

Black Principals' Perceptions of How their Racial, Cultural, Personal, and Professional Identities Affect their Leadership

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Department of
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**Black Principals' Perceptions of How their Racial,
Cultural, Personal, and Professional Identities
Affect their Leadership**

Dissertation
by
Jeremy C. Vinzant

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Abstract

Black Principals' Perceptions of How their Racial, Cultural, Personal, and Professional Identities Affect their Leadership

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This dissertation addresses the negative way that blacks are viewed in mainstream society and how that image affects black educational leaders. Race has been historically used to subordinate blacks in the United States, and research suggests that a key factor in this subordination has been the systematic withdrawal of educational opportunities and access for blacks. This research posits that such racism and discrimination has affected the way blacks have formed their identities, specifically with regard to education.

In this multiple-participant case study, black principals were interviewed to determine the ways in which they perceived their racial, cultural, personal, and professional identities to affect their leadership of schools. Findings stated that race heavily affected all areas of participants' identities. Race caused participants to feel more connected to minority students and communities, to advocate high expectations for minority students especially in addition to all other students, and to integrate diversity in the faculty to be representative of all students. Race also made it more difficult for participants to earn the trust and respect of faculty and parents and to discern whether people reacted negatively to their race or to other aspects of their leadership.

Suggestions from this study included the inclusion of culture and race-specific coursework in educational leadership programs, increased promotion of diversity in recruitment for educators and educational leaders, and institutionalized support groups for principals of color. Methodological limitations, theoretical considerations, and implications for future research practice, and policy were also discussed.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. To all the Vinzants: Peggy, Vicky, Larry, Becky, and Christopher. You have given me the will and the desire to push on when I felt I could go no further. To my extended family, all the Shackelford descendants who have supported me every step of the way. To my spiritual family: Krisindra, Cierra, and the New Life International Family Church, your prayers have lifted me when I did not even know I was about to fall. Thank you. I love you all.

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Title: Black Principals' Perceptions of How Their Personal, Professional, and Racial Identities Interact with Societal Views of Blackness in America to Affect Their Leadership

Introduction:

"... the Negro is sort of a seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks in amused contempt and pity" (Dubois, 1903, pp. 16-17).

"Whether we are called 'colored,' 'Negroes,' 'Afro-Americans,' or 'blacks,' we are marked with the caste of color in a society still determinedly white. As a consequence, we are shaped, molded, changed, from what we might have been...into what we are" (Bell, 1988, pp. 71).

Dubois' famous concept of the "Double Consciousness" applied to the "peculiar sensation" of being a black American and having to choose between ones black and American identities (1903). The tension of these identities stemmed from commonly accepted and perpetuated societal stereotypes, images, thoughts and beliefs that blacks Americans were less than whites intellectually, morally, and spiritually and that they, therefore, could be denied a significant proportion of their human rights. Blacks in Dubois' time desperately wanted acceptance into American society. They needed to believe that they too could pursue the American dream and reach for the inalienable American rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Nevertheless, black Americans also realized that they were different largely by virtue of the way they were perceived and treated in America. Being constantly ostracized in their daily lives caused blacks to develop identities of resistance of American culture and values. They looked to their African ancestry, their communities, and their spiritual counselors to provide a sense of emotional stability and well-being. Thus their identities were constantly at war, balancing the need to conform to society and the need to remain true to themselves.

In the last half century there has been improvement and progress for blacks in America. The Civil Rights Movement is seen as a great victory in American history. Yet even with the milestones began by the civil rights activists and supporters, blacks continue to lag behind, inheriting legacies of poverty and inequality. Education has long been seen as the primary way for Americans born into low standing to rise up and claim stations of power and security in life. Thus this study focuses on blacks who have dedicated their lives to education and rose up the ranks to become educational leaders. The question this study proposes to answer is how black principals' personal racial identities have been formed, how these racialized identities interact with societies prevailing beliefs about what it means to be black in America, and how this interaction has subsequently affected their school leadership.

This research begins with an analysis of the negative views and stereotypes of blacks that have been pervasive in American culture for as long as blacks have been in this country. It considers how blacks living in America are affected by these views, regardless of individual origin or culture. The premise of this study is that whether a black person living in America is male or female, American-born or foreign, American slave descendant or of direct African or Caribbean descent, that person will have experienced in some form the racism, inequality, and ignorance that has characterized American society's interaction with black people. To that end, this research attempts to unearth the essence of the core experience of being a black principal in America. It acknowledges that there are differences based on gender, ethnicity, culture, region of the country one is from, sexual orientation, religious orientation, personal life experiences, and a host of other individual differences. Yet it attempts to find the truths that cut across all these experiences to make up the overall experience of being a black educational leader in America.

The Problem

Central to this research is a thorough understanding of the ways that race has been historically used to subordinate blacks. Blacks in America have been disadvantaged through numerous forms of oppression beginning with Western colonization of Africa and the New World, culminating in the American slave trade. While a more humane form of indentured servitude and serfdom had existed in Europe, Egypt and Sub-Saharan Africa as far back as Biblical recordings, black slaves in America endured being beaten, tortured, raped, and abused on a level of brutality almost unheard of at the time (Spears, 1900). Real access to education was legally denied to slaves under justifications of reducing violent uprisings and maintaining public order.

The post-slavery era remained tumultuous for blacks. While the Emancipation Proclamation technically freed slaves, free-blacks remained in bondage (Dubois, 1935) and were victims of both de jure and de facto segregation. Legal measures like the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision maintained that “separate but equal” was good enough for blacks, who were to be tolerated insofar as they did not share the same space with whites. This ideal was upheld in Jim Crow laws, separating facilities for whites and blacks and forcing blacks to disavow their dignity in daily activities as they were forced to publicly cede their power to whites (Woodward, 1955). Even more devastating than the social and legal sanctions against blacks was the terrorism to which they were subjected. Vigilante groups like the KKK beat, tortured, and lynched blacks long after they were freedmen (Dray, 2003; Ginzburg, 1996; Tolnay & Beck, 1995).

In the social order, race has intricate and nuanced effects on black Americans, largely because of the unspoken "black/white binary" inherent in American racial relations. This concept stems from the assertion that race has been and continues to be a prominent issue in America (West, 2001), and it is most prevalent among blacks and whites. The paradigm of the "black/white binary" in America suggests that blacks and whites are diametric opposites, nearly to the exclusion of the many other minority groups also persecuted by whites in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000 Perea, 1997). For this reason, blacks have been represented negatively far more so than other minorities in America. This disparaging imagery can be seen in historical caricatures and depictions of blacks as lazy, self-indulgent, and stupid (Lemons, 1977). Early media images of blacks served to act out these stereotypes, as many still do today. Aside from these damaging artistic images, societal images of blacks in the media have incongruously reported blacks to be dangerous, criminal elements of society (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997). Even the English language is privy to discriminatory views of blackness. Words containing "black" tend to have negative connotations (blackmail, blackball, blacklist, etc.), while words with "white" are positively slanted (whitewashed, white lie, etc).

A particularly egregious form of black oppression in America has been the assumption that blacks are intellectually inferior to whites. This view was originally backed by various forms of scientific testing indicating that blacks did not have the capacity to achieve as well as whites academically, the most notorious of these being reported in *The Bell Curve* (Hernstein & Murray, 1994). Although these forms of scientific proof of black inferiority have since been discredited, black students (as well as other minority and poor students) continue to be accountable through a national campaign for scientifically based standardized

testing (Lin, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002) which has been shown to be culturally biased against them in many ways (Jencks, 1998). For Americans, education represents the opportunity to achieve the American dream of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Yet for black children in the United States, many of whom are failing to achieve educationally, this dream is far from a reality.

Black administrators have dedicated their careers to education, yet they have experienced life in a society that often does not seem to respect blacks intellectually. With such a long history of oppression, blacks have had a difficult time earning respect from those in power. This history has presented an interesting conundrum for black leaders, especially for black educational leaders. Black educational administrators today must contend with a host of new issues, including increased accountability for an underperforming minority population in America. Yet how do the old and new racial tensions in the U.S. tend to affect their work, and in what ways? How much of a role does race play in the leadership of the modern black principal?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the perceived effects of race on the leadership of black principals. Many black principals have attempted to overcome educational barriers in order to give hope to minorities and other children. Since the time of *Brown v. Board of Education*, however, black principals have been displaced in large numbers (Hooker, 1970; National Education Association, 1970; *Displacement and Present Status*, 1971; *Hearings Before the Select Committee*, 1971; Lutterbie, 1974; Buxton & Prichard, 1977; F. C. Jones, 1978; Tillman, 2004), and urban students, including an inordinate number of black students, have suffered under school desegregation policies. In the pre-Brown era, the black principal

was described as “the central figure in the school: the black principal...led the closed system of segregated schooling for blacks...was regarded as the authority on educational, social, and economic issues; and was responsible for establishing the all-black schools as the cultural symbol of the black community” (Tillman, 2004, pp. 102). The black community idolized black principals (Hooker, 1970) and black principals shouldered the responsibility of recruiting and hiring black educators (Hooker, 1970; Orr, 1972). As principals were systematically removed and/or demoted after desegregation (Karpinski, 2004), there was less recruiting of black teachers and educational leaders, reflecting a dearth in minority representation in education that still exists today (Tillman, 2004). Additionally, the removal of black principals “from the educational landscape or demotion from an esteemed position affected not only these leaders as individuals but also the children and the communities they served” (Karpinski, 2004, pp. 239).

In the past, black principals realized the importance of having school leaders and teachers that represented the students who attended the schools. They also realized the need to have diverse cultures represented in schools. They knew, as research suggests, that having an ethnically, culturally, racially and linguistically diverse faculty can help students, and that not having such diversity can be harmful to them (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995; Brown, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Farber, 1969; Ford, 1996; Franklin, 1994; Orr, 1972; Pang, 2001). Since projections suggest that students of color will constitute half of the US school population by 2020 (Marshall, 2004), and the existing number of teachers of color in the United States represents less than 10% of the teaching force (Jorgensen, 2001), it makes sense for educators of any race or ethnicity to acknowledge that there is a clear and present need for

stronger minority representation in educational leadership and, consequently, in the teaching force.

Currently, black principals, like other black US citizens, are forced to confront Dubois' idea of the "double consciousness" daily (Dubois, 1903). They must constantly situate themselves as black people in a world of "white privilege" (Macintosh, 1990). This task is more urgent and difficult for black educational leaders, who must simultaneously lead their schools toward educational excellence while reconciling their interpretations of others' perceptions of their leadership. Black principals must be able to hold multiple identities and multiple responsibilities without conflicting them in a way that makes progress impossible (Fordham, 1996). Black principals were able to perform these duties before desegregation, as they are able to do now, using the inherent and learned traits and abilities that they have mastered while living in a society that was racially hostile to them. The strategies that black principals have used to persevere in the face of racial injustices have likely lent to their ability to carry out the essential work of educational leadership. Thus their experiences may be useful to future or currently practicing black principals who have shared the burden of the stigmatization that comes with being black in America.

Today, black principals are dealing with various social and economic crises, including bearing the burden of helping minorities to succeed educationally. The achievement gap between minority and white students is increasing, as is the need for strong minority school leaders who represent the needs and interests of an "at-risk" group of children (Haycock, 2001). Among these leaders are black principals, who in many instances have overcome various socio-economic and racial issues to become successful school leaders. This study proposes to answer the question of how black principals beat the odds and

achieved their current status. Its purpose is to decipher the lived meaning of being a black principal in the United States by identifying the traits, background experiences, educational and life philosophies, and the people that have made current black principals successful amidst the implicit odds against them based on their race.

Research Questions

- How do black principals perceive their personal, professional, and racial identities to affect their leadership?
- What experiences have been salient in the formation of black principals' leadership identities?

Theoretical Rationale

Race is a major factor in all areas of American society (West, 2001). Educationally, blacks are especially challenged as they often lack access to equal educational opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Subsequently, many blacks who pursue careers in education experience stress and tension at work based on their race. According to Boothe, et al. (1995) black educators are more likely to think: that racial tensions are increasing in schools (44% of blacks; 21% of whites); that blacks face the most discrimination in the workplace (72% of blacks; 44% of whites); that it is important to recruit black educators (58% of blacks actively recruit minority teachers; 61% educators of other races do not). Boothe, et al. (1995) also state that blacks are also more likely work in predominately black schools (47%) and to believe that "white flight" accounts for major changes in their schools (39%). Racism then is perceived to be much more prevalent for black educators than for their white counterparts. Thus the question of how black principals perceive race to affect their leadership is a relevant one in the realm of educational leadership.

Past research suggests that black principals often experience negative emotions regarding race. Johnson (1977) reports that black principals in many instances do not feel respected, trusted or supported by their superiors; yet they perceive that others see them as superhuman and unable to make mistakes. The aforementioned study also finds that black principals feel responsible for identifying, supporting, and training new black principals, and they feel the need to “sell themselves and their school programs to their employers and the community.” Thus black principals withstand myriad pressures that have more to do with their race, and the well being of their minority students and teachers, than with their educational leadership requirements. These pressures do not end because black principals choose to, or find they must, work in black communities. Chapman (1973) found that black principals are more likely to work in predominantly black schools than predominately white schools. He also found that other black administrators and influential blacks in the community have higher expectations of black principals in terms of advocacy and creativity than the principals even have for themselves. Currently black principals are more likely to work in diverse schools, but this opportunity brings more pressures. Jones (2002) reports that black principals also feel responsible for creating inclusive schools among ethnically diverse groups of teachers, recruiting new principals of color, and ensuring that European American teachers are culturally responsive to students of color.

Race may cause conflict in the leadership of black principals. Based on their life experiences, black administrators may have developed an empathetic stance in meeting the needs of their staff and students, but especially their minority students. According to Madsen & Mabokela (2002) black principals believe that points of conflict in the way that others view their leadership included issues around minority recruiting, focusing on diversity, the

need to be role models for minority students, the need to prove themselves trustworthy and worthy of respect in their schools, and conflicting interests involved with representing their schools and also representing the best interests of their minority students. Black principals have dealt with these pressures in various ways. According to a historical review completed by Jones (1983), black principals have experienced problems in the following areas: dwindling job opportunities, a scarcity of role models and mentors, negative responses from subordinates, conflicting expectations about black administrators' loyalties, misunderstanding of the dynamics of educational administration, widespread resistance to the employment of minorities, and unreasonable expectations that black administrators can quickly solve difficult economic, social, and racial problems. Research from Jones (1983) suggests that black principals seek the support of mentors, friends, and families and that they seek training to understand institutional barriers and dynamics.

Currently, black administrators seem to share some common traits. “[O]ver half of them began their own college careers in historically black colleges and universities earning their undergraduate degree in the liberal arts and their graduate degrees in education” (Rolle et al., 2000, p. 80). It is common for black principals to study humanities because “our leaders have been preachers, teachers, politicians...they have not been scientists” (Rolle et al. 2000, p. 86). It is also necessary for black principals to cultivate leadership qualities, including the ability to develop a strong personal philosophy about life, education, and religion” (Rolle et al. 2000, p. 86). These findings suggest that black educational leaders do share common experiences which help them to be grounded and successful leaders. Among these is a spiritual or religious connection, often a base for black leadership. This may be because there is a connection between mentoring, self-efficacy and spirituality among blacks.

Black religious strength is based on the church being the only institution that blacks could control in a time when they were not able to fully participate in the other institutions that shaped their lives (Echols, 2005). As a race, blacks have sought comfort, strength and unity from the church and from the feeling of being spiritually connected to a higher power and to one another.

Research suggests that students feel more comfortable learning from people who share their own cultural background and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lomotey, 1987). Also, many educators have noted that there is a lack of multicultural voice in teaching today. The mainstream culture is portrayed in education to the exclusion of many voices that also make up American culture (Delpit, 1995). Thus it is imperative that more minorities, specifically blacks, are able to be recruited and sustained in their positions as educational leaders. Because educators are often isolated from their colleagues, research that analyzes the experiences of the black educational leader is paramount in order to support black principals in their endeavors.

Significance of the Study

It is important to study black educational leaders because there is and has always been a structured system of inequality in the United States which provides both covert and overt institutionalized advantages to whites (Tatum, 1997). Education in America is assumed to grant all citizens the opportunity to achieve success without limits. Yet, amidst a system of racism and oppression, many blacks and other minorities have not been able to take full advantage of the benefits of the American education system. This inequity presents a problem for black principals who must, along with the other duties associated with school leadership, contend with the effects of institutional racism and inequity among minority

students even as those forces affect the principals themselves. Lomotey (1987) suggests that black principals are more effective in black schools because they have similar beliefs and values as black students. He also maintains that black and white principals lead differently, noting that black principals place a higher priority on community involvement than white principals do. This distinction is significant for black students, because in black communities this community connection is a key ingredient in improving academic performance (Echols, 2005; Lomotey, 1987).

Black principals are also an important focus of study because they have integral roles in leadership and empowerment for all educational settings. In the urban setting, plagued with the inequitable funding, teaching, and learning opportunities for its students, compounded with complex socio-economic issues that work adversely to educational achievement, black principals are leading not only for educational improvement and change, but also for social uplift for communities incongruously comprised of impoverished minority students and families (Chapman, 1973). It is imperative that these students receive the educational initiatives necessary to uplift the standards of educational achievement and attainment in order to provide examples of success and opportunity for their families and communities. This opportunity can be provided when students can look up to black educational leaders as role models.

In suburban and rural settings, where minority leaders, teachers, and students are generally more scarcely represented, black principals are needed to present a standard of excellence in educational leadership to a demographic that may be averse to minority leadership for a number of reasons. It is important for black principals to lead suburban and rural school communities to model diversity. This modeling is necessary to combat the

generally negative view that society presents about blacks through television, media, and through other forms of historical representations (Hurwitz & Peffley, 1997; Lemons, 1977). Black principals can help to challenge and change perceptions that may be held about blacks and minorities in suburban and rural school communities. This will, in turn, aid in challenging and breaking negative stereotypes and misconceptions students may have about minorities as they begin to contribute to a diverse and constantly changing society.

Current perspectives on race and leadership

Research on the affects of race on educational leadership and specifically how these affects prompt educators to lead schools is sparse. Nevertheless, current work in diversity and multicultural education research is showing a need for administrators of any race to be cognizant of racism and social injustice and be vigilant in ridding their schools of vestiges of these plagues. Black administrators, having been victimized by racism and injustice, have a personal investment in making sure schools challenge that status quo regarding inequity and bias in their schools. To that end they should realize that schools are microcosms of a society that is adversely affected by racism. This realization must prompt administrators to take actively antiracist stances to prevent exclusionary practices from playing out within their schools (Ryan, 2005). Exclusionism is taking place in schools in numerous forms. It is inherent in the current standardized testing system which homogenizes educational outcomes in the face of increasing cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity in the classroom (Sleeter, 2006). Nieto (2003) highlights institutional racism as a factor in such educational practices, which “is most clearly demonstrated through particular policies and practices that grant privilege to some people over others simply because of their race” (p. 95).

Administrators cannot tolerate racism in any form in their schools. They are charged to ensure that the educations provided in their institutions are culturally responsive by including students' language, heritage, and cultural norms into the curriculum (Franquiz, 2005). Unfortunately, this type of cultural inclusion is not explicitly taught in the curriculum for most educational leaders. Gooden (2002) maintains that traditional leadership methods have been founded on research that excluded people of color and women. He suggests that urban school leaders should explore various notions of leadership. Incorporating culturally inclusive leadership methods into the leadership repertoire can be helpful to any educational administrator, especially one operating in a diverse environment. Data from this study will be used to decipher some of the experiences that minorities bring to the table that can inform the practice of educational leadership. Some research has already been conducted on ways that blacks contribute to the field.

Research findings suggest that black administrators possess cultural aspects that are useful in leading for antiracism and social change. Among these is the deep spirituality inherent in black culture as a means of persevering through times of persecution and distress. This spirituality is discussed by Dantley (2006):

spirituality inspires creativity, inquiry, and transformative conduct. Our spirit enables us to connect with other human beings; it underpins our ability to take steps to dismantle marginalizing conditions while simultaneously creating strategies to bring about radical changes to less-than-favorable circumstances. Our spirituality is the core of who we are. It is the place of our authentic selves or the genuine persons that we are. It is the place where motivation and inspiration live. (654)

Though spirituality exists in other communities, Dantley's studies focus on the added element of marginalization and persecution that informs black spirituality in America. He

suggests that schools that are largely representative of black students may benefit from this form of spiritually-grounded leadership.

Other current research suggests that minority educational leaders use culture-specific leadership styles. Black principals have been found to use a mixture of traditional leadership theories and ones that are more culture specific, such as ethno-democratic and ethno-humanistic leadership that allow them to place race and culture at the center of schools' missions to educate students for a democratic and multicultural society (Gooden, 2005; Maxcy, 1998). It is assumed in this study that black principals will use such a combination of traditional leadership styles and cultural styles they have learned over the course of their lives. Thus the parts of their cultural identities that they bring into their leadership can inform the field of educational leadership, especially leadership for the multicultural society that American students are facing today.

Conclusively, current literature suggests that black principals are affected by race. What remains unknown is the ways that black principals have come to perceive these effects in their personal lives and in their careers, and how their leadership is affected by these perceptions. Although we know blacks have been viewed negatively in American society, and that this depiction has affected blacks in America, including black principals, more information is needed about how black principals process these racial effects and if or how these effects extend to their leadership. The data provided in this study, in the form of the stories and experiences of current black principals, can help to provide this knowledge. This information may touch, move, empower and inspire blacks in education and pursuing educational careers to move toward positions of educational leadership and administration.

Seeking black principals' personal perceptions and their perceptions of how others believe their race affects their leadership is useful in synthesizing the major issues that black principals see as affecting them. Likewise, personal beliefs and perceptions can help to delineate attributes that black principals feel are essential in being effective educational leaders. Thus black principals' perceptions of how their identities affect their leadership can lend insight into the effective recruitment, training, mentoring and support of black principals, toward their endeavors to fight the battles that currently face all American educational leaders. This support system is important because black principals can serve as role models to black educators as well as minority students who so seldom see other minorities in positions of power and authority in their lives. Such an influence could be an inspiration to a generation of future minority leaders.

Overview of the Study

Chapter one will provide an introduction to the study of black principals' perceptions of how their race affects their leadership. It will provide a background and history of American racism and discuss the ways that this legacy has affected blacks in America, especially pertaining to their educational attainment and life achievement. The second chapter includes an overview of the three bodies of literature that are pertinent to this research, including writings on Critical Race Theory (CRT), black identity, and educational leadership. Chapter three will present the qualitative design of this research, using qualitative methods to interview participants and analyze data. In Chapter four the findings for the study will be presented. Chapter five will provide a summary of the findings of the

study in light of former research and relevant literature on the topic. The final chapter will also include recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review:

This chapter reviews the three bodies of literature that are pertinent to this research: Critical Race Theory (CRT), black identity, and educational leadership.

Understanding the intersecting relationship between blackness and leadership involves knowledge of several bodies of literature. The literature significant to this study comes from three areas: Critical Race Theory (CRT), black identity in America, and educational leadership theory. CRT provides a theoretical rationale for black Americans' counterstories to the accepted story, which is the perception that blacks are less qualified and capable than their white counterparts. Understanding how blacks identify themselves within the marginalized, minority context to which they are subjected in America is central to

gaining understanding of how black administrators have formed positive identities that helped them navigate racism and educational inequality to achieve success as educational leaders. And necessary for the analysis of any principal's leadership beliefs is a firm understanding of the leadership theories that have been foundational in American education. To contextualize these elements, it is first necessary to trace the origins of the black Principalship from its roots of segregation and inequity to its current state of accountability and unrest.

Background

This literature review begins with the historical tradition of black American principals and their contributions to effective leadership. Most literature marks the *Brown v Board of Education* case as a major turning point in black education in America. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) says of the historical backdrop: "First, historically the *Brown* decision helped the USA in its struggle to minimize the spread of communism to so-called Third World nations. In many countries, the credibility of the USA had been damaged by the widely broadcast inequitable social conditions that existed in the USA in the 1950s...Second, *Brown* provided reassurance to blacks that the struggle for freedom and equality fought for during World War II might become a reality at home" (p. 16). Unfortunately, the reality of equality for blacks, especially in education, was never fully realized. Black principals were rapidly displaced and relocated to serve desegregation agendas, and black students were generally relegated to large urban districts that were still largely racially segregated.

In a 1980 survey, Susan Hines and David Byrne reported on the condition of black principals after desegregation was fully instituted in most of United States. They stated: "[i]n some locations, black principals have lost their jobs due to school integration efforts; in other

locations, black principals are looked upon with suspicion and distrust, as having acquired their positions because of color rather than competence” (p. 67). Aside from losing jobs or being demoted en masse, black principals had another issue regarding desegregation. As they became more assimilated into the desegregated school structure, many struggled to find racial significance in their work. Though they were extended greater career opportunities, they still felt a need to uplift the race because “[a]t an earlier time, the oppression of the race was more universal, and, because we were in the same boat together, it was easier to know what we were against and what we were for. Now, we must deliberately stand against racist oppression and class subjugation, even though some of us may have sailed into a relatively safe harbor” (Calmore, 1995, p. 317). The struggle of racially conscious black principals to situate minority education as a valid and important mission in the larger field of education combined with the normal pressures of Principalship compound the difficulty of educational for them. It is necessary for these principals to develop a critical stance to current educational practices and their roles in education. One critical theory that can help to accomplish this task is Critical Race Theory (CRT).

Critical Race Theory

Significance of the CRT perspective

CRT is an appropriate lens through which to view this research because blacks in America continue to be perceived as less-qualified and capable than their white counterparts. Blacks are failing in the educational system for numerous reasons, including the fact that they are disproportionately socioeconomically disadvantaged. Primarily, they are not expected to succeed on a large scale because racism is normalized in America (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and black youths will have encountered the effects of an American legacy of

racial oppression throughout their lives. Another potential reason black students do not excel is that they do not have enough role models with similar backgrounds and life experiences (Lomotey, 1987).

Black principals have overcome significant personal obstacles to achieve their current positions, one of which is the expectation that they may fail because of their race. This expectation is magnified in situations where they assumed positions of authority over whites and others. In their rise to educational leadership, black principals have had character building experiences involving race and education. They have seen the inequality and injustice that plagues the American schools system along the lines of race and class. For many black principals, it may have been necessary to develop a critical stance of leadership, such as the one described in CRT, in order to lead in a society that continues to benefit whites, often to the detriment of blacks.

Critical Race Theory

“In striving for social justice in educational leadership, Critical Race Theory (CRT) requires that the permanence of racism is analyzed and discussed as it relates to African-American principal placement” (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007, p. 248). Thus, this study will be conducted using the CRT theoretical framework.

The tenets of CRT are as follows:

1. Racism is normal in American society.
2. Storytelling is used to analyze myths that marginalize blacks and other minorities.
3. Liberalism is criticized as being too slow a method for racial change.
4. “Whites have been the primary beneficiaries of civil rights litigation (specifically white women benefiting from affirmative action hiring policies).
(Ladson-Billings, 1998 p. 11-12).

CRT asserts that there is a system of inequality based on the social construction of race, made real because of the privileges that whites receive based on their perceived superiority to

minorities. The assumption that race is a social construct, rather than a biological difference, is important because “[e]very social arrangement, no matter how it presents itself as natural, necessary, or simply ‘the way things are’ is an artificial construct. It is usually structured to benefit some segments of society at the expense of others” (Starratt, 2003, p. 142).

Historically, white Americans have benefited from the ways that minorities are viewed, at the expense of blacks and other minorities. This phenomenon is reinforced by the social and economic disparities that persist between whites and blacks. Calmore (1995) asserts that “[a]s many whites experience competitive advantage and relative prosperity over blacks, they are encouraged to believe in an imagined cultural superiority that, in turn, reinforces their conviction...that our blackness is a condition from which we must be liberated” (p. 315).

In *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction*, Delgado (2001) introduces the theme of revisionist history, which “reexamines America’s historical record, replacing comforting majoritarian interpretations of events with ones that square more accurately with minorities’ experiences” (p. 20). This shift in historical representations of minorities is needed because “[t]he history of racial depiction shows that our society has blithely consumed a shocking parade of Sambos, coons, sneaky Japanese, and indolent, napping Mexicans – images that were perceived at the time as amusing, cute, or, worse yet, true” (Delgado, 2001, p. 28).

Minority educational leaders must contend with these images of themselves and their abilities, even as they face the challenges of running schools and educational programs.

Whites cannot easily understand what it means to be non-white (Delgado, 2001) because they have benefited from more positive cultural images which have empowered, rather than undermined them. History has proven that it is possible for whites to overlook the social emphasis they previously placed on some minorities. “For example, early in our

history Irish, Jews, and Italians were considered nonwhite – that is, on par with blacks. Over time, they earned the prerogatives and social standing of whites...Whiteness, it turns out, is not only valuable, it is shifting and malleable” (Delgado, 2001, p. 77). The value in whiteness has been theorized as a property right. This view is instrumental to educational studies because education, in America, grants access to property, ownership, and possessions, especially for Americans born into lower classes.

Not only does education afford material property to its recipients, but it also grants them the intellectual capital necessary to sustain this property. American history has demonstrated a tension between property rights and human rights, aggravated in terms of racism because blacks were once thought of not as humans, but as property (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). As such, whites were privy to a bevy of rewards, including those delineated by Harris (1993) in her conception of the “property functions of whiteness,” which include the rights of disposition, the rights to use and enjoyment, the rights to reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude. The current mission for black educators involves a rethinking of what it means to be white or black in America, and who should be privy to both human and property rights.

Black educational leaders and those who work with them can benefit from an understanding of how all Americans see race, and especially how minorities perceive racial ideas and images to affect their lives. “The hope is that well-told stories describing the reality of black and brown lives can help readers bridge the gap between their worlds and those of others” (Delgado, 2001, p. 41), and further that these “[n]arratives...reduce alienation for members of excluded groups, while offering opportunities for members of the

majority group to meet them halfway” (Delgado, 2001, p. 44). Only then can the work of education for all be truly understood by whites and minorities alike.

The Oral Tradition

The foundation for using CRT as the theoretical base for this research is built on the concept of the black oral traditions. The oral tradition is extremely important in the black community. African cultures relied on oral history rather than the written word to tell their stories and move their legacy forward. As Africans were transported to America, they ostensibly lost much of the rich oral tradition their people relied on. They were separated according to tribe and language and given a new language to speak. They were also divided according to body type, skin color, age, and other ways that served to make selling and controlling them easier in the American slave trade. Miraculously, amidst the divisiveness and oppression entered into the African/black American culture via slavery, blacks in America managed to hold on to many of their African traditions. One of the traditions they held on to was their oral historic tradition.

Oral history for blacks encompasses everything that blackness has been construed as in America (oppression, bondage, inferiority, incompetence, etc.). It purports a perspective that is unique to blacks and is based on the mutual perceptions that society at large holds about them. However, this perspective is also a means of black liberation from oppression, and it provides a way for blacks to create a space for themselves in the American context. For these reasons, the stories that blacks have to tell about themselves are extremely important in understanding the black perspective on issues like leadership and educational achievement. Black principals perceptions about the ways in which their race affects their leadership are unique and separate from generally accepted views of educational leadership

because black principals first identify as black people and have consequently internalized the views held about them in America and beyond, and they have overcome these views to become leaders in the educational arena. As such, their personal stories regarding equity, anti-racism, and educational access are integral to the education of an increasingly multicultural society. Additionally, black principals' views on leadership can provide new and useful perspectives that may enhance and evolve the way Americans think about education and leadership.

