Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2017). Algera and Lips-Wiersma (2012) stress that authenticity requires one to create their own meaning. Further, research presented by Ngunjiri and Hernandez (2017) asserts a criticism to authentic leadership, as they argued against the idea that authenticity is a relational concept, because it is not contextualized for those whose social identities set them apart from the majority within organizations and society. These direct challenges to authentic leadership's lack of inclusion and varied application limit the theory's development.

Another significant criticism in the literature of authentic leadership is the lack of a conception of authentic leadership that includes the complex identities associated with race and culture. For instance, Faircloth (2017) shared her life story and her leadership journey, as she highlighted that as an Indigenous scholar, the environments in which she has worked prevented her from being able to truly utilize authentic leadership practices. She explained that as she was encouraged to take on increased leadership roles, she struggled to see herself as a leader in the traditional sense of what she thought leadership meant (Faircloth, 2017). She also discussed the ways in which her personal and professional values and beliefs as an Indigenous woman leader did not feel in sync with the environments she was tasked to lead (Faircloth, 2017). Significantly, she

pointed out that still missing was an in-depth treatment of the ways that multiple aspects of one's identity affect leadership aspirations and values, and ultimately leadership practices (Faircloth, 2017).

This last criticism further suggested that school leadership can be viewed through a racialized perspective. Given the political climate of schools during the *No Child Left Behind* period, in part due to the increased accountability and the glaring differences between the changing student and teacher/leader demographics, the reality depicted a need to utilize an educational theory that provided an opportunity to reflect and respond to the many challenges. Even through the discussion of the application of authentic leadership into educational contexts, the experiences and practices of Black principals in this theory were missing. This analysis of authentic leadership has shown that just as important in the work of school leadership as accountability is a need for discussion of the ways that the cultures of leaders impact the school communities they lead. The reflection of this time theory like those discussed earlier demonstrates a gap in greater understanding of the racialized experiences.

From* No Child Left Behind *to* Every Student Succeeds Act *(ESSA)

The literature reflected that although the espoused desire of the nation persisted for increased student outcomes, the sobering truth was that educational outcomes and opportunities illustrated a greater disparity between racial and socio-economic groups, ability levels, and language learners. The *No Child Left Behind Act* (2002) was replaced by President Barak Obama's administration's *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) in 2015. The national shift to the new ESSA policy was in response to the unsavory fact that the earlier policies of *No Child Left Behind* had not yielded any of the gains hoped to

have been accomplished from the policy. The ESSA policy included elimination and flexibility in some of the following areas: Elimination of adequate yearly progress and highly qualified teachers (HLQ) requirements, prescribed interventions, elimination of teacher/principal evaluation systems connected to student testing scores, and flexible funding (U. S. Department of Education, 2016). Although the national policies encouraged greater flexibility in terms of school accountability, the need to drastically change student outcomes continued to be the responsibility of school leaders. In an effort to positively increase student outcomes and respond to the growing needs of schools and communities, educational theories continue to evolve in response to various leadership attempts at meeting students and families' growing needs.

Transformative Leadership. Each year, schools become more and more complex due to a variety of different variables (Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Jun, 2011; Miller, Brown & Hopson, 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Wilson, 2016). School communities (students, teachers, principals and families) try and make meaning of numerous dynamics, including political, economic, and social, among others, that impact the ability to change the life trajectory of each student (Shields, 2000, 2010, 2013; Miller et al., 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Wilson, 2016). These factors created the conditions for a call for a different kind of leadership. Transformative leadership is traced to the educational philosophy and framework of Paulo Friere, whose model of education was a political movement (Miller et al., 2011). Although Friere's work is written during the late twentieth century, it was highly relevant and therefore applicable to urban schools in the United States during this time (Miller et al., 2011). Freire's "critical consciousness" is a foundation for transformative leadership (Miller et al., 2011). In critical consciousness,

education acts as a liberator, which is why one of the tenets of transformative leadership is a focus on emancipation (Miller et al., 2011).

Transformative leadership is defined as "a critical approach to leadership[…]that requires critical reflection of to whom the system is working and for who it is failing, of who is advantaged, privileged, and always included, and who is marginalized and excluded" (Shields, 2013, p.5). In Shields (2013) article, she described the consistent struggle and debate that she argued has always existed in public education. The roots of these debates have included disagreements regarding its purpose and to whom should be included and should receive the benefits of public education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tillman, 2004). Shields (2013) used the military acronym VUCA—which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity—to describe parts of recent educational contexts. Shields (2013) asserted the need to overturn VUCA, and referenced educational practitioner Denise who claimed that in this moment in education, VUCA should instead stand for a need for vision, understanding, clarity and agility (Shields, 2013). This perspective echoes others who added to transformative leadership theory.

Transformative leadership is complex and has many tenets, but ethics and moral values play an essential role throughout (Shields, 2000; Miller et al., 2011; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018). There are eight tenets of transformative leadership that are most often reflected in the literature:

1. A mandate for deep and equitable change,
2. The need to deconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice and to reconstruct them in more equitable ways,
3. The need to address the inequitable distribution of power,
4. An emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good,

5. A focus on emancipation, democracy, equity and justice,
6. An emphasis on interconnectedness, interdependence, and global awareness,
7. The necessity of balancing critique with promise, and
8. The call to exhibit moral courage. (Shields, 2018. p. 24)

Through these eight tenets, the theory's goal was to address the need for systemic and equitable change in education. The discussion of the ways in which transformative leadership could do this was through a dual strategy that is both focused on the brokenness within a system and what can be done within school buildings to remedy problems (Shields, 2010; Miller et al., 2011). Proponents of transformative leadership argued that the idea of brokenness is seen as only a concern that exists within schools, when in fact they believe that the concern is much larger (Shields, 2010; Miller et al., 2011; Bieneman, 2011; Oord, 2013; Shields et al., 2018).

Transformative leadership had several benefits. The first of these was the idea that leadership exist as a possibility for anyone within a system. This means that leadership was not exclusive to someone with the label of leader (Bieneman, 2010; Shields, 2010; Jun, 2011). In Oord's (2013) research, knowledge and expertise exist everywhere. This is an important notion for transformative leaders, as it promotes an encouragement to think through and challenge all stakeholders to strategize toward ending opportunities gaps and inequities. The research stated that transformative leaders work diligently to be inclusive of the traditionally voiceless and disenfranchised; therefore, the transformative leader's work is both inside and outside (Miller et al., 2011; Shields, 2018).

This means that inside, or within the leader is deeply connected to and outside the leader's inspiring change for others (Bieneman, 2011; Zook, 2016). However,

transformative leadership failed to address the ways that the identity of the leader impacts their ability and their approaches to the ways they do the work, and more specifically, the role that the race of the leader plays in the leader's approach to their leadership. A critical examination of the transformative leadership literature for this review reveals narratives included of Black principals that practice transformative leadership, but their inclusion did not center the experiences and practices of Black principals (Wilson, 2016; Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016). In addition, the tenets of transformative leadership do not specifically address identity and its role in navigating change, which is different than the examples and narratives of Black principals throughout history. This suggested that another theory should be included that further examine identity as a component of leadership.

Culturally Responsive Leadership. Situated in the reality of the gap widening between the racial and cultural differences of educators (teachers and principals) and students is the cultural mismatch (Milner, 2007; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011). The growing truth of this reality led to the creation of what is known as culturally responsive leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Research on culturally responsive leadership asserted that because of the diversity of students in schools, more attention needed to be placed on the educational philosophies, epistemologies, and perspectives of those working in schools (Gay, 1994, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; Brown, 2007; Horsford, 2009; Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; Khalifa, 2013). Culturally responsive leadership surfaced almost twenty-five years after the groundbreaking scholarship of Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant and Gay's (1994) culturally

responsive pedagogies, both which significantly transformed the landscape of education and reform.

Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis' (2016) synthesis of the literature of culturally responsive leadership helped to provide a framework for the ways in which a school environment can become responsive to the needs of their minoritized students. The development of culturally responsive leadership came from a push made by Gay (2010) in which she stressed that culturally responsive teaching is not enough to make the kind of impact needed for minoritized children. Gay (2010) further emphasized by saying that if teachers can advance themselves toward making the changes that students need in their classrooms, then administrators should make similar if not greater changes to make lasting changes for their schools. Therefore, culturally responsive leadership is centered around the work of principals.

Because principals are key to instructional improvement and significantly impact student learning, centering the responsibility and work of the principal within culturally responsive leadership seemed logical (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis' (2016) culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) framework is described through what they call behaviors—such as practices, actions, mannerisms, policies and discourses—which they believe influence a school climate and thus impact student outcomes. Their research focused on the culturally responsive school leadership of minoritized students. They largely define minoritized students as those that have been marginalized because of race, ethnicity, religion, language or citizenship (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

The discussed benefits of culturally responsive school leadership is the possibility of creating schools in which students, families and communities can see themselves and the promise of greater opportunities and inclusion (Gay, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tillman, 2004; Horsford, 2009; Horsford, et al., 2011; Walker & Byas, 2003; Khalifa et al., 2016). However, the recent practice of school leadership is not meeting the needs of all students, and specifically those in urban school districts. CRSL suggests that students, families, and their communities would be validated for their social and/or cultural capital (Yosso, 2005). This shift in leadership prioritization has the ability to increase the respect needed to build bridges between schools and community.

Culturally responsive school leadership generated a push for creating inclusive and responsive school communities for minoritized students. However, it missed an opportunity to provide space for diverse and minoritized leaders to talk about the role that their race and culture play in their everyday leadership. Unlike the previously discussed educational leadership theories, CRSL includes numerous narratives and examples of Black principals' experiences and practices. While CRSL uses its behaviors to describe the ways in which culturally responsive school leaders should behave to create more inclusive school communities, CRSL did not explain or critically examine the role that a principal's understanding of their own race and culture play in the way that they lead for children of color and/or within schools. This critical examination of the extant literature of Black principals demonstrated that their race was central to their understanding of their role.

African philosophy specifically says that authenticity finds its triumph in allowing people to clearly understand themselves through their own history (Asante, 1988). This

sense of authenticity is evident in Black principals' practice of understanding why they chose principalship and how they practice school leadership. One of the leaders interviewed as part of qualitative study asserted that as part of her leadership practice, she does not have to navigate the cultural language because she is already a member and therefore understands it (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). A significant component of this discussion is that Black principals can be grounded in their understanding their shared or similar experiences with many of their students, especially those who are Blakc (Pollard, 1997; Walker & Byas, 2003; Loder, 2005; Tillman, 2008; Milner, 2012; Delpit, 2012; Ward Randolph, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). This shared experience became a pivotal component to the ways in which Black principals embraced leadership. The literature illustrated the ways in which Black principals have faced, combated, and navigated the systems of an oppressive society that sees them through their race and has consequently placed race-based conditions on them. Through their shared experiences, they had a greater understanding of the impacts of racism, poverty, community expectations, and parenting styles, to name a few (Walker & Byas, 2003; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). Arguably, these shared experiences acted as an essential component of the foundations of Black principal practice in the United States.

The literature of Black principals illuminated the complexity of Black principalship and shows that in spite and because of challenges, Black principals are committed to the success and creation of a promising future for children, and Black children and communities more specifically. The literature highlights that Black principals both past and present remain committed to the charge of leading students into a

better tomorrow. Fortunately, their experiences and practices act as witnesses to the persistence of racism and other oppressive demands that have not overtaken the dedication, perseverance, and capacity to battle and empower others by Black principals in this country. The literature highlights that since the creation of Black schools after the Emancipation, Black principals' experiences and practices have consistently been characterized through bravery, commitment, and resilience worthy of centered exploration.

Summary

This review of literature examined two primary constructs: Black principalship and educational leadership theories. The findings of these two areas resulted in several key conclusions. First, the educational leadership theories included in this review—including transformative leadership, authentic leadership, culturally responsive leadership, pastoral care, and critical spirituality—focus on leadership in urban schools and consistently missed opportunities to discuss and explicitly explore the differences in racialized experiences that shape leadership styles and practice. The literature demonstrates that there is still a lack of inclusion, and in some cases, authentic leadership, of Black principals' experiences and examination of their practices. This lack of inclusion acts as a signpost indicating a finite space for theory development and application. Second, there is a lack of understanding and discussion about the role that race plays in leadership practices. Third, the missing narratives and literature on Black principal's experiences and practice left room for an omission and possible validation of the skills that result from race-centered leadership practices and reflection. Fourth, an

inclusive and race-centered model of school leadership is needed to meet the various needs of school communities.

The extant literature has shown that a few of the most recent educational leadership theories have missed the important element of centering one's racialized experience as a key part of reflection on leadership experience or practice. Universities and school districts can benefit from embracing a race-centered leadership model. As the nation continually becomes more diverse, so too should the narratives of principalship. This study explores the meaning of race to Black principals within their practices and experiences of principalship. The literature for this has illustrated the experiences and leadership practices of Black principals are unique and deserve further exploration.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Two was a presentation of evidence drawn from the extant literature about Black principals' experiences and practices as unique and concludes by asserting that further research is needed to capture the essence of Black principals' leadership. In Chapter Three, I describe the rationale for phenomenology as a methodological approach for this study. Husserl (1970) defined phenomenology as the "science of essence of consciousness," which is focused on defining the meaning and essence of lived experience (p. #). A phenomenological methodology is most appropriate for this study, because it will allow me to collect detailed descriptions of Black principals' experiences and the meaning they make of their Black identities in their principalship. My purpose is to understand the essence of the lived racialized experiences of Black principals, and there are several assumptions that undergird it: (1) Reality is subjective and constructed, (2) there is value in lived experiences and the individual, (3) there are multiple truths, and (4) the researcher is both a participant and observer (Van der Mascht, 2004; McKenzie, 2016; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Crowther et al., 2017; Creswell, 2017).

In this phenomenological qualitative study, I explore how Black principals make meaning of their Black racialized identity in the context of their principalship. The research question for this study was: What is the essence of Black principals' racialized identity in their principalship? Using sixty-minute, semi-structured interviews over a ten-

week period as my data collection method, I collected perceptions of Black P-12 principals who lead in urban schools.

A Phenomenological Approach

To make meaning of the past and present experiences of eight urban P-12 Black principals to gain deeper understanding of the essence of Black principalship, I used a hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenological approach (Crowther et al., 2017; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). A hermeneutic phenomenological method was chosen for this study because of the method's ability to reveal aspects of phenomena that are rarely noticed or described (Crowther et al., 2017, Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). More specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the interpretation of the structures of experience and with how things are understood by people who live through these experiences as well as those who study them (Crowther et al., 2017; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In this study, I seek to uncover the underlying essence of the experiences of mostly newer (year 0-16) Black principals and their meaning making of how their Black identity informs their roles in the principalship.

At its core, hermeneutic phenomenology has a perspective that the understanding of individuals cannot occur in isolation of their culture, social context, or historical period (Wojar & Swanson, 2007). In this study, I focus on how experiences of Black principals are connected to culture, social context, and historical period. Regarding social contexts, this study focuses on the experiences principals in the earlier part of their careers. In addition, consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology, I use a forestructure for understanding, which consists of: Fore- having, in that all individuals come with a particular practice, from their background or familiarity, which enables them to make an

interpretation; foresight, or their own individual socio-cultural background, which gives them a point of view from which to make and an interpretation; and foreception, an anticipation of what might be found because of their socio-cultural background (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The forestructure element of hermeneutic phenomenology is another important element for this study, as I am a Black woman principal and am therefore connected through my identity to this study. Hermeneutic phenomenology asserts that a researcher must always articulate their pre-understandings and power relations that they bring to the listening and understanding of the experiences of their participants. Further, these pre-understandings and background both initiated and underpin this inquiry.

