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Going Through to Get Through: Life Histories of Black Women in Educational Leadership

by

Ann Marie M. Mobley

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Leadership, Policy, and Lifelong Learning
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Vonzell Agosto Ph.D.
Lauren Braunstein Ph.D.
Deirdre Cobb-Roberts Ph.D.
Tanetha Fisher Ph.D.

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Keywords: Coalitions, Resilience, Life History, Mentoring, Transformational Leadership

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to God, who has been my constant source of strength and inspiration throughout this journey. I am forever grateful for His grace and guidance, which have sustained me through every challenge and setback.

I also want to express my deepest appreciation to my family, including my mother, Marjorie Mobley, and my father, Andrew Mobley who have seen me through every step and have been so encouraging. Even my father who decided he was going to refer to me as Dr. Mobley through the program because he wanted me to believe that I was going to make it through. I would also like to thank my loving husband, Eric Virgil, who not only provided unwavering love and support but also played an active role in my research journey by listening attentively. My sweet baby boy, Samuel Virgil, has also been a source of joy and motivation. Their belief in me has been a driving force behind my accomplishments, and I owe them a lot.

Finally, I want to honor the memory of my brother, Stephen Andrew Mobley, who passed away before he could see me reach this milestone. He was my biggest cheerleader and my closest confidante. In fact it was Stephen who encouraged me to apply and pushed me into pursuing a Doctoral degree. I miss him dearly and I pray this work makes him proud and serves as a tribute to his memory.

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ABSTRACT

Black women who become school-based administrators are severely understudied in scholarly research (Lomotey, 2019). Studies suggest that Black women in the United States, who ascend into educational leadership positions, rely on professional training(s) associated with their employment and understandings accrued from inter/personal background experiences (cultural, familial) to navigate discrimination while attempting to lead. The purpose of this study was to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. Using a life history approach, I gathered data by interviewing seven Black women administrators (all identified as African American), which I interpreted through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, and integrated archival materials to provide historical context to the participants' narratives. I discerned four interrelated themes: They often narrated their work *as (1) Adapting to professional settings while maintaining personal worldviews, (2) Engaging with coalitions to fulfill personal and professional needs, (3) Navigating (gendered-race) politics of potential and (4) Expressing power within power.* Based on the themes, I found that reconciliation of tensions among the participants was rooted in the ability to adapt to professional settings while remaining authentic relationships which they found through supportive coalitions they formed, and how those relationships aided them in strategically navigating through the intersection of personal identity and professional roles when met with diverse challenges. I discuss the implications of these findings for the field of educational leadership: preparation, hiring, mentoring, and the retention of Black women administrators.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, educational administrators have played a significant role in the quality of education in schools. Whether acting as innovators or change agents, administrators are often mandated to focus on improving school achievement (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Reid, 2020; Reitzug & Hewitt, 2017). Administrative leadership is a cornerstone in school success efforts as it influences the school culture and climate of the educational organization to meet the needs of students and staff. However, when it comes to leadership preparation, studies have found that Black women struggle for visibility (Alston, 2012; Roane & Newcomb, 2013).

In the public school system (K-12), women make up about 86% of the teacher population in the classroom (Burton & Weiner, 2016). However, only a few women advance into leadership positions and are disproportionately under-represented in administrative preparation programs. Even more alarming is that Black women, in particular, are even more absent with a mere 13% of them being in school leadership positions (Lomotey, 2019). The disproportionality of Black women in preparation programs and lack of representation within school leadership contributes to discrimination and racism in the school system. Consequently, when Black women are promoted, they are often sent to what most would consider challenging schools (Moorosi et al., 2018; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). For example, according to Tilman and Cochran (2000), the low number of Black women serving in educational leadership positions may face obstacles such as low and conflicting expectations from various entities, challenges to their authority, exclusion from inner networks, negative stereotyping, and isolation. As a result of the aforementioned discriminatory practices, Black women are widely ignored by the research and often

misunderstood. This study examined how preparation programs, mentoring opportunities, and life lessons have shaped Black women as educational administrators. Through this inquiry, I will document the narratives of Black women who have served as educational administrators and how their beliefs, practices, and challenges has shaped their leadership identity.

Several studies concerning Black women in educational leadership positions (e.g., school principals, assistant principals, district personnel, and supervisors) are limited to current happenings and or existing experiences. A life history approach allows me a deeper understanding of Black women's educational leaders (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). Conducting a life history study provides a space for enriched discourse, gives meaning to individual experiences, and expands the understanding of individuals' ideologies (Faulkner, 2015).

In this study, the term educational administrator is interchangeable with educational leaders, referring to all K-12 administrators at school-based sites and districts. In addition to this, at times, I specify individuals' job titles (Assistant principals, principals, superintendents, etc.). I use specific job titles due to the notion that most, if not all, school administrative personnel enroll into some professional leadership preparation program before acquiring their specific job. The terms Black woman and African American woman are terms I use interchangeably.

Background of the Study

Fourteen years before the abolishment of slavery, Sojourner Truth cried out about the disproportionate lifestyle in which she had to live in comparison to her White and Black counterparts in her speech Ain't I a Woman" (Grimes,2005; Horsford, 2012). "Ain't I a Woman" speech served as a powerful message and a call to Black women's leadership in the United States. African American women had to develop a culture of dissemblance and self-reliance to survive. Black women's role in the abolitionist movement did not stop there but continued

throughout history (Horsford, 2012). At the close of slavery, Black women leaders continued to strive for equality and a place in the United States where they would be free to live comfortably in their race and sex (Collins,1990; Grimes, 2005; Horsford, 2012).

The Black woman's challenges are often coupled with the pressures of housework, the demands of child rearing, the necessity of working outside of the home, and with the often-perceived reality that they live in a country where they are not recognized, are undervalued, or are simply not seen. They are not granted the privileges of being a male, being White, or being considered a lady. (Horsford & Tillman, 2012, p.1).

By the mid-1800s, Black women served as leaders for equality and social justice geared toward racial uplift and the advancement of women's rights. Black women struggled to be acknowledged and recognized as women due to their race. Despite their struggle, immediately following the Civil War, Black women played a pivotal role in building Black churches, serving in roles such as teachers and school directors, and serving in other community leadership positions (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). Black women leaders also shaped movements and created organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896. Likewise, in 1908, prominent sorority organizations began to form at Black colleges, such as Alpha Kappa Alpha. The continuance, or formation of comparable organizations, were the product of Black women being rejected from White sororities and clubs. Some Black women who were rejected by their White female counterpart, created spaces of acceptance for themselves. Such organizations were compelled to advance Black women's rights and become advocates for the race (Horsford, 2012).

The 1920s marked a period of organized resistance to the conventional norms of society. As Black men became the face of organized resistance, it in turn limited Black women's mobility

to positions of power and prestige. Just the same, Black women were significant assets and pushed the Black man in his plight for *Black man equality* (Rodger-Rose, 1980). Organizations such as the Pan-African Congress, National Baptist Convention, and others displayed the Black man as the leader and sole proprietor for change. However, many Black women stood firmly in the background laying down the foundation. Patriarchal ideology overshadowed Black women's leadership. It seemed Black men may not have earnestly want Black women to enjoy the same freedoms they wanted for themselves. Training Black women in the same manner as the Black man was "impractical, superfluous...making them unmarriageable, and raised their aspirations to an unattainable standard of living" (Gains,2012, p. 140). Discrimination and marginalization within such groups forced Black women to separate themselves from the dominant group once again and lead their own auxiliary groups. The National Black Women's convention (NBWC) is an example of how the separation began. It was difficult for Black women to have genuine autonomy over themselves among Black men who believed leadership belonged in their hands alone (Horsford, 2012).

Similarly, the Black woman could not gain mobility within White women's organizations or movements. Black women were eager to join White clubs and organizations although there was some skepticism. Racial tensions caused a strain on organizations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), leading Black women to leave and develop their branches. Black women at the forefront of creating Black women social clubs and auxiliaries inspired and provided steps for developing Black nationalist feminism in the 1920s (Horsford, 2012). Black women leaders emerged in many different capacities, creating clubs and organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) in 1935, and more. Headed by powerful pioneers

such as Ida B. Wells, Mary McLeod Bethune, Margaret Murray Washington, and numerous others, similar organizations were purposed to provide a space where Black women could organize their communities, better themselves, and encourage self-determination (Horsford, 2012). Black women saw a need for their leadership and places where they could create leadership opportunities that were not granted.

In the 1950s Karpinski (2006) mentioned that although the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education v. Topeka KA (1954)* placed an end to segregation in schools *de jure* (based on law); the decision consequently "displaced, dismantled, and demoted thousands of African American educators" (Karpinski, 2006, p. 238). Desegregation resulted in the closing and consolidation of Black schools across the nation. Not only did the closing of such schools take away numerous jobs from Black educators, leaders, and staff members and stop their growth in the K-12 system, but it also stripped students, parents, and community members, of a safe environment (Peters, 2020; Tilman,2004). The transfer of Black students to White schools impacted their ability to learn and prosper. Racism created discriminatory practices, further disenfranchising the students (Karpinski, 2006; Reed & Evans, 2008). Black principals were staples of the community, and their removal affected the students they served. Many administrators were replaced by their White counterparts, who were often inexperienced and lacked certification (Karpinski, 2006).

The overall effect on the Black community was devastating. Parents, as well as students, began to distrust the schools they attended and the educational system. Under these new circumstances, Black students were often ignored, over-punished, re-segregated, and failed to receive quality education (Reed & Evans, 2008). In ligh5t of Brown v. Board, the 1950s marked a time of growth and progress for the Black community and Black women. In addition to the

Civil Rights Movement, Black women feminist movements and other Black women-led organizations gained traction (Horsford, 2012). A more fluid African American identity formed as the Civil Rights Movement ushered in economic development, political power, social power, and the opportunity for Black women to re-identify themselves (Reed & Evans, 2008). Women developed social and technical advancements focused on individualism (Sherman& Beaty, 2010).

By the 1960's, in places like Chicago, grassroots activism pushed for increased representation in educational leadership. The Civil Rights movement encouraged economic advancement, stable structural locations, and a sense of identity in the Black community (Reed & Evans, 2008). Numerous legislative acts that rose during the 1960's and 70's furthered the progression as well. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VII, and Title IX adopted in 1972 made it possible for Black women to pursue White-collar jobs, government positions, and educational leadership roles.

The 1970s showed promise for Black women, and a manifesto was published to shed light on their integrity as a citizen and other publications (Horsford, 2012). Yet, White men continued to dominate the profession leaving as little as 5% of principalship positions to African Americans. By the late 1970s, the increase of Black administrators had risen to 28%. However, there was no significant change in opportunities for women (Metzger, 1974). The 1980s showed more promise for Black women. Programs were developed to assist women in becoming school administrators and advance their careers by preparing them for administrative positions through coursework, internships, and workshops (Lykes,1983). Legislation such as the Chicago Act of 1988 allowed for an opportunity for Black women to attain principalship.

In the late 1990s leading to the early 2000s, female principals increased to 56% in elementary schools. In the secondary setting, females grew from 12% to 26%. However, of this population, only 15% of the principals were people of color, and only a fraction of this percent were Black women. Although Black women in leadership positions increased gradually, they still lagged far behind their White counterparts and Black men (Jean-Marie, 2013). By the 1990s, researchers began to examine the Black woman through a multiple-dimensional nature, and the ideologies of the social construct began to arise, such as Critical race feminism (CRF) (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Horsford, 2012).

Today, the impact of Brown v. Board of Education can still be seen throughout the United States. The number of Black educators and administrators in the K-12 System has never recovered despite the steady increase of children of color entering schools. Black public-school principals only make up 11% and are underrepresented as teachers and administrators. Peters (2020) states that the shortage is linked to the scarcity of Black teachers who enter into the leadership pipeline, limited mentoring opportunities, limited recruitment, and low retention rates in educational leadership preparation programs.

The Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. Educational leadership preparation programs have come under increased scrutiny. As a result, there has been a growing interest from various stakeholders, including but not limited to the public, district administrators, private foundations, and others (Black,2011). Many texts designed to develop educational administrators ignore the diverse needs in schools and promoted a "one size fits all" approach (Jean-Marie et al., 2016; Weiner, 2019). For example, in Weiner's study

several participants describe how preparation programs glossed over, if not ignored, the discrimination that they faced as Black women school administrators. These participants stated that they often felt silenced and tokenized. Marlene, a participant, discusses how she along with other Black women in her leadership course would attempt to push meaningful dialogue centered around their diverse needs to no avail.

The theoretical frameworks that will inform this research are Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as the interpretive lens and Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the discussion lens. The guiding research question for this study is: *What personal and professional strategies do Black women serving as school leaders use to acknowledge and reconcile tensions and contradictions in the workplace?* The question will be explored through a qualitative research design, using an in-depth, three-series interview process with Black women administrators during the 2022- 2023 academic school year. The interviews will entail understanding the participants' life histories through discussions centering around their cultural backgrounds, constructed identities, personal and professional lessons, and practices.

Problem Statement

The marginalization and underrepresentation of Black women is not limited to school leadership literature (Alston 2011; Grimes, 2005). This limiting view extends to the curriculum of leadership preparation programs, often dominated by White male norms, and their roles as leaders resulting in fewer leadership opportunities (Peters, 2020; Reed, 2012). Historically, feminist perspectives have not included the experiences of Black women, obscuring social worldviews linked to their racial and gendered perspectives. Misalignment between dominant and self-prescribed leadership narratives about Black women and examinations of their leadership styles often result in a skewed view of the way they lead in schools.

More work is needed to challenge the dominant discourse around leadership characteristics and perspectives of Black women and how they experience explicit and implicit microaggressions in the workplace (Cyr et al., 2021; Weiner et al., 2021). To bring some balance to the field, this study explores the perspectives, experiences, and voices of Black women leaders to understand how preparation programs influence them (Alston, 2011; Burton &Weiner,2016; Moore,2013) and how they reconcile tensions and contradictions between the personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead in administrative roles.

Significance of the Study

This study's information can inform discussions about preparation programs and bring relevance and exposure to Black women educational leaders. This will shed light on how their preparation, mentoring opportunities, and life lessons have impacted them. In the United States, Black women make up a small percentage of administrators. Over one-third of Black women who are principals are under the age of 45 and have been in their role for between four and nine years (Lomotley, 2019). Black female principals are often placed in high minority underachieving schools disproportionately to their White counterparts (Moorosi, fuller & Reilly,2018; Newcomb & Niemeyer,2015). Often underfunded, such schools lack adequate accommodations and support. In spite of that, many Black female administrators positioned themselves within their schools to tackle each challenging circumstances and combat daily obstacles (Newcomb & Niemeyer,2015). Black women principals are often charged with shouldering the transformation and development of Black schools; yet they tend to be widely ignored by the research and are often misunderstood. The lack of research leaves a gap in scholarship and furthers discriminatory practices in educational settings. As a result, I am

compelled to research the life history of Black female principals and discuss their experiences and practices.

Conceptual Framework

Black Feminist Thought

Headed by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, feminism emerged in the United States during the mid-1800s as a movement for fighting for women's rights. The women's rights movement brought attention to the misuse and oppression of women politically. It focused on intellectualism and equality between two sexes/genders (female and male/women and men) (McCann et al., 2013). While some White women supported abolishing slavery, free Black women were shunned and prohibited from joining their organizations and societies. In response, Black women formed groups to address their oppressions. Maria M. Stewart spoke publicly about the liberation of Black women, urging them to be self-reliant and independent. Black women then realized that there was a connection between their gender identity and racial oppression (Collins, 2000; Johnson, 2015).

Similarly, during the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, inspired by the liberation movement, Black women's fight for equality reemerged and grew (Guy-Sheftall, 2011; Johnson, 2015). Black women insisted that there were distinct differences between them and their White counterparts. Their history, culture, and economic oppression were vastly different due to their race, class, and gender; therefore, their needs were unparalleled (Guy-Sheftall,1995). Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was formed out of necessity and designed to oppose oppression. Collins states that "for African-American women, critical social theory encompasses bodies of knowledge and sets of institutional practices that actively grapple with the central questions facing U.S. Black women as a collectivity. The need for such thought arises because African

American women remain oppressed within a U.S. context characterized by injustice" (Collins, 2000, p. 9).

The utilization of Black Feminist Thought offers a critical view of oppression in relation to power and provides clarity and authentication to the Black woman's story (Alinia, 2015; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). It encourages Black women to take political stances that enact change further to liberate them from harmful occurrences and unlawful actions, highlighting both resistance and activism (Alinia, 2015). Patricia Hill-Collins and Beverly Guy-Sheftall's collective works have outlined numerous distinguishing features of BFT (Alinia, 2015; Collins, 2000; McCann et al., 2013). Such features include self-actualization, shared experiences, and individualism (Howard-Hamilton,2003; McCann et al., 2013; Porter, 2019).

The experiences shape self-actualization that Black women have encountered in their lives. Historically Black women have been recorded and defined by others who often relay harmful and stereotypical imaging of them (Howard Hamilton,2003). External definitions and imagery of Black women have been designed to control Black women's behavior often through narratives that dehumanized and depicted them as pack mules who are aggressive and erogenous (Collins, 2000). Black women regularly self-evaluate and redefine themselves to eradicate such negative stereotypes. By redefining themselves, Black women can validate themselves and replace negative images and mindsets with authentic portrayals (Howard-Hamilton,2003; McCann et al., 2013).

Shared experiences emphasize the commonalities among Black women in the United States. The historical intertwining of race, gender, and oppression creates a bond through a shared struggle (Alinia, 2015; Guy-Sheftall, 2011; Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Porter, 2019). Black women appear to live and experience a world distinct from other women given their

socialization, family experiences, and roots in traditional Black American culture. As a result, such experiences may arouse a specific Black feminist consciousness that is materialized into their reality. In other words, being Black and female may expose them to certain shared experiences, predisposing them to a unique group consciousness. However, this does not mean that all Black women will develop a group consciousness or that the group will express it as such (McCann et al., 2013).

The last distinguishing feature of BFT is individualism. Black women have commonalities but are not a monolithic group. Class, religion, age, sexual orientation, and geographical location are some of the varying factors contributing to their individual beliefs and interpretations (Alinia, 2015; Collins, 2000; Johnson, 2015). Differences like these result in varying responses to the core themes of BFT. While BFT attempts to capture the theoretical interpretations of Black women's day-to-day experiences, it is apparent that each women experiences life differently. As Johnson (2015) stated, "there is no archetypal Black woman whose experiences stand as normal, normative and thereby authentic" (p. 9). Some Black women experience discrimination and unfavorable treatment more often than others in other settings. Yet, Black women as a collective may still view such instances as an offense towards the group. In short, knowledge of Black women's everyday experiences constitutes Black Feminist Thought (Johnson, 2015).

In this study, I will explore the life experiences of Black women administrators in the United States. Through BFT, I will be able to understand individual experiences and commonalities/themes among the women. While some themes may not always be apparent to the participants initially, as the researcher I will have to produce facts that elevate their voices (Hamilton, 2003). Using BFT will allow for counter-storytelling, highlighting my participants'

everyday struggles as professionals, and providing knowledge alternative to the mainstream (Newcomb & Niemeyer,2015). My focus as the researcher is to make meaning of my participant's experiences as Black women who lead in educational settings and develop themes that are significant implications for leadership preparation and practices.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory emerged as Critical Legal Studies (CLS) in the 1970s. Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman argued that civil rights strategies needed improvement in social justice jurisprudence. It was not until the 1980s that CRT would step into the discourse of educational scholars and form what it is presently known today. CRT is a cross-disciplinary framework used in schools to "theorize, examine, and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact social structure, practices, and discourse" (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009, p. 656). The usage of CRT in research aids in understanding the construction of racism while challenging societal ideology.