Story v. Counterstory

In light of CRTs assertion that race is an ever-prominent factor in American society, this research seeks to discover the ways in which participants navigated the American racial climate to become successful school leaders. It also relies on participant's personal stories as means to liberate themselves and others who have, will, or wish to follow similar career paths. The logic underlying the use of these stories is that the knowledge and experiences of people of color are important and necessary to understanding race-based subordination in America (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). This use of storytelling is important because “[h]istorically, storytelling has been a kind of medicine to heal the wounds of pain caused by racial oppression. The story of one's condition leads to the realization of how one came to be oppressed and subjugated, thus allowing one to stop inflicting mental violence on oneself” (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 14). Stories also work to legitimize the experiences of the oppressed or marginalized individual by paying homage to “how voice is expressed, how voice is informed, [and] how our voice differs from the dominant voice” (Calmore, 1995, p. 320).

For blacks, the power of the story is even greater, as “[s]torytelling, the articulation of experience and imagination in narrative, poetry, and song, is an important part of the tradition of African peoples” (Lawrence, 1995, p. 343). It is also essential for subjugated groups to have their stories read in ways that are subjective and contextually rich, instead of the objective format of the leading social science research. Subjectivity takes precedence over objectivity because it indicates “that the scholar places herself in the linguistic position of subject rather than object, a being capable of acting upon the world rather than as one upon whom others act” (Lawrence, 1995, p. 338). Context matters especially for blacks since “blacks and others whose stories have been and are excluded from the dominant discourse are more likely to be injured by the error of noncontextual methodology” (Lawrence, 1995, p. 345). Also, “blacks and other marginalized persons are doubly disabled by the exclusion of the narrative voice. For those of us whose story has not been told, an expansion of the scope and nature of the text has particularly important, and even revolutionary, implications” (Lawrence, 1995, p. 346). Without this contextual frame, the reader or listener will add his /her own contexts which can bring different and potentially damaging outsider insight to the stories and their interpretations. For black principals, telling their stories can be therapeutic for themselves and others by allowing them to create a path for themselves in a society that is at times hostile towards them. Stories of oppressed, marginalized and underrepresented minorities must be used in scholarship because, as Lawrence (1995) writes “[i]t is not enough for us to tell our stories. We must use them as text for research and interpretation...it is also essential that narrative be valued as a source of data” (p. 345).

Another important concept of the power of the story in CRT is the counterstory, or the story in opposition to the majority themed story. The counterstory is crucial because blacks in American are often seen as outsiders within American culture. In this insider-outsider view, “[t]he dominant group creates its own stories, as well. The stories or narratives told by the ingroup remind it of its identity in relation to outgroups, and provide it with a form of shared reality in which its own superior position is seen as natural. The stories of outgroups aim to subvert that reality” (Delgado, 1989, p. 60).

Reinventing realities in the form of the counterstory helps minorities to “participate in creating what we see in the very act of describing it” (Delgado, 1989, p. 61).

After engaging in a counterstory, the majority culture reader will ask him or herself the following questions: “Can my world still stand? What parts of it remain valid? What parts of the story seem true? How can I reconcile the two worlds, and will the resulting world be a better one than the one with which I began?” (Delgado, 1989, p. 69). The hope for the black educator is that once his/her story becomes known, it will help to create a better world than the one before.

CRT in Law and Educational Policy

In practice for educational administrators, “critical race theory (CRT) is a valuable lens with which to analyze and interpret administrative policies and procedures in educational institutions and provides avenues for action in the area of racial justice” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 519). The job description of a black principal encompasses a social responsibility to be critical about the ways they choose to frame issues related to their schools and communities. A CRT viewpoint is a good one for black principals because “[c]ritical race theorists seek to disrupt the dominant narrative stories of success through

merit, equality, the market, and objectivity that are so deeply entrenched and accepted unquestioningly by the larger society” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520). Black principals know all too well the dangers of accepting the views and images portrayed about blacks in mainstream society as reality, thus the adoption of a critical stance to view their leadership allows for their leadership to be viewed as valuable outside of the implications of their race. Additionally, principals need a solid foundational knowledge of both American educational policy and the policies that govern their school districts. Yet black principals should be aware of the inherent racism in American laws and traditions, as is pointed out by CRT scholars (Bell, 1988; Harris, 1993; Calmore, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Lawrence, 1995; Crenshaw, 1996; Delgado, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Parker & Villalpando, 2007) and they should put into effect policies of active antiracism. “CRT calls for the legitimization of narratives of discrimination, and the power of the law used against persons of color and the importance of these counternarratives are key aspects of CRT and have implications for educational leadership and policy” (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 520).

The racist foundations of America’s legal policies were acknowledged by the founding mothers and fathers of CRT. American values built on freedom, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, are sacred and protected under the law. But CRT shows that this law does not, in fact, protect minorities, especially blacks, in the ways intended. It has been difficult for blacks to rise to positions of power and authority in America, first because of de jure laws, (i.e. Jim Crow laws, which did not entitle Blacks to full human rights and in some cases, did not even acknowledge them as human beings.) With de-facto segregation, injustices to blacks occurred long after the letter of the law had freed them from their skin-color based sanctions. In the 1970s, as the legal veil of oppression began to lift from the

daily lives of blacks, the CRT movement commenced. CRT legal scholars analyzed the ways in which the American legal system had historically failed blacks, and how it was continuing to do so. Now, nearly forty years later, blacks continue to be victimized by the American legal and educational systems, with staggering numbers of blacks behind bars and dropping out of school. Some correlate the lack of education for blacks Americans to their singularly high prison rates. It stands to reason that, for the black principal, the CRT assertions that black Americans have been excluded from legal and policy rights based on their race has a direct impact on their beliefs about their educational leadership.

The Insider/Outsider Framework in CRT

Black principals, in recognizing the glaring inequalities facing blacks according to CRT assertions, must not assume that they have achieved an elevated status as compared to other members of their race. This belief can have dire repercussions, as it lends to an insider outsider view of race, which is often more palatable to majority culture. Iverson (2007) identifies two insider/outside frameworks which can be detrimental to educational leaders. The first is termed: *Whiteness as Criteria*. This view refers to the mainstream tendency to hold “majority (White and male) as the standard against which to measure minority progress and success” (p. 594). In contrast, Iverson maintains that “[a] CRT analysis interrogates the unquestioned use of a White, male majority experience as criteria against which to measure the progress and success of people of color” (p. 594). The second cautionary framework is called: *Difference Within Groups*. Iverson (2007) explains that this view “produces difference within racial minority groups as it works to produce sameness in relation to a White, male experience situated as the norm,” and that “[b]y attributing insider status to one’s elevated placement on a hierarchy of achievement, reports denote that not all people of

color are eligible (capable) of gaining insider status, further marking those who gain insider status as different...[t]hus, only the exemplary or elite people of color are the eligible candidates and the target of diversity efforts; therefore, only some people of color—those who “pass”—qualify (to compete) for insider status” (p. 594).

The distortion caused by accepting insider/outsider frameworks can manifest itself as racism, for black principals. McCray, Wright, & Beachum (2007) point out that “[c]urrently, the placement of African American principals implicitly indicates that African Americans can only lead and be effective in schools that are predominately Black, and White administrators are able to lead in schools that are more diverse. This supposition is possibly embedded in the rudiments of the historical legacy of Jim Crow edicts” (p. 248). To promote equality and justice today, black principals, more than any other group of black Americans with elite status according to mainstream definitions, need to reject these assumptions and contend that all blacks deserve equal opportunity and respect within American society.

In order for blacks to feel the need to equalize access for other blacks in America, they must first identify as black and develop a critical and oppositional stance regarding their identities. It seems important, therefore, to discover the extent to which black principals “have deliberately chosen race-conscious orientations and objectives to resolve conflicts of interpretation in acting on the commitment to social justice and antistatist subordination” (Calmore, 1995, p. 319). To a large extent, black principals’ orientations of socially and politically racialized views are determined by their formation of a “black” identity.

Black Identity

Significance of Black Identity literature

Exploring the process of black identity development in America is significant in deciphering how black principals view their blackness, and how that view in turn affects their leadership. The black identity models described here expose the psychological damage racism has had on blacks. They also demonstrate the ways that blacks cope with racism and create positive structures from the oppression they suffer in American society. These skills are invaluable for the black leader, especially for the black educational leader, who is responsible for the development of the burgeoning identities of a new generation of Americans. Black principals in this study will need to think about the processes through which they formed their unique black identities as well as how these identities have influenced their leadership philosophies.

A first step in defining black principal's perceptions is defining what it means to be black according to black people. This includes identifying and acknowledging the basic struggles of the black person in America who is often negatively perceived and who has suffered generations of racism and abuse at the hands of dominant society. This black person has the foundation for the realization of a black experience in America. The process of developing a black identity can be measured and evaluated according to specific psychological models, although it manifests differently from one person to another (Helms, 1990).

Many experts today agree that race is a social construction. Biologically race is defined as "a sub-group of peoples possessing a definite combination of physical characters, of genetic origin, the combination of which to varying degrees distinguishes the sub-group from other sub-groups of mankind" (Krogman, 1984, p. 49). Independently, the biological definition of race does not have behavioral, social, or

psychological impact on persons. However, the way others perceive certain racial groups can have such implications on their identity development and their functioning in society (Casas, 1984). Helms (1990) elucidates this point by conceptualizing the way that mainstream society views blacks and whites. She maintains that “to the extent that society stereotypes one racial group as ‘dirty,’ ‘shiftless,’ and ‘ignorant’ ” and another group as ‘clean,’ ‘industrious,’ and ‘intelligent’ and can enforce such stereotypes, then it is likely that the individual will find it easier to use the second than the first group as both a reference group and a source of ascribed identity [and also;]...if one identifies with the positively characterized group, then it is likely that one will feel more positively about oneself than if one does not” (Helms, 1990, p. 6). Belief systems are also constructed in response to the ways in which certain race groups are perceived (Helms, 1990). Thus, the way society views individuals based on their race becomes part of the psychological make-up of those individuals. This effect is far reaching because racial identity development probably occurs, to some extent, in all individuals in the US; thus it is a “normal” developmental process (Helms, 1990).

For several decades, scholars have involved themselves in an ongoing conversation about the black identity and how it affects blacks in America. As with any identity, the black identity begins in childhood. According to Demo & Hughes (1990), parental messages about what it means to be black are important in shaping racial identity. Further, the adults’ relations with family, friends, and community are important in fostering a sense of group identity. This is especially important in the black community which culturally emphasizes the collective over the individual identity. According to the well-known African proverb, “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” Throughout the process by which Africans were

enslaved, colonized, and socialized in the US, black self-esteem and group identity have been continuously and adversely affected by institutional racism in America (Demo & Hughes, 1990). Yet over the years, many blacks have developed strong self-concepts through African-centered principles and their reactions to past and present racial injustices (Allen, 2001).

An extension of racial identity is one's racial consciousness: the degree to which individuals perceive their race to affect their self-concepts and their personal relationships (Caplan, 1970; Terry, 1977). This balancing of race with individual and collective identity is instrumental in conceptualizing black identity. With respect to racial groups, the components of racial identity are:

- Personal identity – the way one feels about oneself
- Reference group orientation – using particular racial groups to guide one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Ascribed identity – an individual's affinity or commitment to a particular racial group (Cross, 1987; Erickson, 1963; 1968).

Racial identification is a collective term, as “the term ‘racial identity’ actually refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one's perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular race group” (Helms, 1990, p. 3). Nevertheless, according to Allen and Bagozzi (2001), blacks have a more collective sense of self than Europeans. The collective “we” is more important than the individual “I.” Allen and Bagozzi (2001) contend that blacks are more likely to view themselves as defined in relation to others, and that they are likely to exhibit an African-centered self-concept which focuses on collective orientations and is manifested in blacks' social and political orientations.

There is a question of the extent to which any black person identifies with his/her perceived racial group. Dizzard (1970) found that two important factors contributed to

perceptions of individual or group racial identity: a feeling that a common history is shared between individuals and a feeling of strength or potency bonding one to one's race group. This potency should take into account a person's ethnicity and culture as well as one's race. It is well known that the people commonly called "white" in the US hail from numerous areas of Europe, each boasting a unique culture. Blacks, although assumed to share African descent, have been acculturated to many different regions of the world. Yet according to Helms (1990), blacks in America are generally perceived according to their skin color, not their culture, at least by mainstream society's standards. Likewise, in formal psychology, literature on the subject of racial identity and mental health for blacks has generally focused on race to the exclusion of ethnicity. Rarely is the specific ethnicity of a black person examined, but rather African descent is presumed to account for individuals' psychosocial development (Helms, 1990).

In America, regardless of ethnicity and based on skin-color identification, black people are generally thought to be somewhat affected by the brutality and oppression that accompanied the slave trade and colonization, and the psychological effects of the residue of this system, resulting in the form of institutional racism (Helms, 1990). Since not all blacks can be expected to think, feel, or react in similar ways based simply on skin color, "[b]lack racial identity theories attempt to explain the various ways in which blacks can identify (or not identify) with other blacks and/or adopt or abandon identities resulting from racial victimization" (Helms, 1990). The two controlling psychological models for black identity development are the Client-as-Problem Perspective (CAP) and the Nigrescence or Black Racial Identity Models (NRID).

Client-as-Problem Perspective (CAP)

This perspective sprang up in response to black people's demands for equality and acceptance during the 1960s. There was a massive increase in black dissatisfaction and leadership at this time, leading to the belief that hostility and violence would upsurge in interracial relations. The CAP models of racial identity theory were generally frameworks for counselors to use in predicting the level of averseness in black behaviors. CAP models were created by several scholars (Dizard, 1970; G.G. Jackson & Kirshner, 1973; Siegel, 1970). An instructive CAP model was constructed by Vontress (1971), who theorized three categories: "Black," "Colored," and "Negro." Blacks were characterized by their willingness to embrace their African heritage and features, they understood the victimization of their race by whites, and they refused to tolerate racism from whites. Negroes took an integrationist stance and accommodated whites who did not appear to be racists. Coloreds internalized the ways that whites viewed them. Although these models typified the stances of blacks in relation to their racial self-concepts, they did little to explain the stages of development that led to these stages and more advanced stages of racial identification.

Nigrescence or Black Racial Identity Models (NRID)

These models of black identity development attempt to describe the process of "becoming black," in which blacks evaluate themselves in relation to their response to racial oppression and form an oppositional identity to the mainstream (Helms, 1990). NRID theorists further posited that for blacks, extreme identification with white culture was a negative psychological reaction to the need to survive in a racist society (Akbar, 1979). There are striking similarities in the numerous NRID models in existence, and "even though the models appeared in the literature around the same time, virtually none of the authors cross-referenced the others. Nor were any of the models developed in the same geographical

location” (Helms, 1990, p. 18). This commonality among the NRID models suggests that there is a similarity in the experiences of black Americans in the way they develop racial identity.

The most widely NRID model was formulated by Cross (1971). This model delineates four distinct stages of black racial identity development. These are experienced in the following four stages:

Pre-encounter: pro-white, anti-black.

The Pre-encounter stage is characterized by an absence of self-identity for blacks. In this stage blacks have adopted identities that are approved by whites (Thomas, 1971). Black in this stage will separate from black culture while placing a high value on white cultural patterns (Festinger, 1957). Thus, as Helms (1990) states, the Pre-encounter person thinks that “exceptionality or deficiency is defined according to how well or poorly one fits into white culture and demonstrates those traits that the person believes typify white culture” (p. 21). Pre-encounter people also place high value in the “myth” of the meritocracy, whereby people are judged only according to their personal merit, to the exclusion of race (Taylor & McKirnan 1978). Because blacks historically have not been as successful as whites, Pre-encounter blacks believe that black culture is inferior to whiteness. This belief allows them to identify with white culture while disavowing their black identity (Taylor, 1980).

Active & Passive Pre-encounter

Pre-encounter persons can either be in a stage of active or passive Pre-encounter. In active Preencounter (Cross, 1971) there is a deliberate separation between a black person’s personal identity and their racial identity. Through deliberate attitudes and behaviors, Pre-encounter blacks make it clear that white ways of being are more desirable than black

cultural patterns. In this active phase, “it is not unusual to hear ‘successful’ blacks argue that they reject other blacks as a reference group because their values or behaviors are so different” (Helms, 1990). In passive Pre-encounter, worldviews are aligned with dominant society. The passive Pre-encounter person strives to assimilate into white culture by adopting white norms while conceding to black stereotypes and rejecting black culture (Helms, 1989). “Even if the passive Pre-encounter person does not always believe in stereotypes, he or she dare not risk questioning them for fear of losing his or her actual or hoped-for acceptance by whites and the anticipated advantages that accompany this status” (Helms, 1990). Thus the passive Pre-encounter person espouses belief in a just world based on individual merit and not affected by racially based injustice or prejudice, even if evidence suggests that such injustices do affect blacks (Helms, 1990).

2. Encounter: the experience that challenges one’s view of “blackness.”

The Encounter stage begins when blacks realize that society sees them as being black and therefore inferior, regardless of the fact that they themselves identify with white ways of being. The Encounter person moves between their Preencounter consciousness and their subconscious building of a new belief system that will eventually lead to the formation of a black identity (Helms, 1990). Confronted with this new reality, the thought patterns of the Encounter person range from suppression of their new found identity to the construction of communities that completely exclude whites (McClain, 1983). The latter part of the Encounter phase is characterized by a sense of euphoria in which blacks begin to exhibit a need to align themselves with other blacks or whites who are empathetic to their plight and understanding of their cultural differences (Parham & Helms, 1981; Pomales, Claiborn, & LaFromboise, 1986). The assumption here is that all black Americans will inevitably come to

this stage if they live long enough (Helms, 1990). Once blacks realize they must develop a specifically black identity, they have begun to enter the Immersion/Emersion stage.

3. Immersion-Emersion: realizing the value of one's race and culture.

Having entered Immersion, the first of this two-part stage, blacks will psychologically withdraw into a state of black consciousness that encourages them to think and act as they believe authentic black people should (Cross, 1971). However, because they exist in a white-normative society, blacks in Immersion often act upon negative images of blackness that they have internalized from mainstream media. This can lead to blacks in Immersion acting out stereotypical images of blackness with negative consequences to their psyches (Helms, 1990). Immersion is generally associated with measurable anger and hostility (Parham & Helms, 1985). "The person is angry at whites because of their role in racial oppression, herself or himself for having been a party to such a system for however long, and at other Blacks whose eyes have not been properly opened yet" (Helms, 1990). Blacks in Immersion are driven to honor their black heritage while distancing themselves from white culture (Cross, 1978). This stage can be particularly harmful for adolescents who do not perform as well in school because they often equate academic success with "acting white" (Latimer, 1986).

Although Immersion paints a bleak picture of frustration and anger for blacks, Cross (1971) suggests that Emersion is a way to transcend Immersion. In Emersion, blacks come together to provide cathartic support groups for one another. "During Emersion, one often finds individuals engaging in "rap" sessions, political action groups, exploration of Black and African culture, discussions of racial issues with black elders whose experiences were formerly ignored, "hanging out" with other blacks in a spirit of kinship, and so forth" (Helms, 1990). This medium gives blacks the opportunity to overcome the tendency to look at

themselves through stereotypes reinforced by society, and instead to create a space for themselves within society and make room for others to learn about them as they are and not as they are expected to be.

4. Internalization: obtaining a sense of pride and security in one's race and identity.

The internalization stage marries the personal identity with the ascribed identity. In this stage, blacks are able to accept their individual identities while realizing that being black does affect their identity (Helms, 1990). This stage also allows blacks to identify with blacks rather than whites as a reference group, granting them the perspective to realistically evaluate whites and white culture. Thus blacks in the Internalization stage can reject racial oppression, yet still maintain and establish relationships with deserving whites. The eventual outcome of this stage is the formation of a positive black identity (Helms, 1990).

Black Identity for the Black Principal

Black principals, like other blacks in America, have had varied experiences in navigating the stages of black identity development. According to Cross' theoretical model, they ultimately reach the Internalization stage, enabling them to positively reconcile and integrate their race with other aspects of their identity. It is expected that black principals in this study may be at various stages in their experience of black identity, and also that all of them may not agree that being black, in and of itself, has a specific effects on their leadership. This fact notwithstanding, the beliefs of all principals who are black inform the general question of how black principals perceive their race to affect their leadership. In order to distinguish black principals' leadership from the generally accepted mainstream definitions of educational leadership, the following section addresses educational scholars' views of what leadership entails.

Educational Leadership

Significance of Educational Leadership Theory

Exploring the traditional paradigms of American educational leadership is significant for black principals because they have been formally trained in the theory and application of educational leadership. Yet as black Americans, they have experienced life in a racial climate that has often been hostile and volatile. Thus, black principals, while working within the framework of accepted views of educational leadership, can be expected to have an altered view of school leadership. While well versed in foundational leadership views and ways to think about school change, black principals are also aware of the stigmas associated with being minorities within the majority culture. They have beaten statistical odds to become educational leaders, and their experiences could empower a generation of black students and other students who feel they are left behind in the system. As such, black principals' insight may be invaluable to the cause of working with children pre-disposed to falling through the cracks of American education. In addition to being helpful for blacks and other minority students, black Principalship perspectives provide alternate views of leadership that might create new insights and possibilities for American schooling and the field of educational leadership. This could lead to cultivation, recruitment, and retention of more leaders of color. Insights from black principals may also display various vantage points for educating students of color. Thus a working knowledge of the foundational literature on educational leadership is necessary to discover the ways that black principals' views merge with accepted views of educational leadership, and how those views differ in favor of ones that align more closely with themes of active anti-racism.

To determine how black principals perceive their race to affect their leadership requires an investigation into the accepted meanings and practices of educational leadership. Educational scholars have defined leadership as they have experienced it, delineating best practices and models for success in leading schools. Yet the practices accepted and established as norms in education have largely emanated from majoritarian views, and many of these views have been held since education was formalized in America – a time when education was reserved for wealthy white males. Many accepted models of educational leadership continue to propagate the status quo, yet more and more, educational leadership theories are being tailored to promote social justice and uplift for the poor, the working-to-lower class, minorities, and the other American cultures formerly left behind educationally. Currently little is known about the relationship between the educational visions and leadership styles of black principals as compared to the accepted theoretical leadership models of majority culture. Knowledge about the unique ways that black principals view educational leadership can provide a new perspective for educational leadership that may improve educational opportunities not just for blacks and otherwise marginalized students, but for all students. Additionally, these divergent views can broaden the scope of the overarching field of educational leadership.

Value-Centered Leadership

Much has been written, researched and documented about effective educational leadership. Many agree that educational leadership, in particular, requires a balance between efficient managerial skills and inspiring visionary leadership. It is derived from a complex skill set comprised technical, human, educational, and symbolic skills (Saphier and King,

1985, p. 72). Few theorists fail to mention the need for a core system of values or beliefs that exist to inform practice in leadership and lifelong learning. In the case of the school principal, “[e]ffective leadership is not possible unless the leader knows and can articulate his or her own values...clarifying the connection between core values and leadership leads to an examination of school culture. The principal shapes this culture” (Blummer, 1999, p. 90). A principal’s values are the platform for his/her vision.

Principals who wish to lead in a way that encourages others to follow diligently must develop “a strongly shared vision or organizational culture...a common set of goals, a common perspective on what to do and how to accomplish it, and a common vocabulary that allows them to coordinate their behavior” (Pfeffer, 1994, p. 25). Goldberg (2006) claims that along with being value-centered, the “right” leaders seek settings supportive of their leadership styles and realize the importance of garnering support for their work. Value-centered principals lead according to their values and beliefs and attempt to win over others in their communities to their ways of thinking, being, and doing.

Transformational Leadership

A large part of the support a principal must obtain comes from the school community, ranging from faculty, staff and students to parents, community partners, and local legislatures. Effective educational leaders cannot ignore the role of people outside their buildings and institutions. They have to concentrate on the welfare of their school systems and schools, realizing that “[t]he best indicator of a good school may well be the extent to which its image reflects the needs and desires of its parents, teachers, and students” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 15). In order to be effective, Langley & Jacobs (2005) state that the educational leader must stay informed by keeping in touch with the community. Principals’ visions cannot come to

pass without the support of their staff. Therefore, they need to institute "...roles for people – ways to involve them, to give them responsibility, to let them take charge of the vision and make it their own..." (Sashkin, 1986, p. 59). This kind of inspirational leadership is what Liethwood, Aitken, & Jantzi (2001) refer to as transformational leadership. Principals who aspire to be transformational leaders provide vision and inspiration. They model appropriate leadership behavior and provide individualized support to meet group goals.

Transformational leaders also encourage high performance expectations, and they visibly acknowledge good work and individual improvement.

Distributed leadership

Educational leaders are not alone in their mission to provide quality educational opportunities and improved academic and social success to students. The entire school community is integral to the success of the educational leader's mission. For this reason, principals must focus on distributed leadership, which is primarily concerned with mobilizing leadership at all levels in the organization not just relying on leadership from the top.

Distributed leadership examines the distribution of leadership among administrators, specialists, and teachers in the school. This leadership is often disseminated throughout the school in the form of routines and tools of various sorts in the organization such as memos, scheduling procedures, and evaluation protocols (Spillane, 2006).

Distributed leadership is meaningful because more and more, educational leadership theorists are arguing that good leadership is about empowering others, such that leading "is about helping everyone in the organization, oneself included, to gain more insightful views of current reality. This is in line with a popular emerging view of leaders as coaches, guides, or facilitators" (Senge, 1990, p, 388). Even as principals act as "lead teachers" it is

increasingly important to enlist teachers as leaders. This change can be enacted through encouraging "...collegiality by asking teachers to work together on evaluation and design. Central to the planning is a commitment to involve stakeholders in decision-making while being clear about the limits of their influence...ensure that teachers receive support to carry out their plans...recognize teachers' efforts by reporting to the superintendent and school board and perhaps even attaching rewards for their efforts" (Saphier and King, 1985, p. 73). Principals should not hesitate to explicitly laud the people who carry out their visions.

Distribution of leadership duties demonstrates a trust and belief in the people in the institution, or the human resources. Fullan (1992) suggests that principals who value the human resources within their schools realize that they must develop "collaborative work cultures ...fostering vision-building; norms of collegiality that respect individuality; norms of continuous improvement; problem-coping and conflict resolution strategies; lifelong teacher development that involves inquiry, reflective practice, collaboration, and technical skills; and restructuring initiatives" (p. 19). Furthermore, Giancola and Hutchinson (2005) extend this human resources view to include humane leadership in which leaders cultivate teams to develop the vision and then help team members become leaders. The leader who develops a team that believes in his/her vision has created a system of leadership that can be sustained independently of the leader.

Sustainable Leadership

Great leaders tend to be emphatic and enthusiastic. They are often thought of as demagogues who are the face of revolution and change among the people who look up to them. For the educational leader, among others, these traits must be tempered with systematic and analytical thinking, because myths of the leader as the charismatic hero

“reinforce a focus on short-term events...rather than on systemic forces and collective learning” (Senge, 1990, p. 386). According to Hargreaves and Fink (2004), sustainable leadership secures success over time by soliciting the leadership of others to address issues of social justice and to undertake activist engagement with the environment. Additionally, according to Fullan (2005) “sustainability” is the ability of developed institutions to improve continuously in a way consistent with deep human values. Sustainable leadership can be obtained when a leader commits to serving with a moral purpose.

Moral/Ethical Leadership

Ethics and morality become integral to educational leadership because ethical leadership—the mental construct—challenges one to live, and work, as a moral leader. Consequently, moral leadership—the enacted process—honors personal integrity and responds to the needs of others in promoting justice as well as preventing harm. In sum, ethical leadership as conceptual structure engenders moral leadership as practical action (Starratt, 2005). An educational leader without a solid moral foundation can make all the right decisions for all the wrong reasons. Ethical/moral leaders know that some battles must be fought, even against the greater educational system, to maintain the integrity of learning in schools.

For black principals, leading in an ethical manner involves considering the struggles all educational administrators encounter as they attempt to pursue access and excellence for all of their students. These struggles are compounded by the fact that society generally views blacks in negatively and by the notion that the actions of black leaders are either credits or discredits to their race as a whole. To be trusted as ethical leaders, Starratt (2005) suggests that principals employ the ethics of critique, justice and care. This ethical framework

requires the administrators to first critique the state of leadership, instruction, and educational access in their schools. It then suggests that they take actions to provide a more just environment within their schools, attempting to promote equity for all students regardless of their race, creed, or ethnicity. Black principals can benefit from analyzing the principles, values, and beliefs that, for them, constitute a moral life (Starratt, 2004) and conveying these ethical principles clearly to the school community.

Through reflection, the educational leader should strive to behave consistently, almost instinctively, in moral ways. Sergiovanni (2005) maintains that moral leaders know and focus on what is important, care deeply about their work, learn from their successes and failures, take calculated risks, and are trustworthy people. For urban leaders, moral leadership is of utmost importance, because “[l]eaders in urban districts need a coherent and morally courageous framework for thinking through the challenges of an environment where the purpose of education is being narrowed, where public schools are being attacked for not solving the problems of cities, and where the shift to meet the current agenda leaves many districts without the human capacity to meet their goals” (Jackson, 2006, p. 196). This leadership style boast practical benefits, as Easley (2006) found that moral leadership from principals positively impacts urban area teacher retention.

Leadership for Black Principals

Existing educational leadership literature may not provide sufficient guidelines for black principals. Current scholarship on educational leadership must take into account the black principal’s need to manage intercultural conflict and navigate both majority and minority cultures without compromising his/her identity. Black principals must develop intercultural relationships with their own identity group as well as the dominant group in

order to respond effectively to the school community and understand structures present within the identity group and the dominant group (Foster, 2005). Also, the bulk of black principals are represented in urban schools. The demographic shifts occurring in urban schools necessitate new leadership approaches to compensate for the decreased level of preparation that urban students bring to school. Because many urban educational issues are shaped by cultural and social barriers to meeting the needs of black students, the answer to leadership changes may lie within black culture. A feature of black culture, the application of spirituality to community issues of social justice and social change, may provide a direction for educational leadership (Dantley, 2005). In other words, ways of being, believing, and doing may be different for black principals, and their focused insights could profoundly affect the way Americans view educational leadership.

Black Women Principals

Since this research is focused on the effects of personal, racial, and cultural identities of black educators on their leadership, it cannot exclude the effects of gender identities. Black women principals face sexism as well as racism in their preparation programs and their practice as educational leaders (Skrla, 2000; Bloom and Erlandson, 2003; Alston, 2005; Loder, 2005). Their gender presents another leadership obstacle for them in a society often hostile to the concept of women leaders. This perspective can complicate the meaning of their leadership and/or the way they go about leading. For instance, black women principals often feel obligated to instill motherly instincts of nurturing, caring, compassion, and concern into their leadership practice. (Case, 1997; Skrla, 2000). Loder (2005) calls this maternal form of educational leadership “othermothering.” These and other pressures connected to

their gender are presumed to affect the ways that black women perceive their leadership in tandem with their other personal identifications.

Conceptual Model of Educational Leadership

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) outlined an educational leadership model encompassing much of the currently accepted leadership theory. They suggested that educational leadership could be broken into three basic categories: 1) setting directions, 2) developing people, and 3) developing the organization. To set directions they state that principals should articulate their visions and make sure that school communications are focused on these visions. They should also create shared meanings and come up with group goals. Finally they need to set high performance expectations and find ways to monitor performance (including measurement and evaluation). To develop people leaders need to provide intellectual stimulation and individual support to staff as well model behavior consistent with school norms. Finally, developing the organization includes development of school culture and developing structures for organization and management structures, collaboration for staff decision making, and environmental management for garnering outside support. When leaders create coherence within these three factions of their leadership that provide a way for their leadership to be institutionalized and backed by staff, students, and the school community.

Practical Application of Related Literature

The three areas of literature used in this research merge to formulate a working understanding of how black principals have experienced their race in America, how they have formed a uniquely black identity, and how their identities and their experiences can merge with existing theories of educational leadership. They will be used as theoretical

frameworks and conceptual lenses to solicit and analyze the leadership views of participants. Understanding the influences that a critical stance, personal identity, and leadership beliefs have on black educational leaders is important in this study in order to extract black principals' perceptions of how their race affects their leadership.