Researcher Positionality

I am a student of Africana, African American, or Black Studies. As a student of this discipline, I have many values and beliefs that are grounded within the discipline of Africana Studies, which rose up as a response to the Black Power movement. The Black Power movement occurred in 1960's and 1970's America, as Black students on college campuses demanded for the Academy to give serious attention and space for the significant and numerous contributions Black people had on the country and the world (Norment, 2001; McDougal, 2014). Thus, as a student in the field, I have embraced one of its basic tenets of continually advocating and seeking strategies for freedom of the oppressed and/or marginalized, and more specifically Black people. As an Africana Studies Master's student at Temple University, my most impressionable memory was that after each of my classes, we were charged by the faculty members to continually be thinking and planning of what were we going to do for our (Black) people. This made

me consistently think about what my contributions to the narrative of Black people in the world will be.

Some of the foundational principles of this discipline are: (1) To analyze, produce, investigate, and disseminate knowledge about African people, (2) to involve and incorporate the content, ideologies, and methodologies of African American Studies in all aspects of the community, (3) to prepare undergraduate and graduate students with knowledge, skills. and paradigms to critically analyze factors that affect African people in America, and (4) to identify issues and problems African Americans face and to provide leadership and solutions to resolve them (Norment, 2001). A foundational belief of the discipline that I have wholeheartedly embraced is that Black people have value and they offer unique perspective and history that is worthy of study and appreciation. The essential principle of this study is that Black people are capable to provide leadership, create solutions, and resolve their own challenges. This study, which is centered on Black principals making meaning of their Black identity in principalship, is grounded on this foundational belief, the conceptual framework that asserts Black leadership is significant and can provide solutions otherwise unseen in educational leadership.

Another significant part of my identity is that of a school leader. My position as a principal and a student of Black studies means that I consistently view experiences and weigh decisions through a racialized lens. This means that my interactions with students, staff, and families are filtered through my experience as a Black woman. In administration and leadership meetings and spaces, where decisions and strategies are determined, I am hyper aware that most often, I am the only Black person in the room and that my voice represents other disenfranchised and marginalized people who are not

often provided the access and opportunities that I have received. Principalship for me means that I often have the ability to design systems and to think and respond according to what group may be most affected by choices for the "greater good."

My background in Black studies has impacted my identity as a mother and the ways in which I decide to parent my children. I have raised my daughters to understand their racialized identities. My racial reality influences many components of my mothering experience from my daughters' names to the schools in which I have chosen to enroll them. As a divorcée, my intersectional identity includes the experience of being a single Black mother and standing often against the deficit thinking of differently configured family structures, my own experience resembling students that enter our schools each day. It is because of my multiple, intersectional identities and perspectives that I have been drawn to an inquiry into the ways—if any—that Black principals make meaning of their racial identities in principalship. Aligning with the charge of my discipline in my Master's, this research aims to counter the one-size-fits-all dominant narrative of the experiences and practices of principalship by exploring the significant nuances of racial identity.

Further, as a current school leader, I approach this study with an insider perspective, and my positionality as an insider to this study is significant. As a principal and school leader for the past six years, I have been intentional about developing relationships with other Black school leaders in my district. These relationships are important to this study because they provided the groundwork for my purposeful sampling of Black principals. Although I may not have had a close relationship with each of the principals in this study, we were familiar and comfortable with one another

due to our associations with one another in the small community of Black principals/school leaders within our district. Our comfort and familiarity with one another are rooted in years of cordial conversations about our school leadership experiences, as well as the unspoken or subtle clues passed between us about our racialized experiences in school leadership. This has led to purposeful sampling of Black principals that I have had exchanges with during my leadership journey. Our time and conversations have surfaced the impact and role of our racialized experiences. With the hope of providing extended time, space, and beginnings of established trust in my insider experience, I purposely selected each principal for this study.

Research Design

The historic and current literature on Black principal experiences and practices include stories of love, holding high expectations, and making meaning of their deep understanding of the significance of their black identity to the role of principalship (Lewis, 2016; Horsford, 2009; Ware, 2006; Tillman, 2004; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2014). These stories make Black school leaders' experiences and styles uniquely their own. Hermeneutic phenomenology is centered in the belief that the researcher and the participants come to the investigation with forestructures of understanding, which are shaped by their different backgrounds; and in the process of interaction and interpretation, together they co-generate an understanding of the phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Phenomenology allows me to be able to describe the lived experiences of my participants regarding the meaning of their racialized identity in their principalship (Creswell, 2014).

Setting and Participants

Setting

The principals involved in this study worked in the two largest urban school districts in Colorado: Downtown District and Backyard District. State demographic reporting indicates that 75.2% of the students in Downtown District are identified as students of color (CDE, 2019b). The racial breakdown of the district is: 3.2% Asian, 4.1% two or more races, 13% Black, 24.8% White, 53.9% Hispanic/ Latinx, and 6.38% Native/ Indigenous (CDE, 2019b). The state demographics report that 85.4% of the students in Backyard District are identified as students of color (CDE, 2019b). The racial breakdown of the district is: 0.7% Native American or Indian, 0.8% Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, 4.9% Asian, 5.1% two or more races, 14.6% White, 18.4% Black, and 55.4% Hispanic/ Latinx (CDE, 2019b). The setting of these two districts is significant in that they resemble the continually growing trend in the nation of increasing student diversity.

The decision to study these highly diverse school districts serves two purposes. First, both districts are close to my own practice of school leadership. I have served all my leadership career in the Downtown District. In addition, the Black principal networks between the two districts is close, which has resulted in Black principals within each district having some familiarity with one another. The other significant reason for the choice of the districts is because they are the two top leading districts with reported Black school leaders (including both principals and assistant principals) (CDE, 2019a). The Downtown District reports having 56 Black school leaders (29 female and 27 male), and the Backyard District has seventeen Black school leaders (seven female and ten male) (CDE, 2019a).

Both the Downtown District and Backyard District have school performance frameworks used to rate the success of each school. Every district school is given a rating on the state school performance framework, based on the following scale: Exceeds expectations, meets expectations, approaching expectations, and does not meet expectations. There are three different areas that contribute to the overall school rating, the indicators are academic achievement, academic growth, and postsecondary and workforce readiness. A major indicator for all (state, Downtown District, and Backyard District) school performance frameworks is the concept of median growth percentiles. Median growth percentiles are defined as the way that districts measure growth of schools based on the median growth of similar schools with similar demographics.

The following are the qualifiers for the state's academic achievement: Exceeds expectations, at or above the 85th percentile; meets expectations, at or above the 50th percentile, but below the 85th percentile; approaching expectations, at or above the 15th percentile, but below the 50th percentile; and does not meet expectations, below the 15th percentile. The qualifiers for the state's academic growth are: Exceeds expectations, median growth percentile (MGP) at or above 65; meets expectations, MGP at or above 50, but lower than 65; approaching expectations, MGP at or above 35, but below 50; does not meet expectations, MGP below 35. The qualifiers for the state's postsecondary and workforce readiness are: Exceeds expectations, matriculation at or above 75%; meets expectations, at or above 61.1%, but below 75%; approaching expectations, at or above 46.8%, but below 61.1%; does not meet expectations, below 46.8%. Both Downton District and Backyard District each have their own school performance frameworks as

well. Each of the individual district school performance frameworks have slightly different metrics that are included for determination of the different ratings.

As stated, the Downtown District uses a different school performance framework with different metrics to rate the schools within the district. The other metrics include student and family satisfaction, student attendance, and student behavior information. The school performance framework (SPF) uses a five-tiered color system for its school ratings: Blue for distinguished, green for meets expectations, yellow for accredited on watch, orange for accredited on priority, and red for accredited on probation. Each school's SPF rating is significant because it is used as the primary tool with which families make decisions regarding their student's choice into schools. The SPF ratings are also significant because the school ratings play a role in the desirability of a school for employment for both leaders and teachers. Schools with high rating (blue and green) use this a marketing for the positive aspects of their school communities. Schools with lower ratings struggle to attract both students and staff because of their color rating. The implicit assumption of those often outside of the direct school community is the lower the color, the lower the "assets/ benefits" of the school community. Because of this, the Downtown District has included different pay incentives for both leaders and teachers in hopes of attracting top talent to more struggling schools. For this study, I center discussion and examination in the state school performance framework, because each school in the state receives a rating from the state. However, district-specific framework elements are also discussed to provide further context of each school and the participants.

Meet the Participants and Their Schools

The study's participants were identified through purposeful selection. Purposeful selection was used to help understand the problem and the research question (Creswell, 2014). Nine principals were invited to participate in this study and all agreed. Four of the participants identify as women and five identify as men. The participants are of varying ages and years of experiences. Each of these principals' work in large urban school districts in the greater Denver metropolitan area. All but one of the selected principals work in district-run schools, while one is a principal of a charter-run school. Using purposeful sampling according to Creswell (2014), my principals lead in schools with following variations: P-5, P- 8, 6-8, 6-12. Their years of experience in the principalship range from one to eleven years. National statistics of principals states that the average tenure of principals is less than four years (Levin & Bradley, 2019). As extant literature continues to grow and develop regarding ways of sustaining and retaining principals in the early parts of their leadership, this study's focus on the experiences of mostly newer Black principals can contribute to the national conversation by including a more diverse and inclusive narrative of principalship. All but one of the principals are leading in the Downtown District, while one leads in the Backyard District. They range in age from early thirties to late fifties. They have between five to sixteen years of administrative experience. All of the principals in this study self-identify as either Black or African American. The following pseudonyms are used for the principals: Jamal, Stacy, Diamond, Malcolm, Asia, Arthur, Stan, and Brandon.

Jamal and Tip Top Preparatory. Tip Top Preparatory is led by Jamal, who is a male in his late thirties who spent a significant amount of his leadership career in the

Downtown District. He was a finalist for two principalships in the Downtown District. However, Jamal decided to switch to the Backyard District, because he believed the switch would give him better opportunities to grow as a leader. Ultimately, he spent such a significant amount of time in the Downtown District that he did not feel that the district was invested in his growth as a Black leader. Jamal is currently in the second year of his principalship of the ninth through twelfth grade high school. Jamal is from a large urban city in the Midwest part of the country. Jamal credits his commitment to education to growing up in a community where he too often saw many of his childhood friends and classmates not make it. He was determined that he would have a better life that allowed him many choices. As a tall, brown skinned man, it is not difficult to identify Jamal walking the halls in his school community. Jamal comments that because of his size and stature people, people are often are surprised that he has taken his chosen career route. This is one of the aspects that makes Jamal so proud of his leadership, as he views himself as a model for young Black men and an example of a different and positive narrative of Black men.

Tip Top Preparatory is located in the southeast part of Backyard District. It is a ninth through twelfth grade school. Tip Top Preparatory was established in 2010. The student population of Tip Top is 1,389 (CDE, 2019b). Student demographics are: 41%% FRL (free/reduced lunch), 30.5% English Learners, and 9.2% students with IEPs (individualized education plan) (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 38% Latinx, 23% White, 14% Black, 0.04% multi-racial, 0.04% Asian, and 0.15% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). Tip Top's vision is to ensure that every student graduates with a high school diploma, college credits, and post-secondary

readiness, the latter of which the school describes as being ready for either college or career. Tip Top's belief is that education must be real-world relevant. Both the vision and belief are centered in its school design and class offerings.

According to the most current state rating framework, Tip Top does not meet achievement expectations. Their disaggregated student groups (socio-economic (FRL), English learner, non-White students, and students with disabilities) do not meet achievement expectations, and is approaching academic growth and postsecondary or work readiness expectations (CDE, 2018). According to the state's student growth expectations, all but students with disabilities meet growth expectations. Jamal believes that there are still areas of growth needed within the Tip Top. For Jamal, this includes work needed toward growing outcomes for students with disabilities. Although Tip Top currently does not meet achievement expectations, their meeting of growth expectations appears to still provide hope for Tip Top.

In spite of Tip Top's academic performance, its popularity in the Backyard District continues to grow. As a relatively newer school in the district and area of the southeast Backyard District, many families choice into the school. The school is part of the two-part Tip Top community: Tip Top Exploration is a lower-aged P-8 school that makes up the other half of the Tip Top community. The lower school is led by a White principal. As part of an established school community, Tip Top Preparatory has a continued pipeline of students and families that are excited to continue along their Tip Top experience. In addition, Tip Top has a growing athletic program that is gaining popularity. This popularity is causing some families within the Downtown District to choice into the school in order to participate in the athletic programming. The

possibilities of a being in a thriving school community with identified bright spots and areas of growth are what most appealed to Jamal and encouraged his move to Tip Top.

Staci and Scholastic Middle School. Scholastic Middle School is led by Staci, who is in her late 30s and has spent all her administrative experience in the same Downton District, but has been serving in a charter network situated within the Downtown District for the past four years. She is in her second year of principalship at a sixth through eighth grade middle school called Scholastic Middle School. Staci grew up being raised by a struggling single mother. Staci is from a large city in the Midwest part of the country, which has continued to suffer from economic decline; and, as a result, Staci believes that education was the answer for her to leave and pursue greater options. Staci has a doctorate in higher education. In her career, she has worked as a professor, a researcher and statistician for the Downtown District, and school leader. She asserts that because of her background in higher education, she knows where P-12 students are headed and what skills they will need once they get there, and she believes this two-fold understanding is essential for success in the principalship.

Scholastic Middle School is located in the far northeast part of the Downtown District. It is in a community that has often been overlooked and under-resourced by the Downtown District. The student population of Scholastic is 310 (CDE, 2019b). Student demographics for Scholastic Middle School are: 85% FRL, 44% English Learners, and 18% students with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 61% Latinx, 7% White, 29% Black, 0.5% multi-racial, 0.01% Asian, and 0.06% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). Scholastic was established in 2018, and it

is the fourteenth school to open of the successful charter network (College Bound) situated within the Downtown District.

After just its first year of establishment, Scholastic is the number one school in the Downtown District for both reading and math, causing it to earn a distinguished school rating on the district SPF rating. According to state rating framework, Scholastic Middle School is approaching achievement and growth expectations. In addition, all disaggregated groups (minus students with disabilities) are approaching achievement, growth, and post-secondary/work readiness expectations. This rating is significant when compared to the Downtown District's overall rating. However, this designation illustrates that although Scholastic Middle School appears to be making gains, there are still areas for improvement. Staci's leadership style aligns with this urge to improve, because Staci continually seeks out areas for improvement and increased outcomes for herself and her school community.

As a member of the charter network College Bound, Scholastic Middle School follows the network's commitment to educating students holistically through a strong academic program. Staci is committed to improving the educational outcomes for her school community in spite of the beliefs and myths about her community. She asserts that her school's first year of success is just the beginning and that there is much more to come. Staci is also grateful for being part of the charter network that she is in and believes that network has aided in the success that she has experienced as a school leader. A significant amount of families know of the reputation of the College Bound network, which includes being known for high educational outcomes for students (academic growth and college acceptance). This has resulted in families and students eagerly

wanting to choice into Staci's school. Staci is proud to serve as the leader of her school community.