CRT evolved from the analytical standpoint of legal scholars who were dissatisfied with the lawful harm inflicted upon people of color. They asserted that the work done on civil rights was unsatisfactory and incomplete. It was emphasized that race and racism in the United States were not merely happening but a permanent feature in society. As a permanent feature, American society could not view racism with discernment because racism is an embedded norm (Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2016). CRT argues that the presence of racism in the United States is a part of its identity. Any attempt to dismantle racism in this nation strengthens its hold. In recent years CRT has been mischaracterized and scrutinized by those who fear viewing the world through a transracial lens. For example, during former president Trump's reign (2016 to 2020), he persistently criticized and called for legislation that would dismantle antiracism and cultural

diversity/cultural sensitivity training (Vaughn, 2021). Subsequently, more than 20 states removed CRT from their schools and/or forged legislation prohibiting it from being a part of the curriculum.

In addition to the above, CRT seeks to transform race relations and create an equitable, heterogeneous society. There are five significant tenets of CRT that will be discussed. The first is the idea that racism is a permanent feature of American life. The second is interest convergence, the third is the construction of race, the fourth is the idea of storytelling and counter-narrative, and the last is that non-minorities have been the primary benefactors of civil rights legislation.

The first major tenet of CRT is the recognition that racism is one of the major foundations of American and has served to be an aberration to the American way of life (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016). The dominant culture in the U.S fosters the sustainability of predatory racial inequity and harm. The United States has a long history of racial oppression dating back to the 1400s, which continues today. Currently, popular movements such as "The Black Lives Matter Movement" have organized efforts to combat inconsistencies in the American legal proceedings regarding racial injustices. The coined term "Black Lives Matter" was first rendered as a Twitter hashtag in 2014 as a cry out from Black women in the Black community. Women were horrified at the slaughter of the then unarmed Black 17-year-old teen Trayvon Martin (Clayton,2018). The newness of the organization and the continual need to inform the public of the injustices happening within the Black community is an actuality that displays the permanence of racism in American culture. Despite these efforts, the need to have a serious conversation about racism in America has been questioned or rejected by many American citizens. Many in the current dominant culture in the U.S. seem to foster and support the sustainability of predatory racial inequity (Vaughn,2021).

The second key theme of CRT is interest convergence, which is based on the presumption that the dominant culture will support racial justice and upward movement only if it benefits them. Historical events such as the landmark case of 1954 *Brown V. The Board of Education* illustrated how interest convergence affected the entire nation. While the nation condemned the rise of communism as a threat to freedom, many Whites embraced the separate but not equal doctrine and fought against desegregation efforts in schools. Several Black students, teachers, principals, and schools were displaced, and as a result, the Black community as a whole was damaged. However, what resulted from Brown v. Board of Education allowed Whites to justify eliminating several Black positions and schools and allowed an avenue for the gentrification of prominent Black communities.

Another theme of CRT is that race is a social construct. CRT views race in the United States as fluid, altering as needed. The construction of race is evident in the questioning and assumption of an individual's race based on appearance. CRT recognizes that the history of race in this nation has varied over time and is a constructed concept.

The fourth aspect of CRT is storytelling and countered storytelling. Storytelling and counter-storytelling call for inclusivity. CRT argues that storytelling and counter-narratives are necessary for uprooting inequalities and discrimination. With such stories, more people can share their own stories and truths.

The last tenet of CRT is the understanding of the fact that Whites have been the primary benefactors of Civil Rights legislation. For example, Affirmative Action has benefited Whites more than people of color. Studies reveal that the primary recipients of Affirmative Action in hiring policies have been White women. As a result, Whites have been able to increase their income to support their household. (Taylor, Gill born, & Ladson-Billings-2016).

Nonetheless, since its emergence, CRT has become an important tool for scholars across disciplines to analyze the ways in which race and racism impact various aspects of society. In the late In the mid-to-late 1990s, scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw applied intersectionality to critical race theory (CRT) and argued that CRT needed to incorporate an intersectional perspective in order to fully account for the experiences of individuals who face multiple forms of oppression. As a result, CRT has become a cross-disciplinary framework that acknowledges the intersectionality of race with other aspects of identity, such as gender, sexuality, and socio-economic status, and how these factors intersect to create unique experiences of oppression and marginalization. It offers researchers an opportunity to examine and challenge implicit and explicit racial biases and their effects on social structures, practices, and discourse, while also taking into account the complex ways in which different forms of oppression intersect (Gillborn, 2015).

Overall, the use of Black Feminist Theory (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) in this study are essential. Both Theories uniquely challenge the ideas of race, racism, discrimination, and subordination (Jean-Marie,2009). BFT will be used to recognize the special circumstances, varying stories, and personal experiences of Black women in the United States (King,1988). Allowing the researcher to provide information that counters the dominant culture's narrative offers an alternative view of their experiences (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). It will also aid in highlighting the impact of race, class, gender, politics, and economics. BFT will allow the researcher to capture the Black woman leader (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). In the same light, the use of CRT will also support the researcher's study by focusing on the issues of race and racism as ordinary happenings in the United States. CRT strengthens the study by acknowledging socially constructed hierarchies and aims to confront racial ideologies (Flores, 2015). In short,

utilizing BFT and CRT in research permits a positionality that recognizes the challenges and efforts of a Black woman in educational Leadership positions.

Positionality and Background of the Researcher

I am a Black Millennial woman who was raised in the southeast of the United States. I am a product of a nuclear home where both parents attained advanced college degrees. My father received a doctorate in pharmacy, and my mother received a master's in education. She taught for 38 years in the public school system before retiring. I was raised to believe that you can do all things through Christ, and that attending school was expected and essential. As a graduating senior in high school, I was at a loss as to what to do next with my life. I had always known that I was expected to attend college, but I honestly did not think I was smart enough. Unlike my older 3 siblings who all graduated from college with master's degrees, I felt that I did not have any notable talents or academic strength. Reluctantly, I applied to Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), a historically Black University (HBCU), for their psychology program and was accepted. While my parents were proud, my father quickly advised me to rethink my major. To be successful in a psychology career choice, and to be able to make enough money to support myself, I would need a master's degree. Again, fearful of not being smart enough to complete a bachelor's, let alone a master's degree, I changed my major to education. I reasoned that surely, teaching was something I could do; I had been in school my whole life.

I eventually focused on a major in secondary social studies education. My HBCU experience impacted my life in ways I would have never anticipated. I had never seen so many professional Black people, nor had I witnessed so many intelligent Black people pursuing educational advancement in one place. As I went through coursework, I began to discover more about myself and who I was entirely. In other words, it was the first time in my life that I truly

understood the impact that historical happenings had on my family and me. Ideologies and behaviors that I believed to be just something that we just naturally did suddenly took on real meaning. Knowing about and being a product of the African diaspora changed my outlook on life. I began to question everything that I had been taught. Even my faith and belief in Americanism started to alter, and I became more critical of my thoughts and beliefs. While I was aware of racism, sexism, and classism, it was not until I went to FAMU that I truly understood how badly I was miseducated - even with my mother's home teachings. At this point, I decided I would never go into the classroom with children who looked like me, and not teach them an inclusive history of Brown and Black people. I decided that I would not allow Black girls in my classroom to believe that they did not matter, or that their culture was something to be ashamed of or needed to be hidden. I was going to be a teacher that would affect change! I would be the teacher that would enlighten and educate by speaking the truth and inspiring my students to think critically as well.

Before graduating with my bachelor's degree in secondary education, I was convinced by my mentors/professors that I should pursue a master's degree. I immediately started the master's coursework at FAMU in history, where I focused on African and African American history. Engaging in this coursework helped me realize that I desired to do more than work in a classroom; I needed to be an element of greater change by pursuing a position in leadership. I applied to the University of South Florida (USF) and was later accepted into their Doctoral program for educational leadership.

In 2016, I enrolled at USF as a part-time doctoral student. At the same time, I began as a first-time teacher in the classroom. As a teacher and student, I was in a unique position with a great opportunity. I was able to have a front-row seat as a student studying leadership while

watching my leaders with a critical eye. I soon discovered that I did not know the proper route to leadership despite being in a leadership program. I was also unaware of how leaders were selected and what training was needed. Although I am still in the learning process, I have become more aware of the functionality of school systems, and I have more insight into what it takes to attain a position in leadership.

Recently I have been promoted to the position of the subject area leader in my school. In this mentor role, I provide guidance and advice for my team. However, as a subject area leader, I have encountered pushback from some teachers regarding the district's direction and how they want to teach. I aspire to leave the classroom and moving into an administrative role within the next two to five years.

In short, I shared my story in this manner to bring about awareness of a few elements in my study. First, there is a common misconception that just because a person has visited a school and observed in a classroom, they are bona-fide educators and are capable of being able to teach, lead, or advise effectively. Next, cultural history impacts who I am - not only in my personal life, but in my professional life as well. My belief system and pedagogical practices are elements of my current and cultural identity. As a new leader in my department, I have identified some of the challenges and barriers of effective leadership. As a leader, I have also identified a notable lack of adequate training for leadership/administrative positions among Black women.

Assumptions of the Researcher

As a historian, I firmly believe that individuals are impacted by their historical and cultural backgrounds. Historical and cultural backgrounds of individuals shape who they are personally and professionally. That being said, individuals in leadership positions bring a bias with them as leaders and are influenced by their backgrounds and experiences. As a result, these

leaders often share and pass down their experiences and cultural beliefs to their successors. However, while grooming is often appropriate for the dominant culture, these mentoring opportunities are not relevant or applicable to Black women in leadership positions. Black women, in particular, have faced unique circumstances that do not adhere to the dominant group. Consequently, when Black women enter into leadership preparation programs, they have also had to fight for a place among leaders due to their race and gender. For Black women, their leadership practices are often overlooked, misunderstood, or diminished. I therefore assume that Black women educational leaders are typically ignored or devalued by the dominant culture. Therefore, their ideas and solutions that could help improve leadership preparation, and school performance may often go unheard or ignored.

Black women who serve as educational leaders bring a unique skillset to their leadership by incorporating their culture into their practice. Their cultural background strengthens their leadership and serves as a platform for school improvement. In doing so, they may present a nurturing demeanor to the student population they serve. I assume that preparation courses are not culturally relevant to Black women. Therefore, Black women serving as educational leaders tend to rely on their own cultural background and mentors they identified as leaders to help advance their schools. I discuss the identified assumptions to provide transparency. They are based on my perceptions as an educator, my personal pursuit of leadership, and my literature review.

Delimitations

This study does not address individuals who have left school administration before completing ten years of service but solely focuses on educators who have persisted in an administrative role longer than what current literature suggests. Studies indicate that

administrators need a minimum of five years to begin school change and a considerable amount of time to fully impact educational settings (Snodgrass Rangel, 2017; Sun & Ni, 2015). In addition to this, school administrators will be limited to the specified Southern State. Allowing the study to be state-specific and provide a definite commonality linking the participants.

Definition of Terms

This section defines terms, phrases, and abbreviations specific to this study in order to establish a common understanding.

African American: The African American identity has long been associated with a shared struggle and experience, which has included limited opportunities and economic hardships (Reed & Evans, 2008).

Mentor: is defined as someone who provides counsel and moral support for an aspiring administrator. (Lomotey,1995)

Ethic of care: A feminist moral perspective and form of political action that centers on interpersonal relationships and expressing concern for others as birth care providers and care receivers (Halliday, Aria S., et al, 2019).

Ethno-Humanism: a commitment to the education of all students; confidence in the ability of all students to do well; compassion for, and understanding of, all students and the communities in which they live. (Lomotey, 1993).

Othermothers: women who assist blood-mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities," othermothers in the larger social context customarily cater to the needs of neighborhood children as a means of assisting biological parents who may or may not lack the resources or the ability to properly care for them (Lane, 2018; Collins, 2000).

Leadership: leadership is defined as the act of leading within the context of an organization, institution, or community (Apugo, 2020).

Transformational leadership: The ability to articulate a vision and inspire futuristic and high cognitive thinking among diverse people for an overall strong school culture(Echols,200).

Mentoring is characterized as an active, engaged, and intentional relationship between two individuals (mentor and protégé) based upon mutual understanding to serve primarily the professional needs of the protégé(Echols,2006).

principal turnover is that it occurs when a principal does not return to the same school from one year to the next (Rangle, 2018)

Principal turnover is defined as one principal exiting a school and being replaced by a new principal (Boyce & Bowers, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study is to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. The literature review highlights how educational leadership practice among Black women extends from their socio-political and ethnocultural relations within the United States. I specifically review literature that discusses the dynamics of the Black family, Black girlhood to leadership, administrative practices, preparation, and other factors that affect their work as school administrators. I will also explore the social ideologies of race, racism, and sexism. This literature review reveals that while numerous studies focus on school administrators, the study of Black women's educational leadership is still quite limited (Dillard, 1995; Horsford, 2012; Loder, 2005; Lomotey, 2019).

Dynamics of the Black Family

Socio-political periods and their aftermath tend to shape the lives of Black people in the United States impacting their decision-making, perceptions, and ideologies. In the broader context, ideologies/belief systems can penetrate family dynamics that often socialize Black women from adolescence to adulthood. As a result, they may provide the foundation for their cultural views and practices. Billingsley's work in the late 1960s discussed the Black family in terms of reconstruction. His work highlighted how the Black family has had to reconstruct itself, despite the challenges of the lingering effects of slavery, emancipation, and other sweeping social changes in the United States. Billingsley (1969) claimed the Black family functioned in contrast to their White counterparts because of racial oppression and an inability to have

traditional nuclear family social ties. Because of the inability to have nuclear family ties, the Black family is viewed as a social system (family, community, and school) within the constraints of the wider society. Therefore, assimilation into society is difficult or impossible for the Black family. Later works continue to support many of Billingsley's ideas offering more defined concepts such as sex roles (now gender roles), resistance, and *other mothering*.

During the 1970s, there were numerous studies conducted that focused on the socialization and cultural norms of the Black family and how they differed from their White counterparts. Researchers found that Eurocentric ideologies and familial social constructs varied from those of Black families (Allen,1978; Billingsley,1969; Lewis, 1975). Black households that contained both a mother and father shared responsibilities; therefore, the sex/gender roles were loosely defined and adaptable (Hill,1971; Ladner, 1971). For example, in Lewis' study (1975), she asserts that it was common for the Black household to have both parents. For those who were married, both husband and wife had a strong self-image. Thereby, they were able to achieve balance within role expectations which often involved mutual agreements. In addition, they encouraged their children to be confident and assertive regardless of their gender (Lewis,1975).

In contrast, Eurocentric cultures often embraced a mindset of dichotomy. The di mindset conflicts with the Afrocentric worldview where Black families manage sex-role training and role expectations in ways that are not gender-specific. For instance, children, regardless of sex, engaged in housekeeping. Thus, the behaviors displayed by children in the Black community were often viewed by White people as inappropriate according to their gender category (Allen,1978). Because sex roles/gender roles in the Black community were not polarized in comparison to the constructed ones in the White community (Jones et al., 2018), misunderstandings of cultural differences in socialization lead to cultural conflict between racial

groups. Consequently, historical implications have encouraged the belief and longstanding idea that Black women should be socialized in a Eurocentric manner. Despite Eurocentric ideology, Black women were culturally different from their White counterparts and behaved and thought differently due to socialization (Lewis,1975; Lorde, 2005; Ramirez et al., 2020; Story, 2018).

Comparative literature on Black and White families centered around socialization and familial norms continued in the 1980s. However, numerous studies shifted their attention to focus more on the Black woman as a nurturer. Researchers sought to examine how Black culture influenced maternal parental values; and what were the critical characteristics for raising children (Blee & Tickamyer,1987; Page & Washington, 1987; Peterson & Peters, 1985). Blee and Tickamyer's (1987) work discussed Black mothers' interactions with their daughters as pivotal in shaping their daughters' feelings about marriage, childbearing, and employment. The findings showed that socialization did not end in childhood but affected the daughter's attitudes about sex roles in adulthood and influenced work behavior. Bailey-Fakhoury and Mitchell (2018) stated, "mothers are the ones who spearhead the gendered-racial socialization process, the transmission of messages concerning race, racism, personal identity and management" (p. 490). This quote illustrates the complex and intimate relationship of many Black mothers with their daughters and how that relationship influences their role development. With this said, it is implied that the teachings that Black mothers imbue in their daughters, impacts how they interact in their work environments (Everett et al., 2018).

The findings in the above studies illustrate how Black women have had to negotiate through life by challenging and adopting values for survival - such as structures of race, class, gender, and Eurocentric ideals of power (Everett et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2018). Despite these findings, Black women have acquired higher participation rate in the labor force gaining

employment to care for their families (Blee & Tickamyer, 1978; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983). Unlike White women, Black women have a shared history of oppression that has diminished their ability to stay home (Collins, 1989). Therefore, many Black women cannot perform the traditional Eurocentric gender roles. Being a working mother is accepted and expected in the Black family household. In many instances, Black women are the central figures in the economic lives of their families even if the household contains both parents. Because Black women do not hold the same traditional values about sex roles as Whites, it has become the mother's duty to instill in their daughter resistance to ridicule and/or discrimination (Blee & Tickamyer, 1978; Greene, 1990).

Black Family Today

Current research continues to focus on the socialization and practices of Black motherhood. In doing so, themes of empowerment, resilience, and coping have been the focus of numerous studies (Everet et al., 2018; Hall, 2015). Experiences of racism and/or racial exclusion are often expressed among Black people within the workforce. Because of their experiences with racism, many Black mothers tend to focus on teaching their children how to combat racism. Black parents frequently prepare their children by having early discussions centered on racial and gender discrimination (Stokes et al., 2020). In doing so, they attempt to correct miseducation and teach their children survival tactics as a means of resistance to oppression (Bailey-Fakhoury & Mitchell, 2018; Oshin & Milan, 2019).

However, many of the discussions are also overlaid with lessons of empowerment and uplifting messages of beauty, strength, and reassurance. Mothers are particularly invested in their daughters' sense of self. For example, Black mothers want their daughters to take pride in their heritage; but at the same time, they want them to understand that others may view them as

inferior. Despite the lack of voice in the broader aspect, mothers encourage daughters to speak up and correct wrongs against them (Bibbs, 2017). Resilience and resistance are taught to provide an ability to recover from adversity, regain a state of equilibrium, and sustain and enhance oneself (Everet et al., 2018). Black mothers exercise their agency when raising their daughters to consider and celebrate their self-worth and value. The mother-daughter relationship is often the most influential in both of their lives. Their interactions are essential in creating behavioral norms and establishing a foundation for resilience (Hortsman,2019).

Within the context of the Black family, daughters have learned to cope with stress, problem solving, and tolerate conflict. Many of such characteristics are aspects of resilience. In Everet's et al. (2016) study, resilience is outlined as having two qualities: the first is the ability to rebound from stress quickly and regain a full state of health, and the second is the ability to move forward in the face of adversity while growing from the challenging experience (Everet et al., 2016; Hortsman, 2019). *Resilience* is a psychological process that involves an internal capacity of strength and a characteristic that grows as a person develops. For instance, the participants in Everet's study (2016) reminisce about their childhood and interacting with their mothers. Many stated that their mothers gave them self-worth while growing up through positive discussions. They also modeled coping behaviors for their daughters and taught them to stand up for themselves. Black mothers often resist racism and sexist stereotyping and actively protect their daughters from dominant male ideologies (Elliott et al., 2018).

Moreover, Black mothers do not shoulder the responsibility of imbuing resiliency in their daughters alone but expect other matriarchs to do the same. Black mothers are often aware of the mistreatment of their children in school settings and purposely place their children around others who will look out for and care about them (Leath et al., 2019). Family, community, church, and

school leaders are employed to help stabilize and educate Black children, particularly the daughters, who will pass the torch to future generations. As educational leaders, such lessons become invaluable for dealing with racial and or gender discrimination.