The crux of this research is the personal experience of each participant. Their stories are at the forefront of this research's aim to understand the experience of being a black principal. Thus participants' stories will be the major unit of analysis, derived from the qualitative interview protocol which is described in detail in the next chapter. The sections of the literature review on race and identity will directly be used to solicit participants' personal, racial, and cultural identities as well as their beliefs about how these identities influence their leadership. The educational leadership section will be used to distinguish participants' leadership styles based on their stories about their leadership. These stories will converge in analysis, in which the interaction of identity and leadership styles will be examined and interpreted.

Chapter 3 will outline the research design and methodology used in the study. It will provide a detailed description of the methods of selecting participants, designing data collection instruments, collecting data, and data interpretation.

Chapter 3 – Design of Research:

This chapter describes the research design used in this study. It explains the rationale for the qualitative interviewing, memos, focus group, and qualitative data analysis that will be used to interpret the meaning of the participant data.

Introduction:

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to discover how black principals believed their personal, racial, and cultural identities affected their leadership of schools using individual qualitative interviews, memos from the researcher, and a final focus group of the participants. Using a multiple participant case study methodology allowed the researcher to collect data from a varied group of black principals in New England and analyze their experience across cases. The interviews administered to participants assessed their perceptions of the challenges of the job of principal due to their being black, including how their identities affected the way they perceived their roles and responsibilities and how they thought others perceived them based on their race and skin color according to the historical associations of blackness in America. This chapter explains the research questions

to be explored, delineates the research methodology used, and provides a description of the research procedures to be used and data collection and analysis. The aim of the study was to investigate the perceptions black principals have about the relationship between their personal, racial, and cultural identities and their leadership as experienced by themselves and as interpreted by others. The study followed a qualitative research design.

Research Questions:

The following research question stemmed from the researchers interest in the intersections of race and leadership, particularly as they affect black principals. Due to historically negative images associated with blacks, a question of concern was the extent to which these images affected blacks who operate as school leaders. In order to explore this question the researcher first needed to find out how each participant felt that society's views of them as a black person meshed with their personal identities. Thus the first research question emerged:

How do black principals perceive their personal, racial, and cultural identities to affect their leadership?

As black principals reflect on the effects of their accepted and perceived racial identities on their leadership they are also recounting the characteristics, opportunities, and experiences that sustain them in their leadership. This information is useful in recruiting and retaining minorities in education. To explore the specific set of experiences that have informed the leadership of black principals in multiple contexts, the second research question was formed:

What experiences have been salient in the formation of black principals' leadership identities?

Research Design:

To explore the research questions for this study a qualitative design was used. Qualitative research examines human behavior and the reasons people act the way they do in certain situations. It requires the study of variables in their natural setting, which in this research is the study of black principals in their schools. Qualitative research also emphasizes the importance of interaction between variables, such as the interplay between race and leadership. It seeks to explain the 'why' and 'how' of people's actions in specific contexts through use of small and focused samples for interpretation (Holloway & Jefferson, 2000). To make meaning out of information provided by these samples, the data is categorized into patterns which help the researcher to analyze and interpret results (Jacob, 1988, Smith, 1983). The usefulness of the qualitative research method is its ability to "capture the human meaning of social life as it is live, experienced, and understood by its participants" (Gay and Airasian, 2000, p. 201).

The form of qualitative research used in this research is the qualitative case study. The case study approach is appropriate for this study because of its ability to "focus upon particular individual actors or groups of actors and their perceptions" and to provide a "rich and vivid description of events within the case" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 317). The case study is usually a search for what is common and pervasive within the case, although it is often not necessarily focused on generalizing as much as understanding the specifics of the case. It is important for the qualitative case study to occur under natural conditions (Stake, 1988). The case study is also chosen for this study because it provides a method for conducting holistic and in-depth investigation (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991) and a

method of analysis for the variables relevant to the subject under study (Polit and Hungler, 1983). The case study is designed to identify specifics from viewpoints of participants using varied data sources, which helps to validate the process of forming the study, gathering data, analyzing data, and reporting results. This research combines the cases of many black principals and cross analyzes each for a larger case. This is known as a multiple participant case study.

Research Methodology:

The Multiple Participant Case Study

The multiple participant case study method expands the case study approach to include multiple cases all cross analyzed as one larger case. Each principal in this study represents a smaller case to be included into the larger case study. Stake (2006) has produced methodology for multiple case study analysis that is instructive for the study. To combine many smaller cases into one larger case study, the cases have to be similar in some ways. For this study each principal represented a smaller case. The first objective in the multiple participant case study is to understand each case individually. Then the researcher can examine the functioning of each case and relate it to other cases. Paying attention to differences in context is important for each case. Stake (2006) outlines three criteria for selecting cases. Each case in the multiple participant case study must be relevant, it must represent diversity across contexts, and it must afford the opportunity to learn about complexities and contexts within and across cases. Cases in this study were relevant because they were studies of black principals' perceptions of how their personal, racial, and cultural identities affect their leadership. They were diverse because they included black principals

representative of as many contexts as possible in order to present an accurate picture of the complexities within and across cases. Within the overall study, cases were carefully chosen so that the researcher could understand the critical phenomena under study (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 1990; Vaughan, 1992; Yin, 1994). The phenomenon of interest was prominent in all cases in order to yield the best possible explanation for it (Malinowski, 1984; Ragin & Becker, 1992; Yin, 1992). Thus the phenomenon of being a black principal remained constant across all cases pertaining to this study.

Methodology

Similar to the single case study, methods for the multiple participant case study include observing, interviewing, coding, managing data, and interpreting data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Gomm, 2004; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Erickson, 1986; Bickman & Rog, 1998). It is common for single cases to be briefly reported within the multiple participant case study. The main source of interest to readers, however, is usually the cross case analysis. Stake (2006) explains that this analysis allows the researcher to provide interpretation across the cases about the “theme, issue, phenomenon, or functional relationship that strings the cases together” (p. 39). Nevertheless he also cautions that the researcher should not ignore the “unique vitality of each case, noting its particular situation and how the context influences the experience of the program or phenomenon” (p. 39). Stake (2006) refers to the multiplicity of cases studied in the multiple participant case research as the Quintain. He asserts that “the complex meanings of the Quintain are understood differently and better because of the particular activity and contexts of each case” (p. 40). In analysis, the findings relate to individual cases while the themes span across cases. Themes should preserve the research questions and findings should expound on specific situations within each case.

(Stake, 2006). In this study, findings related to the qualitative interview questions which originated from the literature reviewed for the study. The interview questions were informed by the research questions. Both findings from individual cases and overall themes were considered by the researcher when making assertions about the significance of the overall case study.

Validity

This study attempted to validate participants' perceptions through corroboration, drawing conclusions from high frequency beliefs held by many of the participants in the study and expecting to find many of these beliefs based on previous research and existing literature. Corroboration was not used to confirm the accuracy of people's perceptions but instead it ensured that findings from the research accurately reflect people's perceptions. In this study corroboration increased the probability that the researchers findings may be valued by others as credible and noteworthy (Stainback & Stainback, 1988). The researcher's own biases were carefully examined with respect to validity. This research also attempted validity through transparency on the part of the researcher. The researcher maintained awareness of personal biases and assumptions coming into the study and explicitly stated these (Merriam, 1988, p. 169-70). In presenting the findings, the researcher further reduced bias by utilizing peer examination "which involves asking colleagues to comment on findings as they emerge" (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 325).

This study also employed the method of triangulation for validation of research findings. Denzin (1978) identified triangulation as the convergence of multiple data sources. According to Stake (2006) all important findings need at least three confirmations of their accuracy. Triangulating data can "help the researcher to establish the validity of the findings

by cross referencing, for example, different perspectives obtained from different sources, or by identifying different ways the phenomena are being perceived” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 323). Denzin (1970) lists several types of triangulation useful in qualitative research. This study relied on two of those. It incorporated *data triangulation* through collection of data over time from multiple locations and about many people. It also achieved *investigator triangulation* by involving more than one observer in the research process (Denzin, 1970). The latter form of triangulation was achieved in this study by inviting participants to share in the process of interpreting data and results during the focus group. The major data sources used in this research were the qualitative interview, memos from the researcher, and the focus group involving multiple participants. Using triangulation in the analysis of data and publication of results for this study supplied a “method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data” (O’Donoghue & Punch p.78). These regularities were expected to produce findings essential to this research and assistive to the field of educational leadership at large.

Generalizability

This study can be generalized as a compartmentalized facet of the human experience. Reading about other’s experiences allows a more objective view of that experience than personally experiencing it which can cause one to ignore rather than accept the experience (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 192-7). Any generalizations “will depend very heavily upon the richness and thickness of the data collected, and equally, on the context from which the generalizations arise” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 326). Generalization is not the main goal of the typical case study, which focuses more on understanding the particulars of the case and figuring out how the case operates in its specific context. However, within the

multiple participant case study there is generalization across individual cases to make assertions based on common themes found in all cases and even some generalizability provided by context-specific differences between cases. Generalizations will resonate differently with different audiences. Two major assumptions are assumed of generalizations from case study research. One is that findings will provide specific implications for policy. Another is that findings will yield general knowledge that can be applied to similar cases (Stake, 2006). Implicit in both of these assumptions is the idea of a quest for information that can bring about valuable insight into the cases being reported on. Stake (2006) argues that when viewed in this context, case study research can provide “valuable counterpositions to experience and convention” (p. 89). Thus generalizations from this research can potentially lead to emancipatory change in existing paradigms about race and leadership in education.

Participants/Sample:

This research drew on the experiences of 15 black principals in New England. It was necessary to limit the study to New England so that the researcher could access each principal for a face-to-face interview. Participants were leaders of a wide range of school types, including public, private, urban, suburban, and alternative schools in order to represent a diverse population. They led schools at all levels including elementary, middle, and high school. This research included the viewpoints of both male and female principals. This sample was intended to achieve the widest range of participant experience possible in order to capture the essence of being a black principal across various contexts.

Snowball Sampling

These principals were identified and recruited using the snowball sampling method, in which the researcher identifies a few participants who lead the researcher to other participants. Goodman (1961) explains that the snowball sampling process allows the researcher to take a purposive sample from a finite population and asks these sampled members to name others they know from this population. The snowball sampling method intends to make inferences about a particular population of individuals (Ove & Snijders, 1994). It can be used to identify samples in light of sensitive issues (Hendrick & Blanken, 1992). In this research the topic of principals' race was a sensitive issue and a roadblock to obtaining information about them. No racially identifying information could legally be dispensed about the principals. Participants' race was a privileged topic known only to others who knew them or knew of them.

The snowball sampling method was inherently predicated on an assumed linkage or bond with others in the population sampled (Spren, 1992). Referrals had to come from people who know one another (Berg, 1988) and from people who have high enough esteem for each other's work to nominate them to participate in dissertation research. Snowball sampling was an especially effective method for the qualitative research undertaken in this study because it allowed sampled participants to provide information about themselves as well as other potential participants (Goodman, 1961) and thus reveal their connections to one another. Connectedness was important to this research because the study proposed to make assertions based on the population of black principals as a whole. Thus figuring out how participants were connected and what they thought of one another before and during data collection was an invaluable tool in figuring out how black principals were joined in the common situation of being black leaders of American schools.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues around this study included possible implication principals' and their schools in the research. Although the research topic is not overtly controversial, it did deal with the topics of race and power, which are sensitive issues in the American context. Thus the study was set up to protect the identities of participants and the schools they lead. Participants were informed of the topic of study and were told they were selected because they were black principals. They were informed that the study would consist of an interview lasting approximately 45 minutes and that they would be asked to participate in a focus group. Participants were informed that there were no foreseeable risks to them in the as a result of the study, though there may be unknown risks. They were informed that the benefits of the study included lending to a greater understanding of the underrepresented group of black principals in America. They were informed that there was no payment or cost associated with the study.

Participants were also informed of confidentiality procedures for the study. These included the keeping of electronic and paper records in locked files to be destroyed after publication of the dissertation. They were informed that no one other than the researcher and Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research (i.e. Boston College Instructional Review Board) would have access to identifying records. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw participation at any time or to not answer any interview questions they were not comfortable with. They were given contact information for the researcher and the research institution (Boston College) and were given a copy of the Informed Consent form which they signed before participating.

Data Gathering Procedures:

Interviews

The major method of data collection in this study was the qualitative interview that was administered to each participant. To that end the three topics of literature reviewed in the previous chapter were used to directly inform the interview protocol. Specifically the protocol was broken into three separate sections to solicit participants' views regarding their identity, leadership, and race. Identity questions inquired about participants' self-identifications and how participants perceive these identities to be affected by race. Leadership questions asked how participants got to their current positions and use the major sections of leadership outlined in the literature review to identify participants' leadership styles and beliefs about leadership. Race questions gauged the level of active anti-racism that each participant exhibits in their leadership and solicit further thoughts and advice on race and leadership.

Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes per participant. They were conducted at participants' convenience and in mutually agreed upon locations. Interviews were digitally recorded and hand written notes were also be used to record participants' thoughts and experiences. Microsoft Word was be used to create grids to code interview transcripts in order to facilitate a cross-case analysis to compare/contrast interviewee data and seek categories and themes useful in determining perceptions that black principals hold about the ways in which their race affects their leadership.

Memos

Memos were continuously compiled by the researcher throughout the process of constructing the study and completing the research. These personal notes helped the researcher to capture thoughts and arrange ideas relevant to the gathering, reporting, and

analysis of data. They also included summaries of the main points of each interview and specific information about each participant as well as questions to think about as research continued. Miles & Huberman (1994) laud the use of memoing to make sense of the qualitative research process, explaining that memos “don’t just report data; they tie together pieces of data into a recognizable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept” and also that “they are one of the most useful and powerful sense-making tools at hand” (p. 72). In analysis, memos took the form of marginal annotations for each transcribed interview highlighting important sections and possible categories and themes to consider. Charmaz (1983) describes the usefulness of memoing in analysis, stating that they are essential to the formation of codes because they provide the background that “tells what each code is about” (p. 120). Throughout the study the researcher used memos in these forms to sort and organize data so as to provide more meaningful and rich descriptions of participants’ lived experiences.

Focus Group

To underscore that themes created by the researcher were truly indicative of the lived experience of the target population, participants were invited to participate in a focus group. Fontana & Frey (1994) state that the focus group is useful because it “can provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interview” (p. 361) and also that it is “inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and above individual responses” (p. 365). In this study the focus group acted as a follow up conversation in which the researcher and the participants checked the themes created in the research according to their experiences and their interpretations of the terminology utilized to categorize them

thematically. The researcher used the focus group to engage in member checking, or taking the results back to participants to test the plausibility of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the researcher shared the results of the study with participants another layer of data emerged. This process is consistent with Glaser & Straus' concept of theoretical sampling (1967) which is "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyses his data...in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (p. 45). Through this joint creation of findings from the data, the researcher attempted to attain a more realistic interpretation of participants' experiences.

Limitations of the Study

Researcher bias

This study may be influenced by the preconceptions of the researcher, a black educator who is planning to enter the field of educational administration. The interview questions were the principal instruments for this study, so they were also biased by the views of the researcher, who has created them. The researcher was as transparent as possible about any biases held to combat the effect of this bias on data collection. This bias was also be checked by participants who were asked to participate in a focus group designed to allow them to co-construct the data and the findings of the study. This co-construction of data reduced the probability that participants' views had not been distorted or misrepresented in the analysis.

Participant perception and response bias

This study was based on the perceptions of the black principals who agreed to be participants. Their views may or may not have constituted reality from other perspectives. Every caution was taken to cross analyze data sufficiently to account for the common

experiences recounted by each participant and the ways in which these experiences correlated to one another. Also, it is possible that participants may have responded in the way they believe appropriate for the study, or that they told the researcher “what he wants to hear.” To combat this limitation, participants were informed upfront that their contributions to the study would be anonymous and that they were encouraged to espouse their true beliefs about how their personal, racial, and cultural identities affect their life, personally and professionally.

Method of Data Analysis:

Critical Race Theory Lens

Racism is normal in American society. Accepted stories and “histories” have disempowered minorities. Critical Race Theory (CRT) uses storytelling to analyze myths that marginalize blacks and other minorities (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It introduces the concept of revisionist history, a form of storytelling that places blacks’ stories and experiences at the center and revises historical representations of blacks in so doing (Delgado, 2001). CRT is interested in giving a voice to minorities who have been subordinated and subjugated by the dominant culture (Calmore, 1995; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). It assumes a difference in the ways of being associated with the majority and minority cultures, though historically these differences may have been submerged so that minorities could gain power and access to systems that majority members have ruled. CRT assumes that current policies and procedures are based on criteria associated with whiteness and that minorities are outsiders to this perspective (Iverson 2007). It suggests that the way for minorities to gain power, access, acceptance and understanding is for them to tell their own stories and not allow others to speak for them. Thus CRT takes the position of the “counterstory” which

subverts accepted reality by viewing it through the lens of minority culture and experiences. The power of the “counterstory” is its ability to create a new reality through encountering a new experience (Delgado, 1989). This research intended to create such a new reality through analysis of the experiences and beliefs of black principals. Specifically, the researcher was looking at the race-consciousness and critical awareness of race conveyed by participants. These elements brought race to the forefront as a critical factor in the leadership of black principals, which was then informed by their other various personal identities, placing the study in context.

Qualitative analysis

Data was analyzed using the method of qualitative analysis outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). This method called for the researcher to become familiar with data from interviews by repeatedly reading and/or listening to data and recording written reflections on the data. Data was then sorted into similar groups, wherein commonalities and differences among the data were recorded. This data was analyzed across all cases to identify common threads and points of dissent. Through this process themes and patterns were created in the data which were then coded in terms that were short but gave meaning to the text.

Coding

Coding was extremely important to the process of analysis since it was central to the generalizations that the researcher made regarding the data. The researcher began with open coding, which is “the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 61). Codes in this stage was immediately accessible, brief, and descriptive of the participants’ experience (Charmaz, 2005). Throughout the coding process the researcher wrote code memos, which were written records

of how and when codes were derived and about the researchers' thoughts regarding each code (Gibbs, 2007). The researcher used data-driven coding, starting without codes and developing them through reading of the interview transcripts (Gibbs, 2007). Codes were developed as the researcher made meaning of blocks of text in the transcripts. This was accomplished through meaning condensation, in which the researcher moved from the natural unit – what was said by participant – to the central theme – what the researcher believed the universal meaning of the statement (Giorgi, 1975). Once created, codes were combined as larger themes useful for data reporting.

Format for Reporting the Data:

Cases were coded individually. Codes were written in descriptive language and written as findings for each case. Evidence from each case was used in reporting findings. Codes from all cases will be combined if possible and then separated into categories. From these categories, the researcher identified the overarching themes for the study.

Grids were used to group the themes that emerged from the data. Each grid was named according to the appropriate theme with the title of the theme at the top. Under each heading, the content from the transcripts that coincided with the theme were placed in order of relevance, or depth of insight into the theme. The grid for each theme was printed as a separate Word document. These documents were ordered according to their richness and depth in relation to the research questions, and overlapping themes were marked. The researcher then analyzed the themes to make meaning of the findings.

Chapter 4 presents the findings from analysis of participant data. The emerging relationships, themes and patterns are organized in Chapter 4 in order to provide a framework to write Chapter 5, in which the findings are discussed in terms of the relevant existing

literature. In Chapter 5, findings are interpreted to decipher the meaning of lived experience as a black principal in America and how that experience lends to black principals' perceptions of how their personal, racial and cultural identities affect their leadership. Also in Chapter 5, implications are made for further research.

Chapter 4 – Findings:

Chapter Four will discuss the findings from three sources: transcriptions of interviews with participants, transcripts from the culminating focus group, and memos from the researcher. All interviews were first recorded using a digital tape recorder and subsequently transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were coded into multiple categories as patterns were identified by the researcher. Categories were condensed into themes, which are reported here by listing the transcribed experiences from each participant that are related to each theme. The themes are summarized as findings.

Introduction:

In America, race is a prevalent issue (West, 2001). Black Americans have experienced life in a society that has maintained racist views about their abilities. They have been subjected to negative images about themselves, which have formed a lens for the way they look at their own lives and value their own contributions to society. The purpose of this research was to study the perceptions that black principals hold about the ways they believed their leadership to be affected by societal views of blackness in America, combined with their own personal, professional, and racial identities. The following research questions directed the research:

- **How do black principals perceive their personal, professional, and racial identities to affect their leadership?**
- **What experiences have been salient in the formation of black principals' leadership identities?**

From these research questions the researcher identified three related areas of literature to review: Critical Race Theory (CRT), Black Identity, and Educational Leadership. From the literature review emerged the following supporting questions which the researcher asked participants in a semi-structured interview protocol:

- How do you identify yourself?
- How has your race influenced your identity?
- How does race affect your daily life?
- Who has made you successful in your career?

- Who have been your mentors?
- How does spirituality affect your leadership?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- What is your leadership vision?
- How do you communicate your leadership vision?
- How do you communicate with your staff?
- How do you get people involved?
- What are your core values?
- What are some specific instances in which your race has affected your leadership?
- What are some challenges you have faced as a black principal?
- How do you deliberately take a stand against racism in your school?
- What advice would you give to other black principals?
- What have I left out that you think is important about how being black affects your leadership?

Interview participants gave meaningful insight into their perceptions of the interaction between their racial, cultural, personal, and professional identities and their leadership. They acknowledged that the stigma held about blacks in America might add pressures to their leadership and expounded on the extent to which their experiences as educational leaders and their personal, professional, and racial identities may or may not be affected by views held about blacks in American society. Chapter Four will fully explore the challenges of school leadership that participants attribute to the dynamics of race in America as well as the personal experiences and beliefs that have made each participant feel they were successful in their role as principals.

Coding of the Data

Common patterns were noticed by the researchers around participants' experiences with regard to the all-encompassing effects of race in America and ways that this phenomenon did or did not affect their personal leadership styles. Their response patterns were identified by the researcher and coded into the following categories:

- Race affects everything
- Pride in blackness

- Constantly proving/justifying yourself
- Needing to always appear to be in control
- Being true to self
- Self questioning
- Role models/mentors
- Influencing future leaders
- Loneliness/isolation
- Support groups
- Connection to black community/black students
- Work with urban/minority population
- Discouraging criminal activity
- Leading by example
- Role of spirituality
- Purpose for the work
- Knowing the work
- Shared leadership
- Diverse leadership styles
- Bringing in outside resources
- High expectations for all
- Commitment to diversity
- Commitment to equity
- Blacks don't always have best interest of kids
- Not tolerating racial discrimination
- Uncertainty about whether race is an issue
- Challenges about Principalship (not race)

Many of these categories relate to principals of any race. However, results from this study showed that due of the added pressures of racism in society, these issues were of greater intensity for black principals. After coding, the researcher separated similar categories into six major themes. These themes described participants' reports about the ways they and their leadership styles are affected by the construction of race in America in tandem with their own personal, professional, and racial identities. These themes are listed below.

Themes

Black Principals in this study experienced:

- **Theme 1: Increased race-based pressure to prove leadership capabilities.**
- **Theme 2: Greater sense of connectedness to minority students and families.**
- **Theme 3: Increased need to promote diversity and equity in schools.**
- **Theme 4: The need to maintain standards of high expectations for all students regardless of the race of students or teachers.**
- **Theme 5: The importance of networking, mentoring, and role modeling in order to give and receive support from other minority educators.**
- **Theme 6: Uncertainty about the extent to which race is an issue in leadership.**

Chapter Four will begin with a brief introduction to the participants in the study, whose identities have been protected with the use of pseudonyms. Next, Chapter Four will discuss the major themes discovered in the analysis of the data. The discussion will include detailed findings from the participant's responses to interview questions, comments made during the focus group, and it will be directed by the researchers own memos about the research process. Finally, Chapter Four will include a summary of the themes and will relate the findings to the research questions.

The Participants: Fifteen New England Black Principals

All participants shared the commonality of being black principals in New England. Four participants identified as having Caribbean and/or Latino heritage. Of these four, three identified as black or African American; the other identified as Afro-Caribbean. Eight participants identified as male and seven identified as female. Participants worked as principals various types of schools, including urban, suburban, and private as well as all grade levels including elementary, middle, and high school. Two principals of alternative schools were included as well. For the purpose of referencing them throughout the chapter,

the participants are listed below along with how they identify and the types of schools they lead. Participants' identities are protected with the use of pseudonyms.

- Patty Kerrigan - Patty is a black/African American female. She is a veteran principal in a suburban elementary school.
- Henry Vincent - Henry is a black/Afro-Caribbean male. He is a veteran principal in a suburban middle school.
- Yohanna VandeCamp - Yohanna is a black/African American female. She is principal at an alternative middle school.
- Richard Morrow - Richard is a black/Afro-Caribbean male. He is an urban high school principal.
- Helen Dawson - Helen is a black/African American female. She is new principal at an alternative high school.
- Allen Perkins - Allen is a black/African American male. He is a new principal at a suburban high school.
- Ashley Gardner - Ashley is a black/African American female. She is an urban middle school principal.
- Anthony Higgins – Anthony is a black/African American male. He is a veteran urban high school principal.
- Pamela Kenwood – Pam is a black/African American female. She is an urban high school principal.
- Melvin Waters – Melvin is a black/ African American male. He is a new principal at an urban high school.

- Irene Walsh – Irene is a black/African American female. She is an urban elementary school principal.
 - Jake Wallace - Jake is a black/African American male. He is a veteran urban middle school principal.
 - Catherine Shields - Catherine is a black/Afro-Caribbean female. She is an urban elementary school principal.
 - Charles Gibson - Charles is a black/Afro-Caribbean/Latino male. He is an urban elementary school principal.
 - Harry Howard – Harry is a black African American male. He is a private school headmaster.
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Summary of the Themes

Theme 1: Increased race-based pressure to prove leadership capabilities.

Race affects everything.

Participants believed that race is a central issue in their personal, professional, and cultural identities. Several participants stated that they could not separate their race from their identities. Participants mentioned that race is paramount in America because, in this country, race is used to identify people. Attached to that identification is a stigma of blackness caused by the negative images that have been and continue to be associated with black people in America.

Harold Vincent discussed how he came to realize the negative feelings he associated with blackness at a young age:

I think the best way to describe how it influenced me...it started in elementary school. All the kids in Kindergarten through fourth grade were all African American. In fourth grade I remember we didn't want to play with a

particular kid because he was too dark. Years later I examined that a bit more and went to dictionaries to look up definitions of black and white and found some eye-opening things about the differences between how black is defined versus how white is defined, and I came to realize at a very young age, eight or nine years old, that I had already internalized those differences and was actually living them out.

The black principals interviewed for this study reported that their race affected every part of their lives. They could not think of another aspect of their being that had as much influence as race. Helen Dawson stated:

It impacts every cornerstone of life. No matter what your race is, your race influences who you are as a person, every sense of your being...Everything that you do is influenced. You view life through screens and those screens are impacted by your race...

Allen Perkins also stated that race formed the lens through which he viewed his life:

I can't think of a way that it doesn't. It just does. You know, it's a consideration. Everything that I say or do is through that prism, you know, through that lens.

Irene Walsh suggested that race affects all black Americans in similar ways. She made this statement about how race influenced her:

On the level that being African American in America has influenced any African American. I would suppose that's about the beginning and the end of the identification. It's the fact that it's obvious.

Ashley Gardner also discussed the totality of the effects of race on her life:

My race has totally influenced my identity. It's hard to separate the two. And it affects my identity in other roles too: as a principal, as a female, as a mother, as a wife, as a runner, all ways, shopper...

Participants described race as something one was not allowed to forget. Harry Howard stated:

As a person of color you're not able to walk through this country without having it identify you. And it's become even more so as I've risen through the ranks. Especially with regard to your intellectual capabilities, your leadership capabilities.

Richard Morrow concurred:

I don't think I've ever been allowed, being a black man in America, you're never allowed to forget that you are a black man. You're always conscious of it in all of the work that you do.

Anthony Higgins suggested that race is tantamount to a group identity for Americans:

When I hear the comments that race doesn't matter I wonder what country those folks are talking about. But in the United States it does, unfortunately, and everything we do in terms of application and trying to identify ourselves. We identify by race and not nationality. So this is a very, uh, a country very much so based on race.

Some participants attempted to reframe the definition of race as it related to personal identification. Charles Gibson rejected race as a term of identification:

I think that ethnicity has a lot to do with everything. I use the word ethnicity as opposed to race because race is very much misused in society. There's just one race and we're broken up into different ethnic groups.

Patty Kerrigan reframed the typically negative connotation that blackness often calls forth in American society. She stated:

I think it adds flavor to our lives. We have such a rich history, a rich history of overcoming adversity and of rising. And the fact that we're still around I think is just phenomenal, frankly, with the forces that have been against black people. I just think that one of our big problems is that we don't know our history. I think that we don't know the richness of our history. I think we start out in school learning about slavery. But we didn't come from slaves, hello, we came from kings and the first universities and beautiful and collaborative work. Things that people are discovering now that work. That's where we come from. That's our history.

Race makes you work harder.

Black principals in this study felt that as black leaders, they had to constantly prove themselves in ways that whites would not because people did not immediately expect them to know how to perform their jobs. Some black women principals in the study also listed

gender as a reason people undermined their intelligence and ability to do the work.

Participants also believed that their race made them work harder to gain the trust of staff as well as families, who were often surprised to find that a black person was principal.

Early on in the study, participants internalized the fact that being black in this country is sometimes synonymous with being doubted in your abilities. Yohanna VandeCamp talked about how she figured out in high school that her race led some people to have lowered expectations for her. This caused her to be conscious of her race and the differences between her and her peers. It also caused her to make the conscious decision to be proud of her race.

She stated:

I recognize and have had experiences that have made me feel like I'm different. Early on I went to a high school that was predominately white. It kind of opened my eyes to realize "You know what, sometimes people look at you differently because of your color." I try to take pride in who I am because of that and to believe that I can still accomplish things. There aren't limitations to what I can be. There may be limitations in terms of what people expect of me. Unfortunately I have to consider at times how people view me. Are they viewing me in terms of what I can do? Does my color influence what their expectations are of me?

The perception that blacks are limited in their capabilities based on their race often extends to adulthood and the perception follows black principals into their leadership positions. Patty Kerrigan, a suburban principal, described the way she felt black leaders were viewed:

I think being a black person, especially at the beginning of this job, I had to justify everything. I had to constantly let them know, no I didn't do this because I come from Boston or because I'm black or because I grew up in the Bronx. It's because it's educationally sound. And if I had been white nobody would have questioned that. So it's a constant proving of yourself...I had a good education so that helps. I can write so that helps. People look at every little thing. Can I speak English well enough to run their school? So that helps. I know how to not be so different that they feel uncomfortable. So I think that those are things that help you ease in if you feel like putting everybody at comfort level – some people don't.

In the final focus group, Patty Kerrigan spoke of the initial years of her suburban Principalship. She maintained that “everybody felt I could do discipline but nobody felt I could do the challenge kids, the academic high flyers, the gifted” because “the assumption was that I had dealt more with remedial kids than kids who were bright”

Kerrigan further explained that gender is also an issue in terms of leadership. She talked about the way that black women leaders are often viewed:

As a black woman first, they see you as black first, then as a woman. Then they get down to the intellect... Well of course nobody's going to state that but I think that one of the major crises that we had here, I think that race was a factor in that. People felt like “I really don't want to listen to her.” I think there was a gender issue. I think there was a race issue here. They're not used to a black person being in charge and I think it's been very clear with some people and you know what, as I say to everybody, “You've got a choice. There's the door.”...I think that it's an underlying thing. I don't think anybody's going to say “I'm not listening to this black woman.” I think it's just “Well I'm not used to doing that so why am I going to start now. After a while people realize, well, that's because I'm in charge. And so it's changed over the years, I haven't gone away.