Diamond and Hallow Elementary. Hallow Elementary is led by Diamond, a female in her early forties who has spent most of her leadership experience in the Downtown District. She has worked in both charter-run and district-run schools within the district. She has been serving as the principal of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) to fifth grade school for the past four years. Diamond has been an educator most of her adult life. She grew up in a large city in the south eastern part of the country. Both she and her husband are deeply involved in the local educational arena, as her husband is a university Professor of Education. With their combined knowledge of education, they wrote and applied for a new school for the Downtown District's call for new schools. Their new school application was accepted; however, during the wait for the new school process, Diamond was offered the principalship at Hallow. Diamond is deeply committed to serving a school community that has a large percentage of Black students, so when the offer came from Hallow, she felt she could not decline, given its student demographics. She believes her leadership as an African American woman is necessary and that students need to experience her leadership example.

Hallow Elementary is an ECE to fifth grade school located in Downtown District. The student census of Hallow is 217 (CDE, 2019b). Student demographics are: 84.3% FRL, 6% English Learners, and 18.9% students with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 13% Latinx, 3% White, 74% Black, 9% multi-racial, 0% Asian, and 0% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). Hallow was established in 1950 in the northeast part of the Downtown District, in a segregated,

mostly Black community. Its original instructional focus was to prepare children without opportunity for traditional formal schooling. According to state rating framework, Hallow Elementary is approaching achievement expectations. Hallow is meeting state growth expectations. All disaggregated groups, minus students with disabilities, are approaching achievement and growth expectations. Considering the large percentage of students from families with disadvantaged socio-economic households, Diamond has placed significant focus on growing student outcomes. The state rating of meeting state growth expectations shows progression from that focus area.

Hallow is a community school that values inclusiveness. The school vision is that every student deserves a learning experience that fosters a sense of wonder, joy, and success. Hallow's mission is to provide a balanced education of academic and social-emotional competencies. Hallow's neighborhood has experienced many demographic transitions since its establishment. Hallow is located in a recently highly sought-after community. Due to gentrification, the school is experiencing a major shift as more White families are moving into what is historically mostly an African American community. The shift in student demographics has begun to surface potential changing priorities for families that enter Hallow. This shift has the potential of many implications for Diamond's leadership. In spite and because of these challenges, Diamond is even more committed to serving her school community.

Malcolm and Stanford Elementary. Stanford Elementary is led by Malcolm, a male in his early forties who has spent all his years as an educator in the Downtown District. He has been in school administration for the past five years. This is his first year in principalship at an ECE-5 school. Malcom has been in education for the past

twenty-one years. He has served in many roles along the education ladder. He began his career in education as a janitor within the Downtown district, and moved to a paraprofessional, a teacher, and now to principal. Malcolm is a proud product and graduate of the Downtown District. He graduated from the premier high school in the district. He is also the proud father of both a student and graduate of the Downtown District. Malcolm is also proud that the school in which he currently serves is located within the neighborhood where he grew up. Malcolm stands firm on the fact that his leadership as a positive Black man is needed for all students to see.

Stanford Elementary is located in the Downtown District. Stanford is an elementary school with deep roots in one of the most historic neighborhoods of the Downtown District. In recent years, Stanford has experienced several principal turnovers, resulting in the transition of Malcolm as the new principal. The student population of Stanford is 313 (CDE, 2019b). Student demographics for the school are: 55.96% FRL, 12.5% English Learners, and 13.1% students with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are 27% Latinx, 31% White, 35% Black, 5% multi-racial, 0.03% Asian, and 0.06% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). According to state rating framework, Stanford Elementary is approaching achievement expectations. Stanford is meeting state growth expectations. All disaggregated groups, minus students with disabilities, are approaching achievement and growth expectations. In spite of the leadership changes, the school rating is showing that the school is moving toward progress with areas that need focus—students with disabilities being one of the areas of focus. Malcolm is excited to make a mark on his school community, included designing for change in prioritized areas.

Stanford is a dual-language school offering English and Spanish immersion offerings for students. Stanford's mission is to be life-learners that respect the diversity of the neighborhood it is located in and to show concern about caring for each other and making a difference. The school's vision is to embrace their diversity, a commitment to excellent instruction, and a quest for wisdom. Located near Hallow Elementary, Stanford's neighborhood is also experiencing a shift due to gentrification, as more White families move into the historically mostly-African American community. As a result of both gentrification and the history of principal turnover, Stanford's school community is experiencing a shift in priorities and needs of its school community, which is like the situation at Hallow. Mike is hoping to position himself as leader who can be responsive to the many different needs of his community.

Asia and ParDeaux Elementary. ParDeaux Elementary is led by Asia, a female in her early thirties who has spent all of her leadership career in the Downtown District. She has served in schools ranging from P-12. She is in her second year of principalship at an ECE-5 school. Asia's career in education has included positions in both the Downtown District and the Backyard District. She began her career as a teacher in the Backyard District, and she has since held leadership positions within the Downtown District, leading in P-12 schools. Asia has a doctorate in educational leadership and is committed to embracing the tenets of transformative leadership. Asia is also a graduate of the Downtown District. Like Malcolm, she attended and graduated from the Downtown District's premier high school. She credits her experience at that school as being the first time she noticed the blatant mistreatment and lowered expectations of her Black classmates. Asia is extremely proud to be serving as the principal of ParDeaux,

because she grew up in the neighborhood in which its located. She has been able to leverage her childhood and current residence in the neighborhood as a key component in her leadership.

Located in the Downtown District, ParDeaux is an ECE-5. ParDeaux is one of the historic elementary schools located in a far northeast community. The neighborhood in which it is located was created in the late 1960s with the explicit goal of becoming both an economically and culturally diverse community. It has since evolved to be mostly a Latinx and Black community, with more families that are socio-economically disadvantaged. All disaggregated groups, minus students with disabilities, are approaching achievement and growth expectations. The student population of ParDeaux is 467 (CDE, 2019b). The school's student demographics are: 96.1% FRL, 59.1% English Learners, and 8.8% students with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 77% Latinx, 3% White, 19% Black, 1% multi-racial, 0.06% Asian, and 0% Native American/ Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). The student demographics were a key factor in Asia's appeal to committing to ParDeaux when she was approached with the idea of leading the school. The school's performance and rebranding are two of the primary areas of focus for Asia.

In the past thirty years, ParDeaux and other schools located within the region have battled continued declining student outcomes, resulting in failing schools in the neighborhood. ParDeaux was identified as one of the failing schools; and in effort to revitalize and redesign the school, it was incorporated into a plan for a developing innovation management organization (IMO) known as the Far Northeast Zone. The Far Northeast Zone is one of four recent innovation management organizations authorized by

the Downtown District made up of innovation schools. The goal of IMOs is to become similar to charter management organizations. Resembling charter schools, innovation schools are given particular autonomies in their governance and school-based decision-making abilities through waivers provided by the state and district school boards. The rationale for innovation status is that through the greater autonomy of decision making, schools can make decisions that are best for their school communities. During the Downtown District's IMO authorization process of the Far Northeast Zone, Asia was named the founding principal of ParDeaux.

ParDeaux's school vision is to empower the school community to challenge the inequities that exist in the education system. The mission is to ensure all learners achieve excellence in academics and the arts, while empowering them to be changemakers in their school and community at large. Asia has experienced many challenges since being named as the founding principal, including feeling that she must prove her worthiness of her appointment as the school principal. However, after her first year of principalship, she moved the school from its previous red school performance rating to green (meets expectations) within the Downtown District. She is extremely proud of what her school was able to accomplish in her first year of leadership and looks forward to continuing to push toward greater outcomes for her school community.

Arthur and Downtown Enlightenment. Downtown Enlightenment is led by Arthur, a male in his late fifties who has spent most of his leadership career in the same district. Arthur has worked in school administration for sixteen years. He is in his first year of principalship at his sixth through twelfth grade school. Arthur previously served briefly as the principal of an alternative pathway school, which means a school for

students who have struggled in traditional school settings. Arthur's leadership experience has included leading in schools in a variety of different kinds of P-12 schools. Arthur is a musician and is deeply committed to ensuring that Downtown Enlightenment's offerings can be experienced by a more diverse group of students. Arthur is the first Black principal to serve at Downtown Enlightenment.

Downtown Enlightenment is located in the northeast region of the Downtown District. It is a magnet art sixth through twelfth grade school, whose student population is 672 (CDE, 2019b). The school's student demographics are: 10% FRL, 5.2% English Learners, and 2.1% students with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 17% Latinx, 84% White, 3% Black, 7% multi-racial, 5% Asian, and 0% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). The school was founded in 1991 as response to the growing decline of arts program offerings in the Downtown District. It was initially created as concurrent program, housed in another of the Downtown District's high schools. The school eventually moved to its own building because of its growing popularity and interests for families and students across the district. According the state's school performance framework, all disaggregated groups (minus FRL students) are exceeding achievement expectations and meeting growth expectations. Arthur was selected as the principal primarily because of the school's desire to increase its student outcomes while offering a robust focus on arts, both of which he had strong experience as well as a concrete vision for implementing.

Admission into the Downtown Enlightenment is by application and audition only. Due to its popularity and large arts offerings, it is one of the most sought-after schools in the Downtown Districts. Some of the popularity of Downtown Enlightenment is due to

some graduates who went on to be Oscar award winners and Broadway artists. The school's vision is to engage and to foster creativity and wonderment by meeting the needs of the whole child. Their mission is to offer daily rigorous involvement of a specialized art form. As the school's first Black principal, Arthur feels a lot of pressure to both meet and break the expectations of what his leadership should and will look like. He is excited but also bracing himself for the challenges that he anticipates experiencing.

Shai and Institute of Achievement. Institute of Achievement is led by Shai, a male in his early forties who has spent most of his leadership career in two districts: One in the east coast and the one that he currently is serving. He is in his third year of principalship at an ECE-5 school. He is deeply committed to education. His father was beloved principal in the Downtown District. He asserts that his commitment to education came from his father who instilled him with belief that leaders drive change for their school communities. He and his wife are proud graduates of one of the high schools in the Downtown District. His daughter is also a student in the Downtown District. Shai was brought to the Institute of Achievement as the principal of the school prior to the school changing their name and school model. When the school became the Institute of Achievement, Shai became its founding principal. He credits his success as a school leader to his father's example, and Shai hopes to be a similar example of leadership to his students.

Institute of Achievement is an ECE-5 located in the northwest region of the Downtown District. The school was founded in 1952 as Neighborhood Elementary. The student population of Institute of Achievement is 279 (CDE, 2019b). The school's student demographics are: 91.8% FRL, 25.4% English Learners, and 11.1% students

with IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are 52% Latinx, 12% White, 27% Black, 3% multi-racial, 3% Asian, and 1% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). According to the state's school performance framework, all disaggregated groups (minus students with disabilities) are approaching achievement and growth expectations. Given that the school was consistently not meeting academic expectations, the school decided to make some major changes including hiring Shai as principal.

Due to the continued academic decline, the school went through a redesign and revitalization effort led by Shai as principal. Spearheaded by Shai, the of the school included renaming from Neighborhood Elementary to the Institute of Achievement as well as changes to the school model. The school now focuses on five primary areas: Whole child development, student talent identification and development, challenging standards and academics-based education, high-level enrichment opportunities, and innovation teacher development. The school's vision is to work with the whole community to foster talent development within all its students. The Institute of Achievement just earned the green level on the Downtown District school performance framework. With this rating, the school was recognized for making the most movement of any school on the Downtown District school performance framework. This moment was especially important to Shai's leadership journey, because he lost his father—his leadership inspiration—at the start of this school year. Now, Shai is even more committed to contributing to his family's legacy of strong and powerful leadership.

Kia and Cornerstone. Cornerstone is led by Kia, a female in her mid-thirties who spent most of her career between two districts: One in the Midwest and the other is

currently the district she leads. All of her leadership experience has been in the Downtown District. She is in her third year of principalship at an ECE-8 school. She is passionate about her work in education. Her sister is the principal of a high school in the Downtown District. She is a mother of two children. She is the succeeding principal after the founding principal of Cornerstone. The joy that she received working in day care is what she credits as the reason that she is in education.

Cornerstone is located in the far northeast region of the Downtown District. The school was founded 2008. The student population of Cornerstone is 843 (CDE, 2019b). The school's student demographics are: 80.7% FRL, 42.7% English Learners, and 9.2% students with IEPs. The racial demographics of the school are 50% Latinx, 7% White, 32% Black, 3% multi-racial, 5% Asian, and 1% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). According to the state's school performance framework, all disaggregated groups (minus students with disabilities) are approaching academic achievement expectations and meets for growth expectations. Since the school's transition to Kia's leadership, they have struggled to maintain academic performance.

The founding principal was a beloved veteran principal within the Downton District, who led Cornerstone for its first ten years. The school's vision is to celebrate the diverse community of scholars and to build a strong school culture centered on high quality instruction. Cornerstone just earned the orange level on the Downtown District school performance framework. With this rating, the school is considered accredited on watch by the Downtown District. Kia was the assistant principal for two years prior to taking over the leadership of the school. Since becoming principal, Kia has been focused on developing strong relationships with the members of her school community.

Brandon and Canyon Verde. Canyon Verde is led by Brandon, a male in his early thirties whose leadership has all been in the Downtown District. He is in his third year of principalship at this ECE-5 school in the Downtown District. Brandon grew up in a smaller city located in the same state as the Downtown District. He began his teaching career as a teacher in the Teach for America Corps. Throughout his journey in leadership, Brandon has served in schools with high percentages of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and student populations of mostly students of color. Being a Black man is important to Brandon and his leadership. He wants to be an example to students of what is possible through hard work and believes that all students need to see his leadership.

Canyon Verde is located in the far northeast region of the Downtown District. The school is one of the largest elementary schools in the region. All disaggregated groups (minus students with disabilities) are approaching achievement and growth expectations on the state performance framework. The student population of Canyon Verde is 701 (CDE, 2019b). The student demographics are: 80% FRL, 48.1% English Learners, and 14.1% IEPs (CDE, 2019b). The racial demographics of the school are: 54% Latinx, 13% White, 21% Black, 4% multi-racial, 8% Asian, and 0.08% Native American/Indigenous students (CDE, 2019b). Canyon Verde's diversity is one of the things that peaked Brandon's interest in the principalship opportunity and continues to influence his investment in striving to improve student outcomes for all students.

The school's history includes being part of one of the Downtown District's first turnaround networks. Turnaround is the designation given to schools that have consistently not met state expectations and is seen as a last resort effort before a school is

closed. With a turnaround designation, schools become eligible through their states for federal funding that supports improvement of turnaround identified schools (Rippner, 2016). As a turnaround school, Canyon Valley became a member of the turnaround network known as the Mountain Top Network (MTN). The MTN consisted of five schools ranging from P-12. Each was identified as a failing school and designated as turnaround in the far northeast region of the Downtown District. As members of the MTN, each school participated in a strict formulaic process, including applying for and receiving innovation status from the state and district school boards for waivers to help the school make changes that were believed to be best for the school community. After Canyon Verde's designation as a turnaround school, the school received turnaround funds and support from the federal, state, and local district, which has led to continued academic gains.