McClain (2019) painted a portrait of how she was raised by her biological mother and other mothers, including her maternal grandmother, aunts, and elders in the community. In her writing, she expressed how her matriarch's shared system of care impacted her in both childhood and adulthood. *Other mothering* is when a woman who is not the biological mother of a child assists in caring for the child and shares in the mothering responsibilities (Bass, 2012; Bernard et al., 2013; Everet et al., 2016). Other mothering was practiced during slavery and used as a means for survival, providing educational and cultural transmissions to offspring (Case, 1997; Mawhinney, 2012; Lane,2018). The development of other mothering as a type of nurturing practice formed relationships between women and children within the larger community out of the necessity for survival. The Black family was often forcibly split during the African Diaspora, which created a need for communal relationships. Throughout history, Black girls and women have learned how to adapt, survive, and function within society based on the development of communal relationships. Collins (1991) writes that African heritage views childcare as a collective responsibility. The shared system of care continues to be a staple in the Black community (Bass, 2012; McClellan, 2020). McClain (2019) best captures this idea as she recalls her mother's words to her when she was seven years old - "We don't live for I. We live for the we" (p. 15).

From Black Girlhood to Leadership

Black girlhood is a framework that defines the characteristics of Black girls emphasizing their agency and resistance. While many works discuss Black girlhood and socialization, very

few studies focus on how Black girls define leadership or what inspires them to become leaders in their adult lives. Mims and Jones (2020) point out in their work that Black women have often been at the forefront of educational leadership throughout history; however, much of their journey, contributions, and perspectives are excluded from the scholarship. In their study, they interviewed 21 Black middle school-aged girls during a summer program, asking them to define leadership and discuss what they knew about leaders. In their study, similar to others, they found that Black girls looked up to other Black women as inspirational leaders, including figures such as Michelle Obama, family members, and community leaders (Hailliday et al., 2019; Mims & Jones, 2020). The girls in their study felt that true leaders were those with similar backgrounds to theirs and, in spite of hardship, they overcame. One participant stated (when talking about leaders), "all of them started from nothing, and they felt like they wanted to inspire others. So, they stepped up to the plate, and they did it" (p.22)! The girls saw leaders as trailblazers, community supporters, and role models they could look up to.

Similarly, Hailliday et al. (2019) found that Black girls are often inspired to pursue leadership when they encounter professional and grassroots Black women and or girl leaders. Their participants identified role models and leaders in their communities taking on tasks that were important to them. They admired servant leaders and individuals who exhibited ethics and care. As young girls, they identified leadership traits within themselves when helping others, speaking up against a wrong action, and/ or giving to those in need. The girls in their study believe leaders fix and clean up messes (Garcia et al., 2020; Halliday et al., 2019).

Black girls who are taught to have self-esteem by the age of six often tend to have a sense of obligation to lead, regardless of the consequences. Because of this ingrained teaching, many Black girls seek justice, equality, and freedom by taking a strong stand in schools and

communities across the United States. However, to take on such roles, Black girls need to develop a strong sense of self-worth and become cognizant of their potential as they navigate through what can be described as harmful, degrading, and often dehumanizing stereotypes. In order to be leaders, they must first experience self-appraisal. In the process of self-appraisal, Black girls need to be able to respond to stereotypes and determine how they will react and cope (Mims & Jones, 2019; Rodgers et al., 2021). It is clear that social support helps Black students cope, leading to self-acceptance and resiliency. In the school setting, teachers have the ability to influence their students' identity and development which can, in turn, push them towards leadership (Nyachae, 2016).

Hailliday et al. (2019) added to this topic by addressing the negative beliefs that Black girls had when thinking about pursuing leadership. In their study, Black girls between the ages of 8 and 14 were inspired to pursue leadership when they encountered Grassroot leaders. However, they were hesitant because of negative stereotypes and their own perceived flawed character traits. The participants identified that being too loud or too bossy was not something that a leader could be, and therefore, in order for them to be leaders, they needed to change (Hailliday et al., 2019).

As adults, Black women often lean on their girlhood lessons to navigate their leadership positions. Brunner and Peyton-Claire (2000) found that one of their participants, a Black female superintendent, learned in her early years of life to engage actively and consciously when forming her own identity and defining her destiny. Empowering messages from the matriarchs in her family, including her mother, grandmother, and aunties, encouraged her to speak up for herself. "Talking back" and speaking up is something that she uses in her leadership role and is an essential practice when she is in a male dominant room and is the only female. She applied

her background, intellect, and personal knowledge to her experiences as a superintendent. In this study, the authors suggest Black families socialize girls in a way that influences their educational and career outcomes. Tran (2014) also found that Black women educational leaders personally and professionally learned leadership skills through mentorship relationships. Growing up, her mother influenced her by consistently soliciting her help when she could not complete a task alone. Her mother leaned on a network of women in their community; therefore, as a leader, she learned to lean on people. In addition to this, she encourages her students to ask for help and seek out mentorship. Another participant identifies herself as a leader and gives much credit to community leaders within the church where she grew up as well as to family members. They coached her and taught her life lessons before she got into the professional world. To her being a role model and being transparent are essential characteristics of good leadership

When analyzing Black women's educational leaders, the above examples allow a better understanding of Black women and how culture frequently shapes leadership styles and practices. As young children, Black girls are taught that gender and sex roles are fluid and can vary as needed. Unlike her White counterparts, she is expected to become a contributing part of the family and is imbued with strength and power, which helps to combat and deal with racism and sexism. Black women are taught to have a strong self-image and positive cultural identities (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). In addition, Black women are taught to resist injustice and nurture their children and those within the community. Many of these passed-down customs are utilized in the everyday role of Black female leaders. Being responsible, caring for others, and being of use are significant themes when discussing family dynamics and are visible within the school context (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). Black women educational administrators are generationally taught by their families that ideals of kinship do not stem from blood relatives alone but are

associated with culture and race (Peters, 2012). According to the literature on Black women and family dynamics, family roles are key aspects that affect how Black women lead. Their decision-making process is driven by culture, which guides how they create school missions and educate their youth (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Roane & Newcomb, 2013).

Path to Educational Administration for Black Women

I intend to provide a background for the readers' understanding of the uniqueness of Black women's educational administrators. Many reviewed works center on Black women as principals and aim to examine who they are, their challenges, and how they lead (Reed & Evans, 2008; Wrushen & Sherman, 2012). Women are underrepresented in leadership positions, and women of color are even more so scarce in this field of study. Black women have less access to administrative leadership positions due to harmful stereotyping about both their gender and their race. In the following section, I will examine how researchers have come to discuss the attainment of K-12 educational administrative positions by Black women. Recurring topics in this discussion include who they are, how Black women become educational leaders, self-efficacy, leadership preparation, and the struggle for visibility.

Current studies on educational leadership acknowledge the disproportion of Black women principals compared to their Black and White male counterparts (Reed, 2012; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Most studies conducted on this topic are derived from an interpersonal standpoint. For example, by examining experiences through personal narratives, researchers are able to delve into Black women principals' interpersonal experiences (Reed, 2012). Many women who speak about their promotion into principal positions express that their job attainment was due to, but not always, steering by their predecessors. Leadership in the Black community is

often handed down from one leader to the next, and this is no different in schools. Researchers claim that purposeful selection, a feeling of calling/destiny/fate, or influence (Reed & Evans, 2008) are major factors that push Black women into principal positions. Often spiritual and church/community leaders, many of them believe their leadership is a form of giving back (Newcomb & Nieyer, 2015; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010; Wrushen & Sherman, 2008). Horsford (2012) also describes Black women principals as a population of women serving as social justice leaders who push for equity and create opportunities for their students (Reed, 2012).

Researchers have also found that most of Black women principals serve in schools where the students have high needs. However, many are content because they feel they are fulfilling their purpose in serving in such roles. In addition to this, they are often the first woman, or the first Black person, to hold such a position. In some cases, they are also first for gender and race, and are often trailblazers for future leaders (Wrushen & Sherman, 2012). According to studies, Black women have a strong sense of self and self-efficacy due to a concern for social justice. Much of who they are is discussed using historical references as Civil Rights leaders. The notion of civil rights leaders alludes to an inherited trait where an individual is regarded as an activist which then allows them space and opportunity to lead in the Black community.

Struggle for Visibility

Black women principals are invisible in educational leadership literature due to race, gender, and class (Jang & Alexander, 2020; Lomotey, 2019). Because of this, they are constantly compared to their Black and White male counterparts and face many challenges (Reed, 2012). The comparison has forced Black women to deconstruct educational norms that reinforce racism, sexism, and other acceptable forms of oppression. As a result, this has challenged researchers to

take a critical look at the influence of power and privilege within schools. Haynes (2016) refers to this as the Invisibility Syndrome Paradigm. The Invisibility Syndrome Paradigm is a term scholars use to understand the experiences of Black women educators in the U.S. seeking freedom from the master narrative (Hayes et al., 2016), which is described as a prescribed social standing that has been created around Black women principals. It promotes racist and sexist ideologies that leave Black women feeling inadequate and invisible. Invisibility has fostered a culture of code-switching and purposeful adjustment, coping, and adaptation to cloak a presumed inferior status as educators (Hayes et al., 2016).

Being invisible also explains how Black women principals experience preparation programs and upward mobility (Flores, 2018; Reed & Evans, 2008). Preparation programs are a critical point in the development of educational leaders. Researchers argue that the selection process devalues people of diverse populations and functions through a hidden curriculum (Karanxha et al., 2014). A hidden curriculum is an implicit and embedded educational experience wherein students are taught through social transmissions certain behavioral norms that reinforce the status quo. In this understanding, the hidden curriculum expresses that there is a right and technical way to educate students (Semper & Blasco, 2018).

With this being said, Black women candidates are not always socialized for principalship and are in fact marginalized, limiting their opportunity for upward mobility into administration (Berry & Reardon, 2021). In Bailes & Guthery's (2020) study, they found that Black assistant principals are 18% less likely to be promoted to the position of principal than White candidates and spend more time in the pipeline for promotion. Being Black and a woman furthered their tenure as assistant principals.

Dancy et al. (2018) argued that race in western society is a foundation on which socio-political organizations are built. Therefore, Black women are disadvantaged because they often do not possess the dominant group's cultural capital. As a result, they may experience not being heard or understood as capable and competent leaders (Apugo, 2020). They are met with many challenges that systematically inhibit their growth (Flores, 2018; Peters, 2012). They also face barriers to entry, such as affordability, lack of recruitment, and sponsored mobility (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Berry & Reardon, 2021).

Preparation for Educational Leadership

The pipeline to the principalship includes essential elements such as administrative experience and leadership training. However, because of discriminatory practices (race and sex), Black women are not often selected as replacements for leadership positions. Karanxha et al. (2014) write that the "lack of racial and ethnic diversity among principals in particular (men and women) has been attributed to insufficient incentives, job-related disincentives, and structural obstacles such as the homosocialization of the leadership pool that occurs through the selection of principals during the hiring process" (Karanxha et al., 2014, p. 35).

Many studies reinforce this by acknowledging that there is a lack of support in preparing Black women for principalship. The absence of appropriate support disadvantages Black women administrators during the onboarding stage (Lomotey, 1995; Peters, 2012). Educational leadership preparation is centered around mentoring. In most settings, an older administrator would prepare a successor to take on their role once they have left the position (Berry & Reardon, 2022). Lomotey (1995) stated that mentorship or sponsorship is important for women aspiring to become educational administrators. However, many Black women lacked such mentors. Berry and Reardon (2022) write that teachers who are given opportunities to pursue

principalship will often have administrative experience and training. However, not all are given the necessary prerequisites. The principal pipeline program equips teachers with the additional academic credentials and skills needed to be successful leaders. Supervisors often initiate leadership training and experiences that may include grooming, exposure, and access to support networks, increasing an individual's visibility. For example, senior principals may invite an aspiring principal to participate in the district or school programs for future leaders. However, Black principals often lack this support and miss opportunities to climb the ladder (Berry & Reardon, 2022; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Those who seek to become leaders without mentors are disadvantaged due to district programs and discriminatory practices that lack support, which significantly limits the number of Black women educators from achieving administrative positions (Berry & Reardon, 2022; Lomotey,1995).

Even so, Black women are still hired as replacements but are usually selected only if they present themselves as non-threatening or are viewed as passive (Lomotley,1995). Without proper guidance, they are often selected to serve in lesser administrative roles and/or as tokens. Therefore, when an individual does gain access, mentors are not there to properly guide them through the process of becoming and staying an administrator (Lomotey, 1995; Peters, 2012). While preparation programs in higher educational institutions are available to train future leaders, educational leadership preparation programs do not often instruct students on problems associated with urban Black communities (Dillard, 1995). Dillard continues, "administrator preparation is devoid of the social, cultural, historical and political experiences of poor urban students and the communities" (p. 559). As a result, many newly selected principals go into positions not knowing how to lead but will often try to imitate what they have seen and admired

and avoid practices they perceive as ineffective (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Jean-Marie et al., 2013).

It is widely believed that having mentors would have helped alleviate errors and strengthen them as leaders (Lomotey,1995). Still, they tend to understand their environments and work to the best of their abilities (Bass, 2012; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2013). As a result, the practices taught in many leadership preparation programs may not always fit the needs of their particular school. Some actions taken may not be well received causing them to be more likely impeded due to systematic racism. As a result, they often face scrutiny by their White colleagues who hold them to a standard that may not fit the needs of their school (Reed, 2012).

In numerous studies, Black women principals have shared negative feelings about preparation for principalship and preparation programs (Reed & Evans,2008). Such feelings often stem from the lack of proper guidance and mentorship for leadership roles. Black women principals feel they need proper mentoring and assistance. With support, they would better identify school problems as part of larger societal structures, preventing the maintenance of stereotypical views about African American students and families. Support would also prevent the negative association of their schools with academic underachievement (Reed & Evans, 2008).

Location of Black Women Principals

The current body of literature acknowledges that the population of Black educators is limited (Aaron, 2020; Moorosi et al., 2018). Studies found that when searching for Black women principals, they are often located within low socioeconomic urban Black schools (Bailes & Guthery, 2020; Bass, 2012; Davis et al., 2016; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Jang & Alexander, 2022). The purposeful placement of Black women in schools with large populations of Black

students is an occurrence that due to, but not consistently implemented for, purposeful placement of homogeneous racial groups (Moore, 2013; Reed & Evans, 2008). Moore (2013) argued that the placement of Black women has more to do with their race than objective qualifications. He further argued that Black woman administrators are primarily selected to serve in Black schools because they are believed to be experts on their race (Moore, 2013).

It is a common assumption that Black educators are the best fit for schools that serve a high population of Black students simply because they are Black, and therefore, should be able to manage Black children or students (Moore, 2013). Homogeneity within the school system is so rooted that Black women principals are often viewed as a “positive influence” or as "clean-up women" for schools’ with certain types of populations (Peters, 2012, p. 29). However, while this is a stereotypical ideology, some studies opine that Black women principals report they are happy and feel obliged to work within such schools. Aaron (2020) writes that while most Black women principals are located in Urban settings, they are content and willing to serve (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). In summary, studies have suggested Black women principals feel a need to serve urban schools to fulfill a sense of responsibility. Their service to predominantly Black schools enables them to uplift the race and prepare their students for success through education.

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is described as a strong belief that an individual is confident in themselves and has the ability to make a change. According to Reed (2008), women, and people of color, leadership abilities are influenced by their self-efficacy. In her study she interviewed three Black women principals. Reed found that her participants believe they can make a difference in the lives of their students and in the schools that they lead. For example, Ms. Johnson stated that her

strategy to confront racism and prejudice was to focus on being the best - regardless of a school's racial demographics. Her commitment to the students that she served functioned as a catalyst for her promotion to an administrative position. Similar studies confirm Reed's findings that Black women principals often advocate for their communities and students. In doing so, Black women tend to willingly go into high need schools where the students are primarily minorities (Johnson, 2006; Reed, 2012; Wruchen & Sherman, 2008). According to the research, they dedicate themselves to their students because their leadership comes from a strong sense of duty and purpose.

Another example of self-efficacy is outlined in Johnson’s (2006) historical case study. Johnson examines and illuminates the life of Gertrude Elise Johnson McDougald Ayer, the first African American woman to become a New York City principal. Throughout her findings, she discusses how Ayer utilized her position as a principal to educate, innovate, uplift, and encourage Black community development. Not only was Ayer an activist for Black people, but she served as a pioneer as well. Many Black women educational administrators are forerunners and are in a unique position to initiate and implement new programs and intercultural curricula to meet the specific needs of their students (Johnson, 2006).

In the above-mentioned studies, researchers identified Black women principals as having self-efficacy when they present themselves as social justice leaders taking on the responsibility to fight the prejudiced domineering norms. Many of these norms often adversely affect their students. Scholars also note that Black women educational administrators strive to eradicate oppression, provide fairness, equity, and equality, and challenge racist ideologies through social justice. These actions serve to empower them to make a positive change in their schools and

effectively educate their students (Flores, 2018; Horsford, 2012; Reed, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010).

The last way self-efficacy is discussed in research is in terms of how Black women educational administrators are treated in comparison to their male counterparts. In Jean-Marie (2013) study, she discusses the educational leadership journey of a Black woman who was constantly demeaned because of her gender and race. Jean-Marie's participant stated that the challenges she faced would not have occurred if she had been a man. If she had been a man, she more than likely would have benefitted from a higher pay and experience a speedy placement into an administrative role. She would not have been subjected to condescending jargon. Yet, despite this egregious treatment, she not only stood up for herself, but for other women. When the opportunity presented itself, she took positions that were considered traditionally male.

Black women administrators often want to be seen as leaders regardless of their gender or their race. In many cases, studies show that they resent being compared to men and have no desire to be seen or portrayed as overly aggressive or abnormally driven leaders. Black women leaders often take pride in their different approaches to education (Wruchen & Sherman, 2008; Reed;2012).

Ethics of Care and Pedagogical Strategies

Noddings (2013) suggests that education should prepare students for life, and that educators who employ an ethic of care have immense influence over their students. The author claims that educators cannot "nurture the student intellectually without regard for ethical ideas unless she is willing to risk producing a monster" (p. 168). Schools have an opportunity to genuinely care for their students, and in return, the students will learn. Noddings (2013) explains that the ethic of care should be a part of the curriculum. Schools have an obligation to their

students and must go beyond academia by paying attention and being intentional to how they care for children; this, in turn, is how measurable development can be achieved. Students will not perform well if they do not feel as though they are cared for (Bass,2012). Educators who employ care in curriculum increase cultural literacy and, as a result, are able to attain mutual understanding and empathy.

Bass' (2012) article contributes to the body of literature on the ethics of care by displaying how leading with care in education can positively impact students' learning in urban schools. The principals were described as having a heightened perception and understanding of inequality and oppression. They promoted positive change and a desire to support and advance their students using the ethic of care (Bass, 2012). The principals frequently utilized the ethic of care in their decision-making process as it promotes social justice (Koonce & Kreassig, 2020). The practice of employing social justice protects students, enhances their rights, and provides them with dignity. When principals are committed and proactive in building responsive and caring relationships, the benefits garnered by students and the school are undeniable. The use of the ethic of care is a powerful tool that not only adolescents respond positively to, but also aids in overall school reform and change (Bass, 2012).

Reed and Evans (2008) refer to caring as a school system in which school officials identify students' academic, social, and psychological needs, and arrange for those needs to be satisfied by school policy. Administrators implement the ethic of care through the purposeful hiring of caring employees, continuous professional development, building an aesthetically welcoming learning environment, and establishing fair discipline rules and practices to foster institutional care (Bass, 2012). In addition to this, many administrators who implement the ethic of care take a critical look at traditional means of discipline and choose alternative strategies. For

example, in Bass' study, the administrators selectively administered zero-tolerance for policies that were not in the best interest of their students. Overall "A principal is at the helm of every school and therefore is the key to guide their school to build upon or to transform the culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, atmosphere, and schoolwide priorities for the benefit of every student" (Koonce & Kreassig, 2020, p. 827).