Irene Walsh, when questioned about the challenges her racial identity presented for her leadership, explained it this way:

One of the challenges that happens as a black principal is this whole idea of being accepted as someone who really knows the work. That we actually can do this work. That we understand what it takes to run a system and to supervise a group of people. That's probably been one of the challenges.

Walsh reiterated this point in the final focus group, stating that “any person of color in a role of leadership has this increased pressure to prove that they are able to lead” because most teachers in the inner city are white and have not had experience working with blacks either as supervisors or even as teachers.

Richard Morrow explained that even though he is extremely qualified to lead, people's first reactions are to doubt his abilities as a leader. He talked about how he handled

these lowered expectations at work and in his personal life:

Lack of belief in my intelligence and leadership, and I think that's just when I walk through the door. You know "Who is he and how did he get here?" I display prominently the diplomas on my wall from Yale and Harvard, though I don't want you to get the wrong impression, it's not anything that I advertise when I'm out in the world. But I think it's important when people come to visit or when students come in my office for them to see that yes a black man when to Yale and Harvard. Yes there's a black man who leads this school. Yes there's a black man who's the president of this country. Yes you can do it too. And yes there is value and merit in their accomplishments, what they've done. There's something really strong about that and I just want that to be out there. Even coming into this position, I think that a lot of staff...you know, I'm thinking, I was just hired. I'm coming here to a school that's predominately white and I'm the only African American headmaster in this building and I happen to be male too. So it's kind of loaded, and this is something unseen here. And a lot of my colleagues work in the Boston Public Schools, so it's not uncommon; it's just uncommon here for the last thirty years. I was constantly challenged intellectually about curriculum. You know "Do you know your content area?" which is science. So there's just always the challenge walking through the door. But I never think I've had a problem demonstrating my value, my worth, my intelligence after the conversation has begun. I think it's always the initial perception and challenge that any black man gets. I shop at Brooks Brothers. So I go in there, and if I'm dressed with my suit and my tie on, I get really good service. But on a Sunday if I'm trying to catch a sale I go in my jeans, my hoodie and my Timbs and I'm followed around the store and no one's even asking if I need any help. But again, when you're walking through the door, how you present is really, really important and this is something that I've learned and even that I teach to the young men both who attend here and who work here. The value of presentation is very important. It's about how you speak. It's about how you dress. It's about how you carry yourself. Very important, because you can then suspend the disbelief of those who may judge you initially.

Patty Kerrigan talked about a common thread among participants leading suburban schools, namely that it is sometimes surprising to people that black people are principals of their schools. She spoke of her being light skinned as a factor that allowed white people to be more comfortable in accepting her as a black leader. She also intimated that being light skinned is deemed as advantageous to black professionals because it makes whites take them more seriously so that they do not have to prove as much:

I know that white people can take me more because I'm light-skinned, because I sound like them, I have a name like them. Once or twice they thought they were coming over to see a white Irish man with the name of Pat Kerrigan and they were a little bit surprised when they got here. So I do think that those pieces – like I don't wear dreadlocks, I do wear my hair curly sometimes, kinky sometimes. If you'd come yesterday you would have seen nappy right now. But I think that our intra-issues do affect things. And it also affects how when you diversify your staff then you can pick up some of those issues too. Am I bringing in staff who are all light-skinned or are there some dark-skinned women here or men or that kind of think. I hate those issues. I hate talking about them. I hated it when Spike Lee put it out there and everybody else could see that we have those issues. But we do need to sit down and say "Whoa, let's talk about these." Because I get it from the kids too because I had one black kid who was told he was African and he got all mad and everything and I said "Whoa, wait a minute man. Me too." So there's a lot of internalized oppression that we have that comes out in our leadership too. And we have to recognize and see where we're at with that too.

Participants working at suburban schools with majority-white populations of students and staff reported feeling added pressure to prove their abilities as leaders. They also noted that people do not expect blacks to be acting as principals and often exhibit surprise when they find that a black person is running the building. This situation was described by two male participants working in suburban schools. Henry Vincent stated:

I've had the good fortune to be in this district for thirty-plus years. I think that I've got a very positive reputation amongst the community. But there are things that will happen like, parents will call and they will ask to speak to one of the assistant principals or they will go through the assistant principal to try to get something done when the assistant principals know they have to come to me about it. One of my colleagues has been at this school as long as I have and I inquired of him about that. I said "Have you noticed that people go to you for questions and things?" and he said "Yeah, I've started to notice that too." I don't know how much that is with regard to race or ethnicity but it's just something that I've observed and noticed over time. Part of my role, part of all our role here in the building is when somebody strange comes in the building you ask them "Can I help you?", and they'll ask me who's the principal and I'll say "I'm the principal" and they'll say "Oh, you're the principal." So I have to deal with things like that along the way.

Allen Perkins remarked believes that his race makes him work harder to get the same

results as a white principal. He echoes that people are often taken aback when they find out that he is black:

As the first black principal of a high school in a high profile job I think about it. I grew up with the adage “Twice as good to be equal.” I think people...I know that people think about it, especially when they didn’t know me. Because you could read about me or you could talk to me over the phone and have it not be clear that I’m black. So I know when some folks first met me and saw me they were like “Oh,” you know.

Catherine Shields, though she works in an urban setting, also mentioned that race causes black principals to work harder. She noted the importance of developing a knowledge base to be effective and knowing the work:

I had to develop my own knowledge base. You know, we always have to work twice as hard as everybody else. So I became a better learner in the work. I know curriculum. I know standards. I know what it should look like in the classroom. And then once you have that skill along with everything else, you can really move people and shift people’s way of thinking. So I was able to do that over the years, shift people’s way of thinking. And those that didn’t like it, well they kind of had issues with me. They would try to battle with me. But once again, it’s about the work and it’s about the love of the kids. So over the years many people have shifted, they’ve left, they’ve retired, they’ve gone off to nice other schools. And I’ve been able to bring in a very dynamic group of teachers that I am so happy with.

Shields also talked about having to prove that she was competent and in charge to her staff members as well as her students’ families by showing that she knew how to do her job well. She stated that neither white nor black parents expected to see a black principal, though black parents were comforted to see a black person in a leadership role:

I’m thinking about one teacher that I had in the building several years ago – She’s no longer among us, praise the Lord – who was very derogatory and condescending to me. I put up with her for about two, three years, I put up with that little nasty, snide, and you know her just busting in and saying things about “You people...” So then I decided one day I was going to have to get a little niggerish with her. She got that side of my personality that’s not the pretty side. She got a big dose of that. A bully’s a bully’s a bully, but you have to use what you know to get past it. But I don’t know. I think people think that...you know I remember parents walking in and looking at the

secretary as if she was the principal. And they were always a little taken aback when they met the principal. “Oh wait, you’re the principal.” Sometimes black parents have the same reaction because they’re coming to South Boston and they’re like “Oh, there’s a black principal there. My kids should be good.” Sometimes the parents will call me and say “I’m not sending my kid there to that school” because of where it is. I say “Well, what’s the problem?” They say “You know it’s racist there and they’re going to not like my kid.” So then I have to introduce myself and explain who I am. Then they bring their kid and I’ll have the whole family for three generations. So that does impact it, once parents know who the leader is.

Along with parents and faculty, participants also felt pressure to prove themselves to superiors. Charles Gibson talked about the climate and the vast expectations for his performance upon entering the Principalship. He talked openly about how his supervisors attempted to usurp his authority and have him fired early in his career as a Principal:

During my early years I had a gentleman by the name of Joe Gage, an Italian Guy, as my area superintendent. The first time I met him was after I was named the principal. Shortly after the superintendent had appointed me he contacted me to meet with him. One of the things that he said to me was “I usually name my principals in my schools so I don’t particularly like that fact that the superintendent named my principal.” At that time there was a vacancy for an Assistant Principal and he said “And usually I allow principals to name the Assistant Principal but since they named you then I want to name the Assistant Principal, and he put one of his boys in here. He then told me that the principal of the Higgins School, another one of his boys, was going to be my mentor. So Principal Higginson came down and we had a conversation a couple of times and so he apparently gave him the word “Oh, he knows what he’s doing, blah, blah, blah.” But at that meeting he also painted a picture of what was happening. Prior to my coming we had some students with behavioral problems. And at the time the Humboldt St. Gang was really active and some of these kids were either in there or their older siblings were in there, and that I needed to do something about that. And there were a couple of teachers that were not cutting it and I needed to do that because his thing was that all these parents called him and he got tired of all these calls and so my job was to make sure those people didn’t call him. I came and I took care of it...

Joe Gage was my boss and after we got reconfigured I had Dr. Cofflin, a white female, come in. Then I had a Chinese guy that was a cool guy. And then the following year he had an assistant that was a white female that I had as a coach. After she was here for a while I told her I didn’t want her back here. And the way things turned out she became my supervisor and tried to come back and get me fired or whatever. She got about three principals and

she tried to put me in that group. But it was clear that it wasn't going to happen.

Harry Howard, who he began his administrative career in boarding schools in the 1970s, described the roadblocks he faced when applying to private schools who covertly used racial dynamics as reasons to deny him jobs.

I came in second for a head of school job in Cincinnati, OH, which I thought I was in good shape to get and the reason I didn't get it is because my diction wasn't quite up to par with what they thought it should be apparently. I had another job in 1985 where I was applying to be director of admissions for an all-boys school in Dallas, TX and I was told that I didn't get the job because I was married then to my wife who was a white woman and they weren't ready for a bi-racial couple at that school. They did hire an African American gentleman who was married to an African American woman. I came in second for another head of school job in PA and I was told I didn't get that job because they weren't sure that I would be able to attract funds from their large givers for their capital programs.

Decades later, participants still report that their abilities are doubted. Melvin Waters also spoke of having to prove his ability to raise funds for programming in his school.

Sometimes the challenge has been when we step outside of our world as public school folk and start to try to build partnerships in the private sector. There are some people that are very receptive but there are some people that I think, they would never say it, but either perceive that we can't understand other situations because we work with public schools, specifically traditional public schools with a diversity of students. There are some people that I often feel, and this could be my own situation, but I often feel like I'm going through a litmus test of some sort around how much I know about the work I do and what I'm requesting of the partnership. And that's come up time and time again.

Irene Walsh stated that black principals should expect to be not trusted as being knowledgeable about the work, and that they have to use their system of beliefs to demonstrate their personal power to lead:

I would tell other black principals that they need to be very clear about what it is that they believe in. In going into a position in a system that is predominately not of color, they need to be really clear about what they are willing to sacrifice to be successful. Because it will cost them if they are

going into a system that is not of color. There is a price to pay because they won't be accepted as knowledgeable in their area. There will always be this underlying piece that "You got the job because..." There will always be parents who don't really want their children in your building and if they couldn't do anything about it they wouldn't have them there. And there will always be teachers who won't trust that you can lead them. They need to be real clear about what it is that they believe in and they need to really know education administration and leadership. What I mean by know is that they have to demonstrate it at all times. They have to always show that. People will say "Oh, you can show your weak side." Principals of color don't have that luxury. White principals do, they can show their weak side, but principals of color, once we show it we are seen as a risk. You have to always show that you are in control and that everyone can depend on you to solve the problem.

According to some participants, a result of black principals always having to work harder to prove themselves is that they always have to appear to be in control, as Walsh alleged. Some participants felt that this belief was a problematic one for black principals. Ashley Gardner stated the problem of having to constantly prove oneself as a leader actually causes a division amongst blacks. Gardner advised black principals:

To both be very real with themselves and the community that they're working with about who they are as a full package, the blackness, all of it, and to also question themselves. I question myself all the time. I think black professionals don't question themselves publicly because of the history of just being a black professional and how you can't ever look like you don't know what you're doing. I think there's some falsity in that, in that that's also a great appeal to people who are outside of your culture. And for people who are black who are going to knock you for being real, then shame on them. You don't have to associate yourself with people who are not about moving you forward. You just don't have to do it. I don't care if you are the only black person. If the folks around you are not aspiring to greatness in a healthy and positive way then disassociate yourself. And I think in Boston that there is some of that going on, that there are people who are not positive and that there are people who use their blackness in a way that can close doors for people who are black and that's not ok to me.

Melvin Waters also took the direction of being authentic and vulnerable to his staff so he could help them improve their instructional practices and develop them as leaders themselves. However, he admitted the difficulty of asking for help instead always appearing

to be in control:

I would describe myself as the lead learner. I think part of my role as a leader is to make sure that I'm always in learning mode for the rest of the community, which is tough at times because I have to be...it puts me in a very vulnerable position around sometimes being able to say "Okay, I'm not quite so sure how to do things so I'm going to need your help to help me figure it out. I'm surrounded by very talented staff and some very caring parents and families. So I think that's one piece, being the lead learner...Eventually I'd like to know that I could develop anyone in the school into being leaders themselves. And I struggle with that. I kind of see myself not only as the lead learner but I'm also the lead teacher in the building so it's not uncommon for me to sit down with different people, if they're parents or students or staff members, and if there's something that they want to be able to do or something about their leadership style they want to develop, I want to be able to help them develop that. Right now I'm definitely not there but I've come to the realization that that's something I want to be able to do. And part of it is slowly getting my confidence that I could do it. Before I don't think I felt as strongly that I could actually help develop someone else as a leader. Now it's my fourth year in the job so I'm feeling more confident that I can help and I'm getting some indicators from some of my staff members that they are trusting that I could do that work with them. So that's kind of the vision for me in terms of my leadership.

Further opposing the tradition of always having to prove oneself and appear to be in control, when asked about his beliefs, Harry Howard emphasized his valuation of the ability for himself and others to make mistakes:

I hope I've instilled in people the fact that none of us are perfect, that they're going to make mistakes, and that while we learn from those that we don't have to be harsh on everyone to have those mistakes corrected...I think there is always this little bit in the back of your mind. You're always, any professional, you never know for sure what you're doing. Being a principal or being assistant head is like being a parent. You do the best you can. But there's no manual for it. You can take all the courses. You can have all the skill sets, etc. But you're going to run into stuff that you just haven't got a clue about what you're doing and you're doing the best you can by the seat of your pants. There's stuff that comes in such odd ways at odd times and you're tired and you're not quite thinking right and you make mistakes. So that goes par for the course. You add to that the layer that you're always having to look through the lens of race, that you're always, even though you try not to, you always are. You have no choice. It's not conscious but it is always on a sub-conscious level. And maybe that's the assiduousness of racism in this country, that it's now caused us to even look through that lens ourselves.

Gibson talked much about the lessons he has learned from being a veteran principal. Among his most emphasized lessons was his clarity about what he was good at and what he needed help with. He felt that this skill increased his longevity and success:

Being a principal is challenging period. I want to start off with that. And being a principal where accountability ends with you and begins with you is very challenging. Being a principal where there's the expectation that you need to move certain mountains but the resources are not provided is very challenging. Being black has not necessarily made it more challenging, at least for me, because over time I have learned how to network with my colleagues and not only learned from previous experiences of other people but I'm not afraid to say "I don't get it. I need some help with this."

Some urban veteran participants felt they did not have as much to prove as they used to or as those that came before them did. Wallace stated his experience and his good name within his school system as reasons why he did not feel the need to constantly prove himself. He felt that as people learn who you are, you have less to prove to others, even as a black principal.

I'm not able to really answer those questions in a way that I see as pronounced today in 2008 for me in the Boston Public School as I would have told you when I became a principal in 1986, or in 1990, or when I became a principal in Randolph Public Schools, in a suburban school where I was visibly the only black principal. In Boston I'm one of 144 principals. And because I have such a reputation, I'm considered a pretty good principal by most people. People know "That guy knows what he's doing and if you go to that school you're going to go there because you really want to work hard and do your job." I honestly can't tell you any situation that I remember recently where...I put on my suit everyday and I go to school and I know I'm a black principal, but I don't necessarily see how that comes up. The way it may come up, which I haven't seen recently, I may be telling someone in the suburbs that I work in Boston and I'm a school principal. They may say something to me to the effect "Oh I feel so sorry for you. That must be tough." And they make some assumptions that I don't necessarily think are as evident as they do. And that becomes an issue. But most times I just come in and do my job. We have a school in a high profile community, in the mayor's backyard. So if I call and say "This radiator is not working; I need heat" I believe they'd fix it, not because I'm Jim Watson, a black principal, but because they know who I am and they'd come out and do it. So I know a young white principal in

South Boston. If he calls he says they don't come out. And I say the reason they come out is because they know who I am. And if they don't come out, I know the next person to contact. And the person who is in the superintendent's office I know on a first-name basis. And that person wouldn't know them. You just learn things with experience and people sort of know who you are, people in the heating department, the plumbing department, the electric department. I've been around for so long. So they know who I am. "Oh Jim, how are you doing? How's your daughter? How's she doing her first year of college?" So it's that kind of conversation. So you call. You have to sort of identify yourself. "Ok, we're busy. We'll put you on the list." And they may get around to it. So those are the kinds of issues I had early on. But now I just...I don't see them. I don't have issues with teachers sort of challenging that. More when it comes to the students because those kids have attitudes. But they'll be put in their place rather quickly. I don't know. I just don't see a lot of that. It's interesting, you asking me these questions. But I can't really...you know, look I'm being as honest as I can with you.

Gibson also learned from mentors who were black principals at the height of racism and integration in America. Compared to his predecessors, Gibson felt he did not have as much to prove as a black principal.

But I remember when I was doing my Master's project I interviewed a number of African American administrators, Al Fortune who was in Brookline, my friend Curtis Wells, both gentleman. I was listening to their perspective of what it was like as I was doing my Master's project. And I almost said "You know, I don't know if I want to do this." Because their reality was real, real tough because they were those first black men that were in that spotlight. And those were the folks who had to break a lot of barriers and a lot of "Oh, he's black he can't do it," and a lot of sabotage. Their stories were so interesting to me and at the same time I was like "Man, if that is the reality of doing it then why are they even going through this stuff." That's not my story. I've had some of that, but not as they had it.

Even though he felt that times had improved from historical circumstances for black educators, Gibson did also acknowledge the ways he had to prove himself not just as a black leader but as a representative of other black professionals. In the final focus group he stated that if he didn't do a good job as a leader "it would be reflected as another black who couldn't do the job"

Finding # 1: Participants believe that race affects every aspect of their identities. They recognize the pressure to prove themselves to their supervisors, staff, and parents of students, who may not accept them as knowledgeable leaders based on commonly accepted views held about members of their race. Participants acknowledge that faculty, parents, and students are surprised to find that they are leading schools and that these people doubt their abilities to do their jobs well. Participants respond differently to this pressure. Some participants feel the need to use their knowledge to inspire confidence in others and to show that they are in capable control. Others reject the notion that they need to always be in control and favor authentic leadership and vulnerability as methods to break down barriers. Some participants also feel that they do not have to constantly prove themselves because they have already done so earlier in their careers or because others have paved the way for them.

Theme 2: Greater sense of connectedness to minority students and families.

Participants reported feeling a greater connection to minority communities and students than they believed white principals would have. They also commented that being black made them aware of how others viewed them and that this awareness helped them connect to minorities and others. This sense of connectedness manifested in various ways.

A concrete measure of the sense of connectedness participants exhibited was demonstrated in the choice of many to live in black communities. Catherine Shields described her propensity to living amongst blacks and how it connects her to the community:

Well I live in Mattapan. So I live in a neighborhood with black people. We're starting to get more and more white people moving into our neighborhood. But it doesn't really affect my daily life because of where I live, and I chose to live in a black neighborhood. I could live anywhere, Okay. But I choose to live with black people. You know, so when the dog is barking I can yell out the window "Shut that goddamn dog up." And they get it. You kind of have that connection. I like having that connection.

Ashley Gardner, when asked how her racial identity affected her, responded:

It affects where I live. I live in a community that reflects who I am, so as I'm driving to work I'm driving through a place where I see myself reflected in my community. It affects why I have chosen to work here and the families that I work with and meet with every single day. Some of them look like me, some of them do not. There's a very ongoing and upfront conversation about that as a part of this school community.

Yohanna Vandecamp also stated:

But as for who I am, I really take pride in being African American. I live in the city, I don't want to live in the suburbs. So I think I'm consciously thinking about where I go, what I read, how I decorate my office, my house. So I think it definitely influences my life strongly.

Charles Gibson explained his reasons for living within his community and he talked about the difficulty associated with residing in a black community.

I live today in Dorchester. I've lived in Dorchester since I came to Boston in high school. I have raised my three adult children in Dorchester, not because I didn't have any choices. But I remember something I told myself when I was in college, that when I finished college I wanted to stay in the community. I want to try and make an impact. I'm saying that to say that many times, as we get into that place, we run away. But on a daily basis I'm dealing with the things that my kids are dealing with and I understand the dynamics. Sometimes I want to run away. I'll be honest. I have a big tree in front of my house. I literally put a trash barrel there because I get tired of picking up people's garbage out of my yard. But that's the environment I chose to live in.

Living in black communities may be preferable to minorities because of their overall sense of connection one another. Richard Morrow explained the implicit connection that exists between blacks and other minorities, versus the exclusion that blacks sometimes feel when interacting with whites. He stated that:

Like anyone else. I think race affects your life when you find yourself different from others around you. I don't think I think much about my race when I am with other African Americans, even Latinos or otherwise. I think I'm more conscious of my race when I'm around the majority population. White males in particular, because they're the ones who are always making me conscious of my race whether they make comments about "Oh, so what's it like to be a black man in America?" because it's something that I'm always reminded of more by them. Whereas when you're with people of your own race it's more talk about a common experience. So you're less conscious of your race unless you're applying it to the contextual aspect of the larger American society. More often it's about enjoyment or talking about common struggles and challenges. But again, you more often notice race when you're around folks who are not of your race.

Other participants also talked about a communication barrier between whites and blacks. Some felt that being black helped them to connect to blacks and others as well. The maintained that their racial identities interacted with their personal and professional identities to make them aware of how they communicate with different groups of people and how they are perceived by various groups. Ashley Gardner credited her black heritage with her ability to better understand and include others:

And in terms of my communication style and ways that I'm able to relate to people, I think there's certainly a part of my history connected to my race that allows me to communicate in different ways to different people...I've had the privilege of being part of some very different circles. Highly educated black people, highly educated Latina people, highly educated white people, and in the same strand in a less educated scene. And so because that was part of my history and just learning how to communicate with all those different people and also being able to have a conversation not just about how I communicate but being able to understand what people are trying to say. I know that for people who are white some behaviors and some words and some gestures might be seen as threatening. For me it never has been so I think that opens a door for people because they can get what they need as opposed to being turned away, shot down, accused of something. More people being asked to join a meeting, that kind of thing.

Gardner advised other black principals to be aware of how others see them because of their race. She stated that this awareness is sometimes lacked by white educators:

I think knowing how other people are going to perceive you and planning for that a little bit. White people are often threatened by blacks. If people are mindful of that or how other races communicate it's just helpful. You can't ever over-understand another person's perspective. There's a lot of translating that has to go on. Black leaders have to help white leaders that way too. White leaders are leading schools of folks of color. I know some black people resent that but if that white leader is leading my folks I'm going to say "You know what, the fact that you used this tone in your memo to these people is not going to work. In fact it's going to cause a divide." And I'll say "You need to remember you are a white woman." And I say that to my teachers. We had two white teachers who wanted to make a home visit to a family and they wanted to talk about retention for the person's kid. I said "As a white woman don't go through their home and talk about that. You could probably go to a white child's family and talk about retention. But you can't

do that.” I’m sure that there are many white leaders out there who can do that, but I think it’s a very special person, very special and unique.

Helen Dawson talked about using cultural forms of communication with her staff that might only be understood by people from cultures similar to hers:

I also communicate with my staff, I’ll be honest with you and talk about how race interplays with it, I communicate with my staff some ways in the same way that I grew up, and it’s that look. Sometimes my staff will know that look, depending on culturally where my staff comes from. So, a variety of different ways.

Harry Howard described the ways in which he has attempted to account for the way people respond to him as a black administrator and how he has worked to make people feel comfortable with him. He also described his communications with a student that he felt avoided him because of his race. He stated:

On a daily basis there are people who just don’t know how to respond to a person of color. For some reason it’s different for them or whichever the case may be. Again I am a man. I am a huge man. I have a deep voice. I get passionate about things. But I’m not a domineering personality. But people read different things into what they want to hear. And they have their own lenses through which they see those. So those I encounter all the time. I was a director of admissions for ten years in a boarding school so I was interviewing at the time almost all white families actually. You’re talking about interviewing 7th and 8th graders and some 9th graders, but mostly 7th and 8th grade students, small children. So as a big man I had to really make myself appealing to those families and so you do it by how you greet people. I’m a naturally outgoing and friendly person anyway, but you really work on that aspect of your personality even more so. And you try to disarm people. You try to diffuse situations. And you just try to be consistent with who and how you are. And eventually some people will warm to that and say “Oh, this is who he is” and other people will just still not warm up and those are the ones who you can’t...I don’t feel badly or negatively toward them I just realize that’s the way it’s going to be. And I still treat them with the same respect and dignity I would expect to be treated with in return. If it becomes more overt than that I deal with it very directly. I would call them and say “What is the issue that we have here? Have I done something to you personally that would cause you to behave the way you have?” I had a young woman, a young student here, who is a senior this year. She never spoke to me. In fact she was blatantly not speaking to me. She would come up and speak to someone sitting next to me and act like I wasn’t there. She came into

my office one day wanting me to give her the key to the mail box. “Oh, Mr. Horne how are you? Do you happen to have the key for the mail box? Can I get in? I’m really so happy that you’re here. Thank you, thank you.” I said “Well that’s amazing. So now you can be very friendly and talk to me but any other time you don’t.” “Wha? What do you mean?” I said “Andrea you blatantly ignore...you don’t speak with me.” And she had another friend with her and I was very cordial. I was very direct with her. I said “You blatantly don’t speak to me and now all of a sudden you want to act like I’m your best friend because you need something. I don’t do that. But here’s the key for the mailbox. You can have the key and go.” And I think it cleared the air. And I would be that way with a student, with a faculty member, or anyone else if it was anything that direct. And I would expect that same directness in return if I was doing something. We don’t always know what we’re doing and sometimes we have to have someone point it out to us. In her case I could give intentionality to what she was doing and there may have been intentionality there but until she told me that I didn’t have the right to assume that. I had to at least point it out to her and then if it continued after that then we would have had a different layer of conversation.

Participants’ sense of connection to blackness was not always perceived as being oppositional to whiteness. They reported ways in which their race helped them in their personal and professional lives. Charles Gibson talked about the benefit of his multiple ethnic identities:

I don’t think that being black has really been much of an issue in a negative way. On the other hand I’m also Latino and this is a school with a large Latino population and ninety percent of the time I’ve had the support of the Latino parents and teachers. So it’s worked for me...On a daily basis I wake up and I don’t walk outside of my skin, so that I know that I am of African descent and I go about all of my being with that. When I interact with folks oftentimes I think about how best to approach that person based on who they are and who I am. I’m very expressive. If I’m angry I’m angry and I don’t play and I let you know what you’re doing that makes me feel the way I feel. I don’t attribute that to ethnicity, that’s just a part of my make-up. I think it’s a little bit more complicated at times because as much as I am black I am also Latino, and so there are times when I go in both of those roles in the course of a day. I’m quite at home whether I’m with an African American community or a Latino community.

Ashley Gardner believed that her race was instrumental in her attaining her current position. When asked about how her racial identity affected her leadership she responded:

And in applying for this job that was certainly a factor. There was a very, very public interview process here, long and public. So as the people here were choosing a principal that was definitely something that I thought about. The people that were also candidates, in terms of what we brought to the table, we certainly all brought different things, but it wasn't that one person was necessarily better than the other so I think there were other factors that people were thinking about here in terms of who they wanted to be here. I don't doubt that being a female of color was a part of that.

As educators, all participants stated that their primary concern was student-welfare.

Many felt that as black educators they were connected to their black students in a very personal way. Their personal connections to students caused participants to work harder to keep them safe, to take a personal interest in them, to understand their various communication styles, and to notice when white educators were not connecting with students on a cultural level. When asked what she would add to the interview protocol, Irene Walsh responded:

I think the piece that you've left out is the relationship between the black principal and the student. It's a different relationship between the black principal and the black student, the Hispanic principal and the Hispanic student. It's a relationship that exists on a different level. It's an underlying understanding while at the same time an underlying feeling that we have to protect them from themselves, from everything out there and from other people. And people don't seem to ever ask that question about the relationship between the principal and the student that is in their school. Most of us choose schools where the kids are like us because we want to give them that piece that we had, the piece that helped us become what we are. We want to give it to them. So we have these very high expectations for them...because we see our future in them. Those are the kids that we know that we can depend on to speak for us who share the same type of experience. So I think that's an important piece that helps formulate and really impacts the decisions the principal is making in the building and the personal decisions the principal makes about the work that they do.

In the final focus group Walsh further described a connectedness to minority students and families that is "beyond the idea of race." She described a need for them to be successful because of the "knowledge of what will happen if they are not successful" which causes

black principals to want their black students “to be better than what they are or even better than [the black principals themselves]”

Jake Wallace described his childhood and how he felt it connected them to disadvantaged minority students by driving him to fight for equity in their educations. He remarked:

Well I grew up in an urban school district in North Philadelphia. I grew up in the ghetto. I grew up poor. And I guess it influences my work in terms of walking for several miles in order to get to a school and remembering, or knowing, at the time that I went to school that white have busses that pick them up on the street corner. As a kid growing up in Philadelphia I had to have either my parents get me to school, and they didn't have a car to do it, or I had to take public transportation or walk to school. And I didn't take public transportation because I didn't have the money. And so on very cold days like today I hated it. But I went to school and I persevered. So issues of equity, I guess, is something that helps me understand a lot of what my kids who are here at this school go through. And so I'm sort of a champion for kids and want them to have a good experience. And knowing that even though the circumstances can be difficult, my kids can become whatever they want. They can become mayor of the city of Boston. They can become attorney general. They can become governor. They can become president. They can become whatever they want. That's the way I think I've always approached. I believe it strongly, stronger about it now...I think I know my kids better than white people would know my kids because I grew up in the inner-city. I went to inner-city schools. I hope that's what you bring to the school. I hope I don't forget that I sat under these lights that didn't work and in the 7th grade I started wearing glasses because I couldn't see very well. Now as a principal I won't tolerate a building with graffiti, a building that's dirty, a building with lights out, or teachers who are not prepared. I had teachers like that. That's not something that I'm going to allow as a principal because I said I wouldn't. It's a matter of principle. Thirty years later, I still believe in that and I'll work as hard as I need to to get the job done.

Helen Dawson talked about the lack of connection she sometimes noticed from white, male colleagues regarding the impoverished minority youth that she works with. She maintained that she was in a better position to make choices for them based on her connection with them:

I have been in positions where my gender and color, race, is in the room with nothing but people of non-color and all men, addressing issues of people who come from poverty or impoverished conditions. It's influenced how people perceive me, how people respond to me, how people even ignore me. The struggle that I've had to have, the barriers that I've had to break down for me to get to other levels or even to gain respect have taken time. For me, that time could have been better spent doing other more productive things and making better decisions for young people who they have been uninformed about because there's no connection. So that's how I would say race has affected my leadership, that's just one instance.

Gibson's connection to the community helped him navigate the dangerous territory of gang activity around his school. He described a potential altercation diffused by his connection to students:

It was interesting because one day, I don't remember what I did but one of the kids went and told the instructor. After school there were about twelve Humboldt St. Gang members in the schoolyard. I didn't have much good sense. I went outside and two of the guys said "Oh, that's Mr. Gibbs." They were my students in middle school. So things just started to fall into place. In time it seemed like "Alright, this person knows what he's doing." I was able to get certain buy in from the community so that some of the challenges that maybe I could have had I didn't have and I don't necessarily attribute that to anything in particular about myself as much as the circumstances. When there's something that really affects me, I'm going to speak on it.