These gains include the school at one time receiving blue designation on the district's school performance framework, which means distinguished. It has since continued to earn meets expectations status on the district's school performance framework. The school's vision is to empower culturally diverse students to exemplify ownership and move toward academic success. Their mission is to meet the needs of all students by focusing on student ownership, high quality instruction, and a positive school culture. As the school has continued to receive a green rating on the district's school performance framework and is approaching state academic and growth expectations, Brandon is determined to continue to improve the school's academic narrative.

School Setting Information

Below is a table that plots out the demographic information of each of the research participants and the schools they lead.

Demographic Information of the Research Participants						
Principal	Gender/ Age	School Level	Setting Classification	Years as Principal	School Type	State Level Classification
Jamal	M/ 38	9-12	Urban	2	Traditional District-Run	Approaching Expectations
Staci	F/ 38	6-8	Urban	2	Charter	Approaching Expectations
Diamond	F/ 42	ECE-5	Urban	4	Traditional District-Run	Meets Expectations
Malcolm	M/ 39	ECE-5	Urban	1	Traditional District-Run	Meets Expectations
Asia	F/ 33	ECE-5	Urban	2	Traditional District-Run	Approaching Expectations
Arthur	M/ 55	6-12	Urban	2	Traditional District-Run	Exceeds Expectations
Shai	M/ 40	ECE-5	Urban	4	Traditional District-Run	Approaching Expectations
Brandon	M/ 33	ECE-5	Urban	3	Traditional District-Run	Approaching Expectations
Kia	F/ 35	ECE-8	Urban	3	Traditional District-Run	Meets Expectations

Table 1. School Setting Information.

Data Collection Procedures

I was the primary researcher. The qualitative methods of this study were used to answer the research question: What is the essence of Black principals' racialized identity in their principalship? Using my conceptual framework, which is grounded in Afrocentricity, I center the experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of Black principals for this study. Afrocentricity asserts that Blacks have the ability to tell and validate their own stories. In alignment with this assertion, Black principals were provided space and time to tell their own stories. To conduct the research for this study, data were collected over a five-week period. Nine individual interviews and one focus group were conducted throughout the five-week time.

Nine participants were invited to engage in one individual interview. Each participant was asked to complete a consent form. A pseudonym was used for each person interviewed. The interviews were scheduled via email or phone, and were conducted at a time and location that most convenient for each participant based on their needs and availability of time. The interviews lasted between sixty to ninety minutes. I decided to conduct one individual interview per principal because through my professional interactions with them, I was able to develop trust and establish relationships with each participant that would normally have been gained through multiple interviews. The individual interviews provided information for thick description about each participant's lived experiences. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed by a transcription service. I took hand notes during the interviews in order to capture key words or ideas that I wanted to further probe or ask clarification during the interview process. In addition, I kept a reflection journal to capture thoughts and ideas, and it

became a tool I utilized for reflexivity after each interview as well as various other moments of reflection.

At the end of each of the individual interviews, I invited all nine participants to join a larger focus group to discuss the ways in which their Black identity has impacted their practices of principalship. I conducted one focus group interview with four of the participants. The focus group helped elucidate the shared experiences and practices of the participants, helping me to make sense of the underlying essence of the experiences of Black principals' leadership. The purpose of the focus group was to allow myself as the researcher to watch the interactions and conversation that happened when the participants are able to meet and exchange with one another about their individual and shared experiences. The literature of Black principals illustrates the many ways in which Black principals can feel alone and isolated within their experiences, so the goal of the focus group to provide a space for them to exchange perspectives about their roles and responsibilities as principal with other Black principals (Pollard, 1997; Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Knaus, 2014; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014).

The focus group lasted 120 minutes. Because part of the purpose of the focus group was to create an opportunity for each of the participants to interact and exchange with other Black principals, an intimate and private setting was important in order to ensure that the focus group was a safe space for dialogue and truth-sharing. As I am also a Black principal, I opened up my home for the focus group. My home helped to create a space of comfort and familiarity. During the focus group, I served beverages and light snacks to better ensure that the setting was a comfortable environment. The interview protocol for the focus group was centered around encouraging the participants to provide

detail of experiences and practices that they have encountered and practiced in their racialized experiences. The dialogue of the focus group provided thick descriptions and conversation, which were key to providing contexts for my heuristic interpretation of the essence of Black principalship.

The questions included in the interview protocol for both the individual interviews and focus were designed from the extant literature of the historic experiences and practices of Black principals. The dominant themes identified in the extant literature about Black principals were used to develop the interview protocol. Each of the questions of the interview protocol were designed to answer the study's research question. The information in Table 2 explains the origins of the questions used in the interview protocol.

Interview Protocol

Below is a table that displays the individual interview and focus group interview protocol. Each question was designed to help me answer this study's research question: What is the essence of Black principals' racialized identity in their principalship?

Individual Interview Questions		
Questions	Theme in the Literature	Citations
What brings you to principalship?	Purpose	(Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Green, 2004; Horsford, 2009)
Why is education so important to you?	Education seen as the key to progress	(Giddings, 1984; Tillman, 2004; Tillman, 2008; Milner, 2012)
In what ways (if at all) does your Black identity impact your ability to	Encountering mistrust	(Loder, 2005; Knaus, 2014)

establish trust with those in your community?		
How (if at all) does your Black identity impact the way you respond to circumstances in your school?	Responsiveness grounded in identity	(Ward Randolph, 2012; Walker & Byas, 2003)
Focus Group Questions		
What (if any) challenges do you believe you have experienced in leadership because of your Black identity?	Black principals in White schools	(Pollard, 1997; Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Milner, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016)
How (if at all) does your Black identity help to create bridges between different communities in your school?	Identity as bridge/ mediator	(Walker & Byas, 2003)
What (if any) ways do you feel as your Black identity played into your school assignment?	Black principals at underperforming schools	(Loder, 2005; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016; Bess, 2009)
How, if at all, do the responsibilities of your principalship show up outside of your school building?	Role significance outside of school	(Pollard, 1997; Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012; Tillman, 2004)

Table 2. Interview Protocol and Literature Matrix.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis in hermeneutic phenomenology is a detailed process that aligns with the assumptions of the method. The steps of hermeneutic phenomenology were used for this study, which include three primary steps of the hermeneutic data analysis process:

(a) Isolating particular themes within each individual interview/participant, (b) identifying repetitious themes from within and between interviews/participants, and (c) selecting exemplary quotes to illustrate themes. This process is accomplished by (a) reading each transcription as a "case," (b) rereading and working up cases to isolate repetitious themes, (c) identifying exemplary quotes to illustrate themes (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

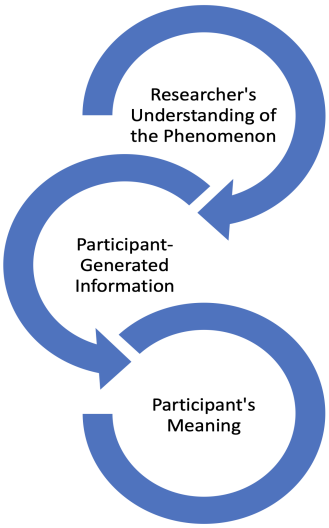

Figure 2. Hermeneutic Phenomenology Flow Chart Illustrating the Components Used to Gather Participant's Meaning.

The data analysis process began after the first interview was transcribed. In order to ensure that I was accurately capturing the experiences of the principals in the study, I bracketed my own experiences from the data by grounding my interpretation in the key concepts and ideas discussed in the literature of Black principals. Data analysis continued after each interview and the focus group interview transcriptions were complete. To begin the initial data analysis, I used an open coding process by reading each transcript. While reading the transcript, I made notes and highlighted particular

words or phrases that stood out. I then created codes that described the notes and highlights. My initial read of each transcript used this form of notation to create codes. I then read the transcript again using axial coding to help find larger categories that the codes could be grouped into.

After the review of the extant literature, there were some possible "look fors" that surfaced to aid as a tool in my analysis. I used these "look fors" as possible themes to analyze when coding. These initial "look fors" were: Challenging stereotypes, responsiveness grounded in identity, and deep commitment to school regardless of school demographics (Loder, 2005; Knaus, 2014; Madsen & Mabokela, 2015; Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). I kept a running list of the categories. I repeated this process while reading each individual interview and the focus group transcripts. After reading each of the different interview transcripts and creating lists of categories from each transcript, I then cross checked the category list of each interview and compared to see if there are any categories that cut across the data from each of the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After the process had been completed for each individual interview and the focus group interview, I reviewed the total data set combing again for any missed or new themes that could be discussed. While analyzing for themes, I used my conceptual framework to ensure that I was centering the experiences and practices of each of the participants and juxtaposing that with their racialized identities. Centering the connection between these elements proved key in the analysis process.

It was important to remember that the purpose of hermeneutic phenomenology is to reveal that which lies in between and beyond the words while staying close to the

phenomenon of interest. The goal of hermeneutic inquiry is to identify the participants' meanings from the blend of my (the researcher) understanding of the phenomenon, the information gathered by the participants, and the data gathered from other relevant sources. Phenomenology is an interpretive process, in which the researcher makes an interpretation. These interpretations were a blend of meanings and understandings expressed by both me as the researcher as well as the participants (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Creswell, 2014). During the process of data analysis, reflexivity was important as I analyzed both singular parts and the whole (Crowther, et al., 2017). In phenomenology, the goal of the analysis process is to bring the phenomenon to greater light and pay close attention to what the researcher is noticing and interpreting while analyzing the data.

Trustworthiness

In order to attend to trustworthiness, I engaged in reflexive journaling to detail my research process and choices that I made along my research journey. The research journal was a place in which I noted detailed steps of part of the research. The research journal was used after my scheduling conversations with participants. I noted the level of eagerness or excitement that participants showed for being participants in the study. My research journal was also used for self-reflexivity throughout this process, which includes detailed notes of how I felt in relation to each interaction with a participant. I used the research journal to describe the role that my emotions played into my abilities as a researcher and my interpretation of the phenomena. I used my research journal to provide clear rationale, reflexive note-taking, and rich descriptions to process my experiences with phenomena (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Tracy, 2010).

Member checking with each of the participants was another important strategy used to ensure trustworthiness. After I completed all of the data collection and data analysis, I offered to provide each participant a transcription of my individual interview with them through my consent form. I asked them for feedback regarding whether they felt the analysis accurately depicted their racialized experiences of principalship. Upon their feedback, I went back and reviewed the data again and determined if the changes should be incorporated into my analysis.

Lastly, this process included monthly process checks with my doctoral dissertation director about my process and the steps that I conducted in completing the study. I also discussed pieces of my data analysis process in order to ensure that I took the correct steps aligned to strong methodology. In addition, with some of my trusted doctoral peers, I reviewed and debriefed my data collection and analysis methods. The goal of these debriefings was to gain feedback to determine if my methods remained consistent with my conceptual framework and chosen study methodology.

Summary

The use of a phenomenological study is intentional in its purpose to center the experiences and practices of Black principals. The narratives of Black principals' experiences and practices is worthy of exploration. The methods described in this chapter were intentionally chosen because of their alignment to the conceptual framework. This framework and the methods of this study are developed from the assertion that Black people also embody leadership and they too have the tools and skills to find and innovate solutions to solve today's challenges (Norment, 2001). In Chapter

Four, I discuss the analysis of the data collected in this study, and in Chapter Five I discuss my findings and implications for future research.

Chapter Four: Findings

In the literature review in Chapter Two, I discussed a variety of ways in which Black principals' encounters with race have been intertwined with both their practice of leadership and their leadership experiences. As described in Chapter Three, phenomenology was chosen because it allowed me to focus on the way Black principals make meaning of the principalship (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In Chapter Four, I present the analysis of the focus group and individual interviews conducted to inquire and make meaning of the experiences of Black principals. The central research question for this study was, "What is the essence of Black principals' leadership as response to their daily lived racialized experiences?" Through this question, I sought a greater understanding of Black principal experiences, and how their leadership offers unique contributions to the field of education.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Analysis

The transcriptions of both the individual interviews and the focus group interviews were analyzed using a multi-step process (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). The first step used was to read each of the interviews to obtain an overall understanding. Second, I began the process of interpretative analysis by writing annotation concepts that arose from the literature on Black principals. The next step in the process was to use the annotations to form interpretative summaries or codes for each of the individual transcriptions from the individual interviews and focus group. Once all the transcripts

were coded, the codes were then used to form larger repetitious themes, both within and between the different transcriptions. These themes were compared against themes that emerged from my literature review and my conceptual framework. In Vivo Coding was used to best illustrate the different themes. In Table 3, I present an illustration of my data analysis process and how the categories and themes generated in the coding process connect with example quotations collected in the study.

Codes	**Categories**	**Themes**	**Example Quotations**
Because I'm Black *Race is huge* *Society sees my race* *They see race*	Race is Everything	Being Black Matters	"I think race affects almost everybody around me." "As a leader of color, I always…" "I think race plays a factor."
Access *Independence* *Belief* *Opportunity*	Brokering	Motivated by Change	"Education provides them opportunity." "Give them opportunities that we did not have as students in this district." "Education is. It's an act of love."
Impact *Change* *More than a Teacher*	Power		"My desire to have a greater impact." "I wanted to have a greater impact on a larger scale" "If you were a principal at a school."
Mentor *I never wanted to be a leader* *They looked out*	Mentorship		"I was around all these black principals." "I did not want to be a principal. I wanted to be a lawyer." "My mentor calls me up. He's like, "Hey,

			man. It's about to happen."
Students are easy *Not had difficulty with kids*	Relationships	Characterization of Leading	"I've never had a not ability to build trust with students." "These kids love me." "Kids are the easy part."
Gender *Black women have it harder* *More than being Black*	Intersecting Identities		"I would say regardless of race." "Mostly in the position of power in education even still." "Gender plays a huge role."
Faith *Called to this work* *God*	Purpose and Faith	Anchored in Faith	"God got me. I'm a be all right." "I'm a person of faith." "God who knows all things."
Anxiety *Fear* *Health*	Mental Health	Consequences of Leadership	"I always feel pressure." "Make you feel very lonely and sad." "I'm always on edge."

Table 3. The Coding Process.

Interpretation and Finding Meaning

Applying hermeneutic phenomenology, I interpreted and made meaning as stories were heard, read, and re-read (Crowther et al., 2017). This approach also allowed me to describe the pre-understandings and power relations uncovered while listening and interpreting the stories to be open to the impact of the participants' already-existing prejudices (Crowther et., 2017). My current position as Black woman principal provided me an insider's perspective to what the participants shared in the interviews. My

positionality as a current Black principal was present during the interpretive stage of the data analysis. Reflexive journaling is one strategy that I used to establish the authenticity and trustworthiness of my study. Through reflexive journaling, I reflected on emotions and thoughts aloud in a recorder after each interview. Additionally, I purposefully looked for variation in understanding among my participants, members checks, and by analyzing my interpretations against the extant literature and the conceptual framework for this study. These will be further discussed in Chapter Five.