Such studies provide insight into how caring environments provide opportunities for principals to foster positive relationships throughout their entire school population and creating an overall positive and thriving school environment. A caring environment has the potential to increase student achievement and adhere to culturally responsive pedagogy - particularly in schools with diverse populations. It also encourages teachers to be responsive to their students by incorporating elements of culture in their teaching methods. For low-performing majority-minority schools, it is strongly recommended to implement culturally responsive pedagogy to address some academic disparities. Principals who employ ethics of care in their schools modify their knowledge and experiences by devoting attention to classroom context and individual student needs and experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy is invaluable in schools with a large population of disadvantaged, marginalized cultural groups. In efforts to bridge gaps between stockholders such as students, teachers, parents, and schools, there should be many opportunities to weigh in and provide input on curriculum matters and issues that concern them. Overall, Black women educators understand that they are ethically responsible for preparing Black youth and demonstrate their care through the pedagogy of care (Lane, 2018).

Black Women Leadership Practices and Attributes

There is a wide acknowledgement that although Black women principals are often situated in low-achieving urban schools, they still strive to care for and advance their students

regardless of their location (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Peters, 2012). Research conducted on Black women principals, centers around their leadership practices and how those practices lead to transformative leadership, caring while other mothering, and demonstrating activist leadership (Jang & Alexander, 2022; Lomotey, 2019).

Transformative leadership in education is a practice by which principals tackle the inequities of their students. According to Agosto and Roland (2018), transformative leadership is the acknowledgment of power and privilege that a principal uses to articulate both their individual and collective purposes for both public and private means. Principals deconstruct social-cultural norms that create inequities and reconstruct them. Transformative leadership as a practice provides a foundation for fairness and justice within such schools. Flores (2018) states that transformative leadership is a practice that Black women principals use to improve their schools and states that "female school leaders of color exhibit a sense of responsibility to use acquired power for the good of the group" (Flores, 2018, p. 349). An example of how this power is used is presented in Dillard's (1995) study, where the principal of an urban school recalled refusing to hire teachers who did not share the interest of her school despite the vacancies.

Black women principals are recruited to improve their schools and lead in a manner that positively impacts the lives of their students and the wider community (Flores, 2018). Transformative leadership provides them with a platform to use their power and position to make the necessary changes. In Flores' study, he selected three participants, all Black women principals, to inform his work. The participants spoke about how they led with the attitude of care and rejected traditional leadership styles that do not adhere to the special needs of their students. Participants discussed how race and class impacted how their students were viewed. Their discussion stated that although their students are able to learn, they often lack opportunities

because of their demographics. In an effort to overcome this problem, the participants stated that they looked at the students holistically, providing equity and opportunities for learning. In doing so, they engage in a variety of practices such as taking community walks, developing community partnerships, hiring diverse staff, being culturally responsive, providing equity training for their teachers and celebrating their students' cultural backgrounds. For these leaders, transformative leadership focused on reconstructing how their students were viewed and changing the master narrative.

Leading with care, or the ethic of care, is another leadership practice employed by Black women principals (Arnold & Brooks, 2013; Bass, 2009). The ethic of care is an approach where principals treat their schools and community in a maternal manner (Loder, 2005; Nash & Peters, 2020). In doing so, they take on the responsibility of each student as though they were their own. Black women principals feel that they are responsible for rebuilding schools and communities by teaching and leading students in a nurturing manner. Nurturing students and serving the community is a key factor in the success of the principal and the school. In Peters' (2012) study, Dr. Brown, a Black woman principal, discussed purposely building relationships with her students. In doing, so, it became essential for her to learn the students' names to combat resistance, build a positive school culture, and improve student behavior. Another participant from this study, Dr. Marshall, became involved in the community to gain community stockholders to partner in aiding school reform.

As previously mentioned, mothering a child who is not of kin is understood as other mothering. In educational research, the concept of other mothering is in tandem with the ethic of care. Many Black women principals find themselves to be othermothers within their schools and function as surrogate parents to their students (Loder,2005). In Loder's study (2005), participants

recall adopting the surrounding community and shouldering their problems. They believed that to help their students, they should implement change throughout the community riddled with gangs, drugs, and poverty. In doing so, the principals state that they would fight the system to bring about change through nurturing, teaching, and leading. In addition, Black women principals reveal that it is their mission to use mothering to provide guidance, not only to their student, but to young parents as well. Black women principals attempt to fill in the gaps by educating parents who can, in turn, aid their children in, as well as out of school (Bernard et al., 2012; Loder, 2005; Newcomb &, 2015; Reed & Evans, 2008). For some Black women principals, their maternal qualities enhance their leadership skills and benefit their schools and wider communities.

As a rule, other mothering allows Black women principals to work as activists in their schools and surrounding communities. Bernard et al. state that academic othermothers create a system of support that provides a venue for students and others who are oppressed and do not feel as though they are empowered enough to make changes in their lives. Other mothers' work signifies the continuity of shared responsibility that brings about social transformation in educational institutions. Black Women principals who assume this role are better able to create relationships with their students where they can provide wisdom, mentoring, and counsel. According to Bernard Black, educators function as activists and "contribute to the collective physical, emotional and intellectual welfare of the community" (p.105). Therefore, Black women who function as othermothers have a common goal of creating a liberating atmosphere that encourages activism within their schools.

Activist leadership, as explained in the work of Bass (2012), is the idea that the discriminatory and marginalized experiences endured by Black women are tools in which they

use to empathize with their students. Bass (2012) further writes that Black women's educational leaders have heightened perception and awareness of inequality and oppression in the United States. This heightened perception and awareness forces them to recognize and cope with racial pressures and tensions. As a result, leaders become sensitive to the oppression of others and wish to rescue other oppressed people. In the case of education, “other oppressed people” are often recognized as their students. In doing so, Black women principals believe they can make a difference in their students' lives because they have similar experiences (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Hence, many Black women principals have adopted a leadership style based on a strong sense of community needs, justice, and social change (Cruz-Gonzalez et al., 2019).

Studies find that Black women principals utilize their background and professional experiences to influence and adopt activist leadership, which in turn is used to combat discriminatory practices. Santamaria and Jean Marie (2014) found in their study that each participant recognized racism in the school system and believed it was their job to lead in a manner that would break through inequalities and help students achieve academically. A few strategies employed by Black women principals included working hard to dispel negative stereotypes, providing equity to their students, and giving back to marginalized communities. Their use of activist leadership attempted to tackle social justice issues in an effort to alleviate their students' unfair treatment in the educational system. Consequently, some Black women principals who engage in social justice reform within their schools are reprimanded. However, many are willing to accept punishment if they find their actions justifiable and help their students (Bass, 2012; Flores, 2018; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Johnson, 2006; Roane & Newcomb, 2013; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010). For many Black administrators, principal activist leadership is a tool that can be used to aid in closing the gap in education while developing the student

holistically (Moorisi et al., 2018). Overall, the principals believe that their pedagogical practices best support the interest of the students (Jean-Marie et al.,2009; Johnson, 2006; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010), and that such pedagogical practices serve to break away from traditional practices that can potentially be harmful (Bass, 2012; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998).

Spirituality

In Black culture, there is a historical connection between religion and spirituality. Scholarship articulates that many Black women principals are grounded and compelled by faith which serves as a basis for their leadership (Arnold & Brooks, 2013; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Jean-Marie et al., 2013; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010). Witherspoon and Taylor found that the participants in their study used spirituality to enact activism against oppressive policy. They believed it was their mission to do "the best they [could] give without getting fired" (p.145). Roane and Newcomb (2013) also describe the spirituality phenomenon in their study as Pastoral care.

Some women rely on prayer and faith to get them to their positions or state that leadership opportunities emerged from a spiritual calling (Loder,2005; Reed & Evans, 2008). In the study conducted by Agosto and Karanxha, they found that their participant, a Black woman who served as an educational leader, relied on spirituality when collaborating with school districts to combat racism and guide her practices. Spirituality aids educators in overcoming various challenges and struggles and encourages them to help those in need (Agosto & Karanxha, 2011; Roane & Newcomb, 2012). The act of faith and use of prayer is also utilized to combat social injustices and as a means of self-preservation (Agosto & Roland, 2018). Black women educational leaders often believe that spirituality encourages family support and

promotes Black students' education. In this study, spirituality afforded the principals a way to continue and thrive in hostile environments. They met challenges with faith and used it to influence their educational leadership practices. The participants led by Christian values used religious-spiritual influences in their educational practices as the basis for resilience and social justice (Roane & Newcomb, 2013; Witherspoon & Taylor, 2010).

Principal Turnover

Principal leadership is believed to be one of the most influential factors in schools (DeMatthews et al., 2021; Rangel, 2018; Yan, 2020). Principals are expected to improve their school's performance, increase student achievement, and support teacher improvement (Bartanen et al., 2019). However, it is difficult for schools to attain the above school objectives due to the steady increase in principal turnover. Nationally, in the U.S., principal turnover is higher than teacher turnover. Effective school improvement can take a minimum of up to 5 to 7 years. Given this needed and critical time period, principals who serve short terms are hard pressed to implement new policies or programs for improvement, let alone to effectively work towards a vision for the school in which they serve. Principal turnover is "defined as one principal exiting a school and being replaced by another principal" (Boyce & Bowers, 2016, p. 237). The determining factors that cause principals to exit their schools vary. Some reasons principals leave include work conditions such as promotion or demotion, retirement, transitioning into another school, or exiting the field of education altogether (Yan, 2020). A principal's tenure in a school is also impacted by their race, sex, age, satisfaction in the field, and/or experience level (Rangel, 2018).

The highest principal turnover rates are found in low-income, low-performing schools with high concentrations of students of color (Bartanen et al., 2019; Boyce & Bowers, 2016;

DeMatthews et al., 2021; Reid, 2020). Low-income and low performing tend to struggle to recruit and retain effective principals who are committed to improving school performance. In addition, principals have had increasing responsibilities. They are now expected to improve school performance, navigate schools that struggle with discipline and lack parental involvement, meet federal and state accountability policies, and produce sufficient standardized testing scores. Furthermore, working conditions do not always equate to salary or job benefits. Many factors impact their decision when considering entry, mobility, or exiting principalship (Yan, 2020).

Even so, principals who are not at low-performing schools are still challenged with an imbalance of increased responsibilities that include improving student learning and achievement, managing school faculty and staff, allocating resources, creating and maintaining a positive school climate and culture, and implementing school goals that adhere to the needs and expectations of the stakeholders(Yan,2020). Moreover, the pressures, long work hours, and stressors have proven to be disincentives for principal retention.

Reconstructive Thought

Historically and traditionally, a large number of Black women have been constructed to be submissive and given prescribed traits. Stereotypes have significantly hindered their image and who they are (Collins, 2000). Many have come to reject stereotypes and assigned identities that describe them as inferior because of their race and /or gender. Positive personal narratives aid in reconstruction and reclaiming of one’s true self. Researchers have categorized them as strong, spiritual, family-oriented, and resilient leaders within the educational setting. Principals with such characteristics have attributed much of their success to their familial and communal

racial backgrounds and resilience. Contrary to the intent, the obstacles that stood in their way strengthened their perceptions of who they were as Black women.

Resolutions

Black principals continue to take risks by implementing new and innovative programs for their students despite criticism, reprimands, and threats of removal or demotion from their supervisors and/or White counterparts. However, their goal to improve student achievement trumps their desire to follow the status quo. Their leadership aids in altering social constructs in other schools in the U.S. (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Moorosi et al., 2018).

The experience of being a principal in schools containing low socioeconomic high minority populations are often very taxing and challenging. Often, the principals are given an inadequate facility to work within and have severe disadvantages compared to their wealthier peers. Despite challenges, Black women principals are increasingly taking on the roles as the leaders of these schools, and are often aware of the circumstances (Loder, 2005). In doing so, they believe it is their duty as principals to be community leaders and othermothers to the students they serve.

Black female principals utilized various strategies to overcome the intersection of race and gender in their leadership. One of the most important and effective strategies used was increasing their visibility in professional settings. They viewed their leadership roles as a commitment and obligation to nurture their students holistically. Principals play an essential role in the quality of education by implementing strategies that improve school outcomes (Cruz-González et al., 2019). Being a good leader is achieved and defined by the overall impact that the principal has on their students (Moorosi et al., 2018). Peters (2020) states that the Black women principals in her study have a passion for their marginalized students and are agents of change in

the schools they serve. Their leadership facilitates learning opportunities and breaks down barriers (Peters, 2020).

In addition to the above, Black women principals recognize and acknowledge the disadvantages that they and their schools face, and often challenge surrounding districts and communities to assist. In Arnold and Brooks' (2013) study, the principal undertook the task of changing a habitual failing school where 100% of the population was Black and more than half of the students were on free or reduced lunch. While the school was at a severe disadvantage, she decided to make a significant change. In doing so, she appealed directly to the district and garnered community support. By confronting the district and demanding financial help, she was not only able to aid her school, but other schools similar to hers. This demonstration is an example of how effective leadership of a school made a tremendous difference. In summary, Black women principals tend to develop strategies that allow them to enact their leadership in ways that dismantle stereotypes and establish strong relationships (Aaron, 2020).

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review focused on Black women's educational leaders as a whole. Many findings suggest that the Black woman is complex. To understand their leadership styles and pedagogy, examining their historical placement in the United States and their unique family dynamics was necessary. By examining Black women, it adds an important layer of understanding and visibility. Many findings suggest that Black women lead their schools in a way that does not adhere to the dominant culture. Leading in accordance to a belief system more so than professional training is partly due to the lack of mentorship, appointments, and more often than not, being the first in their positions. Nonetheless, they often perceive that their position of leadership is an answer to a higher calling. This is mainly because they are often

placed in challenging low socioeconomic minority schools with many deficits. The schools' challenges provide an opportunity for educational administrators to bring about meaningful, societal change. Black women educational leaders lean upon their spirituality to help guide them and the students they lead. However, some studies suggest that the intent of such placements is to fulfill the idea of tokenism or are purely racially motivated placements. Black women principals are typically viewed as experts of their race and “clean-up women”. Therefore, it is often believed that they are the best fit for the locations in which they are commonly placed.

In addition to the above, much of the research sought to identify Black women's lived experiences to understand how their backgrounds affect and influence their leadership styles. The research included ideas and conceptions of transformative leadership, culturally responsive leadership, and ethno-humanism. In addressing lived experiences, researchers argue that Black women principles struggle to be recognized (Roane & Newcomb, 2013). Their experiences include, but are not limited to, family relations, cultural background, gender, race, and historical underpinnings (Roane & Newcomb, 2013).

There were several gaps in the literature reviewed. Few studies examined leadership preparation and how it impacted their practices. In addition to this, little to no research focused on achievement. While many participants identified and knew the achievement gap, few research studies clearly stated how the principles worked at their schools to close it. Nor did the studies discuss how the principals planned to improve their students academically while clearly stating that they wanted to focus on the student as a whole. The studies also needed to expand on the lived experiences of the principals. Future investigations may want to examine the influence of Black women leadership on standardized exams; student, teacher, and staff attendance; teacher turnover rates; graduation rates; and discipline records. Additional research is also needed to

understand the historical implications of Black women and how the impact of race and gender has influenced their ascension to or away from educational leadership.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

This chapter provides a brief outline and discussion of the methods for the study. The first two sections include the purpose study and the guiding research question. Following this, sections three through seven will overview the philosophical underpinnings, research design, inclusionary criteria, exclusionary criteria, and recruitment for participant selection. The following section presents a description summarizing the role of the researcher, followed by a data analysis method. The last few sections explain quality criteria and ethical considerations and clarify how the data is managed.

Purpose of the Study

Black women leaders in the realm of education are often overlooked. Typically, schools are modeled after and influenced by White male-dominated customs. As a result, Black women leaders in the realm of education are often overlooked both in the literature and in practice. This oversight bolsters a distorted view of their experiences and further marginalizes them. Consequently, leadership preparation programs lack sufficient training to meet their diverse needs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. The theoretical framework will be informed by: Black Feminist Thought (McCann et al., 2013) and Critical Race Theory (Lynn et al., 2022). While the literature reviewed has discussed Black women's roles as administrators, many studies are limited to current happenings and/or existing experiences (Aaron, 2020; Bass,2012; McClellan, 2020; Moorosi et al., 2018; Peters, 2012). With this said, a life-history approach allowed for a deeper

understanding of administrators as individuals and as a group. The life history approach, according to Sadam et al. (2019), "has been found to be an effective way to view an individual's life on a societal level and to investigate human experience in its broader political, socio-economic and historical context" (p.5). By conducting this study, I aimed to add depth to the literature by incorporating a life histories approach that will provide a space for enriched discourse. This added layer of research will give meaning to individuals' experiences and expand the understanding of the administrators' beliefs, practices, and ideologies as they relate to their educational practices.

Research Question

The following research question will guide the study: What personal and professional strategies do Black women serving as school leaders use to acknowledge and reconcile tensions and contradictions stemming from microaggressions in the workplace?

Philosophical Underpinnings

The interpretivist-constructivist paradigm guided this study as it sought to understand the perspectives of Black women educational administrators. The interpretivist-constructivist approach was used as a hermeneutic instrument for understanding, explaining, and examining the world through a philosophical lens obtained from human experiences (Alharahshel & Pius, 2020; Van der Walt, 2020). Interpretivism rejects objectivism and a single truth emphasizing that people’s knowledge of reality is a social construction and subjective. Human interpretation is the starting point for knowing about the social world (Chen et al., 2011; Wahyuni,2012). Interpretivism considers human differences such as cultures, backgrounds, circumstances, time, social realities, and experiences (Alharahshel & Pius, 2020; Van der Walt,2020). Interpretivism assumes that people cannot be separated from their knowledge and subjective reality.

To interpret is to look for meanings and motivations behind people's behaviors and actions within society and examine the specific ways in which they manifest. Because of this, interpretivism helps to understand how people's subjective interpretations affect their formation of reality and study how it has occurred (Chen et al., 2011; Chowdhury, 2014). To this end, Interpretivist research involves gathering meaning contained or hidden in the data through investigation and offering an account of the process to understand data yielded by the investigation. Through this investigation, the researcher has to derive meaning to understand the world of human experience through their own views and background as well as those of the researched participants (Van der Walt,2020). An interpretivist approach to research seeks to answer the question: "What is constructed" (Chen et al., 2011 p. 130). The goal of the interpretivist-constructivist is to understand the lived experience from the standpoint of the research participant. I understand that participants may have individualized and/or shared views of social occurrences. While conducting the interviews, I used this philosophical paradigm to uncover how my participants saw their world, constructed meaning, and applied the knowledge that they gained in their leadership.

In addition to this, I recognize power dynamics within society and acknowledge Pierre Bourdieu's development of critical social theories which challenged traditional views of power and social hierarchy. Specifically, his theory emphasized the importance of cultural and symbolic forms of power, including both economic and political power which shape social relationships and perpetuate inequality. Two of his key components included cultural capital which refers to the value placed on a particular culture and its unequal distribution within a society and habitus which refers to social practices. Overall, his theory highlights the importance of understanding power in a society (Tichavakunda,2019).

Nonetheless both CRT and BFT share Bourdieu's emphasis on the importance of cultural and symbolic forms of power in shaping social relationships and inequality. CRT recognizes the ways in which cultural norms and stereotypes are used to justify racial inequality, while Black feminist thought highlights how gendered cultural narratives and stereotypes intersect with race to shape experiences of oppression and marginalization (Johnson, 2015).

My analysis is interpretive as the researcher and the data that I collected is subjective to how I interpreted my participants' discussion. However, through my critical lens I added significance to their stories by connecting them to gendered racism through both BFT and CRT. Critical researchers often borrow methods from interpretive research such as field research, historical analysis, and textual analysis, but utilize them to encourage political action. Interpretive researchers relying on ethnography (p. 281) to convince and persuade audiences to build authority. Interpretivist researchers are charged with understanding human happenings within a context and therefore are also critical (Pozzebon,2004). As the researcher, I have found interpretivism-constructivism to be a valuable tool for collecting and decoding the data. Therefore, I carefully examined the findings, contributed to academia, and presented implications for future research (Stewart, 2010).

Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected to gain an in-depth view of Black women principals. Using a qualitative research design allows the researcher to gain a holistic understanding of the human experience that articulates genuine reasons for specific occurrences or phenomena while gathering, collecting, bridging, and retaining data (Watson, 2014). In addition to this, a qualitative research analysis involves generating a new concept of understanding relationships by comparing, contrasting, and categorizing concepts. Qualitative

methods include information data collection and analysis that consist of "textual materials such as interviews transcripts, field notes, documents, and/or visual materials such as artifacts, photographs, video recordings, and internet sites, that document human experiences about and/or oneself in social action and reflexive states" (Saldaña, 2011, pp. 3-4). However, for this study, interviews and documents were the primary source of data collection. Interviews served as a rich source for exploring people's inner feelings and attitudes. According to Dilshad and Latif (2013), using interviews is a desirable method for obtaining information based on experiences, sensitive issues, and gathering personal insights. Overall, a qualitative study design was the most appropriate tool to use due to its ability to address questions that answered issues about how to better comprehend the meaning and experiential components of people's lives and social settings (Fossey et al., 2002).

Methods And Procedures

Participants

This study was conducted in the United States during May, June and July,2023. The participants for this study were purposely selected. Purposive participant sampling in qualitative research is widely used to identify and select information-rich cases related to a phenomenon of particular interest. This involves identifying and selecting participants who are knowledgeable about or have experienced the desired interest of the researcher (Patton,2015; Palinkas et al., 2013). In addition to this, the participants were required to be able and willing to communicate, be expressive and reflective. Therefore, in this study, the participants consisted of seven Black female administrators who have or are currently serving in the K-12 settings. All the participants held a state-issued certification from the Department of Education in educational leadership and held their position for a minimum of 10 years. There were inclusionary and exclusionary criteria

to limit the number of participants to better understand the participants' life histories. The following sections outline in more detail the required criteria for participant selection.

Inclusion Criteria

The following criteria were established for participant inclusion and aided me in determining which volunteers could participate in my study. Participants for my study had to (a) consider themselves Black and/or African American. Meaning they had to have a particular cultural experience, which is not only a consequence of their stigmatized status within this society but also is a function of their particular historical and cultural experiences in America and Africa (Shelton & Sellers, 2000). (b) The administrator needed to be a woman (due to the extensive history of heteronormativity within the Black community (Battle & Ashley,2008). (c) The participant is currently or has recently retired from being a certified K-12 administrator within the last five years within the state of Florida and (d) had worked as an administrator for at least ten years. In addition to this, (e) the participants needed to be willing to discuss the experiences they encountered as educational administrators and (f) were willing to discuss how they interpret and implement policy in their schools, whether or not their interpretation and/or implementation are consistent with district intentions.

Exclusion Criteria

The following criteria was established to exclude participants from the study (a) participants who were not raised in the United States, (b) who have not worked within public-school settings, and (c) participants who were hesitant about sharing their personal experiences; such individuals were excluded from the study.

Participant Selection

Participants in this study were purposely selected through the method of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling in qualitative research is when the researcher begins the study with a small number of initial contacts who fit the criteria and are invited to participate. The participants are then asked to recommend others who also fit the criteria and so on (Parker et al., 2019). Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling, a strategy wherein the researcher selects participants for their study who align with the overarching aims of the study. I used a life history approach for this study; therefore, only a few participants were needed. Bakar & Abdullah state that in using a life history approach, "large samples are unnecessary and maybe even inappropriate" (p.4). A limited number of participants adds a depth of understanding to the study, and participants are more likely to provide more appropriate and useful information (Campbell et al.,2020). Therefore, as stated above, the participants for this study included eight administrators who fit the criteria established.

Recruitment

To recruit participants for my study, I employed several strategies. Initially, I designed a flyer outlining the purpose and qualifying criteria of my study. This flyer served as a tool for communicating my intentions and gaining potential participants. Following this, I reached out to a select group of individuals who I had a prior working relationship with, specifically African American women administrators. These contacts included both former coworkers and colleagues with whom I shared professional experiences in educational settings. After receiving their responses, I provided them with further details about the study and arranged a convenient date for a phone, in-person, or Zoom interview. As the required number of participants for the study

was relatively small, I did not request them to refer to other individuals; however, a few participants voluntarily shared additional contacts in case of any further need.

After making initial contact with the participants, a total of eight individuals responded and expressed interest in participating, leading to the scheduling of individual interviews however only seven individuals followed through (refer to appendix B: initial email and flyer). Within two weeks of receiving their responses, the participants provided their preferred dates and times based on their availability. To accommodate their preferences, I inquired about their preferred mode of interview, offering options of face-to-face meetings, phone calls, or Zoom sessions. Three participants chose face-to-face meetings, three opted for phone interviews, and two requested Zoom meetings. I ensured that all interviews took place in an environment where the participant felt comfortable, and no other individuals were present apart from myself and the interviewee.

At the beginning of each scheduled meeting, I read a verbal consent script in efforts to establish a record of agreement, ensure that the participant understood the purpose of the study, and provide clarification for why I asked them to be a part of my study. All participants who initially expressed interest in joining the study met the established criteria and confirmed their willingness to participate verbally (See Appendix C: consent script).

Following their agreement, I proceeded with asking participants for more detailed information about their formative years, early employment experiences leading to their current role as administrators, and their early administrative duties, as outlined in the consent form (see Appendix D: Interview questions). After each interview, I reiterated to the participants that I would be in touch to schedule subsequent interviews and informed them that any clarifications or additional questions I may have after reviewing the interview transcripts would be addressed in

our next meeting. Throughout the process, participants were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary, and they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time. I am pleased to note that no participant chose to withdraw.

Table 1.
Demographics of the Interviewed Participants

Name	Years served as classroom teacher	Years served as Counselor or other educational position	Years served as an assistant principal	Years served as a principal	Current position
Shirley Truth	Five years	Guidance Counselor Ten years	Five Years	Twelve Years	Assistant Superintendent
Angela Cooper	Five years	Instructional coach one year	Fourteen years	N/A	Professor
Rose Davis	Four years	Math Resource Teacher 2 Years	Six years	Four years	Principal
Audre Height	Three years	Guidance counselor Four years	Nine Years	Four Years	Principal
Mary Hammer	Thirteen years	N/A	Ten Years	N/A	Assistant principal

Table 1.
(Continued)

Eliza Murrary	Six years	N/A	Five years	Five years	Principal
Hollie Anna Parks	Ten years	Dean Seven years	Eight years	Five years	Retired Principal

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I ensured that the research conducted was completed ethically. While collecting data during the interviews, I made sure that the participants clearly understood the purpose of the study and how it would be used. In addition to this, I also provided them with an appropriate time frame for the duration of the study. Upon meeting with my participants, as stated previously, I took safety considerations into account with regard to their own personal comfort. Due to the climate surrounding the U.S as it continues to grapple with COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, I was sure to be flexible and punctual when it came to the interview process. My goal was to provide a comfortable atmosphere where my participants were willing to divulge their experiences with me openly. When meeting, I practiced and maintained professionalism and was courteous when speaking to my participants, making sure not to interrupt them or steer their answers. I also committed myself to listening intently to what the participants were saying and asked for clarification when needed (Arsel, 2017).

Data Collection

During the data collection phase of this study, I employed the life history approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with the identified participants. These interviews played a crucial role in deepening my understanding of their life histories and providing valuable insights

for my research. Prior to conducting the interviews, I obtained informed consent from the participants and informed them that I would be recording their testimonies while also taking notes for reference and follow-up questions.

Once the interviews were completed, I gathered sufficient information about each participant to construct a timeline of their lives and correlate it to relevant happenings. With this said, to enrich their narratives, I collected a variety of archival documents that added contextual depth to their stories. These archival materials included old newspaper clippings, microfilm records, photographs, letters, course catalogs, and other relevant sources. To access these materials, I utilized various online databases such as the University of South Florida's digital commons, and other digital archival resources. These sources were used to bolster the accounts of my participants by adding a broader social and historical context. I made a deliberate decision to limit the use of these clippings to the first finding (Adapting to professional settings while maintaining personal worldview). This was done to avoid overshadowing the personal narratives of my participants. Their stories, particularly in subsequent findings, centered around their individual experiences and personal happenings that archival materials like newspaper clippings could not adequately capture.

Life History

The life history approach in qualitative research attempts to capture an in-depth view of the participants' lived experiences and stresses the significance of their life accounts (Bakar & Abdullah, 2008; Dhunpath, 2000; Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009). Bakar & Abdullah (2008) describe life history as a foundation for understanding social, economic, and historical data. In practice, the life history approach is depicted as a research inquiry with a dual purpose. The researcher and the participant/s are equally valued as the study relies on both entities to collaborate. The participant has the unique position of sharing their story, choosing how they are

portrayed, and determining what information is and is not necessary. From this, the researcher then co-constructs the story through engagement and interpretation with the participant. Finally, the researcher identifies specific pieces from the narrative to highlight. For instance, the researcher may select themes relating to the participants' family experiences, careers, and/or religious standpoints (Dhunpath,2009).

Therefore, this inquiry aimed to provide a substantial data source derived from narratives that pushed meaningful dialogue (Faulkner, 2015). By choosing the life history approach, I aimed to have a model for my research where the participant leads the study through discussion. This approach began with an interview guide that started with broad questioning and then narrowed, ensuring that important topics were covered (Bakar &Adbdullah,2008). This form of questioning is important so that the researcher can understand how the participant's background impacts how they answer the questions (Aspel,2017). My usage of the life history approach amplified the participant's voices and ultimately shaped a story around them and their practices. The participant's perceptions and views are significant for my study, and their experiences allowed me to gain insight as to how they reconcile tensions and contradictions between the personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead from administrative roles.

Overall, the life-history approach emphasizes the strain between cultural tradition and the subject's personal history (Faulkner, 2015; Sadam et al., 2019). In this, the Life history approach acts as a "counterculture to the traditional research canon… as it promotes methodological pluralism" (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009, p. viii). The participant's subjective reality creates meaning from their experiences, which illuminates the complexity of societal conditions. Through this method, researchers are able to discover how the human condition is represented

and determined by interpretive or critical frameworks (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009; Dhunpath, 2000).

Interviews

A semi-structured interview approach was used to collect the life story of the participants. In the three interviews, participants were asked a series of open-ended questions such as: "Tell me a little about yourself, like where you were born, grew up, and some of your earliest memories about your school experience?" The story, or narrative, was not interrupted by further questioning to ensure that the participant could share freely without derailment. However, I did return to questions and asked for clarity when needed (Roulston, 2010). By using open-ended questioning, it gave space for the participants to go into depth on a topic (Rabionet, 2014). Each interview was performed in a one-on-one setting of the participants choosing (face-to-face, via telephone, or via Microsoft Teams). Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes (See Appendix A).

Following the first interview participants were given a minimum of a week before being asked to continue to the next interview. This interview process allowed the participants to think about their answers from the previous interview when meeting me again. Ensuring that they were refreshed and had time to be candid with me again. The expected timeframe for completing the interviews is no more than one month and I succeeded in this goal.

Each interview conducted was designed to be unique to a certain time period in the participants life. The first interview focused on the participants' formative years leading up to their first assignment as a k-12 administrator. During the second interview the participants were asked questions pertaining to their current or most recent role as a k-12 administrator. The final interview was used for clarification. I presented my participants with a few statements from my

analysis alongside their transcribed statements to ensure that my personal interpretations met the goal of the participants' meaning. I did this for clarity. In addition to this, I presented archival work such as old newspaper clippings to draw connections and asked for insights pertaining to their era and role as an administrator. Furthermore, this final interview was dedicated to making appropriate changes.

In efforts to ensure that my interview process was appropriate for my study I first conducted a field test called Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) to gain insight into my interview process. IPR contains four phases wherein each phase helps the researcher further develop an appropriate research instrument that is congruent with their aims. The four-phase process outlined by Castillo-Montoya (2016) is as follows:

1. Ensure that interview questions align with research questions.
2. Construct an inquiry-based conversation.
3. Receive feedback on interview protocols.
4. Pilot the interview protocol (p.811).

Journaling

As a precaution, I recorded the participants and journaled. Journaling is often recommended in qualitative research to document needed contextual information. This method is encouraged because it enhances the data by providing rich context to the study that can aid in analysis (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017). This process helped me reflect on what the participants said, reminded me of their verbal and nonverbal cues and what I thought during the discussion. In addition to this, journaling also served as a follow-up to anything I did not understand. Instead of interrupting the participant, used my notes to address misunderstandings and gain clarification. Once all of the information was completely gathered, I used my journal notes to

help me code. For example, when a participant discussed taking care of a sick relative while maintaining their duties at work, I made a note (work life balance).

Data Analysis

Upon collecting the data for this study, I transcribed all interviews using an online transcribing tool and mobile app named Otter. I also used a secondary recording device to reduce mechanical error risk. Once this information was transcribed, I reviewed it for accuracy and corrected mistakes. Each transcription was emailed to the interviewees to ensure correctness. The participants were allowed to revise the transcriptions. However, no one made any corrections regarding the transcriptions. Following this, I looked for the participants' patterns, commonalities, and trends (Reid, 2020). Moreover, I utilized the four stages of empirical data analysis suggested by Goodson (2013). The stages are listed in Figure 1:

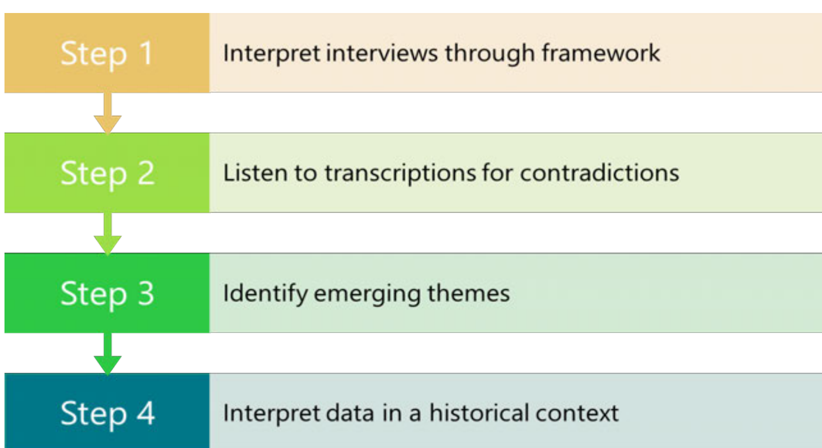

Figure 1. Data Analysis Process

In addition to the above, I utilized the qualitative data analysis software tool NVivo to assist me in categorizing and analyzing the data (Dhakal, 2022). NVivo is an online software designed to import various data forms, including text, audio, surveys, images, and others to centralize data. Its function in this research supported my analysis by organizing my findings and provided a platform where I could facilitate my analysis process (Dhakal, 2022; Lopezosa, 2020).

Quality Criteria

Four criteria are suggested to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Williams, 2015). As the researcher, I am aware of my biases as a Black woman and educator; therefore, I was cognizant while researching, collecting, and analyzing data. I aimed to establish integrity and authenticity as a researcher. In doing so, I sought ways to mitigate my biases to protect the credibility of my work.

First, I engaged in a two-part interview with each participant to examine how they reconcile tensions and contradictions between the personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead. Over a three-week period, I transcribed the interviews and collected relevant primary documents piecing together the participants' accounts in relevance to historical happenings. Once completed this, I incorporated member checking to accurately represent the participant's reflections, feelings, and thoughts. In addition to this, I provided thick descriptions as I pulled the accounts together through coding.

Thick description is described as an interpretive process wherein qualitative research texts create a detailed contextualized description of an event to increase the transferability of the findings (Freeman, 2014; Sankofa, 2022). I used direct quotes from my participants and field notes at the center of my investigation. My field notes served as a tool for reflexivity where I reexamined my thoughts and my participants during the interviews.

Lastly, to establish dependability, I used a code-recode strategy. Code-recode is a method where the researcher codes the same data twice but allows for a one to two weeks gestation period between each coding (Anney, 2014). The results from the two codings are compared to see if the results are similar or different. In doing so, I aimed to provide accurate interpretations that resulted in trustworthiness.

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the study, I obtained permission from the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board. I respected all of my participants and valued their time by being flexible and punctual. For example, multiple meetings were rescheduled or pushed back based on individual obligations and needs. I explained my study's purpose (How do Black women reconcile tensions and contradictions between the personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead from administrative roles?) and how it will be used. When an individual agreed to participate, I had them complete a consent form, informing them that their participation was voluntary. They could withdraw from the study at any time (Arifin, 2018). Participants were assured that I would keep their interviews confidential, and their names would be kept anonymous, and pseudonyms would be used instead. The data I collect would be stored on encrypted devices that are protected with a password. All my interview notes, written materials, and recordings will be safely kept on my devices and will not be shared following ethical guidelines. Lastly, I ensured that my participants knew that there were no risks associated with being involved in my study.

Data Management

All information gathered will remain in my possession and not be shared with anyone besides my chair and committee members. Furthermore, the device in which the data has been collected has lock features that no one is privy to aside from me. Now that my research is complete, all written, and electronic data derived from my study will be stored for the next five years and will be properly discarded, excluding my interviewing recordings which will be disposed of immediately after the study is complete (Arfin, 2018).

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study is to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. The Interpretivist-constructivist paradigm (Freeman, 2014) was employed in this study as a means of understanding the participants and a way for the researcher to analyze their experiences. Furthermore, both the tenets of Critical Race Theory and Black Feminist Thought (Johnson, 2015) were used. By utilizing these theoretical frameworks, the researcher was able to cast a lens that viewed these women not only as individuals belonging to a race or culture, but recognizing how their gender affects their journeys in educational administration.

In this chapter, I present the findings gathered from semi-structured interviews with Black women K-12 educational administrators. The interviews were conducted to explore their experiences, beliefs, and practices related to principal preparation and mentorship. Moreover, archival materials from the relevant period have been integrated to add context to their experiences. The findings are organized thematically, with each theme and corresponding sub-themes addressing the research questions posed in this study. In this, I present four themes. The Themes are as follows: 1. Adapting to professional settings while maintaining personal worldview. 2. Engaging with coalitions to fulfill personal and professional needs 3. Navigating (Gendered race) politics of potential. And 4. Expressing power within power.

Theme One: Adapting to Professional Settings While Maintaining Personal Worldview

The adaptation graph below visually captures the journey of Black women administrators in the educational landscape. It highlights their remarkable ability to navigate through various

challenges while maintaining their personal worldview, therefore. This displays their resilience and ability to push through and thrive.

Table 2.
Adaptability, Navigation and Resilience: Black Women Administrators

Adaptability, Navigation, and Resilience: Black Women Administrators							
Categories	Angela	Rose	Shirley	Andre	Mary	Eliza	Anna
Adaptation in Early Life	■	✕	✕	✕	✕	■	■
Transitioning Roles in Education	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Navigating School Integration	■	✕	■	■	■	■	■
Navigating Diverse Schools	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Adaptation to professional Training	■	■	✕	■	■	■	✕
personal to Professional Adaptation	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Adaptation to Microaggressions	■	✕	■	✕	■	■	■
Adapting to Administrative Support Gap	■	✕	■	■	■	■	■
Navigating school transitions	✕	■	■	■	✕	■	■
Resilience Amidst Career Obstacles	■	✕	✕	✕	■	✕	✕
Adapting to altered roles and duties	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Evolving leadership approach	■	■	■	■	■	■	✕
Balancing life and career	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Adapting to COVID-19 Challenges	■	■	■	■	■	✕	✕
Navigating Barriers in Leadership	✕	■	✕	✕	✕	✕	■
Navigating Challenges of Limited Support	■	✕	■	✕	■	■	■

During both rounds of interviews, adaptability stood out immediately. As my participants divulged their stories to me, I was struck by how much of their tails were stricken with change and how they had to alter with each new occurrence but maintained their semblance of self and outward worldview. This led me to realization that a prominently defining trait in the journeys of Black women administrators was the ability to adapt. In both their professional lives and personal narratives at the heart of their leadership experiences was the recurring theme of resilience, an ability to adjust, evolve, and persevere. Many participants in my study expressed experiences of having to adapt early in their lives, whether it was adjusting to a traumatic loss of a parent or navigating through larger societal shifts like the era of integration.