Shields spoke of noticing gang activity from her elementary students and being connected to that culture in a way that her white teachers might be unaware of:

So being black does impact your leadership because you are able to bring more to the classroom. You understand the language. Lately I've been understanding the gang lingo. The hidden gang lingo of the baby gangs. And that's because, being black, living in Mattapan, understanding "So that blue means what now? So you're wearing all this red because why? And in your readers notebook you have all these little gang symbols." So you can address that with the children. And teachers miss it. So you're able to bring more to the table because you see these things. And then when tragedy happens in the community you're able to bring that piece. We have a little girl whose brother was shot in the neighborhood. So you kind of know what goes on. And then living in the neighborhood makes a difference.

Melvin Waters described the depth of connection he felt to working with minority students as a black principal. He also talked about his requirement for staff to connect to students by demonstrating a commitment to work with minority students from disadvantaged backgrounds. He remarked:

I recognize that I am a black man working in this profession and that my success or my commitment or my hard work will impact how people perceive our community, our students, and the school. Then on the other hand, I think I have a very high belief system. My values are guided...my level of comfort with the students is impacted by my race. The students that I've worked with, they remind me of my family members and people that I've grown up with, people I went to school with. And the relationship piece, I think it's very important to build positive relationships with the students that we work with. I think all of that is impacted by the race piece, or race has impacted me in that way...I think in one way it impacts what I commit myself to, what I've committed myself to professionally. I've been working in public schools close to seventeen years now. I've had opportunities to work in other environments, but I'm pretty much committed to working with schools and communities and families from lower income and under-resourced populations, primarily black and Latino... I think the other piece is, I have some pretty strong values around working with the communities that we work with, especially in terms of believing that as long as they're a part of our community that we do the best we can to service them and to encourage them. I look to hire people that share those values. Not that the work is easy by any means, but that, yeah, if you don't share those values then we can't work together.

Pam Kenwood also emphasized the connection that black principals can have to black students based on common experiences of racism and oppression in America. She further explained the benefit of connecting with white students as a means to subvert racism:

I think that black principals have to remember what it was like to be a black student. I know that we don't have the same experiences, but I know very few black people who have not experienced racism and who have not been exposed to the challenges of being black in this society. Black principals have to remember that in their dealing with students of color. They also have to remember it when dealing with white students. It's important that white students learn about their humanity and become more open to other people. Black principals who are in schools where there are white students can play a

significant role in breaking down attitudes that these students might take into the world with them as adults.

Yohanna VandeCamp talked about how she felt that students and parents expected her to have a deeper level of connection to them because she is a black principal. She discussed the importance of letting black students know they can achieve the same things that she has. She stated:

I believe the students have a level of expectation for you. When they look at you and their African American, your African American, they think that we have some connection and you should have a different level of understanding for me. I think it's important not to ever look down on them. Sometimes they could think "You've got this and you have that, so you think you're better than us." You have to understand where you are, you're in school. You may have to live in two worlds in a sense. But I think that really letting them know that I do think they're like me. I don't see myself up here and them down there. I want them to feel good about the fact that I'm trying to help them represent and be the best of who we are and trying to make sure I expose them to people that can be positive role models. But definitely working with people and especially with families because I think they have a level of expectation and they'll be disappointed if they feel like "Well you really aren't one of us." So I think I try to let them know "You know, I'm the principal so there are certain things I have to do. But you know what, I can relate to you and understand where you may be coming from and some of your experiences."

VandeCamp also discussed ways that parents abuse their perceived connection to her. She explained that parents come to her instead of their children's teachers and that they sometimes expect her to agree with the way they treat their children if they think they are following accepted cultural norms. She reported:

I think with families and parents, sometimes you're in a position where they expect you [gestures]... "Come on. You know. We're the same" so I'm supposed to treat their child differently. Or a parent would come to me as opposed to going to, say, what staff person had an issue with their child. Or if their child misbehaved, the parent would come. I think sometimes parents feel comfortable telling me. Or they might, in terms of their interventions with their children, think that I'm supposed to look away when they say "I'm going to beat the crap out of my kid" type of thing; that I would think that was ok. Like I'm cool with that, you know, you know. So you have to be careful

that they understand that there's right and there's wrong and it's not about being down that I can look away from something. Or they make statements like "Oh, you know how *they* think." And I'm like "Ok, well I can't tell you I relate to that."

VandeCamp also mentioned issues that she has had with staff regarding their sense of connection or disconnection to herself and to minority students. She was honest about the disdain that some middle class black educators can feel for the disadvantaged black students they teach. She also discussed the importance of all staff being sensitive to cultural differences and understanding that minority teachers can sometimes better relate to students in a cultural sense. She reported:

I had a teacher who would be joking around but talked to me like "Hey, yo, what's up." And it's like, I don't talk like that so it's not like you thought this is how I communicate. So you're just trying to talk like me. You're trying to talk like you're saying a black person would talk. Then I had someone from BPS administration, it was a white person, who when she came up to do the introduction, her handshake was not just a regular handshake but what she would consider a black handshake. I don't do that anyway. It's not like I put it out there. I don't do that. So that's a specific example of how "Wait, what's that about?" Strange that sometimes people feel like "This is how I have to behave." And then sometimes it's not only the white staff, but the African American staff, they are sometimes ashamed of the students in terms of the black kids being embarrassing or ignorant or whatever, because they may have made it to a certain place. So they're not always helpful to students either. So it's not always about someone else who's putting the kids down. It's about people who look just like them who are thinking "What's up with your parents or your family?" The other challenge is getting people to understand why being black, you have certain experiences. Trying to get white staff to understand that. You don't know what it's like. Trying to have those courageous conversations, I guess, is a big challenge. Because everybody is nice, but then you get into some of those conversations with people who think that...or the color blind thing, you know, I don't even see color. Well that's a problem. Because then you're not seeing the person. So I think those are challenges, to get people to see that you can't think "I'm just going to treat these kids, I love these kids, and that's it" and feel like "Hey, it doesn't matter to me if I'm working with black kids or Latino kids or whatever." But it does, because you have to take into consideration where they come from and how "This kid said that they're cousins." Well they all say they're cousins. Or understand that they're into looking good and not to

say “Why are you so worried about that?” Well that’s important to them. You have to have some level of understanding of where the kids are coming from and also what’s not part of the culture, because everything is not part of the culture.

In his interview, Melvin Waters also talked issues pertaining to white staff members not having the necessary connection to minority students. He maintained that when not properly examined, this disconnect can damage student-teacher relationships and impede learning. Waters expounded on his belief that when white staff commit to getting to know and care for students, they can create the needed connection with them. He stated:

I’ve been in the position where I’ve hired some teachers, white teachers, who have strong content, who are well-intentioned, and have a lot of possibility. Idealistic, but have not had any real connection to this type of community. I mean the diversity of this community. And I think initially there’s confusion between who they’re teaching and how hard the work is. So I’m constantly having the conversation with certain new teachers that it doesn’t matter who you’re teaching, the profession itself is challenging. It doesn’t mean that the students are all good or bad. For the ones that have not stayed with us, they got so caught up in the who, and I think borderline with the racism piece around “They don’t want to learn. They don’t want to do this. They don’t want to do that.” Although the data suggests that it’s less about them but it’s more about the consistency and how you’re teaching and how you’re learning about the profession. They are aggravating the situation, mind you. I don’t doubt that some of them are aggravating the situation. But these are the same students that I’ve seen, in a different setting, function very differently. So in that sense I think the racism has been very obvious and it’s been a matter of that person really struggling with “Well, what do you want to do?” Some have left the school and gone to other schools and had different types of challenges too. Some have moved on to do other things, whatever the case may be. But then there are other teachers, like I had a few teachers this year that I think are more aware that that’s an issue for them. So then they ask questions like “Well what should I do? How involved should I get with them?” There are those of us right now who can...I can go to almost any student in the building and regardless of what the situation is, have a very direct conversation, whether I’m pissed or happy or excited or whatever. And it’s from a place of understanding, compassion, and so forth. I think that I have a few new teachers who have not gotten there yet. I think part of it is still that barrier of “How much am I allowed to get to know you? How close should I get to you? I just want to do my job.” And then part of them learning is like “Look, it’s the relationship-building. You can’t teach people

you don't care about." I mean, that's what I believe, that's another core value. So in order to get to care about them you've got to build a relationship with them. It doesn't have to be the same relationship but you've got to establish something. Something in which they can talk to you and they can be sensitive to you and you can be sensitive to them. You can try to move on this journey together. So I think right now if there was an issue around the race, that's it. We've done a good job here of trying to keep our staff diverse, but the racial make-up of the staff is becoming increasingly white and that's for a whole host of reasons. But I think that would be that issue.

Participant data suggested that some black principals, especially those committed to working in urban schools with large minority populations, connect with students who are likely to fall through the cracks of education and/or getting caught up in the criminal justice system. Dawson talked about her belief that leadership for black principals working with urban populations is about building up families and communities. She said:

If you're a principal who's really committed to working with an urban population, don't ever lose sight of what your there for. Don't let it become MCAS-driven or money-driven, don't lose sight of that child that it starts with and the family that it starts with. Try to work toward bringing those individuals, I say individuals because it's a child and family, bringing them to the point where it's important for them to be productive as individuals. We're shaping lives and we're shaping communities so we can't lose sight of that.

In describing her mission and vision for leadership, Dawson talked about her hopes for students. As leader in a school for youth with criminal records, her connection to this population involves making them successful by introducing them to positive influences and giving them resources for future success so they can avoid the pitfalls of recurring criminal activity. She responded:

Overall, I'd like to be defined as a strong instructional leader who is competent in working with some of the most difficult youth in any kind of educational system, aside from kids who are seriously emotionally disturbed and aside from kids who are seriously mentally handicapped or physically handicapped, I think that's another challenging population. But next to that population I'd like to say I have probably the toughest population. So I'd like to define myself as instructional leader who is dynamic in really working with young people and pulling together a team of people and motivating that team to educate a group of students who desperately need education and who desperately need adults who are healthy in their life and will help guide them and never give up on them...I envision, at some point in time, never having a student who comes through our doors ever drop out of school, ever. And I envision systems that support that. And I also envision systems that hopefully, at some point in time, will allow us to incorporate through collaborations sort of gateways to college or transitions to college, transitions from here to apprenticeships and vocational supports for our kids. Inundating our kids with education on a number of different levels to the point that they can't get away from it. Ultimately, hopefully guiding them away from delinquent behaviors so that we're not having the vicious cycle of family, generation after generation, coming through our system. Because that's really discouraging, very discouraging.

Pam Kenwood described a specific instance in which her connection to a student as a black person and her belief that he was being unfairly treated by the criminal justice system led her to go above and beyond the call of duty to help him with a criminal case. She also talked about her feeling that race is connected to unfair treatment of young black males in America. She responded:

Another area, a specific instance in terms of my race. I had a student, a black male, arrested on a gun charge. The article said that the mother had been shot and he was arrested. It was a brief article. It happened the night before. And this student is just a wonderful person and I couldn't believe it. He was charged with gun possession at a time when Boston had really strung gun laws and if you were charged with illegal gun possession you were almost certainly going to get a year in jail, at least on your record. That's what he was charged with. There's a lot more to the story. Police, in my opinion, did an illegal search. The gun was at his home, it wasn't like he was carrying it on the street. It was in a closet. His mother had been shot at his home by an assailant and he was the only other person there around eleven o'clock on a Saturday night. His mother was shot in the face. He called the ambulance.

Police came and questioned him, did not allow him to go, and then looked in the closet and found the gun and arrested him while his mother was taken to the hospital. I felt that race was a big factor here. For me, as a leader of this school, I just could not allow him to be convicted for this charge. I invested a lot of time in working with his family and his attorney to try and find a way to get these charges eliminated. He was a junior going into senior year and they were prolonging the case. How could he apply to school with this allegation? There were things about going on probation and he had never had gotten in any kind of trouble. And it was just like “No, this student does not deserve this misuse of power by police and they won’t pull back and acknowledge that they shouldn’t have done that. His life cannot be ruined.” We did get the charges dropped but I had to turn to a lot of resources to get advice because we didn’t have the money, his mother didn’t have the money. I had to draw on myself personally a lot of strength to support him and his mom. It was really hard. I knew that he could have just broken down. We kept him in school and I had to get other faculty to create this network of support for this student and to get this message to our kids that when things like this happen our school is going to support you. You know, when people don’t do something wrong...the gun, an older brother had brought to the house but he wasn’t going to tell on his brother because his brother did have a record. Race was just there in so many ways about young black males and how they can just have this record. I’ve taken that and I’ve pushed with our faculty about criminal records and males and how it prevents them from going on and getting an education and getting decent jobs. I challenge CORI records if I have an employee and it comes out that they have a record. I will go with them and challenge if they are willing to let me know what it is. If I find that it’s not been something that has physically hurt another person or sexually abused a child or selling drugs I’m going to support them. I think race is very tied up in that.

Anthony Higgins directly related historical segregation and racism to current conditions of poverty and crime for blacks. He pointed out that education can be a deterrent to joblessness and criminal activity, citing President Obama and Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick as examples of the kind of success education could provide for students. He proclaimed:

When I first started in Boston Public Schools this was a school district under court order. The federal court found that the school system deliberately didn’t hire black and minority faculty. I also think that we live in a city that’s been highly segregated in terms of housing: where people lived, where people worked, where people went to school. I think breaking down those barriers has taken a great deal of time. And unfortunately as much as Dr. King and

others who fought the battle...we still continue to fight the battle and some feel that hey, we've gotten everything. Except for, we still represent the...socially and economically...you know, the highest rate of unemployment. We still lead the highest rate of males incarcerated. So you know, when people say that things are fine or better, in some respects they are and in some respects things are still worse...If our lives are going to change it's going to be based on education. We can't afford to have our black males locked up or our black males killing one another. We have to make sure that we start developing better character programs in our schools, programs that talk about more unity and less divisiveness. I think we need another Civil Rights Movement around education. I think it's important for us to realize how detrimental not having an education has been for our community. I think it's very hopeful having Obama run for president and show that there is the potential for a black man to be president. Hopefully that will channel down to others like me in schools and say, hey, you too could be a president and, I mean, everything is possible when you put the right effort in it and you work hard. And we have a black governor. Those things are significant, especially in a state like Massachusetts. So I think it's significant that Deval was able to make accomplishments based on his education. I'm sure he looks at himself as a black governor, a black man first a governor second. But it was his preparation, and he got his preparation from a classroom teacher, somebody who gave him the foundation and the encouragement and the enthusiasm to continue the fight. The struggle is not over...The issues for our black and Latino youngsters, the dropout rates are increasing and that means we're not being successful, we're failing. We've got to change those failures to successes. If we don't we're in trouble, we're in trouble now. I look at the role models, what kids look to. They look to the rappers, they look to the entertainment industry, they look to the athletes. I look at some of the professional teams and I know see why different coaches are saying, "Hey, you are a role model." Our message has to be consistent and when our message is negative unfortunately our kids interpret these messages and we see that on top of poverty. We haven't done anything to change poverty. This might be the richest country in the world but there's a (unintelligible) about the haves and the have-nots, and until we make people realize that we all can live comfortably this country is not developing. That's why third world countries look at this country as bullies. You know, we're not everything that we think we are and we won't be until we start changing. And maybe we have to change starting right here, with how we educate all of our children. We have to do better.

Principals in this study did not ignore the importance of the home for student success. In the final focus group, Patty Kerrigan mentioned that she did feel greater sense of connectedness to black families because they "shared the same story...they were outsiders."

In example of this outsider complex, she talked about the “hidden curriculum” that blacks were not given coming into a suburban, majority-white school system. In order to provide clarity about this hidden curriculum, Kerrigan stated “I would have meetings with my parents of African American and Latino kids and say ‘when this is said, you do this’ - making the codes explicit. Thus the connection to minority communities made the black principals in this study focus more diligently on equalizing opportunities for minority students and families.

Finding #2: Participant data suggests that black principals feel a sense of connection to minority communities. This connection is expressed in various ways. Participants report choosing to live in black communities to remain connected. They also discuss having high expectations for minority students and noticing that minority families have high expectations for them as leaders. Participants also note their sensitivity to educational inequities for minority students. They expect staff to commit to working with minority communities and to notice when staff is un-connected to students’ cultures and perspectives. Participants connect their blackness with their ability to communicate with various types of people and to notice when white colleagues are not aware of how to communicate with other cultures in a culturally sensitive manner. Finally, participants believe that young minorities are over-represented in the criminal justice system because of their race. Participants seek to provide education as a means to subvert criminal activity and promote future success for students of color.

Theme 3: Increased need to promote diversity and equity in schools.

Data showed that race made participants feel the need to diversify staff and ensure that students saw diverse images in the classroom. They felt that students needed to be influenced by multiple races and cultures to be well-rounded and successful. Participants personally related to students of color being treated in an inequitable manner, and discussed working to eliminate such biases in their institutions. When asked about how her race affected her life, urban school principal Pam Kenwood talked about how she shares the burdens that her students have to bear:

I think my race makes me see the world from many different perspectives. It makes me be more sensitive to inequities that others might experience. It makes me more sensitive to combating inequities and making sure that everyone has a fair chance. It makes me feel that I am somewhat of an outsider and that I am navigating through this society. I am sensitive to the barriers and the obstacles and the challenges that many of my students must navigate. I always try to educate other educators who are dealing with them to be aware of that and support them through that. It's not just about learning the ABCs.

Patty Kerrigan discussed being connected to students of color and seeing injustices that are done to them that may go unnoticed by others. She noted that these inequities can and sometimes have been addressed by white educators in her school:

And then also the other way it affects you is that you see things that other people don't see. You see where the black kid is spoken to more often in the line than the white kid. He stands out, he's one of the few black kids in his class and you feel that. You see that and feel that. You see where the white teachers are advocated for and you don't hear anyone finding any black teachers or knowing any black teachers. There's a lot of things that other people just don't see, white people just don't see. And sometimes you see a turnaround when a white person goes "Wait a minute that's not fair" or "We have to do X because we need more diversity or a black person there." So that's when you know, whoa maybe you've gone to the other side and somebody else sees it other than you. Somebody white sees what you're seeing.

Participants were driven to hire minority teachers, although the applicant pool is often shallow for qualified candidates. Kerrigan described her interest in hiring teachers of color, despite a lack of minority applicants in her suburban school district:

I mean even today I met with some of the principals and we talked about hiring for next year and at one point I said "Whoa, you know, any of these people that we are thinking of bringing on, are they people of color." And not one was, so I said "Well then, you know, while these people may have some priority we can't just keep going down this path, you know, we have to change in some way.

Yohanna VandeCamp talked about the struggle to diversify staff and the questions it

raised among white staff who are working competently with minority students:

I think the advice I'd give is to really make sure that you get to hire a good staff. Really take the time in your hiring to make sure you're getting the best people and you have a diverse staff in terms of men and women, African American, etc...In terms of challenges with staff, there are times when...say with hiring. The school department has an expectation of numbers and percentage of African American staff since the court order years ago, so it's always been in the school department. The school department also has a team interview process. So sometimes there's a challenge of the staff understanding, you know, they may have a recommendation of someone who's white when we really need a black person. So it's a challenge of, how do you get people to understand that? It's sometimes problematic because people might say "Well, are you saying that a white person can't teach a black child?" So those are some of the challenges, to get people to understand the importance of cultural competency, the importance of understanding that certainly there are people who can work with students of color.

When asked about how he subverts racism in his school, Richard Morrow listed diversifying his staff as a huge factor. He also maintained that providing excellence in education was a means to eradicate racism caused by educational inequities for students of color. He stated:

That's not really my biggest problem anymore. I think one of the things that I have done over the last four years is really recruit staff members who see the vision of the school and see the beauty in our students. And that, I think, is the most that you can do to combat racism in a school environment is to make sure that everyone in the environment is of the healthy spirit of motivating children and don't have racism as a motivation to deny them an education. That's the best thing that I think I've done in this capacity. So if you look at this staff it looks like the UN. We have Asian. We have white. We have black, Haitian, African. We have Latino, men, women. I think just about every group is represented in some way. Every group that the students comprise is represented in the staff. And that's important. It was never like that. It was never like that here. But now this staff looks really good. And they think really well, in addition to that, about the direction the school is going in and the future of the students. That's the best thing I think you can do to combat racism. It's just like, "Take it off the table."

Data also showed that participants felt that diversity should be represented in the curriculum, images perpetuated in school, and various aspects of school life. They believed

that representing various cultures in schools and having minorities working as educators helped to open up possibilities and break down racist stereotypes. Catherine Shields espoused her views about black history month and the lack of cultural representation found in schools and in students' curriculum. Shields felt this was an issue that white principals may not be as attuned to as black principals. She stated:

I hate black history month. People don't understand what it's about. I think black history should be taught throughout the curriculum and it just really annoys me that that doesn't happen on a frequent basis. All of a sudden in February everybody brings out Rosa Parks, poor Rosa. It is the best that we have, but it certainly needs to be better. Our history as black people needs to be infused into the curriculum. What about when the children are studying science? Should we not talk about some black scientists? So I do try to infuse that a little bit more. I'm getting more of that done throughout the curriculum. Black authors when we're doing readers and writers workshop. What is it like to be a black writer and read black literature? So we have a little more of that. But that piece comes, I think, because of my blackness. I don't think a white principal or a principal of a different color would think about that. But I think about that all the time. I need to see exemplars in the class that look like the children. I'll go into a classroom and say, "There are not pictures of blacks represented here." Or "I see a couple of Asian kids but there are no representations of Asian students in here. So it does change the focus if you have that conversation with them. Teachers are really very good about that and they will begin to infuse.

Patty Kerrigan agreed with the need to have a diverse staff and to present diverse images in schools as a means to eliminate racial biases:

I don't think any longer that I stand by myself. I have a number of people of color here so some of them can stand up. And I have other white allies here. A lot of the white teachers here have taken the anti-racism course. We do a lot of reading and they recognize that this is something that's important here. So they know when they put up a picture in their room they need to make sure that it's a diverse group of kids. They know that if somebody says something that they need to either say something they need to either say something back, say "No that's not the way it is." Or find somebody who will help them deal with that. So I think it's more having built some allies around of multiple races. And also I think that when you have other people of color here it helps people cut down on their prejudices. They meet somebody black. And so they don't believe everything that they saw on the TV. They have a living image here that captures that.

Jake Wallace felt that racism was more prevalent in suburban schools with majority populations of white staff and students. In his present urban environment, he pushes for diversity and inclusion of all students:

I've seen racism. I probably saw more of that when I was in a suburban school and I was a black principal leading white teachers. In this school I will have a good mix of black, white, Latino, Asian teachers. But I would take a very firm stand about it. It's just not acceptable. I don't think anybody should be judged negatively because of their race. I guess I do things to celebrate it. I think there are things that you'll see in the school, a selection of quotes, just any number of ways that we communicate, in the school, what's important. I would expect teachers to have stimuli in their classroom that's diverse. Those are the kinds of things that we're doing in the school. If I saw some practices where certain kids were being called on and others weren't. Or we have an advanced work program that used to be more traditionally white. I would want to get more kids of color into that program, to find ways in which we can encourage them to take those kinds of courses. So I would just do whatever I needed to do to address it by having a conversation and trying to get people to understand that that's not in our best interest as a school, as a country, to be biased and to hold people back because of their race. That's just unacceptable.

Charles Gibson described the power of relating one's experience as a minority in order to help others reflect on their own racial conceptions:

You just have to call things out as they come up. We've had difficult conversations. We have had assigned meetings that deal with issues on race and gender and class issues. I have personally given my story, the person that I am now and where I came from. Personalizing that kind of breaks down some of those barriers, where it allows others to also deal with that.

Participants talked about being advocates for minority students and families. Allen Perkins described his role as advocate for black students and his ability, as a black principal, to change people's racial preconceptions:

Well, it has made a big difference with parents of minority students in terms of being a role model and in terms of giving a hard message. White folks have been saying for years but I didn't quite get that there is a sense that folks don't want to embarrass me. There's certain things. When I walk into a

meeting and there's a black student there who's struggling in some way or who needs an advocate, I walk into the room wearing the mantle of principal and that seems to get people's attention and things seem to happen more quickly. For white students it has opened their eyes and for the community. It has demystified us. We are intelligent. We do have a vision. We can take the school and the community in a different direction, a steady and good direction. That's hard to quantify. I'm trying to think of other instances where my race has made a difference. But when I talk about equity, when I do the school committee and the school improvement plan. People can't dismiss me and say "Well it's just wishful thinking, crazy liberal." I am living proof of what I am talking about. So I think people are more circumspect in what they say and do. I do think I've changed attitudes and opinions. I can't specify how. Some things are intangible but you have feeling, you have a sense that people's thoughts are shifting. I think my talking about being from a different community has had an impact... At the end of the day I think it's important for people who live and work here to see people like me in this type of position. I do think it's important, otherwise they won't know. Not while they are kids. I can't speak to everybody's experience. I'm not saying that no one has ever seen an adult black male figure in a position of authority but I know there are those that are out there. I think it's important that they see us operating in this role, making decisions on curriculum, making decisions on professional development, making decisions on the outcome of a high-flying school. And that we can do it. I think that's important for people to see because I do think it destroys stereotypes. I do think it creates opportunities for people because people who hire, their thinking has changed. That's a long-term investment. I think it takes patience and it can be a frustrating process but no one said it would be easy, right?

Henry Vincent also talked about advocating for black students in the process of being classified for special education services, ensuring that their race is not the source of inequitable treatment for them:

Now one of the things that comes up because of our demographics...when a student comes up, particularly an African American student, is brought up for a recommendation for student services and in the process of the meeting, if I'm at the meeting, I will always ask "Does what's going on with this child have anything to do with race, because if it does then we need to examine that and if we feel that it doesn't then we don't need to be thinking about that?" Whether or not they say it, parents of color will always have that in the back of their mind. They may not want to admit it. I remember sitting across from principals as a parent and just listening to things that were being said and wondering "Does this have anything at all to do with race?" So I think it's always a good idea, in those situations, to put it out there.

Data also suggested that participants work to make sure they are not perceived as principals for only minority students. They reported that they wanted to promote equitable treatment for all students. When asked how his race affected his leadership, Allen Perkins reported:

So it affects everything that I do, my daily life, the small and little things. The decisions that I make to make sure that I am fair and equitable, ok, to make sure everybody knows that I'm principal of *all* students here, ok, that I don't favor one over the other. I try to be a role model and a sounding board for everyone. So I think it affects me in every way and I particularly think about how what I say or do impacts somebody else who looks like me male or female who will come after me. And that's the legacy. I think about that. So it affects everything that I do. Every day. Every day. In every way.

Perkins also included a specific plan for equity in his discussion about his vision for leadership. He discussed the power of recruiting a diverse staff that could speak to the experiences of his students:

For me what's emerging is having a vision for equity. Making sure that everybody has access to all that we have to offer. So that's the achievement gap and measures to deal with the achievement gap are ongoing. Mentoring the METCO students. Each department head took on an incoming ninth grader. We have the second year of a summer workshop with math, English, writing, and we're adding physics this year to get kids into ninth grade honors. So it's very successful and this year we're adding physics and we're adding more schools to make sure kids are ready to hit the ground running in a culture like this. We've had professionals, women and men from Wellesley and other colleges come in to speak to students about different facets of high school and college. Whites, blacks, and others who can speak to certain aspects of their lives... And so this year I have an opportunity to really hire some people to get more diversity. Not just in race and ethnicity which is harder than people realize to get people who look like you and me to come here and stay. So we have to look not only there but in experience and biography. Who can speak to segments of our population? And then creating the space so people can talk about these issues so people can buy in to the issues.

Henry Vincent also talked about the need to for the school community to reflect diversity. In the final focus group he maintained that equity should be explicitly taught in

schools through dialogue encouraging staff and students to examine how they “use mirrors to see themselves and use windows to see how others see the world” quoting work by Christine Sleeter. Also in the final focus group, Vincent discussed his plans to share research with his staff about the reasons why some kids do not achieve because of their race and/or ethnicity. He described his outside ventures in studying the achievement gap and his intention to share this information with staff:

I don't think that I've been as proactive as I want to be around sharing with my faculty about the work that I do outside of school which is around looking at race and laying that over the achievement gap and examining the reasons for the underachievement of different groups of folks whether they are white students or African American students or Asian students, Latino students, multiracial students. I've not been as proactive as I wanted to be...I started to become more proactive last year and I continued it just a bit this year.

Participants also took interest in the performance of minority subgroups in their schools. Pam Kenwood discussed a specific interest in the achievement of minority male students:

I do raise issues a lot about black males and Hispanic males. I check to see whether or not there is equal representations of males in the students who are doing well and equal representation of females in the students who are not doing well. I take a stance more around males of color that I do females of color. I do take stances about racism, but I think that it's much more harshly imposed in schools. I think schools are difficult places for males period and males of color especially. So I do take stances about that and I do question what people are doing. I question grading. Not significantly, but I do. And who's being nominated for scholarships and opportunities. It's gotten to a point where people realize that if males are not included in the mix, questions are going to be raised about that.

Catherine Shields also described a need to ensure that black boys excelled, as well as other students subgroups:

I have the difficult conversations with people about race. When I meet with my teachers and we look at the data for example “Hey, our black boys are sucking wind in reading. Why is it that this group is failing at this particular rate?” So you have to have that direct face-to-face with people. You know

“Black males are not doing well in school this year. We have to do something about it. We have to address it. So I do have those difficult conversations with people. People have become more used to it. So now they can look at the data, break it out and say “Oh yeah, the Hispanic girls. We need to take a look at them. What are we going to do differently for that group?”

Finding 3: Participants championed the cause of equitable treatment for all students in their schools; however, their race made them especially sensitive to the inequities experienced by the minority students and families in their schools. Participants felt the need to diversify their schools by hiring staff of color, presenting diverse images in classrooms, and incorporating multiple cultural viewpoints into the curriculum in their schools. Participants believed it was important to allow students to be represented in the things they saw and learned in school, and by the people who taught them. They believed that seeing blacks and minorities working as principals and educators and hearing the stories of people from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds helped to break down racial stereotypes held by their staff, students, and families.

Theme 4: The need to maintain standards of high expectations for all students regardless of the race of students or teachers.

Participants believed in high expectations for students. Several participants reported that they uphold standards of high expectations in their schools by spending time in classrooms as instructional leaders. Patty Kerrigan maintained that she observed teachers’ interactions with students, especially minority and special education students. She stated:

My vision would be that all children achieve here and I communicate it my going in daily seeing what people are doing and highlighting how they’re working with kids. How they’re having kids achieve. And I’m pretty clear that when I say everybody I really mean everybody...After being here for a while people are clear and I’ve went on the line about how we treat kids. And I got royally killed around it but I came back. Because it was all about how we treat our kids of color and how we treat special ed. kids. And people who are teachers and parents who felt that was not their priority really went at me for it but that’s what I really believe. What I have to look at is “Would I want my child to be in this classroom or my child to be subjected to this?” And that’s the underlying thing. If I don’t want it for my child then I don’t think it’s fair for any other kid.

Charles Gibson emphasized that his observations let him know how he could further

support teachers in their instruction. He reported:

I have evolved to the point where I try to focus more on educational leadership. The management happens but I don't spend most of my day dealing with discipline and worried about some things. I try to spend as much time in the classroom as possible, seeing what teachers are doing, trying to support them to improve, encourage those who are doing the right thing to become better on trying to get the type of resources that are necessary to be more effective so that my teachers get as much support as they can so that they will do a better job for our students.

Participants also used their observations to discuss the good teaching practices that they saw and to offer constructive feedback.