The purpose of this study was to center race by exploring the essence of Black principals' understanding of their racialized experiences and its meaning to their leadership. The literature within recent educational theories has left out the significance and meaning of Black principals' leadership to both themselves and their school communities. I begin this chapter with a presentation of the themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with my participants. The quotations in this chapter are from participant interviews, so they illustrate the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions of my participants. I describe the narratives of my participants through five primary themes along with categories that emerged. The five themes are: (a) being Black matters, (b) motivated by change, (c) characterization of leading, (d) anchored in faith, and (e) consequences of principalship. I provide a summary of the findings in the final section of this chapter.

Being Black Matters

Black principals' understanding of the meaning and significance of their racial identities is the central component of their leadership within their school communities. Their conceptualization of race allows them to navigate trust, make decisions, and carry

out the daily responsibilities of principalship. Their entire leadership journey is perceived through race. Their function as principals is both through their own understanding of their racialized identity and also through the understanding of how their leadership is impacted by others' racialized lens and perspectives.

Brandon, Canyon Verde's principal, comments, "Because I'm black, I'm intimidating already. I've developed habits and traits, where I'm overtly nice. I think sometimes, you have to overcompensate professionally and personally, just to make it in this world as a black person." His remarks highlight the fact that as Black principals, the participants were able to discuss the many ways in which race impacted their daily leadership. The participants described examples of how race impacted their ability to talk to different audiences and make decisions. Shai, the principal of the Institute of Achievement, detailed the ways in which he used race to make decisions regarding how to engage different family and student groups, "there are things I'd do for a school in general, but there are things I knew I had to do—if I did something for my Latino students, I knew I had to do something for my White students." This statement illustrated the ways in which Black principals must make decisions that maintain a balance in the perception of how decisions are made with regard to different racial groups.

Asia, the principal of ParDeaux, furthered this idea of the ways that Black principals navigate the perceptions of others when she described the specific challenges she has had with White staff members that pushed against her decisions which impacted particular racial stakeholder groups within her school, "Every year I have White staff members in particular talk to me about, you only care about kids of color. You only care about black kids. What about us White people? I get a lot of that type of pushback."

Asia's comments expounded the ways that Black principals' racialized identities impact not only how they make decisions but also how those decisions are perceived by other racial identities within their school communities.

Black principals' practices are grounded in both the historical implications and present- day contexts of their racialized experiences. The participants provided rich descriptions of the challenges due to their race that impacted their ability to develop relationships and build bridges within their school communities. Jamal, Tip Top Preperatory's principal, highlighted the impact of his being Black in the United States and how that played out in his school community,

> Well, it makes it harder. I wake up every day in America and I'm aware of how I show up in the world. And the world and the system has taught society that when you see a person like me, that your first reaction is to not trust him and to question his motives, his beliefs, his methods, his intention before anything else. It makes my need to build trust even harder. It's not only necessary, but the work that goes into me building trust is probably 10 times harder than a leader who is not of color. But for someone like myself, I have to go above and beyond to build trust, and trust eventually leads to respect. But both have to be earned.

Jamal's comments illustrated that the racial history and reality of the United States has had consequences for his leadership within his school. Black principals experience the typical challenges of school leadership but are also subjected to the implications of race within their school communities. Malcolm, the principal at Stanford, further expanded upon the impact of American societal beliefs and his leadership within a diverse school

community with his reflection, “I'm a black man. Regardless, I'm not blind to how I must navigate to establish trust within a system of oppression. With middle-class White families that just moved here, and they see me as just this black man. That’s been tough for me several times this year.” Malcolm’s comments surfaced the internal struggle that he had to process while navigating this dynamic. His reflection highlighted the struggle and the burden for understanding the root of challenges, which is seemingly also a battle that Black principals have to process alone. Black principals’ experiences with the challenges of racial difference in their school communities have resulted in various tests of their ability to build trust. Brandon discussed his challenges with White staff members and their preconceived fears and beliefs about Blackness that impacted his ability to foster trust, “there's always this element of (people’s) intimidation. I think with staff there's a huge element of intimidation, regardless of what I do or I say. There will always be a fear of me.” Brandon’s reflection demonstrated the complication that his racial identity surfaced for members within his community. Trials experienced by Black principals because of race manifest in a variety of ways in different school communities.

Arthur, the principal of Downtown Enlightenment, described the way in which he feels race impacted his ability to be hired for principal positions. He shared a conversation he had with an instructional superintendent, “‘Why didn't I get this job? Did I not show up?’ He was like, ‘No, you are a good candidate.’ I was like, ‘Was I the best candidate?’ He was like, ‘Well, honestly yes, but I don't think it's time for you to be in this building. I think it's a lot of people-- it would be kind of difficult for them-- their opposition for you being in there.’” The comments emphasized how a school community implicitly made a decision about Arthur’s leadership based on his racial identity.

Diamond, Hallow's principal, highlighted her struggle with a what she referred to as a racist supervisor, "I had to grieve my end of year eval and grieve not one time, not two times, but three times to get an appropriate end of year evaluation." All of these comments shared by participants illustrated the ways in which they believed their experiences with others have been influenced due to their racial identities, which further demonstrates that the racialized perceptions of others regarding Black principals' impact school communities.

In some ways, Black principals take ownership of the implications of race in decisions that they make in their school communities. Staci, the principal of Scholastic, explained that her understanding of her own racial identity impacted how she navigates and interprets things within her school, "my racial identity is everything. That's first and foremost. Even before I'm a woman, I'm black. That's my most salient identity marker. Everything is colored with that lens. More so than the typical White people that I know, which is not something they worry about or must or need to or are cognizant of. But it's all day, every day for me." Staci's comments about the difference between the meaning of race to her and her White peers is significant. She highlighted the ways in which Black principals have an increased awareness of the significance of race in schools. Asia's statements reiterated this with her discussion of the way that her values are intertwined with race and other identity factors she used to make decisions, "Every second, every day you just think about it, or it's brought up or whatever the case may be. That's just the kind of the identity that I live with, and people know that. They know my values." Black principals' racial identity is in fact perceived by others and can be a factor of how the Black principals carry out the responsibilities of their leadership.

Motivated by Change

Black principals' motivation for going into leadership is embedded from their belief of their ability to create change in their community. Black principals' primary motivation for principalship have been grounded in their notions of brokering, power, and mentorship. The individual meaning that they associated with each of these areas contributed to their decisions to pursue the field.

Brokering

Black principals believe that an essential part of their work is to broker access, belief, and opportunity for their communities, which is precisely what these participants expressed they see as their charge. As I questioned participants about their belief about the purpose of education, all participants passionately expressed a deep belief in the meaning of education for and to their students. Seven of the nine participants expressed ways that they believed education had changed their own life trajectory and would for their students. This idea highlighted the importance that Black principals place on their belief in education to make change. Shai's statement in particular emphasized this belief, "to see the impact that it's going to start to have. And honestly, I think that's the only way to help them have control of their future, is to not be dependent on anyone else." This point illustrated the strong belief in the importance of education for students.

Black principals' personal experiences with the impact of education on their own lives reinforced their desire to be part of the journey of education in their students' lives. Participants shared their personal meanings of education. Shai expressed, "I think where me and my wife are is all because of education. That's the biggest door that's opened opportunities, networks, and connections." Brandon furthered this sentiment by saying,

“I think education for us, or education for people of color, in general, gives us an opportunity to push back on those White paradigms, to be able to say, ‘Look, I can write too. I'm not scared of anybody. Because I feel like my education has provided me the backbone.’” Brandon’s comments emphasized a level of confidence and certainty because of his education. Arthur, the principal of Downtown Enlightenment, concurred with Brandon, “My education is everything. It's given me opportunities that I never would've had. It was my music education. I got to travel and play my horn. Been to China, Japan Australia, Hawaii, all over the US, all before the age of 21. It was everything. I'm still learning with it.” With their varied experiences, Black principals have a shared belief in the opportunities provided by education.

In addition to the opportunities in their personal lives from education, the participants described the origins of their beliefs about the meaning of education. They described how the meaning of education to each of them was connected to several different origins: Society, cultural/ethnic roots, and individual family significance. The comments by Arthur and Staci addressed the different origins of importance. Arthur stated, “In the school I'm in, education means a lot because their (students) families push them.” The statement emphasized a family’s meaning of education. Staci commented on the societal meaning of education to Black people specifically, “It's something that historically was taken from us [Black people], with all of our rights, but that was a pretty big one that they [White America] were adamant about. When we think about how we were brought to this country during slavery times, we were not allowed to read, and that was intentional. And to me education is freedom.” The historical significance of education is a crucial component of the motivation for leadership by Black principals.

This motivation for participants was expressed in their reflections about what they believed education meant for the students. The brokering of the possibilities of education was expressed in Kia's (Cornerstone's principal) comment, "When I think of the word 'education,' you prepare someone to defend themselves, to take care of themselves, to speak up for themselves. When we're educating our students, we can help them to advocate for themselves." Asia furthered this by adding what this means in the current and future of her students, "For kids nowadays and having a son and a son who's Black, education's important for them to see multiple perspectives and empathy to investigate the world." Jamal echoed this importance of education regarding future opportunities with, "The more you know, the more you're prepared to navigate the world and for life beyond high school." Black principals stressed the importance education being both future facing and in relations to the current reality of students.

Power

Black principals are motivated to go into principalship because of their belief in the power of the principalship to lead toward change. The participants discussed their ability to feel and experience change as part of their everyday work. Malcolm's reflection is an example of this idea, "We get to be the change in students' experiences within our classrooms." Participants described their belief that the work of principalship had greater reach than their work as teachers. Asia and Jamal's comments illustrated this belief. Asia expressed, "I never wanted to be a principal before but there were a couple things that led to my decision to become a principal. One was that I couldn't make systemic changes in my classroom in the same way. I see change happening as a principal. I see where this school came from and where we're at now. So, I know it's the

right work." Jamal affirmed Asia's statement, "my desire to have a greater impact on not only a diverse student body but a community, is what led me to want to be an educator. I was passionate about the way I was able to serve students as a teacher on the south side of Chicago. When I realized that my influence only went so far as 150 students per year, I wanted to have a greater impact on a larger scale and become a school leader." The idea that principals have power to make greater change was a shared belief that motivated the step toward principalship.

The principals in this study described their feelings of being able to enact change in a couple of different ways. Participants shared the impact they felt their identity as a Black principals had on their school communities. Jamal's and Diamond's responses illustrated this belief. Jamal addressed the ways his Black identity was important for *all* of the students in his community, "I think it's important for a leader like me, a leader of color, to lead in a diverse school setting. Having a principal of color impacts not only students of color but White students as well because they are able to enter into the world beyond high school having a lens that is open, diverse and unbiased." Diamond described the ways her Black identity influenced how her students thought about their futures, "I've had families tell me things like, 'My child always plays school, but now she's the principal. She calls herself the principal, not just the teacher.'" The leadership of Black principals is important to a variety of different types of school communities. This importance is felt by Black principals as a form of power that helps to motivate them toward the principalship.

Mentorship

Black principals have been motivated into principalship because of the influence of Black mentors in their career. Participants admiringly described the ways in which other Black leaders had influenced their path toward principalship. While sharing their stories, I took note of the watering eyes and bright smiles that participants used to detail the experiences with mentors they had encountered. Jamal asserted the importance of his male mentors in his high school, "I was also able to have male educators in my school that I was able to have real conversations with about what I should do after graduating high school. They were able to tell me that yes college is for you." Arthur discussed the importance of a single conversation that set him on his leadership trajectory, "My first year of teaching, my [Black] principal called me in on my planning period. He was like, 'you make a really big impact on the children. And that was just one year. I think you'll make a bigger impact if you go back to school for administration.'" Both of these examples shed light on the power of the single conversations that Black principals share with a mentor that lead them to a life as principals.

Mentors are important to Black principals' initial steps into education. Diamond shared the experience of having a Black principal that hired her for her first teaching position as well as the role that that principal had in her life as a mentor. She described, "And I sent her my resume and cover letters, and she sent me an email and said, 'I'm holding your eighth-grade language arts position open for you if you want it.' And I knew that day I would never make her disappointed. She has been the person to walk with me through all of it. Every position that I went to, I'd call her; she'd help me navigate it." Staci discussed the role of a mentor, which led to her decision for school leadership,

"Somebody actually asked me. It was a person of color. He was like, 'Hey, would you consider being an assistant principal?' And then another black leader, who sort of was like an informal mentor of mine was like, 'We need you to. And so that's ultimately how I came to school leadership.'" The informal recruitment and assurance provided to Black principals by their Black mentors are crucial to decision to pursue school leadership.

The participants illuminated the admiration and care they had for each of their mentors and the influence of these mentorships on the leadership journeys. Because of this admiration, they addressed their belief in the importance of preparing future leadership. The participants detailed their own personal experiences with mentorship and discussed the ways in which they act as mentors for future leaders. Staci's explained the ways she develops future leaders using a race-based approach, "My approach with White leader development has a heavier emphasis on their understanding of race, inequity, and the role that they can play. And the importance of them calling that stuff out. For White people to be able to use coaching with other White people on how to use their power and privilege in a way that's going lead to change." Staci's use of a race-centered approach to leadership is important. Black principals understanding of their racial identities of themselves and their community is important and can be beneficial to their whole school community.

Characterization of Leading

Black principals' characterization of their leadership experience is largely impacted by their encounters with different members within their school communities. Each Black principal has a narrative that details their own historic and personal experiences that have been both positive and negative. These personal understandings

have been significantly influenced by their relationships with members within their school communities and by the intersecting identities with which they carry. Their individual practices, ability to establish trust, and demand of high expectations are central to their personal stories as Black principals.

Relationships

Relationships are essential to Black principals' experiences. Within a school community, it is vital that Black principals establish strong relationships with the largest and arguably the most important stakeholder group in a school: The students. Contextualized within the personal experiences of participants, they described their ability to build relationships with students as the *easy* part of the work. Kia's description illustrated her strength of building relationships with students, "I think that with my students, I don't have a problem at all. That's always been a strength of mine, which is why I loved teaching so much. My kids and I, we get along great. They love me. They know what I stand for." Kia's description pointed to her values, or what she stands for, as the reason for the success of her relationships. Malcolm echoed the belief in the ease of the relationships with his comment, "With students, I just do it. That's so easy. That's the easy part because they're empty vessels." Malcolm's comments reflected his reasoning for his strength in relationships with students, grounded in his perception that students' lack of historical bias makes the ability to build a relationship easier.

The ability of Black principals to develop strong relationships with students in their community is something that is noticed by other stakeholders. Asia's confirmed this strength and the ways that was perceived by teachers within her school, "I've never not had an ability to build trust with students. It is one of my strengths, and teachers

comment a lot on my leadership surveys with statements like you know she loves kids and you know kids love her." Diamond explained the reasoning she believes she is able to establish relationships with students, “I'm relational and easy to talk to which I believe shows myself to have a pretty high emotional IQ. So, relationships come easy for me.” The ability to connect with students is crucial to Black principals’ relationships with their students.

Black principals’ ability to understand the significance of their own racial identities is another factor that is vital to developing relationships within their communities. The participants described the ways in which their identity as Black principals led to developing strong relationships with others in their schools. Diamond illustrated this in her reflection, “And I don't take for granted that, just because I look like the children, that families trust me blindly. I have noticed parents paying particular attention to the way their children interact with me, and *that* has been the thing that I believe has won trust.” Staci explained the way that her understanding of her racial identity and the identities of those within her community impacted her ability to build relationships, “I think it's an advantage for me particularly with kids of color because I think they know that we have a similar experience. We speak a common language. We're able to code-switch with each other, we're able to joke with one another, so it's a lot easier.” Understanding the racial identities of the members of their school communities is an essential foundation to Black principals’ positive relationships within their schools.