In their narratives relating to their professional lives the theme of adaptability reoccurs as they share countless stories of navigating through professional settings where they work around, daily microaggressions, new district mandates, and even the pandemic period of COVID-19. All of these elements further display how their ability to adjust and navigate but remain true to their identities is a testament to the ways in which they reconcile the tensions and contradictions of both their personal and professional lessons in their leadership roles.

Integrating and Adaptability

In examining the adaptability characteristic of Black women administrators through my lens, it quickly became apparent how similar their experiences were despite growing up in different households. For instance, in interviewing both Shirley Truth and Anna Parks it was revealed that these women shared a very similar family background. Both women grew up during the 1960's in South Carolina in a two-parent household during segregation. As a result, much of their early educational experiences were exclusively in all Black schools.

Parks states:

> I was in high school, between 73 and 77, we were supposed to integrate in the 50's but they didn't and in 73 the command came down from the Supreme Court, all deliberate with speed so it was during that time of integration. So, all of my teachers were African American but when I transferred to college, I don't think I had any Black teachers after that.

In the wake of the Supreme Court decision Brown v. Board of Education States across the nation became hesitant to take action to be in compliance with the new demands of the supreme court. Despite what is commonly believed the transformation of mixing "Negro schools" and "White schools" did not happen over night and many states resisted. Southeastern newspapers had striking headlines such as "Majority Oppose Immediate Segregation End" and "Southeast Opinion Firming Up on Segregation; Many look to Leaders to Hold the Line" displays the feelings of the time (Blalock, 1955; Powell, 1954).

Journalist Powell suggested that the Supreme court misunderstood what both sides wanted when it came to segregation. He wrote that this sudden elimination of desegregation would incite violence. However, he later admits that Negros were more willing to adapt to this new way of life than Whites (Powell, 1954). A year later Journalist Blalock states in his article that the majority of Floridians "have an abiding faith that the state government-the political and economic leaders will find a way to maintain the color line" (1955). With this said, Blalock goes on to argue that desegregation is inevitable and while this current generation may not deal with it directly the next will. He makes a point to say that Florida is not prepared to desegregate in its current climate. In addition to this, Blalock also suggests that many White families are hopeful

that future generations have enough wealth to send their (White) students to private schools. Nonetheless, others believe that the process is not “moving fast enough” (1955).

By the late 1950’s and 1960’s the plan to integrate was still slow and not much had changed. Southern counties and school districts report that no public schools had desegregated and as a result Negro parents filed a lawsuit (1958). The lawsuit impacted several southeastern counties who were also noncompliant to the Supreme court decision. Tribune writer Fred Smith wrote that there are no schools officially classified as Negro schools in the county” (Smith, 1960). As a result, “The Pupil Placement Law” was passed to ensure that desegregation would take effect.

By the time Truth and Parks reached college, schools were going through a lot of change. They were among the first to not only be students in this newly integrated society but eventually professional educators. This era of educators was led to believe that integration would mean that the mixing of the races would happen and be apparent in schools and other areas. But as Parks stated reality integration for a time meant imbalance. Black teachers were not placed at certain schools and were no longer in front of their Black students. For Truth and Parks, they would have to adjust to this new environment while maintaining their cultural beliefs and outlook.

Despite the efforts of the federal courts the climate surrounding desegregation and public opinion progressed at a measured pace. Newspaper writer Martin Dyckman on January 25th in 1970 titled his article “Racist Bask in Kirk’s Busing Stand”. Southeastern Governor Kirk Jr. is called a hero for standing against integration and is thought by the public that he is willing to go to jail to defend it (Dyckman, 1970). One month later, Mary Anne Corpin, a staff writer for the Tribune, stated that a southeastern county is ahead of other counties in the state when it comes to desegregation. Federal decisions that are sweeping through the nation insist that the time is now.

The “school system is now working on specific procedures of how to effect the transfer 200 White and 200 Negro teachers… by next fall to complete the plan for full faculty desegregation in every school” (Corpin, 1970). By March Staff Writer Margie Sisk writes that the transfer of a total of 422 teachers both Negro and White were approved, and principals of each school will need to inform their staff of who is transferring. Headline Faculty mix drawing begins (Skisk, 1970).

As new educators, their roles did not solely focus on teaching, but also becoming inadvertent pioneers in a shifting nation. Truth and Parks both spoke on how they were often placed in schools within their district to meet racial quotas. Parks states that “they had this rule here that you could only have 20% of your teachers be black and so you had to apply to schools based upon their need.” With this said, the transformation is clear. Both Truth and Parks had to adapt and navigate through not only integration but teaching in integrated settings where no one knew what or how this looked.

By 1972 one southeastern county was fully integrated. Staff writer of the Times newspaper John Perry’s extensive article highlights the enormous change that the county had undergone in the first year of full desegregation challenges were immense. Some of these challenges include a failing bus system that had caused the county an influx of county spending, lack of proper training for teachers in integrated settings, the drastic increase of Black student suspension rates, racially motivated school yard fights and the resignation of a small group of white teachers and other staff. Nonetheless, change is imminent and according to Perry “there is literally no place in the county where anyone can hide …from full public-school desegregation…all 104,000 students in all 12 grades in all 125 schools are now completely integrated” (Perry, 1972 p. 1-E). The following year the county advertised for more Black

teachers despite having more than 3300 white applications. Corpin writes that the district had to recruit outside of southeastern region to maintain federal court desegregation ratios. Corpin states that positions “are being held open for blacks. They’re needed very badly (Corpin, 1973a p 1).

As both participants recalled, mirroring each other's reaction in recollection in amazement at the work they had done, both adamantly told me that there was no training. The district was of no help and apart from collegiate classes and some basic classroom management courses, very little specialized training was available.

Truth states that “[training] it was not how it is now… like the pipeline all that work did not even start happening… that had to be in 2006.” Both women recall seeking guidance from seasoned administrators who held positions that they aspired to and had to learn the job from them due to their not being a professional course or pipeline.

Parks recalls going to school to earn a master’s but once completed the district did not offer any professional training or assistance for individuals wanting to advance into administration. Parks states:

> Well, you did the masters. You did kind of like a semi-internship. Oh, which wasn't really, but it was like you had to go and work with an administrator for a certain amount of time, you know, to do things then. That's one of the things we complained about. It [professional training] didn't start until like 2006… it was like they [hiring district personnel] wanted you to know the job before you applied.

In 2002 the Wallace foundation was created as philanthropy with the purpose of supporting education and youth programs. As a result, the southeastern county became one of six counties across the nation to receive the Wallace Foundation Principal Pipeline Initiative, a grant

of $75 million in 2007. This initiative aim was to provide lessons about challenges in preparing, supporting and retaining effective instructional leaders (2013). Prior to this initiative very little can be found on the principal pipeline.

News articles in 2004 discuss the wide change of leadership in the county. One being that the boomers were all leaving and young principals nicknamed “rookies” were filling these positions in droves. In fact, 80 first time principals were appointed within a three-year period including the first African American woman Jackie Haynes to be appointed as the principal of a high school in a southeastern county. According to Marilyn Brown of the Tribune, the new demands on principals in recent times have made the job difficult and has sparked early retirements. Haynes states “I didn’t realize how big the job is” (Brown,2004 p12). The paper article also gives special attention to what it takes to become a principal. In this it mentions that the district offers a two-year training program on Saturday’s (Brown,2004).

Truth emerged as an innovator of change to help bring about the principal pipeline in the 2000s. Together with Janell Graham, the Assistant Superintendent of the district at the time, created and began offering training courses tailored for emerging administrators. This initiative took place after Truth was promoted to a principalship position. Truth states “Janell and I, when I was a principal, and I would start book studies.” Overall, Parks and Truth’s narratives are a prime example of their adaptability, resilience and navigational characteristics while they maintained their personal worldview. Through their personal narratives it is clear that they believed that integration in schools would be more structured but in reality, no training was offered and there was a lack of structure. For this reason, both participants had to create opportunities to learn and create training through collaboration.

Teachers share Ideas at Book club meeting is the headline of Courtney Cairns Pastor's article where Tricia McManus is said to have been leading a class through a book study with hopes of closing the gap (Pastor,2004). In 2005 at the passing of Corrigan Harrold William at the age of 98 is remembered for his significant contributions, notably revolutionizing leadership training for principals and assistant principals in a southeastern county through his foundation(2005, December 23).

Later, much of McManus' experience can be found in her article discussing the principal pipeline. In this she confirms that historically southeastern counties professional learning for instructional leaders was in need of improvement. The district lacked real professional development training and principals had little coaching and were limited in who they could go to. However, in the 2015-16 school year an instructional leadership and faculty development grant pilot program was introduced. The model was called Leaders engage in acceleration performance or LEAP UP(McManus,2017).

While Truth and Parks are the oldest participants in my study and share a unique story that not only captures the time period but the essence of what it was like to watch the ending of segregation, many of my younger participants offer an alternate yet similar view. While they were not teachers of newly integrated schools Angela Cooper, Mary Hammer, Rose Davis and Audre Height all share awing stories about being Black students in these newly integrated schools. Similar to Truth and Parks all of these women have had to adapt and navigate through their educational journeys while maintaining their personal worldviews.

Cooper was one of the early attendees of the first integrated elementary school in South Carolina. She paints a vivid picture depicting her experiences as a little Black girl going to an all-white school for the first time. Cooper states that "I just remember elementary was weird. I

mean, we were bused because it was in the 70's." In that moment her story goes on to share how she and the kids who were selected to go across town would tease the other Black student in her neighborhood for going to the local school and how she was able to meet "good white" teachers.

Overall, this story that she shares depicts how the adjustment to this new environment not only affected the way she viewed the world but the overall impact that it had on her community. Suddenly there was a class difference and division among the neighborhood kids. In stating this, Cooper became aware of the line between Black education and White education at an early age. Later, she would discover that white education did not mean right education. On the other hand, the youngest participants, Davis, and Height, though they grew up in all-black communities, ultimately attended fully integrated schools and eventually taught in these same schools. While they might not have been direct participants in the early integration initiatives like their senior counterparts, their experiences were no less challenging or enlightening.

In Corpins news article she highlights how Black parents believe in the improved quality of education for their children post-desegregation (Corpin, 1973b). This period also saw a southeastern county receive praise from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare for its effective and harmonious desegregation program, described as smooth, speedy, and peaceful. However, Brunais (1979) points out significant challenges that persisted. Despite these efforts, disparities in academic achievement remained, with Black students often lagging behind their white counterparts in standardized test scores and not receiving an equitable quality of education. Moreover, Black students were disproportionately suspended, expelled, and were more frequently placed in programs for the mentally handicapped, despite representing a smaller ratio of the student population compared to white students (Brunais, 1979).

Height states:

I grew up in a small town that was founded by freed slaves but what was unique about it was when the slaves were freed, 12 of those slaves, including my great grandparents, were given land and on that land they settled. There was a school in that community I did not go to because I was born after integration but all the people in that community went…so there was this teacher, her name was Ms. green. And she was one of the ladies from not our community, but another community who kind of took us under her wing in a school setting that was predominantly, you know, white, except for my community that were bused in and made us learn about our history, made us perform and Black history plays.

Another significant challenge faced by Black families in their pursuit of equality was the disproportionate implementation of busing policies. Brunais (1979) writes that since the initiation of desegregation efforts in 1970, Black students were more frequently bused to predominantly white schools, as opposed to white students being bused into predominantly Black schools or neighborhoods. This imbalance in busing practices meant that, typically, white students would remain in their local schools for the first five years of their education, only being bused for the 6th and 7th grades, after which they would return to schools in predominantly white areas for 8th through 12th grades. In contrast, Black students faced a significantly longer period of busing, often spanning a decade (Brunais, 1979).

In telling this story, Height ultimately highlights the adaptive and resilient nature of her community and the people within it. Even though Height was bussed into a white school. It was important for Ms. Green (a Black woman) to care for and teach the Black students their history. This lesson of adapting and being resilient was ultimately taught to Height.

Salatheia Bryant a Tribune writer discusses in her article how the integration of schools brought shifts in the school culture and climate, highlighting the close connection between Black teachers and their students prior to these changes. She emphasizes that, before integration, Black teachers extended their roles beyond the classroom, making house calls and being deeply embedded in the community. Bryant notes, "The teachers were my friends; they went to church with my family and were an integral part of our lives" (1994, Bryant p.7) Tribune."

Overall, this section provides a clear understanding of how my participants have had to adapt and navigate through integration. As young adults and kids my participants were taught or made to believe that in white settings they would thrive because ultimately, they were better. However, once they got into these places, they realized that this was not necessarily true. These schools lacked training, among other things. Despite this realization they were able to navigate through these spaces and place themselves at the helm of their environments. Whether it was creating courses for the district or maintaining their Black heritage.

Resilience in Adolescence

Angela Cooper and Eliza Murray present a heartbreaking backstory of resilience during the tender years of their adolescence. Each of these women faced the challenge of becoming caregiving as children, due to the illness and poor health of their mothers. Suddenly, they were no longer little girls, but primary supporters for their families. From cooking dinner for the whole family to giving medication to their mothers, each of them now had responsibilities far beyond the scope of children their age. These unfortunate circumstances cultivated a seemingly natural ability to adapt and push through life no matter the circumstance. Their stories bring to light just how much family background and upbringing shape how a person develops. In stating this, these personal lessons in their adolescence molded them into resilient individuals and professionals.

Angela Cooper grew up in a single parent household where her mother was very sick. Cooper describes her family as being very poor and as a result she had to start working at a very young age. Family members such as her grandmother and aunts would send money to help them get by. Nonetheless, she describes her upbringing as tumultuous and she looked forward to the day that she could move away from her hometown. Cooper portrayed her mother as being a very strict parent who did not play about school or grades and expected her as the eldest sibling to be responsible for her younger brother and sister. At the age of nine Cooper was made the primary caregiver of her family.

Angela states:

> I'm the oldest child so I was responsible for everything and everybody and my mom was quite sickly…One of my earliest memories is making my mom food like I was probably three or four. And I used to grill her a bologna and cheese sandwich in the oven and make her instant coffee and there was a gas stove. So, by the time I was nine years old, I could clean up the whole house and make a full meal because I am the oldest and that's the expectation. You know. I worked; I started working when I was 14. I've always had a job and always worked. I was just responsible for my siblings, and I've always been responsible. So yeah. And I think like That's why inner child work is so important. Like for me, I think as I've gotten older and the second half of my life, I'm thinking about what did the little girl miss out on so I try to attend to those things… and I think that that kind of drove my passion for education. And especially for poor Black kids, you know, and why I got so irritated with teachers who weren't all in for kids.

Similar to Cooper Murray recalls how hard it was to take care of her sick mother and younger siblings as a young teenager while still going to school until her mother's passing. It

was at this moment when her life began to change again. She found herself uprooted from her home, school, and ultimately her home state in the northeast to be relocated to a state in the southeast taking residency with her grandmother. To say this adjustment was difficult would be an understatement. Murray had been living for several years as a pillar for her family taking on many responsibilities and obligations but all of a sudden, she became a child again whose only responsibility was completing school work. With this said, Murray was torn from her sense of normalcy and thrown into another. This occurrence came with numerous challenges.

Murray states:

> I lived in the Bronx up until I was 15. My mom had psychological problems so my sister, brother and I were awarded from the state to my grandmother and moved to Florida…I was the oldest girl so being the oldest I had a huge responsibility at a young age whether it was grocery shopping, managing the money, I did all that at the age of 12. So, I was really used to being a leader and taking care of my family…so when we first moved to Florida and I had to be a child, it was very difficult. I went from doing adult things to now the only thing I had to do was homework.

In all, both Cooper and Murry learned early in life to be resilient and adjust to their environment. Their adultification at such early ages is what motivated them to pursue educational leadership. Cooper stated that "school was the only palace where she could be a child." As professionals these personal lessons contributed to who they eventually became as leaders. Ironically both participants join the military shortly after completing high school. Their striking similarities strengthen the idea that Black women Administrators are often able to adapt and navigate through numerous challenges and circumstances while maintaining their worldview.

Navigating Through Shifts in Careers

Professional transitions further emphasize the theme of adapting to professional settings while maintaining world view. Both Cooper and Murray, following their high school graduations, decide to pursue a career in the military right out of high school. Cooper makes the decision to join the army while Murray pursues the Airforce. In discussing their time in the armed service both women stress the structure and pointed environment of the military. Ultimately this detail is used to stress how different working in the military was to working in public education. Surprisingly, both participants found the transition to be challenging due to the vast differences.

Cooper states that:

> In the military they train you to work as a team. Everything you do is based on teamwork and team performance. So, I think that is something there I brought into as a lesson to help me in leadership and teaching. But the way that people work [in education] they don't want to work as a team. It's always a competition. People are very sneaky. So, the things I learned in education are in direct contrast to how I grew up and the things I learned in the military. I am straightforward. I am a problem solver. I want to get the issue out on the table, but people in education want to sit around and mil about and complain and have pity parties and I am not that person.

As an educator it was hard for Cooper to understand how the classroom could be so different from the military that she once served in. As a soldier, teamwork was a necessity and a skill required to move forward. But it appeared that within her school people were self-centered and only looked out for themselves. Through this shift Copper had to readjust her mindset and

adapt to her new surroundings while maintaining who she was. Cooper befriended colleagues and went out of her way to collaborate despite the culture of the profession.

Echoing these sentiments is Mary Hammer, a former juvenile officer, who later transitioned into education. Hammer aspired to be the warden of a prison and worked in the criminal justice system for several years. Hammers upward mobility in the criminal justice system was stunted due to perceived discrimination.

Hammer states:

> I wanted to intern for the Feds… I made sure my background was impeccable… I interviewed a panel of seven people and answered all my questions correctly. They said I did an outstanding job. But the young boy from Florida State who was not of my color didn't have to do anything at all and got the job. They told me I could still volunteer. The warden came up to me and said Mary, you did a wonderful job and I'm sorry. He knew I was a better candidate. But they chose that individual because his father played golf with members of the board.

In an article written by staff writer Jim Sloan of the Tribune he states that there is a persistent issue of discriminatory hiring practices in a southeastern county. Sloan goes on to cite Commissioner Rubin Padgett, the only Black commissioner at the time, who openly spoke out about the issue voicing that his expectations of Brown have not been met. He had believed that the county's blatant discrimination in hiring, and promotion of Blacks and other minorities would end but these practices are ongoing despite all the efforts (Sloan, 1987). This issue extends beyond the southeast, as evidenced by a 1992 Tribune report on a $65 million lawsuit in Okaloosa County, alleging systemic hiring discrimination against Black individuals. Even a decade later, Susan Taylor Martin of The Tribune revisited the subject, noting that Southeaster’s

hiring practices still disproportionately disadvantage women and Black individuals, despite an anti-discrimination agreement overseen by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. This agreement required the formulation of an affirmative action plan to guarantee fair treatment for women and minority groups, yet the southeast continues to breach Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (Martin, 1997).

Hammer's story reveals how normal it is for Black women to get passed up for Jobs and opportunities simply because they do not have the connections or the correct skin tone. Despite being taught that hard work and dedication are the key to success for many Black women this is not their reality. With this said, Hammer was acutely aware of what had happened to her when it came to the job she applied for. The circumstances ultimately pushed her to seek out a new career. Already having a run in with hiring discriminatory practices, she was not surprised or deterred by rejection within the career of education.

While Hammer wanted to stay in the criminal justice system due to the low pay and lack of promotion the talk of better opportunity in another field looked more appealing. Hammer's aunt who was an educator told her that education would be a more rewarding career.