Henry Vincent stated:

I do supervision and evaluation. I do walk-throughs. Whenever I do walk-throughs I always try to come right back to my office and write down something I saw that I really liked, ask a question about something I saw, and ask them to make a comment offering a suggestion about something they could do, or offer them an idea about something they could do. I try to not be in my office a lot although there are times when I have to be in here. I don't like to be in here a whole lot. I try to communicate people, without being cliché, on a human level. When I can get up and walk and talk to somebody rather than sending an email. I would prefer to do it that way.

Richard Morrow reported:

I get into classrooms where I do observations and give quick feedback. Quick feedback is very good. It's not the kind where you're sitting down and taking a whole bunch of notes on the teacher's performance. It's just going in the room and seeing an opportunity to praise a teacher, giving them some constructive feedback that builds them up and doesn't debase them. Seeing an interaction between an adult and a child that's really positive and complementing them, or if you see one that's negative, helping them understand how to better communicate with the child.

Participants working in urban schools reported their belief that their students should be held to the same standards as other students. They felt that high expectations were especially important in their contexts.

Yohanna VandeCamp declared:

I feel that I have to, especially in my work with students, I always want to make sure that I'm helping people understand the importance of being culturally competent, the importance of not setting lower expectations for the students.

Jake Wallace remarked:

I just want everybody to have a chance to be whatever they can be. I want a kid in Irving Middle School to have the same opportunities as a kid from Wellesley Public Schools. I don't want anyone assuming that the kid from the Irving is not going to become governor of Massachusetts. That kid has to have that same opportunity. I went to a school in North Philadelphia and I got a chance to become principal. And I've been an Assistant Superintendent. And I could have gone to other positions, but I've chosen to...and I grew up dirt poor. I grew up with three pairs of pants that I had to be able to go to school everyday. Nothing like what my kids have today. Every kid should be able to reach their fullest potential. And my job is to try and bring in resources, put the best teachers in front of them, give them the best books, give them technology. All of those things that they need in order for kids to achieve. And that's what I think I'm trying to achieve as I do my job.

Irene Walsh compared the high standards she expects from teachers at her urban elementary school to those one would expect in suburban schools. She stated:

I really demand that every child is educated to the best of a person's ability and that what you would expect of your child in Milton or Westwood or whatever, you need to expect of the children in this building. Whatever you expect the teachers in those areas to do for your child, you must do for these children. So that's one way, I think. It's very direct in that there are no exceptions. We just don't tolerate exceptions.

In the final focus group, Patty Kerrigan discussed holding teachers and parents responsible for high expectations for minority students. She pushed teachers not to let minority students turn in poorer quality work because they either completed it on the bus or because they did not have as much home support. She also held minority parents responsible to show up in support of their children, stating that even if they lived further away, "last I checked there roads and buses...and you can walk...if you need to...all parents had to come in and they could make it in twice a year"

Instead of focusing on racism and inequality as a means to excuse poor performance for minority students, many principals like Richard Morrow talked about their belief in focusing on education and high expectations to combat the inequities that students may have experience based on their race, culture, or ethnicity. Morrow remarked:

The issue that we have is not racism but the lack of achievement of our students who have been systematically denied excellent resources in education because of a racist construct in society. So our job is not to focus on that but to focus on their achievement. Focus on how we can take them to the next level. Focus on high quality instruction. Focus on motivating, challenging, and inspiring every child that walks in this building so that when they wake up in the morning the first thing they do is think about getting to school because they're so excited. That's the job of everyone who works in this building. And it's not just an adult responsibility. We have student leadership also that contributes and participates to that end.

Pam Kenwood also discussed the urgency of focusing on achievement and not letting staff or students use race as a crutch. She stated:

The focus has to be on excellence in education. It's never settling for second best. The advice I'd give other black principals who are working in schools with predominately students of color is to never settle for second best. Go into it realizing that there are going to be challenges and it's up to them to believe that all things are possible. Be very clear about academic expectations and to never allow students or faculty to use race as an excuse. In terms of our students, when talking to them, it's really not about race. It's about achievement. It's about excellence. It's about your future and looking forward and being prepared.

Kenwood further described her personal journey to challenge her staff's low expectations for minority students caused by their assumptions about minority achievement on standardized tests. She stated:

I take issue with teachers and other educators who say that SATs are culturally biased and black students and Hispanic students simply can't do well on them. I don't believe that. I think that if students have a strong foundation in reading and thinking and reasoning and math that they can do well enough to get into competitive colleges. It causes me to have tension with my faculty, both black and white, around that. I simply refuse to believe it based on my own experience as an African American and my own

experience as the mother of three African American males. I think that some of the stereotypes that are held about black students and their performance are just stereotypes and that people accept those and are not willing to problem-solve and get beyond them. I think it holds our students back. It's a challenge for me. It's one that I'm constantly trying to convince people to move beyond.

Participants also reported having to change existing school cultures into cultures that promoted high standards for students. Catherine Shields described her experience of shifting her school's culture. She stated:

The school has turned around. The culture has shifted, the school has turned around. I'd like to say that that has a lot to do with my leadership. Not pat myself on the back but that's how it happens. When I first came here the school was not a productive school. It was not a high performing school. The teachers that were here had a culture that dealt with "Oh, it's all about me." I'll never forget my first meeting with them. You know you ask the question "Well, what's good about this school?" They were they only good things. The children just didn't figure into the picture. That was crazy thinking for me because I come from a long line of educators. We just think that our children are beautiful, adorable, and just absolutely stunning and intelligent. That's the kind of thinking that I come from. That was not necessarily the thinking that I walked into. There needed to have been a shift. It took me ten years to shift from that kind of thinking...I came to this building and there was no leadership that had been provided. Everybody did their own thing. Teachers made the schedules. They ate with their friends. It was kind of like "Ok, this is just a nice little place in Southie where we can just hang out for the day." That had to shift. Needless to say, over the years there've been many confrontations. I'm a pretty confrontational person. That comes from blackness. (laughs, gestures) "What are you talking about?" Then I began to discover that a part of the problem here was because of the lack of skills. I began to use the work, use the curriculum. You know, it's like "This is not how it's supposed to be implemented." So I would go into classrooms and see what was going on. Children were really not learning. People were doing the act but they really weren't learning and I think it was because of the lack of skills. So the lack of skills as teachers tend to, you know, they'll cover it over with other things. So I began to see through that and I began to use the work. Sometimes I have a sign on my door that, you know, when people want to come and talk to me about nonsense, the sign says "Is it about the work?" And then they know it better be about the work and not bitching and whining about the children, their parents, someone.

Shields also talked about her belief that teachers had to genuinely care about students to be able to teach them and hold them to high standards. She stated:

As long as they love my kids we're good to go. We can work on some of those other things, but you have to have your high expectations and you have to be able to teach them. Love my kids, that's number one. When I sit in interviews with people, teachers, and I don't hear that they love my kids, I don't care what your resume says or what Harvard you graduated from,

you can't be here. Because if you have that love and affinity for them and you know you're going to be able to teach them and the kids are going to go home just brimming about school. You know, what they've done, how they've moved up the ladder to say "Look, I can read this book now. I can do my multiplication." I love that. And I have that conversation with children.

Jake Wallace, an urban principal known for implementing cultures of high standards in schools, also concurred that observing teachers working with students and showing students that you care for them is paramount. He reported:

I have a reputation for being a turn-around artist. The superintendents always send me to the most difficult schools...schools that are on the decline. And they want me to build them back up and bring some order and discipline. So I'm pretty hard-nosed, I'm pretty aggressive...And sometimes teachers will marvel and say "How did you get him to sit down?" And I say "I think it was just the tone of voice. It was the eye contact." And they'll say "But you didn't yell or anything." And I'll say "I don't need to yell. He understood what I was saying to him. He knows I care. And he knows that's something that he needs to do. It's probably my eye contact or something that he connected with that made him decide that I probably should comply with what he's asking me to do." Kids like me a lot. I'm sort of like the dad, or whatever it is. But they come to me with all kinds of problems. They like that fact that my door is always open and I'm in classrooms. That's what took me a few minutes to come down and see you. I was watching 7th graders learn English. So I spend most of my time in the classroom observing teaching and learning, seeing what the kids are learning, and giving teachers feedback about what they need to do to be even more effective with our kids. That's what the superintendent expects, and that's pretty much what I do.

Participants clarified that their wishes for all students, especially minority children, to achieve highly did not lead to the expectation that minority teachers were the best teachers for minority students. They cautioned that teachers of color do not always have the best interest of minority children.

Richard Morrow remarked:

As a black leader, don't you dare think that there are not white people or other kinds of people that can teach your kids either more effectively or as effectively as black folks can. It is a grave error. And I may have thought it once upon a time, that the kids need black male teachers, you know, we need black female teaches in order to move these kids through the curriculum and to get them into a higher place. That's a very bad mistake. I have learned and seen some powerful white brothers and sisters, and I say brothers and sisters because in the spiritual essence they are. They believe in these young children's success and they will

go to the end of the earth to make sure they get what they need and they are not trying to change their identity. They're not trying to be black. They're not trying to be cool with the kids. They're just trying to inspire the kids, let them know that there's an opportunity out there for them. I think it's a mistake when we try to load the staff or load a school with images that are too narrow. Kids need, these days especially, a world view and need people giving them information and they need to draw from that information that is from all aspects of race, culture, and society.

Charles Gibson commented:

BC can give you a good foundation but it's nothing compared to the reality of doing this. It's nothing compared to naively thinking that because somebody is black that they have the best interest of black kids. And I've had that naiveté. There was once upon a time when ninety-five percent of my staff was black. I wouldn't hire anybody white. "Those white folks, they ain't here for us." I've learned there are some very competent, caring white folks. There's some that ain't...If you're black and you're doing the wrong thing then it's my responsibility to correct you. If you're white, it doesn't matter. As much as there are folks who want to pull you into that, I realize that I can't escape it, but I don't have to buy into their game. I just do what I have to do. This is my twentieth year here and it's interesting that in none of those instances any of those allegations have been substantiated. Some don't bother me. There are a few that may have. I have been doing this for long enough that I have brought in some black educators, even folks that did not have all their stuff together and I have developed them, reached them to a point, and then seen that the way they operated was inconsistent with what I thought should have been in terms of the way they dealt with things. And when I see people of color looking at children of color in a derogatory manner similar to how other people, non people of color, at times, at our kids, that is very demoralizing. That is, to me, personally hurtful.

Regardless of race, participants were clear that all teachers must be working towards achieving high standards of success for students. Gibson described the need to weed out teachers who were damaging students by not providing them the tools to achieve highly. He stated that:

Some staff members you have to be directive toward and you have to be documenting certain things to make sure that they're centered on teaching and learning. I would be very dishonest if I told you that everybody who is in this business is in this business because of children. There are some folks who are here because they have no other option or who are here because it pays whatever it pays and they're not that concerned about our young people. So part of my responsibility is to help those people improve or to help those people find a career that is more fitting to their needs as opposed to damaging kids. And when you start dealing with people on that level then you also understand, especially if they've been doing this for a while, that they fight back in all the various ways that they fight back. So folks like that...my approach with them is much different than a teacher who I am more collegial with, with folks who know what to do and with a little coaching will go a couple miles as opposed to a person that unless you direct them, they're going to do the minimum that is contracted to

them and if they can get away with less they will. When you deal with people like that, that's not a very pleasant situation for anybody and you've just got to do what has to be done.

Jake Wallace gave vivid descriptions of issues he has experienced with teachers he observed not teaching students proficiently. He reported:

I did a lot of work around supervision and evaluation and setting standards and expecting teachers to teach well. And teachers who didn't always teach well, I gave them critical feedback, which is the most difficult part of this job. The minute you have to tell someone bad news it becomes difficult. They can sometimes engage in character assassination and say all kinds of awful things about you. And when he was interviewing with me he, you know, smacked me three times and said "How could you ever say that?" Then I could look you in the eye and said "No, I didn't do it." But you would say that because you were getting a bad evaluation. You would write letters to the superintendent. You would write letters to the mayor. You would do all of these things which people did as recently as last year. There's a colleague of mine who told me somebody spray-painted his car the other day. This work is not always easy. You've got to teach a principal that people do things like that because he's trying to give teachers who are not doing their job messages about what they need to do to improve it. And whether they just accept that or they behave in that fashion.

Finding #4: Participants believed in high standards for the achievement of all students. They challenged notions that any subset of students, especially minority students, could not achieve as highly as any other students. Participants focused on the academic achievement of their minority students instead of racial inequities in their educations. To ensure a culture of high standards in their schools, participants spent time in classrooms supervising and evaluating teachers. Participants did not believe that minority teachers were best for minority students. Participants did require that teachers be skilled at instruction and that teachers genuinely cared for students.

Theme 5: The importance of networking, mentoring, and role modeling in order to give and receive support from other minority educators.

Isolation

Participants reported a sense of loneliness attached to the Principalship. They reported many reasons for this loneliness ranging from being the only black principals in their areas to being the only leader in their school buildings.

Ashley Gardner described a unique circumstance in which she was the only black principal in her chosen venue of education, the progressive education movement. She stated:

One really big thing is that it's hard to find other black leaders who are in the progressive education movement. There is an organization that we're a part of: The New England Consortium of Progressive Educators. I'm the only black principal in that group. And it happens often. When I go to Boston Public School events or I go to events where there's a venue full of traditional schools, more than half will be black and there's this historically black alignment with Freedom Schools and that children must sit, children must have this level of discipline, children must...you know, I get that, but there's other school of thought that is also rooted to black history that's about learning through experience. It's about "If you want to learn how to fish go fish, don't sit and read about it in a book. If you want to learn how to live off your land than live off your land." So there's that whole piece and that's where we are aligned. There's ongoing debate among black educators around progressive education and how it is a white liberal thing. I challenge that. And it's really hard for me to find colleagues as a black leader in this kind of school. So I would say when I think about my race and my leadership one of the biggest challenges is finding allies of color. It's just a little lonely.

As a suburban high school Principal, Allen Perkins explained the isolation of being a minority leader in a non-diverse school system. He reported:

My number one challenge here is that sometimes it feels lonely. You feel like your carrying the weight of the race on your shoulders. Sometimes I miss the diversity of a [school previously worked at] whether it's race or ethnic or class, I do miss that. And I think about it. I think "Do I want to stay here?" I like it here. People commit to me here. And there's work that I could do here.

Charles Gibson talked about the alienation he felt because of his rare status as a black, male, elementary school principal. He commented:

For the last eight or so years I've been the only black male in my group of principals. So from that perspective it can be a little bit lonely, even today, because in as much as you collaborate with your sisters, there are some things that they don't get that a brother, you just say "Bro..." and you touch bases, you don't even have to go through the full story. So from that perspective I think it's a little lonely. As I look around are there more black men coming into it? Not necessarily at this level. In middle school and high school you have the most.

Networking

Participants maintained that it is imperative for black principals to get a network of supportive people to talk to about the job. Some advocated gathering a group of educators of color. Pam Kenwood stated:

But in terms of dealing with your colleagues, you always have to have a network of support of colleagues of color, some who have been there before you and some who are just beginning so you can encourage them and share what you know with them.

Patty Kerrigan declared:

Get some friends. Get other people around them not necessarily at their school. Have somebody outside that they can talk with. I think that's really important because... first of all you're going to be alone no matter what because you're the only principal there. You supervise everybody so even if you have an assistant principal they're still not your buddy, you still have to supervise them. It's only you. And even if you're in a school with other black teachers you're still alone because you might see some things that you don't like that they're doing too that you find racist or not good for kids. So I would say get yourself a posse outside of the school that you can call up and say "Look, I'm getting ready to explode" or "Help me with this" or you can run something by them. Or even that you can just go and cry to. My first year as principal I remember just feeling like oh my goodness and I called another principal and I said, I picked up the phone and I said "Oh Edna" and she said "Hang in there girl." We never talked about the issue. That was the entire conversation. And I just felt "Okay, I'm going to go back out there again and do it."

Irene Walsh suggested that not having a supportive group of people to talk with can be detrimental to the health of black principals. She responded:

Also, and I always say this, have a support system outside of the place you work, a place where you can go and vent and feel safe venting. One principal just said to me the other day that she's working so many hours that her husband is getting very upset. But she can not not work those hours. So we are helping her figure out how she can cut back on her hours and still get the work done. But one of the things I will always say to African American principals is, always have a support system, because it will start impacting your health if you don't. You need a place where you can dump all of this stuff. And that includes the stuff that comes down that is racist. The stuff that's based on the premise that you do not know what you're doing and I must tell you what you're doing. So that exists, especially in this system. I don't know about other systems. But I know that it exists here. And I think

that black principals feel that they can't say anything about it or do anything about it because there isn't a sense of "Let's get together and form a team." Everyone just exists in different places.

Yohanna VandeCamp implied that having a black support network allowed black principals to check their beliefs about possible racism with others. She reported:

Number one, it's important to have a network, have support. I think that's very key because let's face it, racism is all around. It's important to have someone to kind of say "Is this real?" or "What does this look like to you?" And I think if you have people that you can talk to to help you through the tough times, especially with like an African American support. Because you're going to have colleagues, but I think it's important to get with some African American colleagues because then you can have some reality checks or just some advice. Maybe have a diverse group in terms of age and experience. Get to know the landscape. Find a group and get to know the history in terms of racism, in terms of equity and those kinds of issues, because it's important to know that. So that's what I would say.

Other participants did not specify the need for a black support group, but did say that having a network was vital to the Principalship. Harry Vincent stated:

I would say be sure to have a network. Have somebody you can go to, whether that's a black person or a white person or an Asian person or a Latino person, be sure to have somebody else that you have as a mentor...And actually the principals' group that I'm in now is...handling difficult decisions not only with teachers but also with parents and being able to organize one's thoughts in recognizing the type of person one is talking to and being able to structure things in a way that you become reflective in your response instead of reflexive in your response and try to figure out what's right or wrong with something. You try to look at it from a different angle and say "Why is this person feeling the way that they are?" "What's really wrong here?" "What is it that's going to get them unstuck from where they are?" and "How can I go about helping them to do that?"

Melvin Waters recounted a story illustrative of the power of a professional network to help principals to reflect deeply on their beliefs and actions. He maintained:

The people I've found to be most sensitive about the position I'm in are my colleagues, other principals who will say "OK, I understand, I've been there." I have one cat who walked with me around the school and we came back to the office and he looked at me and he said "You have low expectations for

your students. I was shocked because, you know, I'm like "What are you talking about?" And he talked about my expectations for students. He said I put a lot of emphasis on building positive relationships but I very seldom really connected the expectation about getting to the classroom, getting the learning done, getting the homework done. And I didn't notice that at the time. What was front and center for me was that "You came to school. You're safe. I'm glad you're here." You know, you could come here at eight thirty (laughs) and you're late and I'm still like "Let's get you to class." But when he said that he said "Don't worry about it, I've been there myself too. I'm telling you this now because this is what you need to focus on." And it was immediate. As soon as I walked out, the next student I saw I was like "You just got in the school. Where have you been all morning?" And they were shocked like "Oh, I woke up late." "Well, if you woke up late you missed half your first period class." It was a different lens and I just didn't know...I knew it was important to me but I just, you know...So one thing would be the mentor. You've got to get someone that you can talk to. Someone that you're willing to be open to.

The need for a network for black principals was noted but was also missed by participants. In the final focus group Irene Walsh stated that she did not "see networking as a thing that people of color in education in Boston do" though she did "see the need for it" because "networking is really important when it comes to surviving in this business." She added that "white principals do it...they have like scheduled times when they actually get together" but she maintained that there was not currently enough networking support for black principals. In the final focus group, Patty Kerrigan related a story of how important networking is to the survival of black principals. She stated:

I watched one of our colleagues go down because at that point nobody was helping her go through the minefield...she was under attack and I couldn't help her because I was severely under attack and I think that how I survived is because of the support I got from my colleagues, not necessarily in the system

Kerrigan added that black principals in her school system were all "ht in similar ways to different degrees and at different times" and thus they truly needed one another as well as outside help to survive.

Mentoring

In addition to having a professional network, participants believed that it's important for black principals to have mentors and to mentor others to prepare them for leadership. This may be because participants enjoyed the benefits of mentors themselves and spoke highly of the people they recalled as being instrumental to developing their personal and professional identities. Participants drew strength and inspiration from various people in their lives that served as mentors or role models. Often, gender made a difference in the people that participants remembered as being influential in their lives. When asked who made her successful, Ashley Gardner stated:

My mother. The woman who founded this school, her name is Debbie Major. She has been a mentor, still is a mentor to me. Dana Lawrence is a black woman who started another school, the Young Academics School. She was a coach here and she actually ran the interview process when I was applying for this job but I didn't know that until it was all over. She was able to keep things very separate. Also, I was an administrator at a very, very difficult school that required me to meditate every morning before I went in and she stood by me that whole time while I was there and just helped me sort of keep sane.

Helen Dawson also spoke of her mother's influence:

Another person is my mother, just by virtue of the fact that she was an African American woman of color who exposed my brother and I to a lot of different things and as a result helped shape me to be who I am today. I lost her at a very young age so becoming responsible and independent and seeing a woman of color be successful and get her undergrad degree from Harvard at the age of fifty allowed me to know that that's something that I could do. Her modeling of that allowed me to know what I was capable of. Unlike some parents who will talk a lot of the talk, she didn't talk the talk she just walked the walk and that was much larger than people speaking it. And she was capable enough to be a single parent, to care for two children, go on to grad school, ensure we were fed and clothed and taken care of spoke volumes for what anyone can do in life as long as you put your mind to it. So she was clearly influential in helping me to become who I am today.

Catherine Shields stated that her culture included motivational black women:

Being a black person coming from that culture where survival is critical. Growing up in Brooklyn as I did, having those strong survival skills, having

that deep instilled culture in me that “You can do anything.” I’m a Jamaican by birth so I come from a long line of very strong, dynamic, black women. We have strong, dynamic, black males, but the women in my family are just incredibly outrageous. I grew up in this country and you learn how to survive.

Patty Kerrigan discussed black women who currently inspire her leadership:

I’m in a book club with all black women and they’re a phenomenal group. Meeting with them, even if you haven’t read the book, just fills me up. All powerful in their own right, movers, shakers, people who’ve done things, not just talked. Started schools, been a part of the civil rights movement, people who know the greatness of being black and being alive and doing and want to keep doing.

Male role models were important to some male participants. Anthony Higgins described several black male influences who were formative in his development:

I’ve been really blessed. I’ve had several mentors. One was a teacher, my first male teacher who, black male teacher, that impressed me in terms of how he carried himself and what he stood for. He also prepared me for some of the encounters I would face growing up. Also I had two outside mentors, one a social worker and the other person was a social worker at a youth agency. So I have been fortunate to have three strong black male influences around me as well as having a father that played a role in my development.

Charles Gibson also mentioned several male educators who shaped his leadership:

I don’t know if I can attribute that to anyone in particular. I can say that there have been people that have influenced me, and so I can speak on that. I recall my first year as a teacher in Boston Public Schools back in 1973. At that time I actually worked just about three-fourths of the school year as a substitute. The particular school that I was subbing in was right here in Roxbury. There were a number of black males in that building including the principal. One in particular, Curtis Wells, he was a very heavy-set gentleman and he taught sixth grade English, and I used to admire the way he went about his work. I remember often in my unassigned times I would go in and observe him teaching. There’s another African American male that was close by who also had an impact on my development, Gus Pangen. Interesting enough, years later, Curtis became the assistant principal and eventually principal of the Timothy School where I worked. Both as a teacher and an administrator he served as a mentor to me. So was Gus who, actually he retired, who was the headmaster of the O’Bryant School. Aside from those two gentlemen, there was another older gentleman by the name of Jerry Field who was a long time principal and before that was a high school coach. As a matter of fact, when I was in high school I used to play against the team that he coached. He was a

down-to-earth person and used to mentor young black men. He was a Q, and it was very important to him to pass on a certain legacy to young black men in particular, especially going into education. He used to try to help steer them toward positions of leadership. So in that regard those people played a significant role in my life. My wife has also been significant, but not to the extent that these people have.

Richard Morrow discussed the importance of male mentorship and the need for it to continue into adulthood:

Mentors in my family, uncles, my father. I did have strong mentors in my family. Mentors in my youth, I was actually someone who went out to Framingham Public Schools for the METCO program and one of my METCO counselors was a mentor of mine. Actually, the Vice-Principal of my high school was a mentor of mine. So mentorship has been heavy in my life. I think it is for many successful black men because your not socialized to think you can be successful, at least that was not the case pre Barak Obama. And in many cases just the general make-up of messages that are coming through the airwaves, it's not a programming of success it's a programming of fashion, of music, of misogyny, of incarceration. It's not a programming of education or of leadership or of success. So mentorship has to play more of a role not just in the lives of the youth right now, because there are many men such as myself who continue to value and need mentorship. It's an ongoing, lifelong process.

Participants also identified the importance of their families in shaping their work ethics and their leadership styles. Family gave them the motivation to succeed at high levels in their educations and their careers.

Allen Perkins identified his mother as his consistent mentor in life:

I don't know if I've ever had a constant lifelong mentor. So I sort of patched it together, observed, listened and I'd like to think I took good advice. But there hasn't been a constant figure I look to and say, other than my mother, you know without them, him or her... My mother would have to be that person.

Irene Walsh described the motivation her family provided:

I think my family. I and I think the reason that has happened is because my family has always been motivators. Your better becomes best and your best becomes better. So it's how we actually were raised. It's this whole thing, is your good better and does your better become the best?

Catherine Shields discussed her families focus on success:

We've got to go back to my family. I have the world's greatest family. I come from great, great people. And it's always all about education. It's always all about the next level. It's like "Oh, what are you working on? What are you doing?" It's not always a conversation about "How much money do you have?" or "What car do you drive?" But it's about success in your field. And you better be able to ante up to the table with some good stuff. So my family without a doubt. That rich Caribbean heritage that I come from. And they would kick your butt if you weren't doing the right thing. Our culture is very strong in making sure that their children are successful.

Yohanna VandeCamp mentioned the caring attitude she adopted from her parents:

I would say my parents have always embraced people in terms of "It's always good to help people out. Bring people in." and that kind of attitude. So I think in terms of being in a helping profession that has influenced me.

Melvin Waters credited his parents with expanding his horizons:

My parents first and foremost. Like I said both my parents are educators, but just being parents and exposing me to a wide variety of experiences growing up.

Due to their positive experiences with mentoring and role modeling, participants felt it was necessary to give back to other minority educators as well as the students and families in their schools. Melvin Waters described experiences with other black male educators who may need mentoring and development from established principals like himself. He reported:

I think I've met several peers, black men especially, who I think would make wonderful leaders. And I think there is a resistance to take the reins. They'll support me. But with a couple of people it's like "Well I don't know if I can do it." And I'm thinking to myself "You can tell me what to do all day but you can't step into the shoes and do it yourself."

Anthony Higgins also noted the importance of mentoring black colleagues. He remarked:

I consider myself to be a mentor. I mentor younger black males who are in education. I try to continue the process of reaching back and telling my kids and my staff that reaching back is important. I think that mentoring is natural

because I was mentored. I had people looking out for me and we would never get anywhere without somebody helping us. I didn't get this job because I'm a black male, well educated, I got this job because others paid the price to open up doors and opportunities. I'd like to continue to realize that doors and opportunities still need to be opened.

For some participants, part of mentoring included their need to be a role model for students. Higgins responded:

I think race affects me in terms of how I have to carry myself after understanding, as an educator, I'm also a role model, a role model for the youngsters that look like me and the ones that don't look like me. In terms of how I carry myself, in terms of what I stand for. In my daily routine I think I have to always guard myself and make sure I'm doing what's correct and I also have to be an advocate. Advocate for the youngsters that may not speak out or those youngsters in situations where we view them differently and in fact they're not; they're just youngsters that need to be exposed and have opportunities. Just like us adults, we need the same exposures and opportunities.

Melvin Waters stated:

I think another big challenge has been trying to make sure that I, being one of the few black men in this particular role, am making sure that I'm doing my best to set an honest example. It may not be the best, but as much as possible an honest example of what it means to be a learner, a leader, what it means to support. If I say this, do I mean it and how are my actions demonstrating it? And feeling like people are paying attention to that. Not just people who want to see me do well or people who may question whether I should have the job or not, but most importantly the students that I'm working with. They want to have confidence that "Okay, you're the man in the building. You got me."

Yohanna VandeCamp connected her need to be mentored with her mission to be a positive role model for students. She commented:

Part of the reason I came to Boston Public Schools is because I wanted to be exposed to more African Americans in leadership positions. I was at a small school in which I was the only African American in a leadership position and I felt I really wanted to expose myself. I wanted to not be limited and just know that there were more people out there. I feel that I have to, especially in my work with students, I always want to make sure that I'm helping people understand the importance of being culturally competent, the importance of not setting lower expectations for the students. So I think it influences me in

my work because with students who are in front of me every day who look like me, I have to be a role model. I have to let them know that they should be proud to be African American. So I think it's definitely something that I think about a lot, especially with the students I work with, in an alternative school, who often feel that they are put down in their economic status and all those things. They definitely feel like "What can we be?" So in terms of how I hire and who I try to hire, it influences a lot of what I do.

Participants also discussed their positions as role models in terms of how they touched the lives of future leaders. Helen Dawson stated:

I want my legacy to say I made a difference, a bunch of differences in the lives of folks who are really important and probably some of the most dynamic and dynamite individuals anyone can ever experience. I want my legacy to say that I was rich because I've known them and influenced them in ways that they become great leaders in our country, personally and professionally. My children and these children, I call them all my children, but my birth children and my other children. And for the family's to say that that's what I was about.

Anthony Higgins stated:

People look at what you stand for. People hear what you say about your school, about education. Whether or not you are serious about your profession. I think in education it's so critical because you never know when you're going to touch the life of a youngster. It's the only profession that you really can influence leaders. Any great leader, there was a great teacher. I think it's a profession that often...people don't realize how important being a teacher is. As an administrator it's important for me to identify the correct people to be in those classrooms because it is in the classrooms where education takes place.

Finding # 5: Participants reported a sense of loneliness and isolation associated with their jobs. They suggested that black principals get professional networks to discuss the pressures and stresses of the Principalship with. A major finding is that black principals need to get a supportive group of colleagues to talk, share ideas, and get much needed support. Participants discussed the supportive mentoring they received from other black educators as well as family members that formed their leadership identities. They advocated mentoring and being mentored by other colleagues as a way of extending their professional networks. Participants believed that role modeling appropriate behaviors for the young people who will be future leaders was a final extension of their professional networks.

Theme 6: Uncertainty about whether race is an issue in leadership.

Participants reported dealing with myriad stresses associated with their work. They often acknowledged sometimes feeling that their race was influencing how people were dealing with them and their decisions. However, participants acknowledged that they could not always be sure whether race was a factor.

Patty Kerrigan described the ways she believed people have masked their feelings about her race:

Many of the challenges are just of being a principal. But as a black principal I think the times I've been confronted there's been an underlying piece of race in there. And it's been convenient and it's like "Oh let's talk about this because we're really not talking about this. We're really not talking about the race part. Let's latch on to this mistake she made."

Harry Howard, a black headmaster in private education, talked about how one can never know if race is a factor. When asked about how his race affected his leadership, he stated:

Not very much that I allow it to. It probably does more than I realize as far as how other people see me. But I also have, I don't know if it's the advantage or disadvantage, of being very tall. I'm 6'8 and 270 lbs. so I'm also a big man. So being a big man as well as an African American man you're not always aware of whether people are responding to your size, your race, your voice, whichever...I can't speak for other people. Again as I said earlier is it because I'm a tall man? Is it because I'm a big man? Is it because my voice is booming? Is it because I'm really not doing a good job leading? Is it because, because, I mean there are always ways that people can deflect that off. So you can assume all kinds of things. So you're always left to wonder. So you have your beliefs but then very seldom if ever will you be able to come back and say that this is what it is. It's just not that type of process.