Black principals’ leadership practices are grounded in their demand for high expectations. Participants described the ways in which their sternness and high bar of

expectations for students both academically and behaviorally contributed to their ability to have strong relationships. Brandon's descriptions of his hallway interactions with students illuminated his demand of high expectations, "If my kids aren't acting right in the hallway, I'm going to go off. And the kids look back at me, and they know when I mean business. But the kids aren't scared of me. The kids aren't frightened for me. They know, 'oh Lord, here he comes. Let's get right.'"

Shai expanded on his high expectations by comparing the ways in which he has used his expectations compared to the leader that came before him, "I had to put some fear in the kids here because they're used to running stuff. And outside these four walls, you (the students) ain't really running nothing." Shai's comments reflected his understanding of the implications of racial identity for his mostly Black and Brown students outside of their school community. The high expectations for students by Black principals are rooted in their desire for change and their belief in education as a path toward that change (Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012).

Intersecting Identities

Black principals also encounter challenges because of their intersecting identity markers that they carry in their school communities. In addition to their racial identity, participants described the impact of intersecting identities that also impact their principalship experiences. Gender was the primary identity highlighted that participants felt had the greatest perceived impact to the principalship. The male participants were the first in the interviews who, without prompting, highlighted the differences that they perceived that Black women experienced in the principalship compared to their own experiences. Shai initiated the discussion of gender, "I think that it is different because I

have been around Black principals and I hear feel like they have to wrestle with the female aspect of their principalship. Am I too strong? Am I X, Y, and Z? through the female lens, not even necessarily the Black lens." Arthur agreed with this sentiment, "Black women have it much harder. I'll be the first to tell you. With some definite apprehension, they're [White people] not going run up on us [Black men] that quick. So, that kind of slows some of that down. They'll figure they can challenge a Black woman, and they're [Black women] going to back down." Arthur's comments also reflected the reality of his own racial understanding of the perception of how the fear associated with Black men impacts others' perceptions of Black women.

The female participants described their challenges and experiences with gender and other identity markers. Asia described another identity marker—age—that has impacted her experiences, "I think me being a woman and being perceived as a young woman. I've come across a lot of patriarchy in this role, not necessarily from people higher up. From people below me, if you had to put it on like a top to bottom kind of thing. More of my strong-willed, strong opinionated teachers have more of an issue with a directive from me." Asia's discussion of her experiences illustrated an assumed variation of who and how identity markers impacted her school community. Kia highlighted another component with her description of differences she experienced following a male predecessor, "I think definitely being a female impacts my experience. I say that because Mr. [Man] had been the principal of my school since it opened, and he was a Black male. I would sit in on some of his meetings with teachers and with parents, and the same message that he could give would go over ten times better than the same message I would give as a Black female. And I'm like, I know I'm saying everything he

would say, or I know I'm giving the same message, but it wasn't taken the same." The details that Kia used to describe the differences in the way that she was received in her school community implied the importance of different identity markers to stakeholders within her community.

In contrast, Diamond described the way in which her identity positively impacted her ability to lead in her school community, "Because many of my teachers are also women, I think that they are mostly inclined to follow me." Additionally, Staci spoke about the ways that she used her identity to build bridges amongst different people within her school community, "I think using my identity to build bridges has been one of the fun parts of this job. Because I think I use it to be able to connect with people who don't look like me, don't have a similar lived experience. But, I'm able to tap into whatever their *isms* are. We all have our *isms*. So, if it's White women, which is the majority of our teachers, one of the *isms* that they face is sexism." This final point reflected by Staci reiterated the significance of Black principals' understanding of the racial identity and other identities as paramount in principal experiences.

Participants suggested other less common identities that are at play on their experiences within their school communities. Shai struggled with the idea and complexity of his racial identity being the only one that impacted his principalship journey, "All of this stuff has been posing as a Black-White issue. And I'm like, there's so much more to my identity than just a Black dude. There's the sports aspect of me. There's the places I've lived, the music I listen to, where I grew up at. I don't know how much of it is race and I know race is a huge component." Although Shai struggled with

the importance of his many identities on his principal experience, he was honest about the implication of his racial identity.

Staci described the complexity of her Black identity combined with her educational attainment of obtaining a Ph.D. She explained, "I've also experienced this intersection of having a doctorate. But what I find is that that's another layer of my identity that people are very uncomfortable with and struggle with just understanding. I would say with White people, in particular, struggling with just saying Dr. Staci. I think they experience cognitive dissonance because they think people who are doctors are White, first and foremost. And, specifically, White male." The description offered by Staci emphasized the magnitude of the implications of Black principals' leadership through the variety of identities that they bring to their school communities.

Because of the prevalence of the significance of their racial identities, Black principals understand the existence of stereotypes within their school communities. Participants explained their experiences breaking with stereotypes that could be associated with their racialized identities. Shai described the different ways that he does this in his school, "I'll come dressed up, I'll come with my tattoos out. I also will try to put students in environments that don't look like what they're used to. So even simple things like taking them to the ballet and seeing *The Nutcracker*." Just as importantly, Malcolm described the ways in which his rise to principalship was in fact a break from the stereotype associated with his own life story, "I think having a daughter at 19 years old changed my life because I wanted to show her something completely different. My mom is a single mom with three boys. In my immediate family, no one went to or graduated from college. So, when I had my daughter so young I said, 'I've got to give her

something different than what I experienced.'" Stereotypes can play large role in the identity narratives that exist within a school. Black principals' understanding of these factors are integral to their experiences.

Anchored in Faith

The spiritual beliefs of Black principals are key foundations of their leadership. Black principals use their spirituality to help ground them, recognize the spiritual components of the identities of others, and to sustain their commitments to their school communities. Similar to their racial identities, their spirituality is an essential component of who they are. For instance, Staci remarked, "I think one of the biggest things I've learned is this idea of not checking your identity at the door." Here, Staci emphasized the belief that identity includes many components. More than half of the participants surfaced their leadership being anchored in their faith, as they described the ways that their faith shows up in their experiences of principalship. Shai discussed the way in which his religion helped him to navigate particular parts of his principal journey, "I think there are so many different factors with a Black person, with just things that make up your identity alone, your religion. God got me. I'ma be all right. Maybe I'm going through the storm for now. He put me in the storm and it made me stronger. I didn't want to be in it. I didn't want to be in any of these places I've been in, but He's put me here." Shai's comment also alluded to a belief that a spiritual foundation is connected to his Black identity. Arthur expanded upon this assertion with his description of the meaning of faith to Black principals, "With all the shit that we've gone through, we still believe something can work for us. You have to have faith in this because there's a

purpose for you to do this." Black principals' leadership is rooted in faith that is both backward and forward facing (Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010).

Black principals understand the impact of spirituality to their school communities. Staci described the importance of understanding the role of religion and spirituality in leading her school community, "It's actually really important for you to bring who you are and to be accepting of who everybody else is. My staff know that I'm a person of faith and they know what that looks like for me. We have conversations about faith." Staci's comments asserted the importance and model of Staci's leadership to her school community in celebrating and uncovering the many components of her different identities and her encouragement of them to follow suit.

Spirituality has also been used to sustain Black principals in challenging moments in their leadership. Diamond highlighted the encounters she had in her leadership when her spirituality sustained her in her difficulties and challenges, "And right when I say, "I'm giving up. I'm giving in. I'm done. I'm going on leave—it's the God who knows all things who's like, 'No, you're not.' Even when you want to walk away, Creator is like, 'No. I told you to do this one.'" Staci further asserted, "I would say my faith is deeply rooted in my relationship with God, and how I show up as a person every day. I think that that is what matters to me and I think that's how it connects to this work. I believe that you are called to do this work, literally, by God. I think that you are destined to do it even when you try to go do something else." Diamond's reflection emphasized the belief that because of their racial identity, Black principals experiences greater challenges in their schools. Black principals use their spirituality to ground them along their leadership journey.

Consequences of Leadership

Black principals' encounters in leadership have consequences that impact them personally. The results of their racialized experiences in leadership are both momentary and lasting. Most often, these repercussions remain personal and hidden from their school communities. Participants described the various ways in which the principalship effected their lives.

Fear

Half of the participants in this study discussed battling fear as an effect of their work. They shared that their fear was associated both from the demands of their role and the complexity of the implications of their racial identity in the role. Brandon provided a rich description:

> I feared for my job at that time. My mom always used to say, as a Black person, being Black, you have to work 110%. And I've always held that to me. And so, people always say, "He works so hard. He's basically killing himself." I do have to work 110%, or they're going to put somebody else in this position. I live in daily fear. Because I feel like it's not if, but when somebody's going to come to me and say something that's not true. And I'm going to lose my job. And I'm afraid that this district will come in, and they'll pull me out.

Brandon's comments reflected a belief that because of his racial identity he is under greater scrutiny and can at any time fall victim to an injustice or falsity associated with his principalship.

The fear felt by Black principals can exist in different ways in school communities. They fear that because of their racial identity, different members within their community—staff in particular—may interpret normal everyday activities in a school in a completely different way. Kia's description illustrated the way fear and her racialized identity impacted her daily practices,

> I have a lot of African American staff in my building. If I am meeting with—I have three senior teacher leaders who are African American females and someone walks by, I automatically get anxious, thinking, "They're going to think we're in here just talking about the BET Awards." And so, I even make jokes with them and say, "There's too many. Making people nervous." Inwardly, I get really nervous. I kind of overcompensate, because I always wonder what people are thinking.

Kia's reflection illuminated the internal and private struggle of fear situated within an understanding of the importance of racial identity in school communities that effect Black principals in the leadership.

Mental Health

Black principals' racialized leadership experiences effect their mental health. The constant fear, pressure, and scrutiny of the principalship resulted for several of the participants describing their battles with mental health. Brandon shared that the pressure of being a Black principal made him feel he needed to work harder, "I always feel like I have to work harder than the other principals around me, or I will not be here long. It's a daily fear of mine. I have a lot of medical issues dealing with the anxiety and stress. I didn't know what it was. But it is, anxiety and fatigue." Kia expanded with details of her

battles as she shared her journey with fear and anxiety, "I have a lot of anxiety. I would say inwardly is where it weighs the heaviest for me. I'm always thinking, 'What are they thinking? What are they thinking?' It can make you go home at the end of the night and shake your confidence. It can make you feel like, 'Why am I in this role if no one believes in me?' It can really wear away at you."

The pressures of Black principals' racial identities in principalship has at times made them question their ability to continue in their roles. Diamond detailed how she sought a therapist in order to ask that she be placed on medical leave due to the pressure and anxiety that she faced daily in her work as a principal. Diamond's statement highlighted her internal struggle with the impact of her work, "I am a fighter. When things don't go well or I believe that something unjust has happened, I feel personally responsible to bend the arc back. It's not healthy because there are things that are outside my control. So, I always feel pressure. I feel anxious all the time." The work of the principalship can be challenging. The impact of the racial identity of Black principals complicates and at time leads to further challenge for the work. The trials of this work for Black principals unfortunately includes impacting their mental health.

Summary

The analysis of this study resulted in five major themes about the experiences of Black principals: (1) Being Black matters, (2) motivated by change, (3) characterization of leading, (4) anchored in faith, and (5) consequences of leadership best summarizes the racialized experiences of Black principals. In this study, I found that there are varied experiences and practices amongst Black principals. However, the prevalence and understanding of their racialized identities is significant to not only them, but also to their

school communities. In fact, their leadership is impacted both their own understanding of their racialized identity and by others' racialized lens and perspectives. Further there is nothing about their leadership or the perceptions of others within their school communities that is colorless. Diamond succinctly encapsulated the charge of being a Black principal,

> I do think it's a calling. I really do. And I think that it's one that I take to heart and that I take seriously. And that I think is a privilege, because our kids, their very lives and future are predicated upon what we do, and that's showing up every day. And so I think that's what helps you get through all the bullshit that we've been sharing, all the things you go back to, like this is what God—this is what you have called, and so—and it is what pushes you to lead with EXCELLENCE.

This study's research question—*what is the essence of Black principals' leadership as a response to their daily lived racialized experiences,* was central to the investigation and analysis of this study. The results of this study revealed that the essence of Black principals' leadership is situated in the reality of the dominance of their racial identity on their leadership. The signature components of this essence operates in excellence because of their desire to be in alignment to a higher purpose or calling for the work that they do daily. The above reflection by Diamond reflects this essence. The narratives of the participants emphasize the significance of a racialized lens for leaders and their school communities (students, staff, and families), and emphasized the impacts of a leaders' experiences and their practices of leadership. This study is significant because it examined the ways in which Black principals navigate the nuances of school communities utilizing their racialized lens and serves as a model for further examining

how racialized lens are important for school leadership. The participants affirmed the importance of this study through narratives confirming that nothing about leadership is race-neutral. In Chapter Five, I discuss these findings, their implications, and suggest future recommendations.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The different racialized experiences between students and educators is important and often overlooked in the literature and the practices of educational leadership (Murtadha & Watts, 2005; Faircloth, 2017; Shields, 2012; Knaus, 2014; Horsford, 2009; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Bess, 2009; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the essence of Black principals' understanding of their racialized experiences and the meaning to their leadership. The central research question for this study was: What is the essence of Black principals' leadership as response to their daily lived racialized experiences? Through nine individual interviews and one focus group interview, I collected rich and descriptive data from Black principals regarding how their Black identities have impacted their experiences and practices of principalship. In this phenomenological study, I sought to understand how Black principals make meaning of their racialized experiences. I was interested in learning about the essence of the Black principals leading while Black in diverse school settings. In this effort, I sought to deeply understand the lived experiences of Black principals who lead in schools located in urban contexts from their point of view. In this chapter, I discuss and interpret the findings for this study, which is followed by a discussion of study implications and recommendations for future research that will support the development of future and present principals in the P-20 continuum.

Discussion of Findings

This study was designed to explore the essence of Black principals' experiences. Afrocentricity is a key component of the conceptual framework of this study. The findings of this study emphasize the assumptions of Afrocentricity which state: (a) The experiences of Black people are worth study, and (b) the best way to understand Black people is from their own perspective (McDougal, 2014). While the field of educational leadership continues to develop new leadership theories to make sense of leadership roles and how one goes about leading in different contexts, existing leadership theories still lack specific ways in which a racialized lens is an important dimension to leadership theory, especially when such theories are applied to more diverse school communities. In this study, I explored what can be learned when principals—specifically Black principals—in urban school settings are given opportunity to reflect on their racialized identity and experiences.

After analyzing the data to uncover the essence of Black principals' leadership as response to their daily lived racialized experiences, five key findings emerged that addressed the central research question. The first finding was that being Black matters. In this study, this meant that Black principals understanding of the meaning and significance of their racial identities is the central component of their leadership within their school community. The second finding was that Black principals' motivation for going into leadership was grounded in their belief of their ability to create change in their community. The third finding was that Black principals' experiences are largely impacted by their encounters with different members within their school communities. The fourth finding was that Black principals are anchored in faith, which means that the

spiritual beliefs of Black principals are key foundations of their leadership. The fifth and final key finding was that there are consequences of leadership for Black principals. This means that Black principals' encounters in leadership have consequences that impact them personally. Together, the five key findings culminated into one shared essence: Black principals' leadership is situated in the reality of the dominance of their racial identity on their leadership. Through these findings I argue against color-evasive approaches to the way we think and talk about leadership and provide evidence of how distinct racialized experiences are important to critically interrogate to provide a more nuanced understanding of the principalship and how it is theorized.