Hammer recalls

> I had got a job at a prison and had 400 inmates on my caseload, and we were an institution of 400… getting paid 29,000. My mom didn't want me working in prisons and I was like I wasn't going into education, but my aunt said well it's paying 34,000. I said okay, that changed my mind. That's how I got into education.

Leaving the criminal justice system proved to be more challenging than Hammer thought. Hammer was used to being strict and callous with her inmates, but students did not respond well to that form of teaching and it showed. She states that

> I had to take the prison out of me to teach kids because I was very hardcore at the beginning. I also didn't know a lot of pedagogy and all those terms… coming out of an industry whether you are a civil servant or public servant you will struggle that first year. I struggled after that first year and I had to adjust.

For all three of these women shifting to a new career was not only challenging but eye opening. As new educators from varying fields they learned quickly that they would have to adjust their attitudes and approaches to everyday work. However, their diverse professional backgrounds allowed for a fresh outlook where they could easily point out flaws within their schools. This happening enabled them to not only find balance but provided a road map when it came to implementing new strategies to the field that maintained their background knowledge. With that being said they all came to the same conclusion and that constantly adapting to their new job was the only way to be successful. Essentially Angela Cooper, Eliza Murray and Hammer had to practice relearning, redefining and adjusting within their schools reconciling their personal and professional lessons.

Navigating Through Educational Career Shifts

Shirley Truth and Anna Parks were early pioneers in their roles as integrating teachers and later as administrators, in their early careers as administrators, professional training was severely limited. Aside from college, the districts that they worked in did not provide many opportunities for improving their skills as a leader. As a result, their leadership styles were not a product of a prescribed practice or method but rather they were crafted from their personal experiences and belief systems. Their journeys are the epitome of navigation and adaptability. Personal lessons guided how they viewed the world but professional settings taught them that where they lacked guidance and structure they had to create it.

Meanwhile in the narratives of the younger participants Angela Cooper, Rose Davis, Audre Height, Mary Hammer, and Eliza Murray their experiences are vastly different. These participants fondly share memories of great training and materials that prepared them for their roles as leaders. However, while they benefited from these professional trainings several participants shared that they were often too general and did not meet the unique challenges that pertained to their schools and more importantly to their minority students. Essentially, the one-size-fits-all approach of these training sessions lacked value for my participants, and they often had to adjust the approaches to make it work for their schools.

In 1988, a southeastern county began a two-year program dedicated to principal training for those aspiring to become principals. Mary Ellen Murphy writes in her article that, for the first time in the school system, first-time principals will no longer be handed school keys and be left to fend for themselves. In this article, the program was called a blessing. Earlier methods of providing support for principals were described as makeshift, and leaders did not know much about the job (Murphy, 1988). Fast forward to the mid 2000's more help was on the way Trica McManus helped develop a new program in the county that would further aid school-based administrators. In Jeff Berlincike's article Learning process never stops for aspiring a southeastern county Principals he writes that now coach mentors are now available to principals to help they through the pipeline. While the principal's trainees are going through their two-year program they are then paired with a coach where they can continue to develop as new leaders in their session (Berlincike, 2013).

Davis states that while district training was useful, many of them were generic.

> I felt like if I lacked something, I was able to take training… but when you're in a district as large as ours, you know decisions are made, you know, one size fits all approach

oftentimes. So, I think just with anything you just have to learn on the job, so you can train and try to inform yourself as much as possible.

Interestingly, many of these leadership training sessions were developed by Truth and Janell Graham's efforts. However, as the district underwent leadership changes, many of these trainings ceased. The younger participants stated that they had come to rely on the guidance of those trainings provided, and when Graham and Truth left the district, they missed them.

Marlene Sokol, a staff writer for the Bay Times, reported that McManus was exiting her role in the county. This departure came due to the search for a new superintendent, the same one who had appointed McManus to lead the Achievement School Project. This initiative was designed to promote equity in schools with high minority populations (Sokol, 2019). McManus managed this program, which is why she ceased her involvement with the principal pipeline in 2017. By the end of the 2019 school year, McManus had moved on to become a deputy superintendent. Her work on the principal pipeline, a role she held until 2017, laid the groundwork for her next steps in educational leadership (McManus, 2017).

Height states:

> The school leader networks that we participate in was even a smaller cohort. of our principal preparation program that we met, you know, monthly, at a restaurant, paid for by the district to discuss problems of practice, and work through problems of practice. As a network to hold each other accountable for the desire for leading rubric that really focused on how your actions as a principal, as a leader impacts the overall goals of the school. It was so valuable. I got a lot out of that. Now since then, funding has been impacted and so and we have a new leadership light, so our new leadership didn't necessarily see the value of, you know, a program that extensive and so now the program

happens within the school year instead of over the course of two years and, you know, those elements the design on the school leader network element is no longer a part of the program. The design for the leading process is no longer part of the program. It's been pared down quite a bit.

Height’s quote emphasizes the loss felt by the participants who went through several of these training sessions that were developed by the district but later dismantled when the source of these trainings decided to leave. The younger participants learned in their personal life by watching others and imitating what they had seen. Parents, mentors and community members were like permanent fixtures that they could always rely on. However, in professional settings this was not always the case. District funding, management or even a shift in power could alter at any time. In stating this, these administrators had to adjust and adapt to no longer having these tools available to them.

Adaptability and Work Life Balance

In addition to the constant changes that Black women administrators take on in their everyday professions. Whether it is dealing with scheduling, district mandates or other school happenings they often must maintain a family balance. All too often these women are viewed as impervious leaders who live and breathe for their jobs and if they do not maintain this façade, they are not worthy of the position. Black women especially with the stereotype of being strong women who can carry the weight of the world on their shoulders suffer this burden regularly. However, as professionals they learn to delegate and take a step back when needed. Needless to say, these women try to maintain this balance and it is evident in the narratives of my participants Audre Height, Eliza Murray and Anna Parks.

The second youngest participant, Audre Height embodies resiliency. Her personal narrative is full of grief and trying times as she has had to face numerous adjustments to her family dynamics within the last five years while still having to maintain her role as an administrator. Height is the primary caregiver to her elderly mother, niece, and a nephew with a severe disability. Height's shares that while life keeps happening outside of her profession, she must maintain a balance. Despite personal responsibilities including the tragic loss of several family members over the years, with the most recent being a nephew's death due to COVID-19. For Height her commitment to the profession is expected. Her narrative stresses the immense emotional labor Black women administrators often undertake as they push through personal traumas to meet their professional obligations.

Height states that:

> I can tell you about really going through to get through. In the last ten years, I have lost three family members starting with my dad. Then I lost my mentor. Then my brother was killed and this summer my nephew passed away from COVID at 30. So, when you talk about, you know, having to pull yourself up by the bootstraps and keep going through in order to get through when you're dealing with that level of grief… You have to kind of understand, okay, these things happen in life. You can't stop because you got to work… You gotta do what you got to do…you have to keep moving. Otherwise, you will crumble under the pressure.

Eliza Murray's story also echoes this feeling of perfection pressure that Black women often experience as administrators. In her journey to principalship, she discovered that her husband was diagnosed with a long-term incurable ailment. Immediately, her world began to change as she once again returned to being a primary caregiver for a loved one in need. Despite

this, she still maintained a perfect attendance record and a high-quality professional status. Even when being promoted from Assistant principal to Principal, this joyous occasion was overshadowed with silence, privacy, and the desire to maintain a proper work-life balance. Nonetheless, Murray still strives to be the best at home and ultimately at her job, adapting and navigating both worlds masterfully at the same time.

Eliza states:

> So that is, my husband is my priority. But I'm going to my job. It is also a priority to me as well and I don't ever want one to seep into the other. But one thing I've learned to say is when I need help, say I need help, because being a black woman they think we could do 50 million things and things and it's okay… I did four roles with one check. But I did that in dealing with things. I got home with my husband and his illness, but I came in [to work] with a smile. I did it every single day, right…I'm going to always do my best for this campus.

Anna Parks' journey also captures the sometimes-overwhelming challenges faced by Black women administrators. In trying to find a balance between a demanding career and changing family dynamics Parks found herself at the mercy of her exhaustion. The unexpected death of her brother was the breaking point in her already seemingly impossible and chaotic work-life balance. Ironically the COVID-19 pandemic was underfoot and the increasing pressure from the district was a catalyst to calling it quits. Parks, despite her recognition as one of the district's most accomplished principals, opted for an early retirement. Her decision displays how burnout coupled with personal happenings can alter professional decision making. With this said sometimes even the strongest, wisest and or most skilled Black women administrators' trajectories can alter within a season.

Parks states:

> My brother had a massive stroke while I was at work. And he never recovered. All I could think about was you're supposed to retire. Then my granddaughter. She came home and she had this knot under her nose. And it just kept growing… it just scared me so stupid. I was at that point; I was tired of it. I was tired of fighting with people to help them understand the core mission of what we were going through and what we were doing. We were a place for kids that needed another opportunity. (Shifting administration in the district wanted to close the current school that she led because it specialized in helping students who could not function in traditional high schools.) I was always stuck where I was. And I didn't want to go back to a big school. I had done that. I'm just done with it. I was already in drop (a retirement program for exiting administrators and teachers usually based on a five-year exit plan). And I was like no, I'm just, I'm just gonna go and have already thought about it. And what was sort of funny was what I had planned to tell my kids… I didn't want to tell them until I was ready. But when we [Parks' family] got to Myrtle Beach, and they shut the schools down for COVID, I told them I said I'm not going back and they all just looked at me. I had planned to go in June.

Overall, the compelling stories of my participants share a more intimate view of how Black women administrators must grapple and navigate through their work life balance. Growing up Black women are personally taught that independence and being strong is something to strive for. They often see their mothers and other maternal loved ones work tirelessly and believe that not only is it normal but is expected. However, as professionals they learn that finding a middle ground is crucial. As a result, they must constantly adapt to various happenings, creating a

balance between their duties as leaders within their schools and as normal people who experience life.

Adapting and Navigating Through COVID

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 was unfathomable. With this said, school districts were completely unprepared to handle this pandemic. This sudden crisis required immediate attention and called for innovators and leaders of these schools to make quick decisions in the interest of the students. As a result, for a brief period it seemed like the world was coming together. As administrators my participants were at the forefront of this change within their schools and built teams to take on the challenge. While some felt this sense of togetherness, as Cooper did, others like Murray felt the gravity of being the central provider of information for parents and students. Nonetheless, this also gave rise to more training opportunities and collaboration.

On March 1, 2020, a southeastern County reported its first COVID-19 case. By March 13, as schools entered spring break, the public was shocked by the announcement that students would not return to in-person classes until further notice. This was quickly followed by statewide shutdowns, resulting in schools remaining closed for the rest of the academic year (Farrow, 2022). On March 20, 2020, Marlene Sokol highlighted the slow transition to virtual learning in southeastern schools, attributed to a lack of preparation. This period saw many teachers scrambling over their break to learn online programs and alternative ways to teach. In the following school year, a southeastern county adopted a hybrid learning model, with some students attending in person and others, along with some teachers, participating online, while another group of students and teachers remained on-site at the schools (Sokol, 2020).

For Angela Cooper the COVID-19 Pandemic provided her with an opportunity to collaborate with coworkers that usually excluded her. For a time, she felt that race and gender became insignificant due to the unity and cohesion brought about by the pandemic. However, as the pandemic's severity began to lessen, old norms gradually returned and once again Cooper perceived herself to be left out. Her story is another example of how Black women administrators maintain their resiliency, when adapting to challenges, to navigate within changing environments.

Cooper stated:

> In the beginning, it [The COVID-19 pandemic] seemed to draw us closer because we all were concerned. But as we learned and got our routine down, it put things right back to the way that they were, a lot of divisiveness and backbiting.

For Angela, the pandemic's silver lining was the brief hiatus in business as usual, where divisions momentarily dissipated, creating an inclusive environment. As previously stated, having experienced division within educational settings since early childhood and through a midlife career change from the military to education, Cooper had become accustomed to division within educational environments but had hoped that this dire need for unity would permanently alter the behaviors of her colleagues. Unfortunately, that unity was short lived, with the post-pandemic era came the resurrection of pre-existing divides, highlighting the impermanent nature of such unity in the face of adversity.

Cooper further stated:

> if I said, 'Hey, why don't we send out the lessons electronically? Or is there a way to have the teachers send us the lessons ahead of time?', there were always excuses made for why we cannot do that. But excuses were only because two to three teachers that were

> close to the principal didn't want to do it. So that meant the whole school had to stop. So things just went back to the same old kind of stuff. It actually got worse. In May of 2020 when George Floyd got killed, it furthered a lot of tension in itself and so I think our team just fell apart.

On the other hand, Eliza Murray's recalling of the COVID-19 speaks to the resiliency and determination of Black women administrators. Murray challenges brought about by the pandemic and made the best of the situation. As a caregiver Murray understood that things did not always go as planned, and unexpected happenings were just another part of life. However, as professionals establishing routines were imperative and schedules are rarely altered. For Murray COVID-19 was just another hurdle that she had to overcome. Her life had taken sudden turns without notice; therefore the pandemic was another obstacle that she had to adapt to, both personally and professionally.

Murray states that:

> It was a lot of jumping through the hoops, learning the different ways to communicate different ways students learn best. But I think that as a district and even as myself, I think it impacts us in a positive way. Because now we have online training where we're in teams and we visually can see the person and now, parents are not afraid to put their students virtually. And some kids do better in that environment. So it forced me to think out of the box and try to find success with it.

Her narrative displays the relentless spirit of Black women administrators who, even in the face of global crises, remain unwavering in their commitment to education.

Cooper and Murry's response to the COVID-19 pandemic further exhibits the theme adapting in professional settings while maintaining worldview. From their stories they outlined

how the need to navigate through challenges is necessary. Moreover, their persistent drive and positive outlook attests to the notion that Black women administrators must be adapting while maintaining their worldview.

Adapting and Navigating Microaggressions

Adaptability for Black women in administrative roles is not only a response to shifting societal norms or global crises; but it also extends to confronting and navigating through systemic barriers within the education realm. Many participants in my study spoke candidly about the challenge of being a Black woman administrator and breaking through barriers. Many of my participants have learned to appreciate their communities and believe that they are able to achieve just like any other school. However, in professional settings they quickly learned that this is not a common thought. As a result, they have had to face prejudice not only as people of color leading in Black schools but as women.

Microaggressions in this profession are defined as subtle yet damaging forms discrimination that create barriers. They are often conveyed through covert or casual racial slights. For many of my participants these microaggressions often occur when discussing the potential success of their schools which is often based on their demographics. Alarmingly, these biases are not exclusive to people outside of the community. In some instances, even Black educators or community members lack faith about a principal or the school's improvement plan because of ingrained beliefs tied to race and or gender. This challenge is a daily struggle for my participants who constantly fight and navigate to refute these demeaning perceptions.

For Rose Davis she experienced first-hand how these ingrained perceptions harmed her student population. As an incoming principal to a historically failing Black school her ideas and initiative for school improvement were met with pushback which initially hindered her ability to

make the necessary changes in her school. It was not until she addressed and removed individuals who obstructed progress that she was able to see vast improvements.

Davis stated that:

> making slight changes, you know, to build relationships, establishing trust. So, years one and two, you're getting the right teachers, you're getting your team on board. So, sometimes you do have turnover. That 3rd year you really have your core teachers… one of the biggest changes. I would say it is getting my school to become more of a data driven school.

To navigate through the restructuring of her school Davis had to foster a new culture for the teachers that decided to stay.

Davis goes on to state that:

> We started off with looking at our data PLCs (planning learning communities) protocols that we use, link that to collaborative planning, and creating student ownership. That was a game changer for us as well. How can we really empower our students to own what they're learning and set goals? My primary teachers were pushing back initially. So, we you know, you just kind of listen to their concerns and like you know, as we listened, we made slight changes.

Davis's initial response to her staff was not to scold or reprimand them but to gain their support and drive this notion that the idea of student driven data would be beneficial. In doing so she first made sure to listen to their concerns and validate what they were feeling. Once she did this, she then adapted her plan to these responses and slowly pushed her teachers into doing what she believed would improve the school.

So now that practice is streamlined from kindergarten to fifth grade. The students are now taking iReady, the star Fastpass as their monthly assessments, and they're setting goals and they're proud of when they meet their goals. They are running to me saying Miss Davis, I met my reading goal they're telling me that percentage and number of questions they got correct. Like I'm we're celebrating like, we've done so much celebrating…now everyone's on board.

Nonetheless, Davis pushed forward with her plan and advocated for her new approach. Once implemented, she successfully won over her teachers. Teachers, parents and most importantly students were able to see the real results of their efforts. This positive impact on her student performance was undeniable and proved that her vision was beneficial. In her personal life, Davis came to understand the importance of uplifting within the Black community and recognized that effective change was crucial for achieving certain goals. However, as a professional and new leader, Davis soon realized that not everyone, regardless of race or cultural background, would be willing to follow these initiatives, even if they were made with good intentions. Ultimately, Davis's story demonstrates the importance of an administrator's adaptability even in the face of internal opposition.

Anna Parks narrative shares this theme of adaptability in the face of systemic barriers. Parks was a newly appointed principal of a school where the students were expected to eventually drop out. Upon taking over the school Parks she immediately realized that the students struggling were not entirely at fault. Parks saw potential in her students and thought that the students were failing because they did not have the tools needed to be successful. The school was supposed to use a credit recovery online tool to allow students to retake and make up courses at their own pace. However, when Parks took over, the school there were no computer

labs and very few computers available. Parks immediately began working on changing the school's culture and reached out to the district for technology. Despite initially being dismissed and told that the district did not have any spare computers Parks persisted. She then reached out directly to the technology department to get used and refurbished computers into the school.

> Parks states that "the students were all working on an online program. But they didn't have computers. I called downtown because I had friends in IT. I said I need some computers. He told me to call the warehouse and they said they would put us on a list. I then asked, Is there a list for those recycled computers? And he said, what do you mean? I said, what are you gonna do with them? He said, well, we don't really do anything with them. I asked, can I have them? We'll figure out how to make them work. And so, I built laps.

The success of her computer labs did not just display Parks' tenacity in providing her students with necessary resources but also showcased her resourceful thinking and quick adaptability to the challenges that she faced. Parks' personal life lessons instilled in her to be innovative and the ability to work around barriers. She applied this ability to adapt to a professional environment that was meant to be accommodating and prioritize students' welfare, especially those in the most vulnerable populations.

In conclusion, when synthesizing the experiences of my participants, it becomes evident that their journey in educational leadership is remarkable. They consistently adapt to new circumstances, are resilient in the face of various challenges, and strategically navigate their environments while maintaining their world views. Whether it is confronting the challenge of desegregation or addressing biases against them or their students, these women consistently demonstrate a commitment to lead from a place of genuine compassion and care. Overall, their

narratives illuminate the overarching challenges faced by Black women administrators, emphasizing that adaptability, for them, is not just a trait but a tool to address and overcome educational barriers. This first theme indicates that through the narratives of these administrators, it becomes evident that reconciliation is a journey of resilience, innovation, and continual adaptability.

Engaging With Coalitions To Fulfill Personal And Professional Needs

The graph below illustrates the impact of coalitions on Black women administrators in their leadership roles, highlighting the strategic use of personal and professional connections. In stating this, it demonstrates how my participants use coalitions as an aid in response to professional happenings and or challenges. Additionally, the graph categorizes specific areas and provides a visualization of how working within coalitions has either facilitated growth and identity formation but also assisted in navigating through the lack of professional networking/mentorship opportunities.