Yohanna VandeCamp discussed the difficulty with specifying whether race was affected her interactions with others. She reported:

Well I think, specifically, I don't think it's very specific, but there are times when you wonder if somebody...sometimes you feel like these things are happening, okay, like "Is this because they think that I don't know? Would they be doing this to someone else?" If it's someone who's a white staff person, if I'm confronting them, for example, on something, would their response be different. Would they even try that? Would they...but is it exactly because of my race? Am I really sure about that? I don't know, so that's why that can't be specific. But there are often times when that happens, I guess, as a leader. I can't think of a real specific instance that may not be based on assumption. But sometimes when you might be a little paranoid about something, you should be a little paranoid. It's a reality, not just an imagined kind of fear. So I don't know if I can say specifically. I'm trying to think more about what someone might have said or done. I've had teachers...but see it wasn't necessarily about my race but about the race of the students, you know, the African American students and why they were treating students a certain way. But me specifically, I don't know if I have a specific example of that.

Irene Walsh also commented on her thoughts about whether people would react to her in certain ways if she wasn't black. When asked about how her race affected her daily life, she stated:

It forms the lens sometimes through which I see actions by others that are in positions to impact us. Not to the extent that it allows me to judge their motives, just their actions. I never question someone's motives for doing something. But I sometimes question their action. The question I tend to always ask, depending on the situation, is "If that was a different situation then would the action be different?"

Relatively new principals admitted to not being able to distinguish issues that might be motivated by race. Helen Dawson cited her short-term experience as a principal as a reason she could not pinpoint issues in her leadership that were based on race. When questioned about specific examples of when her race affected her leadership, she stated:

I've only been a black principal for three years and I'm so isolated here that it's really hard for me to measure against other people. So that's a question that to be honest with you I can't answer. I think that other principals who have been in the system longer and who have observed different things may be able to answer it but I can't really speak to it. I can speak of challenges

that I've had but I can't say that it's because I'm a black principal that those challenges exist.

Melvin Waters, an urban principal in his third year, reported difficulty in knowing if race lay underneath certain issues because of a lack of information.

I just don't know enough data even to know of issues grounded in race. But I think one way is that I would probably handle it like I handle most cases and try to find out what's underneath the issue. When many things come up there's the issue and how it's handled, so it's all the way up here (gesture) and you have to find out "OK, what's underneath all of this stuff?"

Some veteran principals regarded age and experience as principals as reasons for race not being as prevalent in their leadership as it once was. Jake Wallace admitted that he was not always certain whether race was a factor in people's interactions with him, but he stated that race has become less of an issue because of his reputation and status. He commented:

I live in suburbia. I work in the urban area. But I don't know that I walk through the building every day ever thinking about being black although I'm well aware that I'm black. Maybe because I'm a thirty year experienced principal. People know who I am and I guess there's a certain respect that's given to the person who is in authority, who is principal. So I don't really have an interaction with that one way or another in terms of being drawn to that. Sometimes there may be a parent who will come in here and say something about the school being unsafe and I'll know a little bit about the parent and I'll sort of wonder if that parent is talking to me in a certain way because of my race or whether it's just genuine concern about her child going into an urban school. But I don't see that as much, it's not as pronounced. In other years when I was younger it would be obvious. I would go into an insurance place and I'd have on a baseball cap and I'd have my regular jeans on and people would respond to me differently than when I'm dressed the way I am now. There would just be a different approach. I don't know if I look more professional than if I had on a baseball cap and baggy pants, people might just wonder. But I don't see a lot of that day-to-day, not even with my teachers. But I've been around for a long time.

Some participants advocated moving away from race in terms of leadership. Instead they believed one should think of oneself as a good principal without including the racial

labels. When asked about advice he would give to other black principals, Charles Gibson stated:

I would urge you, if you can, to get to the point where, if it works for you, you can go beyond that ethnic identity in terms of administration.

Henry Vincent also discussed the value of thinking of oneself as an effective principal instead of a black principal. He remarked:

It's hard to determine. You never what to say, that such-and-such happened because you were black? You always have to wonder what if. Is this happening because I'm a black principal or does that not have anything at all to do with it? I'm probably very hard on myself, so I think a challenge is to continue to model for people what a black principal can do that really is no different than any other principal. I feel that kind of pressure with regard to the challenge. I think I've been, for the most part unless I'm completely misreading people, accepted not so much because I'm a black principal but because I am a good principal who happens to be black. I think that there are those who would rather not see me in this role. I think the biggest challenge is making sure, as a principal who happens to be black, that the achievement of all the students continues to move forward. Jeff Howard's expression about "Find out how good you could be" is what I tell the kids that their job is. I also tell them that it's my job as well. In so doing I have to be sure that each kid is challenged to their fullest. I also think that my responsibility as a school leader to make sure that all the teachers have what they need which makes my job a whole lot easier. I try to use the lens of "I'm a principal who happens to be black" rather than challenges of the black principal. I will say that whenever I go into meetings I notice who's there and how many faces of color I see and how many faces of color I don't see. I don't always see a lot of faces of color and one of the things that I've noticed over the past four or five years is a decrease of the number of African American males that I see in positions such as mine. It leads me back to thinking about that whole scenario about the lost generation of black men that they're just not here anymore. But it's more about being a principal who happens to be black because I would go off the deep end if I worried about being a black principal...I would also say to view oneself as a principal first as opposed to being a black principal, but know that there are going to be times where that's going to be an issue for folks. How are you going to handle those situations when they come up? Expect nothing but be ready for anything...As far as being a black principal I always, again, I would prefer people who are in my role, I would suggest you are a principal who happens to be black. There are some things that come along with that, but don't make it more that it needs to be at any time because it can take you out to lunch and then it's hard to get back.

In the final focus group, some participants showed surprise regarding this final finding. For example, Irene Walsh felt that most people of color would say that race was an issue and could not believe that people said they were uncertain about whether it was. However she did add that in her school district there was a fear “of actually talking and dealing with race...race does not get addressed on any level.” She maintained “that race does matter and race does exist, but...that it’s safe not to deal with it...there is still this fear that ‘If I deal with race it will affect my job.’” Likewise, Patty Kerrigan was “not uncertain about that” because she claimed that “race is an issue in leadership” and that “it is an issue every single day on every level.” Other participants who did not feel that race was as much of an issue, like Henry Vincent and Charles Gibson, also acknowledged the power that other people’s racial perceptions held over their careers in the final focus group. Vincent stated that one had to wonder “all the time” if race was affecting his leadership, and stated that the only time he did not wonder was when he knew for a fact that he was being interviewed for a position because he was black. Gibson maintained that at one point black principals “really had to fight tooth and nail for every single position that was out there” and added that he did not feel that black principals were “at that level anymore.” However he also talked about other black principals he knew “who were really given a hard time just because they were black” although that was not his personal experience. Thus all participants did acknowledge that people’s perceptions of their race affected them as leaders, even if they were uncertain about the extent of these effects on their actual leadership of schools.

Finding # 6: Participants reported being unsure about whether race was a factor in the ways people responded to them. Some thought that race was an underlying issue that motivated people to question aspects of their leadership. They believed that if they were white many of their decisions would go unchallenged. Participants questioned whether people would react to them in certain ways if they were not dealing with black principals, but they admitted that there was often no way to answer that question.

Some newer black principals acknowledge lack of knowledge and experience as reasons they could not pinpoint ways that race affected their leadership. Some veteran black principals correlated their experience to their belief that racial issues in their leadership are not as pronounced now as they used to be. Some participants advocated moving away from attaching racial identity, opting to describe themselves not as black principals, but as effective principals.

Summary of Findings

Interviews with participating black principals were transcribed by the researcher and coded according to patterns discovered and themes that emerged from the data. The data collected included individual participant interviews and the final focus group with some of the participants. From the data and the themes that emerged, the following six findings articulated what participants had to say about each of the themes.

Finding # 1: Participants believe that race affects every aspect of their identities. They recognize the pressure to prove themselves to their supervisors, staff, and parents of students, who may not accept them as knowledgeable leaders based on commonly accepted views held about members of their race. Participants acknowledge that faculty, parents, and students are surprised to find that they are leading schools and that these people doubt their abilities to do their jobs well. Participants respond differently to this pressure. Some participants feel the need to use their knowledge to inspire confidence in others and to show that they are in capable control. Others reject the notion that they need to always be in control and favor authentic leadership and vulnerability as methods to break down barriers. Some participants also feel that they do not have to constantly prove themselves because they have already done so earlier in their careers or because others have paved the way for them.

Finding # 2: Participant data suggests that black principals feel a sense of connection to minority communities. This connection is expressed in various ways. Participants report choosing to live in black communities to remain connected. They also discuss having high expectations for minority students and noticing that minority families have high expectations for them as leaders. Participants also note their sensitivity to educational inequities for minority students. They expect staff to commit to working with minority communities and to notice when staff is un-connected to students' cultures and perspectives. Participants connect their blackness with their ability to communicate with various types of people and to notice when white colleagues are not aware of how to communicate with other cultures in a culturally sensitive manner. Finally, participants believe that young minorities are over-represented in the criminal justice system because of their race. Participants seek to provide education as a means to subvert criminal activity and promote future success for students of color.

Finding 3: Participants championed the cause of equitable treatment for all students in their schools; however, their race made them especially sensitive to the inequities experienced by the minority students and families in their schools. Participants felt the need to diversify their schools by hiring staff of color, presenting diverse images in classrooms, and incorporating multiple cultural viewpoints into the curriculum in their schools. Participants believed it was important to allow students to be represented in the things they saw and learned in school, and by the people who taught them. They believed that seeing blacks and minorities working as principals and educators and hearing the stories of people

from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds helped to break down racial stereotypes held by their staff, students, and families.

Finding #4: Participants believed in high standards for the achievement of all students. They challenged notions that any subset of students, especially minority students, could not achieve as highly as any other students. Participants focused on the academic achievement of their minority students instead of racial inequities in their educations. To ensure a culture of high standards in their schools, participants spent time in classrooms supervising and evaluating teachers. Participants did not believe that minority teachers were best for minority students. Participants did require that teachers be skilled at instruction and that teachers genuinely cared for students.

Finding # 5: Participants reported a sense of loneliness and isolation associated with their jobs. They suggested that black principals get professional networks to discuss the pressures and stresses of the Principalship with. A major finding is that black principals need to get a supportive group of colleagues to talk, share ideas, and get much needed support. Participants discussed the supportive mentoring they received from other black educators as well as family members that formed their leadership identities. They advocated mentoring and being mentored by other colleagues as a way of extending their professional networks. Participants believed that role modeling appropriate behaviors for the young people who will be future leaders was a final extension of their professional networks.

Finding # 6: Participants reported being unsure about whether race was a factor in the ways people responded to them. Some thought that race was an underlying issue that motivated people to question aspects of their leadership. They believed that if they were white many of their decisions would go unchallenged. Participants questioned whether people would react to them in certain ways if they were not dealing with black principals, but they admitted that there was often no way to answer that question. Some newer black principals acknowledge lack of knowledge and experience as reasons they could not pinpoint ways that race affected their leadership. Some veteran black principals correlated their experience to their belief that racial issues in their leadership are not as pronounced now as they used to be. Some participants advocated moving away from attaching racial identity, opting to describe themselves not as black principals, but as effective principals.

Chapter 5

Chapter Five will begin with a summary of the findings from participant's answers to the above questions. Next, in a discussion of the findings, the researcher will connect the findings to what earlier research has noted and will identify substantiation or refutation of the research. A discussion of the limitations of the study will follow. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for practice, policy, and future research based upon the knowledge introduced in this research study.

Chapter 5 – Implications for Future Practice:

Introduction:

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify the ways in which black principals in the New England perceived their leadership to be affected by societal views of blackness in America, as well as their own personal, professional, and racial identities. The conceptual framework for this research is derived from the existing body of research literature about the interaction between the race and leadership of black principals as well as the relevant scholarship related to the study as reported in the literature review. The literature review examined three bodies of literature pertinent to the leadership identity development of American black principals. These literary strands were : (1) Critical Race Theory, (2) Black Identity, and (3) Educational Leadership.

Principals were asked to speak about the pressures they faced daily in their lives and in their work that they felt were related to their own conceptions of how race affected their leadership as well as their views about how others interpreted their leadership based on their race. The following research questions were used to guide the research:

- **How do black principals perceive their personal, professional, and racial identities to affect their leadership?**
- **What experiences have been salient in the formation of black principals' leadership identities?**

The above research questions, combined with the major areas of scholarship included in the literature yielded the following interview questions which were administered to participants in a semi-structured interview protocol:

- How do you identify yourself?
- How has your race influenced your identity?
- How does race affect your daily life?
- Who has made you successful in your career?
- Who have been your mentors?

- How does spirituality affect your leadership?
- How would you describe yourself as a leader?
- What is your leadership vision?
- How do you communicate your leadership vision?
- How do you communicate with your staff?
- How do you get people involved?
- What are your core values?
- What are some specific instances in which your race has affected your leadership?
- What are some challenges you have faced as a black principal?
- How do you deliberately take a stand against racism in your school?
- What advice would you give to other black principals?
- What have I left out that you think is important about how being black affects your leadership?

Chapter Five begins with a summary of the findings from participant's answers to the above questions. Next, in a discussion of the findings, the researcher will connect the findings to what earlier research has noted and will identify substantiation or refutation of the research. A discussion of the limitations of the study will follow. Finally, the researcher will make recommendations for practice, policy, and future research based upon the knowledge introduced in this research study.

Summary of the Findings

This section will include a summary the findings emerging from an analysis of the data as they related to the research utilized in the literature review. The section will move chronologically through each finding as presented in Chapter Four. The summary of the findings explored participants' responses from both the individual interviews and comments that were made during the final focus group.

Interviews with participating principals were transcribed by the researcher and coded according to patterns discovered and themes that emerged from the data. The data collected includes individual participant interviews, a final focus group including some of the participants, and the researcher's memos. Participants were shown findings from the

research in order for the data to be triangulated for accuracy. From the data and the themes that emerged, the following six themes articulated what participants had to say about each of the themes.

Finding # 1:

Participants believe that race affects every aspect of their identities. They recognize the pressure to prove themselves to their supervisors, staff, and parents of students, who may not accept them as knowledgeable leaders based on commonly accepted views held about members of their race. Participants acknowledge that faculty, parents, and students are surprised to find that they are leading schools and that these people doubt their abilities to do their jobs well. Participants respond differently to this pressure. Some participants feel the need to use their knowledge to inspire confidence in others and to show that they are in capable control. Others reject the notion that they need to always be in control and favor authentic leadership and vulnerability as methods to break down barriers. Some participants also feel that they do not have to constantly prove themselves because they have already done so earlier in their careers or because others have paved the way for them.

Finding #2:

Participant data suggests that black principals feel a sense of connection to minority communities. This connection is expressed in various ways. Participants report choosing to live in black communities to remain connected. They also discuss having high expectations for minority students and noticing that minority families have high expectations for them as leaders. Participants also note their sensitivity to educational inequities for minority students. They expect staff to commit to working with minority communities and to notice when staff is un-connected to students' cultures and perspectives. Participants connect their blackness

with their ability to communicate with various types of people and to notice when white colleagues are not aware of how to communicate with other cultures in a culturally sensitive manner. Finally, participants believe that young minorities are over-represented in the criminal justice system because of their race. Participants seek to provide education as a means to subvert criminal activity and promote future success for students of color.

Finding 3:

Participants championed the cause of equitable treatment for all students in their schools; however, their race made them especially sensitive to the inequities experienced by the minority students and families in their schools. Participants felt the need to diversify their schools by hiring staff of color, presenting diverse images in classrooms, and incorporating multiple cultural viewpoints into the curriculum in their schools. Participants believed it was important to allow students to be represented in the things they saw and learned in school, and by the people who taught them. They believed that seeing blacks and minorities working as principals and educators and hearing the stories of people from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds helped to break down racial stereotypes held by their staff, students, and families.

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Participants believed in high standards for the achievement of all students. They challenged notions that any subset of students, especially minority students, could not

achieve as highly as any other students. Participants focused on the academic achievement of their minority students instead of racial inequities in their educations. To ensure a culture of high standards in their schools, participants spent time in classrooms supervising and evaluating teachers. Participants did not believe that minority teachers were best for minority students. Participants did require that teachers be skilled at instruction and that teachers genuinely cared for students.

Finding # 5:

Participants reported a sense of loneliness and isolation associated with their jobs. They suggested that black principals get professional networks to discuss the pressures and stresses of the Principalship with. A major finding is that black principals need to get a supportive group of colleagues to talk, share ideas, and get much needed support. Participants discussed the supportive mentoring they received from other black educators as well as family members that formed their leadership identities. They advocated mentoring and being mentored by other colleagues as a way of extending their professional networks. Participants believed that role modeling appropriate behaviors for the young people who will be future leaders was a final extension of their professional networks.

Finding # 6:

Participants reported being unsure about whether race was a factor in the ways people responded to them. Some thought that race was an underlying issue that motivated people to question aspects of their leadership. They believed that if they were white many of their

decisions would go unchallenged. Participants questioned whether people would react to them in certain ways if they were not dealing with black principals, but they admitted that there was often no way to answer that question. Some newer black principals acknowledge lack of knowledge and experience as reasons they could not pinpoint ways that race affected their leadership. Some veteran black principals correlated their experience to their belief that racial issues in their leadership are not as pronounced now as they used to be. Some participants advocated moving away from attaching racial identity, opting to describe themselves not as black principals, but as effective principals.

Discussion of the Findings

Black Principals in this study experienced:

Theme 1: Increased race-based pressure to prove leadership capabilities.

And if I had been white, nobody would have questioned that.

A major finding in this study is that participants felt that race affects every part of the identity of black people in America. Helen Dawson, felt that race was the “cornerstone” of her existence. Ashley Gardner maintained that “race has totally influenced” her identity. Irene Walsh maintained that race was “the beginning and end of the identification.” Although their cultural and personal identities were varied, participants generally felt that race infused all other aspects of their beings. The omnipresence of race in the black identity formation process is documented in William Cross’ black identity model. According to William Cross’ model (1971), blacks experience the following stages of racial identity formation:

1. Pre-encounter – pro white, anti black.
2. Encounter – the experience that challenges one’s view of blackness.

3. Immersion – realizing the value of one’s race and culture.
4. Internalization - obtaining a sense of pride and security in one’s race and identity.

This model shows that blacks begin with a mainstream identity which incorporates the value of white cultural norms and beliefs. They then realize that their race makes much of society see them as inferior, which ushers them into an acceptance and celebration of their own race and culture. Acceptance of the black identity is key, because this is when blacks realize that their appearance makes them stand out and that it makes them susceptible to the preconceptions of others. Participants remarked that not only did race define much of their identities, but also that it framed other’s perceptions of them as well. Harry Howard and Richard Morrow, for example, believed that in America, people of color are consistently identified by their skin color and they are never allowed to forget about being black.

Research shows that being reminded of blackness is also a reminder of the racism inherent in American society. Critical race theorists contend that racism is normal in American society (Ladson-Billings, 1998) and that the permanence of racism must be factored into the training and placement of black principals (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). Black principals and leaders are especially needed to stand against racist societal constructs like black/white binary, which is the societal construction that places blacks opposite whites as the major minority and majority groups in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Perea, 1997). Although other minorities are marginalized in society, blacks are often seen as the binary opposition to whiteness. Thus blacks being seen in leadership positions can serve to break down racist stereotypes regarding the intellectual capabilities of blacks and other minorities.

Participants in this study acknowledged a need to prove themselves as leaders that they felt was specifically connected to people perceptions of their abilities based on their race. Patty Kerrigan, believed that race caused them to work harder to justify their decisions, although if they “had been white nobody would have questioned that.” For many participants, including Irene Walsh, an added job stress for them was the struggle “to be accepted as someone who really knows the work.” Participants were accustomed to being doubted because of race. Richard Morrow explained that this is “always the initial perception and challenge that any black man gets.” Research shows that historically, blacks have been held to be measurably less intelligent than whites (Hernstein & Murray, 1994). This trend continues with the federally supported campaign for standardized testing which shows blacks to underperform in accountability testing (Lin, Baker, & Betebenner, 2002) while ignoring the cultural bias that has been shown to affect these assessments (Jencks, 1998). By all accounts, minority students start the educational race with deficits that they have to make up for over time. As educational leaders, black principals feel this pressure for themselves and for their students.

Research corroborates participants’ belief that black principals have to work harder to prove themselves trustworthy and worthy of respect in their schools (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Allen Perkins and Catherine Shields described feeling as though they needed to be twice as good as a white principal would be in order to be considered equal. Charles Gibbs and Catherine Shields also described pressures to address other social issues such as gang activity in and around schools. This experience is accounted for in related research stating that black principals face unreasonable expectations that they can quickly solve difficult economic, social, and racial problems (Jones, 1983). These pressures caused participants like

Irene Walsh to feel they had to constantly prove they were always in control of everything. Also because of these added strains, participants including Ashley Gardner and Melvin Waters maintained that they were often afraid to question themselves publicly or ask for help, though this is precisely what they should do in order to improve their practice.

In conclusion, the first finding showed that existing research about the omnipresence of race as an issue in American society was confirmed by participants. Participants thereby acknowledged the need to form a uniquely black identity that incorporated all the other various ways that they identified themselves. The findings also showed that participants believed their leadership to be affected by the negative societal views and attitudes about blacks that are prominently documented in the research literature. Because of these perceptions of the lowered intelligence and acumen of black people, the black principals in this study agreed that others did not expect them to be school leaders, that others did not initially trust their leadership, and that this lack of belief in their leadership ability caused some to avoid questioning their leadership or being authentic about the help they needed to be better leaders.

Theme 2: Greater sense of connectedness to minority students and families.

It's a different relationship between the black principal and the black student...an underlying understanding while at the same time an underlying feeling that we have to protect them from themselves, from everything out there and from other people.

A second major finding in this research study revealed that participants felt a sense of connection to minority communities and populations based on their own experiences as minorities. For this reason some participants including Catherine Shields, Ashley Gardner, Yohanna VandeCamp, and Charles Gibb chose to live in communities that reflected them

culturally and allowed them to deal with the same neighborhood issues that their students were facing. This need for a community connection extended to participants' work settings and their ideas about student achievement. Irene Walsh explained that minority principals often work with students who look like them "because we want to give them that piece that we had, the piece that helped us become what we are." Black principals are often employed in schools or districts with large numbers of minority students (Boothe, et al., 1995). Researchers contend that the community connection is also a key ingredient in improving performance for underperforming minority students (Echols, 2005; Lomotey, 1987).

Participants felt that their racial and cultural identities allowed them to communicate effectively with all types of people because they have had to learn to communicate with people from various races and cultures. They recognized that people might receive them differently as black administrators and some, like Ashley Gardner and Charles Gibson, spoke of planning and preparing for how people might receive them. This is an extension of the Duboisian idea of the "Double-Consciousness" that causes blacks in America to live between two worlds. Their personal and professional life experiences often cause them to "code-switch," or to vacillate between communication styles that are acceptable in their communities and in larger society. Ashley Gardner verbalized this in her admission that there is "certainly a part of my history connected to my race that allows me to communicate in different ways to different people." Participants realized when whites did not have sufficient experience with minority cultures to connect meaningfully with minority communities. Helen Dawson spoke of her time with majority white, male committees charged with making "decisions for young people who they have been uninformed about because there's no connection."

A cultural knowledge and connection to students was deemed important by the participants. They agreed that, to a certain extent, students did feel more comfortable learning from people who shared their cultural backgrounds and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lomotey, 1987). Some participants, like Yohanna VandeCamp, also felt that black students and parents held high expectations for black principals to understand them and their situations and be able to effectively communicate this understanding to teachers who may not share their experiences. Among the various cultural communication styles described by participants was Helen Dawson's description of "the look" that calls people to order. This is a look that people from cultures similar to Dawson's can understand immediately. Cultural differences such as these are issues to consider when recruiting strong minority leaders that represent the needs of "at-risk" students (Haycock, 2001). Data did not suggest that minority leaders should be employed in schools totally composed of minorities. Participants agreed that seeing black principals was also helpful to minority students that represented small populations of their schools. Research suggests that these principals are also connected to their minority students and often feel conflicting interests involved with representing their schools and also representing the best interests of their minority students (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002).

Critical Race Theorists believe that in the stories of marginalized minorities lies the power to unlock them from their oppressive circumstances (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Calmore, 1995). Hearing the stories of black principals allows others to understand their experiences. Through the personal stories they have shared in this research, participants have allowed others to better identify with minority educators and to realize the importance of including

diverse perspectives in their teaching staff and in their curriculum in order to provide equity for all students.

Theme 3: Increased need to promote diversity and equity in schools.

I think my race makes me see the world from many different perspectives. It makes me be more sensitive to inequities that others might experience. It makes me more sensitive to combating inequities and making sure that everyone has a fair chance.

The study's third finding showed that participants' felt increased pressure to diversify their schools based on their experiences as minorities in America. Prior studies corroborate this finding, including Jones' explanation that black principals feel responsible for creating schools representative of all students by hiring ethnically diverse groups of teachers, recruiting new principals of color (2002). Participants were adamant about the importance of hiring a diverse staff that represented the students in the classrooms. Among the proponents of the diversified staff was Richard Morrow, who proclaimed that his staff "looks like the UN...just about every group is represented in some way." Though some have been successful, participants also acknowledged the difficulty associated with hiring a diverse staff. Teachers of color represent less than ten percent of the teaching force (Jorgensen, 2001) and that is not totally because principals are not serious about recruiting teachers of color. Allen Perkins confided that it "is harder than people realize to get people who look like you and me to come here and stay." Yohanna VandeCamp also talked about how white staff sometimes felt slighted when she discussed her attempts to hire minority staff. Nevertheless, participants reported being diligent in their attempts to include multiple racial, ethnic, and cultural representations in their faculty.

As difficult as the task of staff integration may be, participants were up to the challenge. Research shows that black educators are more likely to think it is important to

recruit minorities than their white counterparts (Boothe, et al., 1995). It is imperative that white educators value staff diversification as much as black educators do because of the lack of minority representation in education. This dearth of black educators began during school desegregation when many black principals lost their positions (Karpinski, 2004), leading to diminished recruiting of black teachers and educational leaders (Tillman, 2004). The issues participants have with minority recruiting are also documented in the research. Black principals report conflicting views of the ways in which they and others perceive their leadership concerning minority recruitment and focusing on diversity (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). For example, Yohanna VandeCamp described experiencing tension with her white staff members when she brought up her legal obligation to hire a certain percentage of educators of color. Black principals cannot be seen as leaders of only minority students and staff; and yet they do feel responsible for bringing more diversity into the schools they run. These pressures notwithstanding, it is still preferable for black educational leaders and others to diversify their staff as much as possible. Research suggests that having an ethnically, culturally, racially and linguistically diverse faculty can help students, and not having such diversity can be harmful to them (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995; Brown, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Farber, 1969; Ford, 1996; Franklin, 1994; Orr, 1972; Pang, 2001).

Participants were also concerned about providing multicultural stimuli in the classroom that represents students from various cultures and backgrounds. While diversity may be a priority among many white principals as well, black principals felt that this was even more mandatory for them. Research explains that whites cannot easily understand what it means to be non-white (Delgado, 2001) because they have benefited from more positive cultural images which have empowered, rather than undermined them. Thus black principals,

having gone to school in an environment that disempowered their culture in many ways, are motivated to provide empowering images for all the students in their schools.

The black principals in this study identified the need for multicultural curriculum to be taught in schools. Among this group was Catherine Shields, who felt that “black history should be taught throughout the curriculum.” Jake Wallace and Patty Kerrigan felt that pictures and images in classrooms needed to reflect the ethnic groups that made up the students therein. Patty Kerrigan made it clear to their faculty that “when they put up a picture in their room they need to make sure that it’s a diverse group of kids.” This belief system aligns with relevant research stating that black principals prioritize ensuring that European American teachers are culturally responsive to students of color (Jones, 2002). Instructing students in a manner that includes multiple cultures allows students to reject the societal norm that white cultural patterns are desirable above and beyond other cultural concepts. This culturally competent manner of teaching extinguishes the sense of entitlement that Harris (1993) describes in her conception of the “property functions of whiteness,” which include the rights of disposition, the rights of use and enjoyment, the rights to reputation and status property, and the absolute right to exclude. Overall, the black principals in this study realize that their culture is excluded in many ways in the American context, and therefore they strive to create inclusive cultures in their schools.

Participants acknowledged that they might be the only strong, positive black role models that many students came in contact with in their lives. They felt that black principals broke down racial stereotypes simply by being present in schools, especially if they did a good job while they were there. Patty Kerrigan thought that when people saw blacks in leadership positions they began to reverse any discriminatory thoughts they may have

harbored about the ability of blacks to lead and direct schools. Allen Perkins felt that it was particularly good for suburban, white students to see blacks in leadership positions, stating that “For white students it has opened their eyes and for the community. It has demystified us. We are intelligent. We do have a vision.” Charles Gibson and Allen Perkins believed that when they told stories about where they were from and their personal experiences it alleviated racial tension and allowed others to deal with the cultural differences and similarities between them. This finding is corroborated by research suggesting that 1) hearing the stories of blacks and other marginalized minorities is necessary to empower those groups (Parker & Villalpando, 2007) and 2) that telling their stories is also therapeutic for minority groups who, when contrasting their personal life experience to that of the dominant group, (Calmore, 1995) can actually stop the mental anguish they inflict upon themselves by accepting the beliefs of the dominant group about themselves and their cultural backgrounds (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Another major finding is that black principals in this study felt responsible for advocating for minority students. Research revealed that “black principals are looked upon with suspicion and distrust, as having acquired their positions because of color rather than competence” (Hines & Byrne, 1980, p. 67). Having been so carefully scrutinized in their careers because of their race, black principals may be more able to understand how it feels for minority students to be treated unfairly. Participants related to many experiences that minority students encountered in school and felt that being black allowed them to empathize and protect students who might otherwise be treated unfairly. Patty Kerrigan described this as the ability to see what others do not see: “You see where the black kid is spoken to more often in the line than the white kid. He stands out, he’s one of the few black kids in his class

and you feel that. You see that and feel that.” Allen Perkins and Henry Vincent clearly articulated their mission to ensure that when black students were in trouble because of discipline or were being recommended for remediation services that race had nothing to do with the issues that students were having. Pam Kenwood and Catherine Shields also reported working to ensure that underrepresented subgroups of students, especially black and Latino males, were equally represented in the students that were doing well and students who were active in school activities. Conclusively, participants agreed with Delpit’s claim that in education the mainstream culture is portrayed to the exclusion of many voices that also make up American culture (1995). This knowledge made them work harder to be inclusive of all voices, especially those that represented the students in their schools.

Theme 4: The need to maintain standards of high expectations for all students regardless of the race of students or teachers.

The issue that we have is not racism but the lack of achievement of our students who have been systematically denied excellent resources in education because of a racist construct in society. So our job is not to focus on that but to focus on their achievement.

Finding four showed that participants do not wish to be perceived as principals for black students or black teachers only. Their primary goal was to prepare all students to achieve educationally. To clearly convey this aim to staff, participants utilized characteristics of values-driven or moral leadership, in which they communicated a common or shared vision and set of goals for the school and a common plan of action, (Pfeffer, 1994) the common action being a level of high expectations for every student. To execute a plan of action for student success, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) suggested three major steps that principals should take to institute directed leadership and direction for their schools. Those steps are:

- 1) Setting directions,

- 2) Developing people
- 3) Developing the organization

By espousing the core value that every child can and should succeed educationally, participants were able to follow the aforementioned steps by expanding their visions to staff, helping prepare staff to contribute to the vision, and putting in place structures that sustain and support achievement for all students. Specifically, participants communicated their desire for all students to succeed by spending time in classrooms ensuring that teachers were working with students appropriately. Research suggests that in this time of transparency and accountability for each and every student in their school, educational leaders can no longer work from their offices; they are expected to act as “instructional coaches, guides, or facilitators” (Senge, 1990, p, 388). For Patty Kerrigan, that means “going in daily seeing what people are doing and highlighting how they’re working with kids.” Participants felt that their presence in classes was of the utmost importance. Charles Gibson reported attempting to “spend as much time in the classroom as possible” in order to support teachers as by providing teachers with resources, materials, and support to improve their performance. Henry Vincent noted the importance of providing positive feedback for teachers, which took various forms, including writing down what they observed that they liked, questioning something they saw, or offering suggestions for improving practice. Richard Morrow described these interactions with teachers as “quick feedback”, which is “going in the room and seeing an opportunity to praise a teacher, giving them some constructive feedback that builds them up and doesn’t debase them.”