Being Black Matters

Black principals' understanding of the meaning and significance of their racial identities is the vital component of their leadership within their school communities. This theme was most significant for this study because it provided the structure for conceptualizing the essence of Black principals' leadership. Regardless of the range of differences and similarities within Black principals' leadership, the meaning of their racial identities was important to both the principals and their school communities. This theme reiterated Black principals' battles with the daily manifestations of racism and the implications of its interplay amongst different racial identities within schools. The extant literature on Black principals also emphasized the various ways in which Black principals racialized identity made it difficult to establish trust and navigate challenges within their school communities (Pollard, 1997; Brown, 2005; Jean-Marie, Williams & Sherman, 2009; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gooden, 2012; Ogunbawo, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Knaus, 2014; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). The

findings of the study confirm the various ways in which Black principals' identities impact the experiences and practices within their school communities. The prevalence of this theme helped to further understand the essence of Black principals' leadership as situated in the dominance of their racial identities.

The historic and present experiences of Black principals in the literature demonstrated the variety of ways in which Black principals' racial identities is a dominant essence of their leadership (Pollard, 1997; Tillman, 2004, 2008; Loder, 2005; Bess; 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Walker & Byas, 2003; Ward Randolph, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). There are concepts in this study that both aligned and strayed from the extant literature on Black principals. Within the literature, emphasis was placed on the many ways that Black principals' race impacted their school assignments (Pollard, 1997; Loder, 2005; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Wilson, 2016). The findings of this study indicate that race did in fact play a factor in the school assignment of the participants. However, unlike the widespread practice in the literature of Black principals being *sent* to Black and Brown communities, instead the principals in this study felt that they could *choose* the community in which they wanted to serve. The participants in this study emphasized that the demographics of the school communities greatly influenced their *choice* in what schools they chose to serve. This distinction from the literature is important, because it asserts the ways in which current Black principals' feel that they have some agency in the decision-making related to their career.

Motivated by Change

Black principals' motivation for going into leadership is embedded in their belief of their ability to create change in their community. This theme is important because it indicates that Black principals believe and operate with excellence because their leadership in education could create change. Throughout the extant literature from post-Emancipation to more recently, there is a common belief that Black principals have a deep belief in the possibility of education (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012; Walker, 2018). This concept was emphasized similarly in the findings of this study. The legacy of the importance of education and the excellent models of the leadership of Black principals is emphasized both in this study and in the literature. The extant literature included examples of newer principals that were encouraged and brought into the field through the influence of veteran Black principals' leadership (Anderson, 1988; Pollard, 1997; Walker & Byas, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Ward Randolph, 2012; Walker, 2018). In this study, I present similar findings revealing relationships and inspiration confirming the continued meaning and importance of Black principals' leadership.

Characterization of Leading

Black principals' characterization of their leadership experience is largely impacted by their encounters with different members within their school communities. The theme is significant in that it points to the complex elements that comprise Black principals' everyday leadership experiences. It is focused on two of most frequent stakeholder interactions that happen within a school community: Between a principal and their students and staff. Both in this study and the extant literature, there are

examples of how these experiences can be both positive and negative. The review of literature of Black principals in this illustrates the variety of roles that Black principals have played in their communities but did not speak specifically of the strength that they have with students (Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). However, the finding of this study specifically demonstrated a strength that Black principals maintain with students. The implication of this finding is important when situated within the literature of the challenge of the growing diversity of schools across the nation. The perceived strength of Black principals with students could provide a place of further exploration and understanding of their practices of leadership.

The findings of the study highlighted the challenges that Black principals experienced as result of their intersecting identities. The most commonly identified intersecting identity that significantly impacted the experiences of Black principals of this study was gender. Gender surfaced as another major identity that impacted the ability to build trust and navigate the school community. In this study as well as in the literature of Black principals', gender was expressed as a challenge to leadership. In the literature, gender was most discussed by women principals (Tillman, 2004; Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010); however, in this study it was discussed by both. This is a significant distinction within this study, because it provides some reflection in Black principals' developing awareness of intersecting identities and their impact on journey of principalship.

Anchored in Faith

Black principals' spiritual beliefs are key foundations of their leadership. As I have addressed in the explanations of previous themes, Black principals experience many

challenges during their leadership. This particular theme provided an example of the elements that Black principals utilize in order to sustain themselves through their challenges. There are similarities to this finding in the literature that address the significance of the spirituality (Loder, 2005; Bess, 2009; Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Newcomb & Niemeyer; Wilson, 2016). There is a slight difference from the findings of this study and the literature review of Black principals. In the literature, the discussion of Black principals centered around the similarities of Black principals' leadership to Black ministers within the Black church (Bess, 2009, Dantley, 2010; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). The difference and significance of this study points to the ways that Black principals leverage and are sustained through their spiritual beliefs.

Consequences of Leadership

Black principals' encounters in leadership have consequences that impact them personally. This theme is significant because it addresses both the momentary and lasting impacts of leadership on Black principals. This finding surfaced the consequences of Black principals on their mental health. The extant literature of Black principals did not specifically address the impact of mental health due to the principalship. The theme explicitly arises from interviews with participants who discussed their battles with anxiety due to their principalships. This is critical area that deserves greater research and attention in the discussion of Black principalship. This finding reiterates another example of the ways that Black principals' narratives have been overlooked and absent in recent theories of and models educational leadership.

Implications

This study has implications for educational practitioners, school districts, researchers and policymakers. The conceptual framework of this study emphasizes the importance of Black principal narratives. Black principals' racial identity signifies a variety of implications within educational leadership. The findings of this study have implications that are important to those who work in school, those developing theory, and those making policy. The implication for professional practice is the development of intentional and systematic leadership practices that require greater understanding of a leader's racial identity. The last implication is for policy that prioritizes the importance of understanding racial identities within school communities.

Implications for Theory

As mentioned in Chapter One, urban public schools across the country are working struggling to find solutions to the growing the diversity of students and their families (Tillman, 2004, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Khalifa et al., 2016; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Gooden, 2012; Wilson, 2016). In addition, the general approach to school leadership preparation and practices has been focused on providing principals with tools that are centered on creating the inputs needed for strong student outcomes. Due to the continual decline of educational outcomes and greater disparities between race and ethnicity, English Learning students, students with IEPs, and student from lower socio-economic statuses, the need to have leaders that are more equipped to meet the diverse needs of school communities has increased. Recent educational theories have developed with aims to better prepare leaders to meet the varieties of needs of the communities that they serve. However, the literature has missed the opportunities to specifically examine

the ways that racialize experiences impact leadership. The implications of these misses are profound. These implications are significant to education at the district, state, and national level.

Implications for Professional Practice

In this study, I presented a story that illustrates the importance of examining racialized identities. The first implication addresses the need for principals to examine their racialized identities and the ways that this impacts their leadership within their school community. The essence of the Black principalship explored in this study clearly displayed that Black principals are aware and navigate their leadership positions with an understanding of their racialized Black identity within their school communities. Their understandings of the meaning of their racialized identities has significant impacts to and on their different experiences and practices within their school. In many examples in the findings of this study, Black principals described the ways in which their racialized identities could not be separated for their leadership experience or narratives.

In a nation and urban public education system that is quickly diversifying, the need to examine one's racialized lens is vital to all principals, not just Black principals. The principals in this study detailed the ways in which their racialized identities impacted not just their own decision making, but also the ways in which they were received from their school communities. This is an essential element to spotlight because principalship is anchored not just in the practices of the leader, but also in the response of the school community. The school community (students, staff, families and community) is an essential factor in student outcomes. Self-reflection and awareness of the racialized

identity is necessary for effective leadership and a best practice that needs a considerable amount of time to unpack.

In addition, districts should prioritize the importance of a principal's understanding of their racialized identities. This understanding and continued development is important not only when making decisions regarding school placement, but also in determining readiness for principalship. School placement can be a contentious space in school leadership. Typically, the schools that are identified as the most challenging have large populations of Black and Brown children from lower socio-economic statuses. When no consideration is given to the leader's understanding of their racialized identity and its impact on a school community, it is unfair and does not set the principal or the school community up for success.

Evidence within the extant literature continues to indicate that second to teachers, principals are the greater indicator of school success (Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzono & Waters, 2009). This research addressed the importance of strong instructional leadership and does not speak to the importance of leaders understanding the cultural diversity of the campus. Culturally responsive leadership addressed the importance of a leader deeply understanding the cultures of their school community (Khalifa et al., 2016). However, the theory missed the mark on emphasizing the importance of principals' understanding of their own racialized identities. As school districts prepare leaders for school leadership in varying school communities, this understanding is significant to their success.

The Black principals in this study demonstrated in both their experiences and practices that racialized identity matters. Principal preparation is significant to principal

success. Preparation includes not only exposure to important theories of educational leadership. Principals must also be prepared for what happens once they go "live" in an actual school setting. The needs of a school community are many and a principal's understanding of themselves—particularly their racialized identity—is a vital component.

Implications for State Policy

The fourth implication addresses the need for state policy that determines principal licensure standards. Principal standards guide the frameworks and courses that universities and districts use to design their principal programs around. The current principal standards for the State of Colorado in particular do not currently address principal reflectiveness. Through the findings, I have demonstrated the importance of reflecting on one's racialized identity and its impact on their leadership and school community.

In this study, I focused on the experiences of Black principals, and the findings of this study reiterated the contribution Black principals make to school leadership. I expounded upon the reality of the role that race plays in school communities every day. The impact of race is real and as stated need principals to meet the changing needs of their schools, it is important to create policy that addresses principal standards to reflect this importance.

Through my findings, I contribute to the field of educational leadership in variety of ways. This study continues to push for greater inclusion, through its illumination of the experiences of Black principals' unique essence using their racialized lens in principalship. The findings of this study and the extant literature on Black principals together reveal that Black principals have entered principalship because of the impact of

other Black leaders. Arguably, this is due to their racialized lens they inherently carry that causes them to *see* developing leaders and provide the tools or words they need to enter their field. As less people and specifically Black educators are entering the field, it is crucial to ensure that there are strong leadership development pipelines in place. Uplifting the voices of Black principals is also a contribution to the literature by adding dimension to the diverse experiences of principalship and provides examples of the ways that racialized identities can impact school leadership. The inclusion of diverse experiences and practices helps to provide foundations for helping to diversify leadership pipelines.

Recommendations

After analyzing the data gathered for this research, there are number of recommendations that are relevant within the field of educational leadership and in particular to leadership preparation and development. Through my findings, I demonstrated that the current practices and research regarding principal preparation do not meet the needs of the increasing student and family diversity of urban public education. I asserted that not only do Black principals have different experiences and practices, but also their leadership is key to understanding how better meet the needs of school communities. Within the extant literature, there is an underlying assumption and an unfortunate practice of placing Black principals in schools in mostly Black and Brown communities; however, this study underlined that Black principals' understanding of their racialized identity has meaning and learning that can be applicable to all within educational leadership. All leaders can be and should be prepared to work with students from diverse backgrounds to disrupt racially segregated leadership.

Programming and Policy

Leadership Self-Reflection. This study's findings highlighted the experiences and practices of Black principals that are often invisible to other principals. Current and aspiring principals should begin with a process of reflection to think about the different elements of their racialized identities. The first step in this process is to look deeply at the demographics of the school community that they are currently serving or aspiring to serve in. After completing this analysis, they should reflect upon their own racialized identity and compare that to the demographics of the school community. This initial level of reflection should include thinking through the ways that the differences and similarities of their own racialized identity may function with the school community that they serve or will be serving (Pollard, 1997; Brown, 2005; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Coleman & Campbell-Stephens, 2010; Gooden, 2012; Ogunbawo, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014).

Practitioners' continual practice of reflection allows for deeper levels of understanding of their racialized identities to develop. In this study, Black principals described the ways in which their racialized identity impacted their ability to develop relationships, the ways they communicated, and ways that they made decisions. These learnings are vital to the components of a conceptualized racial identity. School leaders could use these elements as the key markers to their reflection for making meaning of their racialized identity. Principals with a deep understanding of their racialized identities could tremendously impact the ways that they think about their school communities.

Racialized Identity Leadership Preparation. School districts should consider incorporating a series in the preparation process of their district-developed principal and leadership preparation programming that includes learnings related to understanding racialized identity. The findings in this study have surfaced that the benefit of such learning is essential for all those in leadership. The unpacking and understanding of racialized identity could include trainings for those who are already in leadership through professional development. Urban districts across the nation offer recertification and professional development opportunities and requirements for leaders throughout the year. A component that focuses on racialized identity should be included in a series for leader development.

Race-Based Mentorship Programs. As school districts determine principal and community needs, they should incorporate components that highlight the impact and meaning of racialized identities. This could be used to think through the ways in which incumbent leaders and their policies either positively or negatively impact their school communities. The findings of this study also emphasized the importance of other experienced Black leaders who act as mentors to developing leaders. Another essential recommendation is that districts put effort and funding into developing more race-based mentorship programs.

Principal-Centered Mental Health Supports. Finally, the findings of this study surfaced the mental health challenges that exist for principals. The mental health challenges of this work manifested in the form of anxiety for the participants in this study. As urban districts develop leadership plans for principals, they should include plans of specific ways in which principals can maintain positive physical, emotional, and

mental health. As the current national tenure for principals is less than four years, examining areas of support is crucial for increasing that tenure (Levin & Bradley, 2019).

Race Reflection Standards. The findings of this study emphasize the importance of racialized identity to leading school communities. This importance should be considered when policymakers are deciding changes and additions to current principal standards. A principals' understanding of their racialized identity impacts their ability to make decisions and build trust in their school communities. Language that addresses racialized identity reflection should be incorporated into state and local principal certification standards. By making changes to the current standards, a foundation would be set that demonstrates the importance and priority of leadership racial reflections.

Areas for Future Research

The field and theories of educational leadership are continuing to grow and develop. Continued research that specifically address the racialized identity of principals is necessary in this growth and development. Some of the most recent education leadership theories have examined the racialized identities of school communities, but do not specifically address the racialized identity of the leader and its impact on the school community (Bieneman, 2011; Wilson, 2016; Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018; Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Khalifa et al., 2016; Avolio & Gardener, 2005; Sparrowe, 2005; Dantley, 2010; Faircloth, 2017; Fine, 2017). Research that centers racialized identity furthers the push toward inclusion and diversity by highlighting that racialized identity reflection is the work of *all* leaders, not just leaders of color.

The results of this study indicate that there are many theoretical frameworks that can be incorporated into scholarship within educational leadership. This study's use of

Afrocentricity as a theory within its conceptual framework demonstrated the ways in which other disciplines (e.g. Black Studies) can be incorporated to examine urban public education principalship. In continued research that addresses communities and their contextualized issues, I recommend looking outside of educational leadership to approaches that more specifically speak to the communities and challenges that are being explored. This study's focus of the unique contributions of Black principals throughout history offers reflection of leadership that is beneficial to diverse students and particularly Black students, through leaders who understand the importance of racialized identity and utilize more inclusive practices. The implications for this continued expansion of culturally responsive school leadership and transformative leadership.