Participants were vigilant in their opposition to teachers lowering expectations for students from any generally underperforming group, including minority students and special education students. In previously analyzed data, participants stated that they felt a special

connection with minority communities based on their experiences as minorities in America and that they felt an increased need to advocate for minority students and make sure they were successful. Their wish to ensure the success of all students, especially minority students, is rooted in the belief that the “best indicator of a good school may well be the extent to which its image reflects the needs and desires of its parents, teachers, and students” (Sergiovanni, 2000, p. 15). In order to meet the needs of their school communities, many of the black principals interviewed for this research study have taken a specific stand to inspire academic achievement for all students, not just a privileged few. Some of them faced resistance from teachers and parents for whom this focus on equity was not a priority. Patty Kerrigan stated that she got “royally killed around” her beliefs, but stood by her declaration that “it was all about how we treat our kids of color and how we treat special ed. kids.” Yohanna VandeCamp admitted that a large part of her work involved making sure “that I’m helping people understand the importance of being culturally competent, the importance of not setting lower expectations for the students.”

The existence of institutional racism (Nieto, 2003) was addressed by some of the black principals who contributed to this study as a factor that motivated them to be especially adamant in requiring that teachers have high expectations for all students. Participants acknowledged relevant literature espousing that blacks are especially challenged because they often lack access to equal educational opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Yet they posit that black and minority children be held accountable for success in spite of the educational inequalities they might face. Richard Morrow explained that many minority students have been “systematically denied excellent resources in education because of a racist construct in society. So our job is not to focus on that but to focus on their

achievement.” Pam Kenwood was explicit about how to convey this very specific concentration on achievement and success for minority students, a process that she felt required principals to be “very clear about academic expectations and to never allow students or faculty to use race as an excuse. In terms of our students, when talking to them, it’s really not about race. It’s about achievement.” Participants also refused to accept that students be judged according to racial stereotypes. Pam Kenwood also challenged faculty on concepts like expectations that blacks and Latino students will underperform on standardized testing. For the participants in this study, such blatant expectation of failure for minority students is unacceptable.

Summarily, American schools have long suffered from an achievement gap separating the academic success of middle to higher class white and Asian children and minority students as well as lower-income students and students with special learning needs (Haycock, 2001). The job of the principals charged with closing this gap in their schools is a daunting one, but participants agree that they do it because they truly care about the success of their students. Some of them also stated, in no uncertain terms, that this caring is so central to student success that they require evidence of it from their staff. Catherine Shields echoed the sentiments of many participants with this statement: “As long as they love my kids we’re good to go. We can work on some of those other things, but you have to have your high expectations and you have to be able to teach them.” Participants agree that it does not necessarily take minority teachers to care for minority students and be able to teach them effectively. Richard Morrow admonished black principals not to “dare think that there are not white people or other kinds of people that can teach your kids either more effectively or as effectively as black folks can.” The central motivation for expecting all students to

achieve highly was a degree of caring for students and the institution. Research corroborates the need for educational leadership motivated by caring. Sergiovanni (2005) maintains that moral leaders know and focus on what is important and care deeply about their work. Starratt (2005) suggests that principals employ the ethics of critique, justice and care. This ethical framework requires that they demonstrate caring by taking actions to provide a more just environment within their schools and attempting to promote equity for all students regardless of their race, creed, or ethnicity. The principals in this study have adopted this caring ethos into their mission of providing equal opportunities for all students to achieve.

Theme 5: The importance of networking, mentoring, and role modeling in order to give and receive support from other minority educators.

My number one challenge here is that sometimes it feels lonely. You feel like your carrying the weight of the race on your shoulders.

Many participants discussed the loneliness and isolation associated with their work. Part of this loneliness is occupational because, as Patty Kerrigan pointed out “you are the only principal” in the building. Other participants specified their isolation in various ways. Ashley Gardner described being the only black progressive education administrator in her New England association. Allen Perkins, in describing his experiences as principal of a suburban high school with a very small number of minority students, stated that at times “you feel like your carrying the weight of the race on your shoulders.” Charles Gibson, as an urban male elementary principal, describes his loneliness as a product of being “the only black male” in his cluster of principals.

To combat the solitary, intense, and difficult work of the Principalship, research suggests that black principals seek the support of mentors, friends, and families and that they seek training to understand institutional barriers and dynamics. (Echols, 2005; Jones, 1983).

Participants agreed that they needed a network of people to talk to about their work. Many participants specified a group of black educators. Some included educators of other races as well as family and friends into this network. The purpose of these groups for participants was to vent safely and problem solve collectively. Participants also noted the importance of having a range of experience levels in their supportive groups, including “some who have been there before you and some who are just beginning so you can encourage them and share what you know with them.” These groups provide a sense of safety for principals. Melvin Waters, an urban high school principal in his third year, stated that he learns the most about his position from other principals who often tell him “OK, I understand, I’ve been there.”

Mentoring was paramount in most participants’ educations and preparation for leadership. Gender seemed to influence the mentors that they chose to discuss, as several male principals described other black male educators as influential, as well as their uncles and fathers. Women were more likely to describe female educators and inspiring female leaders they admired. As adults, some participants continued to report a special connection to other black educators of the same gender as being supportive and having common experiences. Both Patty Kerrigan and Charles Gibson described situations in which they talked to other black principals of the same gender who they were so in tune with that they didn’t even have to tell the complete stories about problems they were having at work. Gibson expounded that “as much as you collaborate with your sisters, there are some things that they don’t get that a brother, you just say ‘Bro...’ and you touch bases, you don’t even have to go through the full story.” Regardless of gender, some participants also cited their mothers and spouses as role models and mentors. Other mentors were people who participants greatly admired in terms of their work ethics and values.

Research shows that black principals have had a scarcity of role models and mentors Jones (1983), and also that black principals feel the need to be role models for minority students Madsen & Mabokela (2002). This sentiment was confirmed by participants, many of whom felt the need to give back as mentors, including Anthony Higgins, who expressed “I consider myself to be a mentor. I mentor younger black males who are in education.” Participants saw themselves as role models and were very concerned about the appropriateness of the actions they took and how those actions affected not only themselves, but other black leaders who were to come after them. Being black caused them to seriously consider how their performance affected the way people perceived their entire race. Melvin Waters stated that a challenge “has been trying to make sure that I, being one of the few black men in this particular role, am making sure that I’m doing my best to set an honest example.” Participants were especially concerned about how their actions affected young people. Some participants stated that they were in the education profession because of its singular ability to allow them to influence future leaders.

As much as they believed in the importance of the mentoring relationship and having a network of other educators inclusive of their race, culture, and gender identity groups, many participants noted the difficulty of locating such support systems. This may be because such supports have not been in place for black administrators in their education, career, and professional development. Most of them were educated before research about culturally responsive pedagogy, in which students’ language, heritage, and cultural norms are included into the curriculum (Franquiz, 2005), was widely instituted. Thus many saw little of themselves reflected in their educations. Even in their training as teachers and educational leaders, they learned mostly traditional leadership methods, which have been founded on

research that excluded people of color and women (Gooden, 2002). Because participants received training largely in culturally unresponsive settings using non-inclusive leadership models, they have become more isolated than their white counterparts. They need to form stronger and more specific social networks, involving other minority educators or educators who are serious about cultural inclusion, in order to survive and thrive in their careers. They also need to be a part of a continuous cycle of reaching up to others who have been where they are and reaching back down to help those who are going to where they are. This concept is exemplified in a traditional African proverb that reminds us to “lift as we climb.” Another reason specific support groups are necessary for black principals is that research shows that black principals may share some ways of leading that are different from other cultures, but similar to one another. They have been found to use a mixture of traditional leadership theories and ones that are more culture specific, such as ethno-democratic and ethno-humanistic leadership that allow them to place race and culture at the center of schools’ missions to educate students for a democratic and multicultural society (Gooden, 2005; Maxcy, 1998). These commonalities may warrant consideration of a unit of study in educational leadership that focuses specifically on minority leadership.

Theme 6: Uncertainty about the extent to which race is an issue in leadership.

So you’re always left to wonder. So you have your beliefs but then very seldom if ever will you be able to come back and say that this is what it is.

This study aspires to analyze the interactions between black principals’ leadership and their racial, cultural, personal, and professional identities. The process of developing a black identity can be measured and evaluated according to specific psychological models, although it manifests differently from one person to another (Helms, 1990). Literature regarding black identity formation is instructive in the interpretation of the degree to which participants

believed their racial and cultural identities informed their personal and professional identities, and the ways they perceived the merging of these identities affected their leadership. With respect to racial groups, the components of racial identity are:

- Personal identity – the way one feels about oneself.
- Reference group orientation – using particular racial groups to guide one’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.
- Ascribed identity – an individual’s affinity or commitment to a particular racial group (Cross, 1987; Erickson, 1963; 1968).

Thus in their formation of uniquely black identities, the black principals in this study have been confronted with the dilemma of identifying with a particular racial group in thought and action (reference group and ascribed identity). Both of these forms clearly affect their personal identities. According to Helms (1990), black people’s self identity and self perceptions are somewhat driven by “the extent that society stereotypes one racial group as ‘dirty,’ ‘shiftless,’ and ‘ignorant’ ” and another group as ‘clean,’ ‘industrious,’ and ‘intelligent’ and can enforce such stereotypes.” Since the former stereotypes have been portrayed about blacks in America and the latter ones have been conveyed about whites, Helms maintains that it is likely that blacks will initially identify with the white self-concept and reject blackness, as blackness is deemed a social construction that is not profitable for them to adopt (p. 6). This is especially true for black professionals because of the structured system of inequality in the United States which provides institutionalized advantages to whites (Tatum, 1997).

Psychological models for black identity development place alignment with white cultural values as the initial stage of identification for blacks (pre-encounter) before they encounter an experience that makes them realize they are viewed differently because of their race and subsequently begin to embrace their own racial and cultural heritage. However,

blacks reach these phases at different times in their lives, and some never fully cycle through the phases. It follows that individual participants in this study, though undoubtedly affected by the racism and inequality associated with their blackness, will come to perceive the effects of racial and cultural identity on their leadership differently. Nevertheless, data from the interviews suggested that each participant felt that other people's perceptions of and reactions to their leadership may have been motivated by racial conceptions held by their staff, students, parents, and/or the community at large.

Some participants clearly believed that race played a negative role in the ways that staff members interacted with them. Patty Kerrigan conceded that many of the challenges she faced in her work related to being a principal in general; however she also maintained that in the confrontations she has faced as a part of her job "there's been an underlying piece of race in there." Generally, participants were not as certain in their belief that their race caused people to interact with them in a derogatory manner. However, participants frequently discussed feeling as though their race may have played into issues they had as leaders. Several participants mentioned the need to wonder whether or not their race was making people treat them in certain ways. Henry Horne, a private educator, cited numerous job opportunities he was blatantly denied because of his race, though the institutions attempted to mask the racism with explanations about their perceptions that he would be unable to attract funds from large givers or speak in the correct diction to run their schools. However, in his daily interactions with staff and students, he often could not be so sure about the effects of race. Horne was "always left to wonder" whether people were reacting to his race or to aspects of his leadership.

Other participants described their thought processes when they needed to confront

staff about their performance. Yohanna VandeCamp wondered about whether her white staff reacted to her race in these situations, yet she added “but is it exactly because of my race? Am I really sure about that? I don’t know.” Similarly, Irene Walsh questioned “If that was a different situation then would the action be different?” This reaction was common even among participants, like Jake Wallace and Charles Gibson, who maintained that their long and successful careers and upstanding reputations as principals in their school systems superseded most race-based issues they might otherwise have in their leadership. Wallace recounted interactions with specific parents that caused him to wonder “if that parent is talking to me in a certain way because of my race or whether it’s just genuine concern about her child going into an urban school.”

Participants who were at early stages in their careers also expressed uncertainty about whether race was a factor among other challenges they encountered in their work. Melvin Waters and Helen Dawson, both in their third year as principals, respectively reported that they “don’t know enough data even to know of issues grounded in race” and that “other principals who have been in the system longer and who have observed different things may be able to answer it but I can’t really speak to it.” Finally, some participants found it expedient to transcend ethnic and racial identifications with regard to their leadership. Charles Gibson valued the prospect of going “beyond that ethnic identity in terms of administration” and Henry Vincent believed the black principal, rather than evaluate the ways that blackness might specifically affect his or her leadership, should instead identify as “a principal who happens to be black.”

The fact that black principals are often uncertain about the extent to which their race affects their leadership is an administrative concern unique to black principals. It is a

residual effect of the fact that black people live in a world of “white privilege” (Macintosh, 1990); one of these privileges is not to have to think about one’s race as a negative influence in daily interactions. Another privilege white principals might enjoy that black principals do not is the ability to not live in two worlds, one of which binds them to ideals associated with their racial and cultural identities and another that dictates their actions in their professional lives. This sense of double consciousness (Dubois, 1903) caused participants to acknowledge and accept that they may never know whether people were reacting to either true or false representations of their racial and cultural heritages, or if people genuinely diverged in principle with their professional opinions.

Unexpected Findings

1)

The data revealed that although each participant felt that race was prevalent in their lives and affected every other part of their being and identity, many remained uncertain about the extent to which race played a role in the way that others reacted to their leadership. This presented a dichotomy from the data from Finding # 1 indicating that participants believed their race made them work harder to prove themselves capable of leading well. This finding was also counterintuitive because participants largely felt that their race affected the way they went about leading their schools. The data exposed participants’ belief that their racial, cultural, and personal identities formed a lens through which they viewed their leadership. They were likely to live and work in schools that reflected their ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They also felt a close connection to minority students, families, and communities that caused them to work harder to maintain high expectations for these students in spite of the omnipresent stereotypes indicating that minorities are not able to achieve

academic excellence. A final way that participants felt their race, culture, and ethnicity affected their leadership was that it drove them to push for diversity in every aspect of schooling. From staffing to curriculum to images presented to children in their schools, participants endeavored to include representations of all the students in the building.

Nevertheless, many of the black principals interviewed for this study stated that in daily interactions with staff, students, and families, especially those that resulted in conflict, they could not be certain that race was a factor. Because participants did feel strongly that they were not expected to be good leaders based on their race; and because they believed their race, ethnicity, and culture molded their leadership in multiple ways, it stands to reason that this uncertainty represents the phenomenon of the black professional who must live in between two worlds (Dubois, 1903). It also follows that black educational leaders do have an additional burden in their leadership in that they always have to wonder if racial and cultural stereotypes and mainstream expectations of blackness in America are motivating factors in people's reactions to their leadership.

2)

Another unexpected finding in this study stemmed from Finding # 5, which provided conclusive data stating that black principals feel they need support systems including other administrators, preferably administrators of color, who can help them navigate the murky waters of education administration. Participants pointed out the importance of mentors and role models in their early lives and in the beginning stages of their careers. Many stated that they learned from other educators of color. They

felt it necessary to mentor strong minority educators who were just starting out as administrators or who showed promise in the field of education administration. The unexpected data in this finding was that several participants noted the difficulty in finding such support groups, networks, and associations; although most of the participants adamantly espoused that this kind of support was needed for black principals to survive. Because there is an obvious need for professional networks of minority principals, it is baffling that no such groups are currently in existence, or that they are not easily accessible to practicing black principals.

Limitations to the Study

This study sampled a wide variety of black principals representing various types of schools and both male and female principals. However, the study focused exclusively on the New England region of the United States. Additionally this research included a sample of only fifteen principals within the New England region. Although this is a relatively large number of participants for an in-depth qualitative study, it may be considered a minimal representation of the thoughts and beliefs of all the black principals working in the sampled region. Accordingly, due to the limited sample size and restricted sampling location, this study may not be readily generalizable.

Another limitation to this study is researcher bias. This limitation is based on the fact that the researcher is a black educator planning to enter the profession of educational leadership, specifically as a black principal. As such, the researcher may be biased toward feeling that blackness does affect leadership in certain ways. Participants, through their racial, cultural, experiential, and occupational connection to the researcher, may also be biased in their responses. Nevertheless, all questions asked of the participants by the

researcher were products of research and were not meant to lead the participants in any way. The researcher also attempted to offset this bias by introducing diverse perspectives through the inclusion of participants with varied backgrounds, work environments, and cultural experiences.

Gaps in the Literature

There has been little research conducted linking the leadership of black principals to the effects of societal racism. This research has been based upon literature citing that there is a lack of diversity in education dating back to school desegregation and that black educators feel that racism is prevalent in their jobs. It is also strongly based on literature claiming that minority students need a culturally responsive form of teaching that may be best provided by minority teachers. Findings from this research have uncovered a major gap in the literature that should be addressed in future research.

The main gap in this literature is the knowledge of how the psychological threats of racism affect black principals, especially the idea of the “double consciousness.” Per findings from this study, the feeling of belonging to society and being alienated from it at the same time is very real for black principals. It causes them to feel that race affects all aspects of their leadership even as they struggle to pinpoint the full extent to which it plays out in their decision-making and in people’s reactions to their decisions. It causes them to fight valiantly for equal opportunities for black students and other minority students while they also work diligently to prove that they are not only advocating for these students, but that they do indeed have the best interest of all students at heart.

An area of literature suggested by this research may be directed towards ways to address this internal conflict in black principals. The solution may be similar to recent

educational conflicts such as ways to properly educate ELL students or special education students. Research suggests that this end is achieved when we balance the individual needs of these special students with their rights to be educated in the mainstream, alongside their peers. Such a method may also be useful in educating minority students and in training minority educators. We must recognize that minority students generally are not mainstream students because they have been exposed to the prejudices of society and have been denied many opportunities enjoyed by many mainstream students. We must also factor in the need for minority students to receive culturally responsive educations. Like ELL and special education students, minority students must be exposed to techniques proven to help them succeed where mainstream education has failed them. And like methods commonly used to educate ELL and special education students, culturally responsive methods of teaching minority students and training minority educators will be useful in teaching all students in the mainstream, making them more creative and well-rounded citizens.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Coursework in diversity and minority issues in educational leadership

Personal identity definitely affects leadership; and because most accepted theories of educational leadership represent a patriarchal viewpoint, the identities of marginalized groups of people can be detrimental to the acceptance of their leadership in various ways. For this reason, educational leadership coursework should address the formation of under-represented identities, including minority, gender, and sexual orientation identity among others. According to the data from this research, race, ethnicity, and culture do impact the leadership of black principals in both positive and negative ways. These factors also affect the ways that black principals perceive others to view their leadership, even if this perception

is simply a feeling of uncertainty about the extent to which being black influences black principals' daily interactions with staff, students, and families. Currently, higher education programs for education and educational leadership include vast literature about culturally competent teaching, learning, and curriculum. Social justice literature is also well-represented in preparatory education programs. However, in the coursework and field experiences necessary for training and certification in educational leadership, there is a dearth of literature focusing on issues in minority educational leadership. It is critical that this area of scholarship is included in the cannon of preparatory literature for educational administrators. Knowledge of the various ways that the multiple identities of minority administrators affect their leadership can be helpful for black educators entering careers as principals in several ways. This area of literature can help to reduce the feeling of isolation that participants listed as a major challenge in their leadership.

Minority principals would do well to prepare themselves to deal with the perceptions that others may hold about them as leaders before they step foot into their schools. Black principals in general need to realize and be prepared for the fact that many constituents and stakeholders in their school communities will not trust their leadership simply because they are black and that they will have to work harder to make people feel secure under their leadership. This knowledge, stemming from a specific curriculum, scope, and sequence regarding black educational leadership, would prepare black principals to enter the job with a strong emphasis on their knowledge, expertise, and ability to lead well.

Studying minority issues in educational leadership can also help minority principals to come to terms with the biases they hold going into their jobs that are based on their race, culture, and ethnicity. This course of study can also engage principals in metacognitive self-

analysis and self-awareness of through discussion of their role as black principals or as principals of other cultures who are charged with education an increasingly multicultural student body, all of whom are subjected to the effects of white privilege, racism, prejudice, and stereotypical images that play out in all aspects of life in American society. These principals should have time, space, and content that helps them to grapple with the ways that their racial, culture, and personal identities will affect their professional beliefs, values, commitments, and ultimately their leadership decisions. Thus an additional strand of coursework in diversity in educational leadership or issues in minority leadership would be invaluable to the field of educational leadership at large.

Professional organizations for principals of color

Data from this study showed that black principals are in need of supportive professional organizations although these organizations are currently lacking in the New England region of the United States. Several participants reported a sense of loneliness and isolation in their work exacerbated by the fact that there are a limited number of black principals in the region. A suggestion for the central offices for education in New England is to create professional mentoring and support networks for principals of color. Black principals could register to join such organizations upon receipt of their educational leadership certificates. Belonging to such an organization, or knowing that one is available to them, can help black principals to work through issues related to being a new principal in general, as well as the nuances of leadership specific to being a principal of color including learning how to deal with other people's perceptions of them as black leaders and how to reconcile their own ideas about race, culture, diversity, and equity with their leadership of schools. According to participant data, the most important function of such an organization

would be the comfort, support, and strength that it provides for its members. This support may well be the factor that keeps a black principal surviving and thriving in their leadership rather than succumbing to the stresses of the Principalship and the added pressures that being black may place on educational leadership.

Increased promotion of diversity in recruitment for educators and educational leaders

Three of the findings for this study demonstrated ways that black principals connected specifically to minority students and families. Participants reported 1) feeling closely connected to minority communities 2) feeling the need to diversify staff in order to reflect the diversity found in their student populations, and 3) feeling the need to hold minority students to high academic standards although admittedly, some members of the school community have lower expectations for these students based on experiences with them or stereotypes held about them. These three findings tell the story that black principals, as well as black educators in general, are needed by black students who benefit from seeing black people in positions of leadership. Black students also benefit from black educators because black educators have a vested interest in seeing students of color succeed. Participants in this study have discussed their propensity to desire to mentor, train, and recruit black educators. These black principals also have high expectations for their students of color, whom they expect to be successful in order that they might be role models and mentors to another generation of students of color.

Based on the data, a final recommendation is that school districts begin to aggressively recruit, promote, and prepare educators of color to work in their school systems. This begins at the undergraduate level, when districts should target schools of education, associations for students of color and educators of color, and Historically Black Colleges and

Universities (HBCUs) to provide incentives for minority educators to join their district in diversifying their staff to represent the students therein. This is especially true for urban school districts, with large numbers of minority students and lacking representations of educators who share aspects of students' cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. It is also necessary for schools of education within colleges and universities to impress upon incoming undergraduate minority students the vast need for minority representation in education.

College students are often seeking ways to use their education to make positive a difference in the lives of others, and it is incumbent on schools of education to ensure that students realize the power of education to do just that, especially for marginalized and under-represented groups such as minority students. The third prong to a comprehensive, directed effort to attract minorities to careers in education should come from business and community partners to schools and school districts. In the current climate of accountability, and school choice, community partners are invaluable to the sponsorship of better schools for students who currently are not receiving free and adequate public schooling from their districts.

Realizing that young, gifted, and talented minorities are attracted to secure and lucrative careers, business partners for schools may be most successful in recruiting minority students to careers in education. These partnerships could set up programs that would train minority educators to work in urban communities in exchange for monetary incentives in the form of grants and scholarships, or potential opportunities to work with the partnership companies after serving as educators for a prescribed period of time.

The key point of this recommendation is that minority representation is needed more and more in education as representation for minority students as well as for white students who often go through their entire educations without being taught or led by any minority

educator. Diversity in education is one way to elevate success levels of students who may believe that education and schooling is not for them because they do not see anyone else that looks like them working in education and looking out specifically for their best interests as students of color. A concerted effort to diversify the field of education is a final recommendation based on findings from this study.

Implications for Further Research

Per the limitations listed for this study, further research may be needed to look at the variation of black principals perceptions of how their racial, cultural, personal and professional identities affect their leadership in various regions of the country, such as the Northeastern, Southeastern, Southern, Midwestern, and Western regions. Black principals' perceptions may vary based on location so findings from this additional research may be necessary to provide more comprehensive data.

This study focused on an isolated sample of black principals to analyze the interactions of race and leadership, specifically how racial, cultural, and personal identity affected the leadership of these black principals. In order to present a more comprehensive picture of how racial identity and other forms of identity affect leadership, further research may need to be conducted about the perceptions of white principals regarding the ways they believe their race might impact their leadership. This research has found that black principals do perceive their leadership to be affected by their racial identity as well as their cultural, ethnic, and personal identities in various forms. A major source of this perception amongst black principals is their experience of racism and prejudice in mainstream society. However, recent trends in education require all educators and educational leaders to lead with a focus on social justice, equal opportunity to learn for all students, and active anti-racism.

Also, federal education legislation like the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) holds principals responsible for the achievement of all students, including the traditionally underperforming subgroups like minority and low-income children. As such, white principals are being asked to grapple with hard questions about race and opportunity in America. They may have some interesting and illuminating insights about ways they feel their race may hurt or help them in their leadership of schools that can be instructive to the field of educational leadership.

Finally, the results of this study brought up some interesting beliefs about how black principals connect their identities to those of their school communities. Participants discussed feeling connected to minority students and communities and pushing for the success of these students specifically in addition to all other students in their schools. They talked about their interactions with staff and families, which they sometimes believed to be adversely affected by the perceptions people held about them as blacks and as black educational leaders. One important aspect of this area of research that is currently unknown is how staff, students, and families perceive the leadership of the black principals that run their schools. Learning about these varied perceptions of the leadership of black principals could help to validate the data received from the black principals interviewed for this study. This information could also raise more questions about the intersections of race, identity, and leadership in American schools. Thus, gathering and analyzing such data would be valuable to the field in order to further determine how to support and train minority educational leaders to be successful in any arena.

Personal Learnings

Throughout the process of researching and writing this dissertation, I have gained an increased awareness of how other people will perceive me as an educational leader based on my physical appearance. There are other factors that will influence how others view my leadership, including my personal background, my experience as a teacher and administrator, and my education. However, the first and most obvious thing that many people will notice about me is my skin color. I hypothesized at the outset of this dissertation that the negative connotations about blacks in America, enforced by negative stereotypes and carried forth by a majority-white society that had the power to continually enforce such stereotypes, would have effects on the leadership of black principals. While researching I discovered several ways that race does affect the leadership of black principals, one of the most interesting of which is the constant uncertainty about how one's race undergirds how people respond to their decisions as educational leaders. As in other matters of racism in America, black principals are sometimes subjected to blatantly racist views and at other times they may never be able to pinpoint the extent to which race affects their leadership. In any case, I have learned that being black will definitely affect the way I lead in several ways, including ways that others have listed in this dissertation such as increased connection to minority communities and increased promotion of staff-diversity. Most importantly I will work to provide the best opportunity to learn for all students, realizing that this task will require a concerted effort to work with marginalized populations of students, including minority students, to ensure that they have equal access to education despite the myriad of obstacles that stand in their way.

As a black educator who is planning to go into educational administration and to pursue further educational research, I identify with each theme highlighted in this study. I

understand that these experiences are common ones for black educators, even though we all have unique experiences and identities. Conducting this research has allowed me to begin to discover the essence of the experience of the black principal. It has informed my practice in various ways. I know that as a black principal, I will be clear about my need to fiercely advocate for marginalized groups of students, including minority students. I realize that I will be expected to support minority students, families, and staff. As such, I will endeavor to create a school community that is built on understanding of our differences and allowing diversity to represent unity. I am a better leader for having done this research, because I will be prepared to prove myself as a leader while still being authentic about my strengths and weaknesses. Being clear about who I am as a black, male leader, what my experiences have been, and what my intentions are, will allow me to be authentic and transparent with staff, students, and parents. These traits, along with skill in managing people and the organization, are the keys to successful school leadership.

Conclusion

In our current era of stringent accountability for all principals, but especially for principals charged with educating traditionally underserved populations of students largely made up of minorities, the perspectives of minority educators is crucial. If minority educators and educational leaders navigated the American educational system successfully and mastered it with enough skill to teach others, we can learn much from their experiences and their past and present struggles in the educational arena. Their stories speak for the oppressed, marginalized, and overlooked students throughout the country, who despite the prominent legislation, continue to be left behind. These stories of tragedy and triumph have the power to emancipate and empower the oppressed as well as the oppressors (Freire, 1970).

To be sure, the field of educational administration is lacking in diverse stories, perspectives, and voices. The research conducted in this study has sought to explicitly include the perspectives of black principals in the ongoing conversation about best practices in educational leadership. As the black principals in this study lent their voices to the discussion on the ways their race, culture, ethnicity, and heritage influenced their leadership, they paved the way for further studies that will continue this tradition of analyzing the myths and exploring the realities of minority leaders in education.

Appendix I – Informed Consent



Boston College Lynch School of Education
Informed Consent for Participation as a Subject in:
Black Principals' Perceptions of How Their Race Affects Their Leadership
Investigator: Jeremy C. Vinzant
Adult Consent Form
Date Created: 5/1/2008

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to be in a research study about black principals' perceptions of how their race affects their leadership. The purpose of this study is to find out how black principals feel that being black

affects their leadership. This study will include 10-15 participants, all of whom will be black principals in Boston or the surrounding area. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a black principal in the greater Boston area. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Your participation in this study involves a 45 minute interview with me and, if possible, a focus group with other participants in the study. There are no reasonable expected risks associated with this study, though there may be unknown risks. The benefits of participation include the ability to share personal experiences with other educators in an effort to better understand the underrepresented group of black principals in America. You will receive no payment for your participation in this study, but the study will be administered at no cost to you.

Every effort will be made to keep your research records confidential, but it cannot be assured. Research records will be kept in a locked file. All electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. No one other than myself will have access to audio tapes of data collections (i.e. interview, focus group) and these will be erased after the study is completed. Records that identify you and the consent form signed by you, may be looked at by a regulatory agency such as: Federal Agencies overseeing human subject research and/or Boston College Institutional Review Board. The results of this research may be presented at meetings or in published articles. However, your name will be kept private.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time for whatever reason. There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not taking part in this research or for stopping your participation. You are not responsible for answering any interview questions that make you uncomfortable for any reason. For further questions or more information concerning this research you may contact me at vinzant@bc.edu or call me at (678)982-7559. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact: Director, Office for Human Research Participant Protection, Boston College at (617) 552-4778, or irb@bc.edu. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records and future reference.

Statement of Consent:

- I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

Check here to consent:

Signature : _____ Date _____

Appendix II – Interview Protocol

Black Principals' Perceptions of How Their Race Affects Their Leadership?

Identity

1. How do you identify yourself?
2. How has your race influenced your identity?
3. How does race affect your daily life?

Leadership

4. Who has made you successful in your career?

5. Who have been your mentors?
6. How does spirituality affect your leadership?
7. How would you describe yourself as a leader?
8. What is your leadership vision?
9. How do you communicate your leadership vision?
10. How do you communicate with your staff?
11. How do you get people involved?
12. What are your core values?

Race

13. What are some specific instances in which your race has affected your leadership?
14. What are some challenges you have faced as a black principal?
15. How do you deliberately take a stand against racism in your school?
16. What advice would you give to other black principals?
17. What have I left out that you think is important about how being black affects your leadership?

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