Conclusion

In this phenomenological study, I explored the essence of the leadership that Black principals bring to school communities. The purpose of this research was to understand more about the ways in which Black principals respond to their daily racialized experiences. The findings of this study demonstrated that regardless of the configuration or demographics of the school community, Black principals' leadership is significantly influenced by their racialized identity and impacts their experiences and practices. I assert that Black principals' racialized identities are significant to both themselves and the other racialized lens and perspectives of members of their school community. This last finding is significant in that demonstrates that this understanding is not meaningful solely to Black principals, but to all those seeking and currently serving as educational leaders.

I was surprised by two components of this study. The first was finding that current Black principals broke with the historic legacy of Black principals' leading outside of their school settings. However, the reality and current climate of increased accountability and pressure for schools and principals provides some clarity as to why the Black principals in this study addressed the need for setting clear boundaries between their professional and personal lives. This break with the extant literature highlights that further research is needed to explore more about elements of Black principals' leadership. Another surprising finding within this study is the reality of the effects of principalship on the mental health of Black principals. Extant research addresses issues of sustainability and actualities associated with the principalship, but the literature of Black principals and their presence within recent educational leadership did not surface this area. Similar to the findings related to the need for boundaries, the missing narratives of Black principals allow room for many misconceptions and assumptions.

While the trend of othering Black narratives in educational leadership has dominated research, the extant literature of the history of Black principals since Emancipation illustrates that Black principals have so much more to contribute to the whole field of educational leadership. This study is significant because in answering my research question, I identify the essence of Black principals' leadership' as being situated in the dominance of their racialized identities. My study significantly examines the ways that their racialized identities impact their leadership in their school communities by examining what motivated them into the principalship, discussing the highlights and challenges they experience in leadership, and uncovering what anchors them to their purpose as they experience the unforeseen consequences of their leadership. Future

researchers should continue to examine the many contributions and approaches to leadership that is utilized by Black principals. As this study was centered on their racialized identities, future research must more closely examine the impact and meaning of leaders' identities.

The essence of Black principalship is complex, multi-layered, and meaningful. Black principals' leadership provides the field of educational leadership with a framework that is significant to all school communities. On a daily basis, Black principals use their understanding and navigate through their racialized experiences. This reality and knowledge are crucial to urban school leadership. This study is significant as it shines light on the insight and understanding of Black principals within the racialized world of urban public education. By examining the current reality of school communities, I call out the challenges that exist within educational leadership and shine light on the unique contribution provided by Black principals.

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Appendix A
Human Subject Protection- Consent Form
Principals
University of Denver
Principal Consent Form for Participation in Research

Title of Research Study: We Are Because I Am: A Phenomenological Study

Researcher: Natalie Lewis, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Denver

Study Site: Metropolitan Area

Invitation to participate in research
You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a Black principal in the metropolitan area. The purpose of this research is to understand the essence of the lived racialized experiences of Black principals. The researcher also aims to use the data collected to understand the role that a racialized perspective and understanding impacts the ways in which principals lead in their school communities.

Procedures
If you take part in this research study, you will be invited to participate in one 45- 60 minute interview in December/ January 2019, and one 60-90 focus group in January/ early February 2020 in which you will be asked about your experiences and practices of principalship through your racialized perspective and lens.

All interviews will be audio-recorded using an electronic recorder for ease of referencing the interviews. These recordings will only be listed to by myself (Natalie Lewis) and a transcribing service, in which they will be transcribe the recordings and remove any identifiable information. The recording device will be kept in the personal home office of Natalie Lewis. Recording will be deleted once notes are transcribed.

Voluntary Participation
Participating in this research study is completely voluntary. Even if you decided to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. There are no consequences if you decide to withdraw early from this study and the information or data you provided with be destroyed.

Possible Risks or Discomforts
There are minimal potential risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study. Your answers to interview questions will be kept confidential. **Any information which is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.**

Benefits

This research has the potential to expand the narratives of principalships in this nation. Research conducted via this project will add to the body of knowledge regarding the practices and experiences of Black principals that might help ALL principals further investigate and consider the role of their racialized perspective in their leadership in their school communities.

Incentives to Participate
You will not receive any payment for participating in this research project.

Study Costs
You are not expected to pay for any costs associated with this research project.

Confidentiality
The researcher will make all efforts to keep your information private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort or report that might be published. The name of your school district will also be kept confidential. You may choose your own pseudonym. The researcher will destroy the original data once it has been transcribed and the study is completed. Information about you will be kept confidential to the extent permitted or required by law. There are two exceptions to the promise of confidentiality. Any information you reveal concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect is required by law to be reported to the proper authorities. Research records will be stored securely on a password-protected software and computer, and only Natalie Lewis and Dr. Lolita Tabron, professor and this dissertation's Director will have access to the records. Representatives of regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) and entities such as the University of Denver Human Subjects Protection Program may access your records to make sure the study is being run correctly and that information is collected properly. Further, should any information contained in this study be subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. The research information may be shared with federal agencies or local committees who are responsible for protecting research participants.

Questions
Please feel free to call the researcher, Natalie Lewis at (720) 339-3840 with any questions or concerns about participation in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about your research participation or rights as a participant, you may contact the DU Human Research Protections Program by emailing IRBAdmin@du.edu or calling (303) 871-2121 to speak to someone other than the researcher.

Options for Participation

Please initial your choice for the options below:
___The researcher may audio record me during this study.
___The researcher may NOT audio record me during this study.

Please take all the time you need to read through this document and decide whether you would like to participate in this research study. By participating in the interview, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for learning purposes only.

If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign below. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature **Date**

Appendix B
Interview Protocol- Administrators Focus Group

Central Research Question:
What is the essence of Black principals' racialized identity in their principalship?

Opening Protocol
Provide the Informed consent form to the participant and ask that the form be read.
After the participant has read the form, ask the participant if he/ she has any questions about his/ her consent, the research, or the process.
Answer any questions the participant may have, and ask the participant if he/ she is willing to participate in the study and to sign the two copies of the Informed Consent Form.
If willing to participate, give the participant one copy of the informed consent form and retain a signed copy for yourself.
Give the participant a face sheet for them to fill out while checking devices.
Read Preamble

Preamble
Thanks so much for agreeing to this interview. The reason why I asked you to participate in this interview is to hear about your experiences about your work as a principal. Today is _____ and we are at _____. I'm interviewing _____ today.

Your opinions, experiences, ideas and participation are very important in this study and may lead to deeper understanding of the experiences and practices of Black principals. Please know that I am not here to promote a particular way of thinking about principalship. I want you to feel comfortable to share good things as well as critical things about this topic. There are no right or wrong answers.

We are going to spend the next 45-60 minutes having this conversation. I am going to be asking you some questions about your experiences as a Black principal. The permission form that you signed means that we can record our discussion so that I can listen to it later and use it to write a report. I will ask the questions and I will also take notes of the conversation. No one but me, my dissertation committee including Dr. Lolita Tabron, Dr. Kristina Hesbol, Dr. Serie McDougal and Dr. Nick Cuttforth will hear the recording or read the transcript of this interview. However, I'll share my findings with the University of Denver and others as my dissertation oral defense. I will not put your name in the report so it's OK for you to tell me what's on your mind.

I intend to share general themes from our and other conversations with Black principals with my dissertation committee as part of my dissertation data analysis and findings. I will not put your name or any other identifiable information that be traced back to you in the final report.

During this time, I have several questions that I would like to ask you. To respect our time together, I may need to interrupt our conversation if we are running short on time. As a follow-up to this conversation, I may request additional comments and feedback during the writing of the data analysis of my dissertation to ensure that your opinion, experiences and ideas are accurately reflected.

Now I will ask some questions regarding your work as a principal. You may ask me questions at any time during this process. If you would like to follow along, here is a copy of the questions I plan to ask.

Before we continue, do you have any questions? Great! Let's get on with the interview.

Purpose
First, I'd like to hear about your journey into principalship.
[Question 1]- What brings you into principalship? ○ *What is your journey that brought you to the work?* ○ *How did you know this is the work that you should be doing?* Listen for: ● Commitment to purpose connected to Black and Latinx students ● This work is connected to a higher purpose ● Their individual work is connected to something greater (a collective) **[Question 2]? Why is education so important to you?** ● *What meaning has your own education had for you?* ● *What meaning do you see education having for your students?* Listen for: ● Education is progress ● Education is a way out ● Education is key to a bright future <u>Overall Themes to Listen for</u>: ● Purpose in the work connected to their identity ● Education is important throughout time (historically, present, future) ● Education is significant for life trajectory
School Community's Perception based on Racialized Identity

Now I'd like to hear about your experiences in your school.

[Question 3] In what way (if at all) does your identity impact your ability to establish trust with those in your community

- *With students?*
- *With staff?*
- *With families?*

Listen for:

- Challenges with establishing trust (with who)
- Benefits with establishing trust (with who)

Overall Themes to Listen for:

- Racialized identity impacts the ability to establish trust

Racialized Identity Role in Decision Making

Now I'd like to hear about the way(s) that you feel your Black identity plays in your decision making.

[Question 4]? How (if at all) does your Black identity impact the way you respond to circumstances in your school?

- *How does your identity impact the way you make decisions?*
- *How does your identity impact the ways you begin conversations with different audiences?*
  - *Staff, Students, Families*
  - *Different racial groups?*

Listen for:

- Intentional code switching
- Consideration for particular factors

Overall Themes to Listen for:

- Race is an important factor
- Different audiences (racial in particular) receive different responses

Now I'd like to wrap up the interview by making sure I didn't miss anything.

At the beginning of the interview I asked what you about ____. Some of the things I heard include _____.
And I asked you about _____. Some of the things I heard include _____.

Has our discussion brought up any other issues about your experiences as a Black principal that you'd like to bring up?

You may be wondering about what I'll do with all the information you've shared today. Well, I'll be transcribing this interview in the next few days. Out of all the things we've talked about today -- of maybe some topics we've missed -- what should I pay most attention to? What should I think about when I read your interview?

Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the transcript?

You can contact me via e-mail or phone if you think of anything else that you'd like to tell me about what we've talked about today.

Thanks. I really appreciate your help with this research!

Appendix C
Interview Protocol- Administrators Individual Interview

Central Research Question:
What is the essence of Black principals' racialized identity in their principalship?

Opening Protocol
Provide the Informed consent form to the participant and ask that the form be read.
After the participant has read the form, ask the participants if they have any questions about their consent, the research, or the process.
Answer any questions the participant may have and ask the participants if they are willing to participate in the study and to sign the two copies of the Informed Consent Form.
If willing to participate, give the participant one copy of the informed consent form and retain a signed copy for yourself.
Give the participant a face sheet for them to fill out while checking devices.
Read Preamble

Preamble
Thanks, so much for agreeing to this interview. The reason why I asked you to participate in this focus group is to hear about your experiences and your work as Black principals. Today is _____ and we are at _____. I'm interviewing _____ today.

Your opinions, experiences, ideas and participation are very important in this study and may lead to deeper understanding of the experiences and practices of Black principals. Please know that I am not here to promote a particular way of thinking about principalship. I want you to feel comfortable to share good things as well as critical things about this topic. There are no right or wrong answers.

We are going to spend the next 60 to 90 minutes having this conversation. I am going to be asking you some questions about your experiences as Black principals. The permission form that you each signed means that we can record our discussion so that I can listen to it later and use it to write a report. I will ask the questions and I will also take notes of the conversation. No one but me, my dissertation committee including Dr. Lolita Tabron, Dr. Kristina Hesbol, Dr. Serie McDougal and Dr. Nick Cuttforth will hear the recording or read the transcript of this interview. However, I'll share my findings with the University of Denver and others as my dissertation oral defense. I will not put your name in the report so it's OK for you to tell me what's on your mind.

I intend to share general themes from our and other conversations with Black principals with my dissertation committee as part of my dissertation data analysis and findings. I will not put your name or any other identifiable information that be traced back to you in the final report.

During this time, I have several questions that I would like to ask you. To respect our time together, I may need to interrupt our conversation if we are running short on time. As a follow-up to this conversation, I may request additional comments and feedback during the writing of the data analysis of my dissertation to ensure that your opinion, experiences and ideas are accurately reflected.

Now I will ask some questions regarding your work as a principal. You may ask me questions at any time during this process. If you would like to follow along, here is a copy of the questions I plan to ask.

Before we continue, do you have any questions? Great! Let's get on with the interview.

Strengths and Challenges Because of Identity
First, I'd like to hear about some of the ways that your identity has been received as a challenge or strength in you school communities?
[Question 1]- What (if any) challenges do you believe you have experienced in leadership because of your identity? ○ *What negative things have you experienced in your school communities because of your identity?* ○ *What positive things have you experienced in your school communities because of your identity?* Listen for: ● Negative interactions with school community (students, staff and families) ● Differences in majority (_____) school communities ● Deliberate reflection of how to approach situations **[Question 2]? How (if at all) does your identity help to create bridges between different communities in your school?** ● *Has your identity helped during times of misunderstanding?* ● *Has your identity helped to build relationships with particular groups/ people in your school community?* Listen for: ● Identity has acted as a bridge ● Identity has acted as a mediator ● Identity creates an opportunity for shared language <u>Overall Themes to Listen for</u>: ● Identity helps in building relationships and trust ● Identity challenges the ability to build relationships
Racialized Identity's Role in School Placement

Now I'd like to hear about your beliefs about your school placement.

[Question 3] What (if any) ways do you feel your identity has played in your school assignment?

- *Has your identity played a role in where you currently serve?*
- *What has made you believe that it does or doesn't?*

Listen for:

- Black principals are sent to majority communities of color (Black and Latinx) schools
- School was struggling and needed a strong leader
- School needed a particular kind of leader

Overall Themes to Listen for:

- Racialized identity important to school placement decision
- Particular characteristics used for determining school placement

Racialized Identity Increases the Levels of Responsibility

Now I'd like to hear about the way(s) that you feel your Black identity impacts your feelings of responsibility.

[Question 4]? How (if at all) do the responsibilities of your principalship show up outside of your school building?

- *How does your racialized identity impact your sense of responsibility about your principalship?*
- *How do the responsibilities of the principalship carry outside of your building?*

Listen for:

- Responsibilities of the job carry outside of the school hours
- Race impacts the sense of responsibility
- Community needs are beyond just traditional role of principal

Overall Themes to Listen for:

- Race is an important factor in the determining responsibilities.
- Different audiences (racial in particular) cause a need for different responsibilities.

Now I'd like to wrap up the interview by making sure I didn't miss anything.

At the beginning of the interview I asked what you about ____. Some of the things I heard include _____.
And I asked you about _____. Some of the things I heard include _____.

Has our discussion brought up any other issues about your experiences as a Black principal that you'd like to bring up?

You may be wondering about what I'll do with all the information you've shared today. Well, I'll be transcribing this interview in the next few days. Out of all the things we've talked about today -- of maybe some topics we've missed -- what should I pay most attention to? What should I think about when I read your interview?

Would you be interested in receiving a copy of the transcript?

You can contact me via e-mail or phone if you think of anything else that you'd like to tell me about what we've talked about today.

Thanks. I really appreciate your help with this research!