Table 3.
Impact of Coalitions to Fulfill Personal and Professional Needs Among Participants

Impact of Coalitions to Fulfill personal and Professional Needs Among Participants							
Categories	Angela	Rose	Shirley	Andre	Mary	Eliza	Anna
Family-driven coalitions	✕	✕	■	✕	■	✕	✕
Black women's coalitions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Community connections	■	■	■	■	✕	■	■
Faith based coalitions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Networking with superiors	✕	■	✕	■	■	✕	✕
Peers and Colleagues coalitions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Table 3.
(Continued)

Diverse Connections: Beyond Gender and Race	■	■	■	■	✕	✕	✕
Enhancement in Leadership through coalitions	✕	■	✕	■	✕	✕	✕
Student engagement and connections	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Support emotional through connections	■	■	✕	■	✕	✕	✕
Coalitions-induced growth pressure	✕	■	■	✕	✕	■	■
Coalitions-induced safety forged connections	■	■	■	✕	✕	✕	✕
Role modeling through coalitions	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Coalitions identity & representation	■	■	■	✕	■	■	■
Mentorship Void: Hindered Networking	■	✕	■	✕	■	✕	■

The second theme from my study is Engaging with coalitions to fulfill personal and professional needs. Several of my participants describe engaging with coalitions as a lifeline throughout their educational journeys. This circle of family, friends, and colleagues provide them with guidance, friendship, support and more. They make it painstakingly clear that they do not move in isolation but are a part of a larger network that pushes them along the way. Whether it's leaning on faith to help them get through challenging situations or collaborating with students to create positive spaces. For Black women administrators these interactions bridge their personal and professional lessons that prepare them to lead.

Family Coalitions and Spirituality

For all of my participants their families played a pivotal role in their lives. After all they laid the foundation for who they would eventually become both personally and professionally. It

was through their family that they were introduced to the church and the wider community. As a result, early on they learned to have a deep love and resolve for community uplift. For Black women administrators the combination of family values and longing for community uplift reach is beyond personal gain and is deeply rooted in their historical makeup. It was within this close-knit circle that they first learned lessons on leadership, resilience, and compassion. These lessons were taught to them by parents, siblings, and extended family members. These individuals have not only anchored them but have also provided a continual space and source of guidance through the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Notably, Shirley Truth and Rose Davis shared detailed accounts of their mandatory involvement in church. Growing up their families emphasized that you do not just simply go to church but needed to be involved. As a result, church became the centerpiece of their lives. Their active membership meant participation in an array of auxiliary groups within the church, allowing them to understand all its intricacies. They were involved in various ways, including attending choir practice, participating in leadership meetings, and volunteering.

Truth states "So church was Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night, Vacation Bible school, I mean church was the center of our life. Church has played a big part in my family's life…you know church was what you did." Echoing this sentiment Davis also states that

> My grandfather was actually a preacher, so we were brought up in the church. We went to Sunday service two or three times a day and I remember going to Bible study services as well. We would have church camps that we would go to throughout the year...I also joined the choir. At church, I had a lot of responsibilities.

Davis later goes on to say that "my faith in God helped me in knowing my purpose and helped me commit and pour into my profession."

Through Truths and Davis's account it becomes vividly clear that the church is a cornerstone in their journey and a key aspiration for how they lead. You do not simply go to school or lead a school but become engaged and be a part of the environment as an acting member. With this said, Black women administrators have relied on their faith to guide and make principled decisions in their leadership roles.

Audre Height also recalls growing up in church and becoming a part of the leadership team. She states that "the roles I played in church, in ministry, all of those lessons that I learned from those experiences, prepare me for the role of leadership. It starts in our everyday life. It starts with, you know, leading our families."

Many describe their bond with God as the foundational pillar of their administrative philosophy, their relationship and connection to spirituality not only serves as a guide but acts as a moral framework. It is from biblical teachings that they gain strength and the will to press forward in all circumstances. Eliza Murray believes that God is in charge of her life and makes decisions and has an understanding that all aspects of her life are due to Gods will. Putting God first Murray states that "God is above all else and that goes into my decision making because it is never about me, it is about my students… I'm following and operating in love the way God wants me to."

For my participants the role of spirituality is significant not only in their personal lives but in their professional lives as well. The accounts that they shared display how profound the influence of spirituality is on their leadership styles and decision-making processes. Their moral values, instilled through their religious upbringing, play a pivotal role and serve as their initial point of reference in times of professional dilemmas. Nonetheless, reliance on spiritual and

moral compasses can sometimes clash with the secular principles of professional training, and present unique challenges.

The Church is often viewed by many not just as a spiritual connection to God but also as a connection to the wider community. The building, people, and teachings are intricately tied to who they are. Often in Black communities, neighborhoods, schools, and churches are the center of life. In this context, Black women administrators acknowledge the various shared community spaces, including the local churches, and emphasize the importance of sustaining them by leading with this in mind. In the narratives of my participants, there was an understanding that their schools are a part of the community, and they, as leaders, influence it and are influenced by it. Being cognizant and staying aware of the community's needs, and by establishing impactful partnerships, allows these women to keep their schools relevant.

For Black women administrators ensuring that their schools are not only a key component of the community, but a contributing factor that leads to greater engagement. The relationship between family, faith and community engagement emerges as a grounding factor in the leadership practices of my participants. It facilitates this seamless integration of their personal and professional lessons. Audre Height affirms this sentiment, by stating that "

> I think that you know, one thing that I've learned in life is that the master is not above the server, right, that the servant, the master is the ultimate servant. And so, you know, I see myself as a servant to the community, as a servant to the school and the servant to the people that are charged with following me.

Building Professional Friendships and Coalitions

Black women are often met with challenges when it comes to career development and advancement. As professionals it is common for mentors to be provided however, Black women

learn quickly that this is not always an opportunity afforded to them. As a way to try and combat this many Black women administrators have had to learn how to navigate their way into finding mentors of their own. Through their personal lessons they understand that working alone is detrimental to growth. From my interviews several of my participants described how networking was an indispensable strategy that helped them along the way. However, networking is far more than a means to securing a better position but is a necessary tool and resource. Black women administrators' networking abilities often evolve into real friendships that create and establish lifelong coalitions of support, guidance, and validation.

Black women in the educational sector have long recognized the vital role of engaging in coalitions to advance their careers. While intelligence and dedication are essential to the role, the connections, and relationships they develop often serve as bridges to new opportunities and professional growth. Coalitions allow these women to tap into a wealth of knowledge through their shared experiences, mentorship and reciprocal relationships. These notions can prove to be invaluable in a field often filled with obstacles. By forging these strong alliances with peers, mentors, and other leaders, Black women educators not only extend their professional development and practices but also contribute to a communal pool of knowledge and resources that benefits the entire educational community.

This system of support has been instrumental in helping many Black women navigate through their roles in educational leadership and break through barriers that might have impeded on their progress. Before becoming a principal Rose Davis, recalls being a math coach and having her Assistant principal at the time encouraging her and helping her in becoming an administrator.

Davis stated:

> My AP she was a black woman, and she was very instrumental. Just a dear friend of mine. Even till this day. I would say, she was a mentor. As you go through the position, you wind up finding other APs too, that you can kind of connect with and they will give you support.

For some of these women, forging connections with their superiors was not just about strategic positioning or gaining promotions, but it was also about being seen, having their talents and potential recognized. Black women often face barriers and are not afforded certain opportunities due to their race, gender, or a combination of both. Therefore it becomes essential for them to build and maintain genuine relationships and secure allies that acknowledge their gifts and. Superiors therefore become more than just bosses, but are mentors, advocates, and allies who significantly assist them in their professional journey. Nonetheless, according to my participants, mentorship was not given but earned through sincerity, time, and effort. Several of the participants discussed volunteering to work with others in desired positions, by shadowing them to gain invaluable knowledge or working with them closely. They believed that these relationships would increase their chances of success. By the time they were interviewed for a specific position, they were informed, experienced candidates with a clear understanding of the role they were applying for.

Anna Parks recalled being a young teacher with the ambition of becoming an administrator. She built several friendships with Black women who could mentor her because at the time the district did not offer leadership courses. She stated,

> I had some very good friends who had been successful within this system. And they taught me a lot and so I would reach out to them. It was a struggle for African American

women to move. Most of my friends were assistant principals together so we worked together and a little bit at a time some started moving up, you know as principals.

However, while vertical networking was instrumental, the horizontal connections of the peer networks were equally crucial. Collaborating with peers offered a platform to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. These relationships extended beyond the bounds of professional boundaries; they were lifelines, support systems, and think tanks rolled into one. In situations where professional district training fell short, these peer networks filled the void, offering guidance, insights, and camaraderie.

Similarly, Angela Copper also shared how Black women she had encountered in her educational journey had become lifelong friends who have been instrumental in pushing her to excel along the way. Cooper remembered being one of only five Black teachers and how as a new teacher she was able to forge a bond because of the similar background she had with women. Those women became her peer mentors and confidants when she was in need. Cooper stated:

> I admired other teachers and would watch them...in my first year of teaching, there were two of us (Black teachers). Shelly and I are still very good friends. Then in the 80s [1980s], I think there were only five black teachers...so we were very tight. We shared best practices so we could all be successful." Thus, for Black women administrators, networking was more than a strategy, it was a system with a web of vertical and horizontal relationships that fostered growth, provided support, and ultimately, empowered them to reconcile the personal and professional lessons of their roles.

Coalitions Made Through Black Cultural Similarities

In the realm of educational administration, Black women often find themselves in spaces that might be lacking in diversity or understanding. For instance, in the U.S. the educational system is largely staffed by teachers who reflect limited racial and gender diversity meaning Black women school administrators are often surrounded by people who often do not understand them or how their philosophy or practice is shaped by social and organizational culture. There is power each can harness when networking with individuals who look and think similarly. For Black women administrators, networks that operate as sanctuaries provide reassurance and mutual understanding; forms of emotional support to help them persist despite the tensions between their ethno-racial cultural norms and those of the organizational culture.

As a young principal Rose Davis had developed a wide network of colleagues that she leaned on for guidance; however, she made it clear that she felt the most comfortable and authentic with her close circle of Black women Administrators.

Davis stated:

> So I have colleagues and I have friends that are principals as well. And that's what they are. And it's good to have that network and that circle of friends. But you also need that friend that you can confide in and that, you know, it (sensitive information) will not go past between the two of you. So, I have that network of colleagues and friends that I go to. I have really good relationships with other district staff members and just in various departments and although, my network is pretty diverse. When I have to go to my principal's friends, many of them are Black women.

Cooper echoed Davis's statement by affirming how having a network of people who share her cultural background creates a profound sense of comfort. These interactions extend

beyond career trajectories. They are centered around emotional support and validating one another. Many Black women administrators encounter a multitude of unique challenges and microaggressions that only individuals within their culture can truly comprehend. As a result, these relationships provide a sense of genuine support, becoming a safe haven where they can reveal their authentic selves. These networks act as safe spaces where questions can be asked without judgment, experiences can be shared without hesitation, and guidance can be sought without reservation. Angela Cooper states that:

> In dealing with trauma stemming from the field of education it is important to have support but not just any types of support, you know, that's where it's important to network. To have colleagues and peers that look like you and have those support systems. You know, because I think you need professional and personal support systems when you're in the role. So, I think understanding how trauma can remap this and how you can be re-traumatized in that environment is important to know.

Furthermore, these relationships play a crucial role in shaping and affirming their identity. To see someone who looks like you, who has walked a similar path, and who has encountered similar barriers, is empowering and reassuring. Representation in these leadership roles is more than a status but a beacon of hope and possibility. It tells Black women administrators that they belong, and their presence not only matters but is needed. Black women leaders are not just pioneers but creators of legacies and embodiments of resilience. Cultural coalitions for Black women are essential and send a message to other Black girls and women alike that they are not alone. For my participants in their cultural coalitions, they find strength, affirmation, and a sense of belonging. Overall, this is necessary when it comes to reconciling

personal and professional tensions and contradictions encountered in their roles as administrators.

Audre Height fondly described her mentor, who was an educator and dear friend before she passed away. Height expresses that her mentor was a true confidant that pushed, supported and was always there for her. Heights states:

> She was a black woman. The mentoring came, the pushing came, the challenging checks came, when I wanted to quit, you know, (she said) no, you're not gonna quit. I don't care how many times you have to do it over you're not gonna quit. Through some of the roughest times in my life, that person was there. So that's kind of how that if I didn't if, if I didn't have her as my mentor, I wouldn't be sitting here today.

Networking With Others Outside Cultural And Or Gendered Background

Needless to say, as professionals' Black women have the ability to collaborate and connect with people who are not within their own community, race or gender. This notion speaks to the multidimensional nature of their personalities. In their personal lives authenticity is embraced in both private and certain public settings; however, they have learned as professionals that authenticity has limited space. Despite this understanding, many of my participants recognize that support comes from a multitude of individuals and the knowledge that they share is vital to their growth as administrators. They are often open and willing to work with others outside of their cultural background due to their drive to be successful.

Angela Cooper reflects on significant training that she attended in her county, stating that although the trainers were not a part of Black community, their teachings were still impactful. She states that " I will say again, that I like Marjorie Andrews because she had more impactful

professional development options." Copper continues to share the positive and long-lasting effect of the trainings and even expresses disappointment when Andrews left the district.

Several participants candidly shared that while they naturally leaned on networks of fellow Black women for emotional support and mutual understanding, it was often their white counterparts or male colleagues who played an instrumental role in their professional advancement. This discovery highlights how having a diverse professional network can foster growth and alternate modes of thinking. In all, my participants experience an educational atmosphere where allies and advocates emerge from various places.

As a new administrator Marry Hammer leaned on her male counterpart to get her acclimated to the job, she states that:

> "Mr. Stephens helped me he, got on my nerves. I mean, there was some things he did that I approved. Some things he did that I didn't. But I told him in his face ha ha. That's kind of our relationship. You know… Um, but yeah, he helped me not to go through to zero to 100 (remaining collected and professional)."

Similarly, Audre Height states that when she was seeking to enter into administration it was a white woman principal who pushed her to become an administrator and even professionally mentored her and got her acclimated to the job. Height's principal pushed her out of the classroom into guidance then later encouraged her to become a principal. Audre states that

> she (her principal) was like, I don't care whether you want to do it or not you're doing it. and so, I became an assistant principal at that same school, and I stayed there. She was a Greek white lady, and we are still friends to this day and she is still currently a principal in the district. She pushed me to this life. And I always remind her it's her fault, it's her fault that I'm you know, that I'm here.

Overall, engaging in professional coalitions, networking, collaborating and building relationships beyond their community serves as a testament to the adaptability and resilience of my participants. They navigate their professional settings by recognizing good in all people regardless of race or gender. As a result, they establish genuine connections, and lean on the teachings that are shared with them. While the support of their own community is a part of their foundation, their ability to seek guidance outside of it illustrates their resourcefulness and versatility. In a world marked by divisions, the experiences of these Black women administrators shine a light on how cross racial and gender collaborations strengthen community growth.

Networking With Students of Color

Perhaps one of the most important forms of networking shared by my participants was their ability to network with the most important people within the educational realm and that is their students. Black women administrators find that despite the challenges they face, their purpose is to help their students succeed. Their own lived experiences serve as a basis for their commitment to their work. For these individuals, leadership is more than a job, but it is a responsibility and an instrument to be used to provide hope, inspiration, and promote empowerment for their students.

Many of my participants possess an astute understanding of discrimination and prejudice in society and empathize with their students who will have to confront these issues. This is particularly true for their students of color who are often misjudged or ridiculed for the way that they look, talk or dress. In response, these Black women administrators often strive to protect them by being their role models and mentors. To this point they are aware that there is a lack of representation and try to fill that void, fostering hope students will see themselves and recognize

the potential of their future. For Audre Height, changing students' mindsets about life was essential to their success.

Audre Height aims to uplift her students by creating a positive and productive environment that prepares them for life. Height states "we start to teach students and build that foundation, when they go other places and they see some of the things that they see, then they understand, okay, this is why we do this at this place,"

Relationship-building becomes a pivotal tool in networking with students. By creating genuine connections with their students, these administrators are better equipped to advocate on their behalf, having firsthand insight into their challenges, dreams, and aspirations. These relationships are not merely transactional but transformational. Cooper shares in her narrative how she aimed to instill confidence, self-esteem, and ambition in her students who might have lacked these traits. In doing so she created lifelong relationships.

Angela Cooper shares that she was able to create lasting relationships with her students that have now grown up. Cooper has attended their weddings, college graduations and has even celebrated with a few of her former students the arrival of their own children. These students range from initial kindergarteners to students from the 3rd grade. Cooper's story reflects the lasting bonds that she created with her students. She states:

> And for me, it was that the children loved me. I remember being at Townsend Elementary and I was the AP there and when some of the students came to Woodson and they were in middle school, they remembered me and they were like, we remember you Miss Davis, we saw you every day!

For Eliza Murray her unwavering belief in the potential of her school and students guides her decision-making and makes every day worthwhile. Through her leadership, she has worked

to create an environment where each student is seen, heard, and valued. The narrative that she shared continues to align with the shared goal among Black Women to create environments potential is not just acknowledged but encouraged. As administrators, they push boundaries, challenge stereotypes, and forge pathways for the next generation.

Murray recalls an incident involving a student who bullied her son, yet she chose to create a relationship with him despite this. The student was unaware of Murray's knowledge of the situation and felt compelled to confess. Murray over a period of time had fostered a strong relationship with this student through her tutoring sessions. Once he finished confessing, she revealed to him about her awareness of the situation. The student was astounded and questioned her behavior toward him. He was perplexed at her kindness and wondered why she continued to treat him so nicely. Her response was that she cared. Murray stated that "to me, every day is an opportunity to do something in someone's life in a positive way."

In the narratives of my participants, engaging in coalitions, networking and building relationships stands out as a pivotal theme. Black women administrators, continually seeking out ways to reconcile their personal and professional teachings through their lived experiences. They maneuver these lessons from their family ties, spiritual beliefs, professional friendships, and cultural background to uplift students. These relationships are the essence of their journey and emphasize the importance of community, representation, and collaboration. Through the engagement of coalitions these Black women are able to draw on both their personal and professional lessons in their leadership practices.

Navigating (Gendered-Race) Politics of Potential

The Navigating (Gendered-race) politics of potential graph below highlights the unexplored capabilities and aspirations of Black women administrators in my study that often

remained overlooked. disadvantages, It sheds light on the untapped resources that could significantly enhance educational leadership if given the opportunity and recognition they deserve.

Table 4.
Navigating (Gendered-race) Politics of Potential

Navigating (Gendered-race) politics of potential							
Categories	Angela	Rose	Shirley	Andre	Mary	Eliza	Anna
Economic Barriers and Potential	■	✕	✕	✕	✕	■	■
Lack of Guidance	■	✕	■	✕	✕	■	■
Racial biases	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Gendered biases	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Underestimated potential	■	■	✕	✕	■	■	■
Superiors' Failure to Acknowledge	■	■	✕	✕	■	■	■
Stagnation	■	✕	✕	✕	■	■	■
Life outside or work	■	✕	■	✕	■	✕	■
Self doubt and potential	■	✕	■	■	✕	✕	■
Early departure	■	✕	✕	✕	■	✕	■
Untapped Talents: Overlooked Capabilities	■	✕	■	✕	■	✕	✕
Invisible contributions	■	✕	■	✕	■	✕	✕

The journey of Black women in administrative roles is not just one of triumphs and networking successes but also of navigating (Gendered-race) Politics of potential.

Several participants in my study struggled for visibility. In many instances these talented women were overlooked for positions, promotions or ignored in education settings due to their demographic. To put it simply, being a Black woman in professional settings can sometimes be a disadvantage. This story of having to navigate (Gendered-race) politics of potential is common among women of color and is deeply rooted deeply in systemic racial and gender barriers. The gendered politics are in direct contradiction to the personal lessons that hard work and dedication will afford you more opportunities. Nonetheless, these barriers can cause a delay or denial in promotion, make it difficult to find suitable mentorship, and ultimately cause self doubt.

Racial and Gender Barriers

In this study, I identified racial and gender biases to be significant obstacles that impeded or slowed many of the participants' upward mobility. Leadership positions in education are often dominated by white men and because of this Black women often find themselves at the bottom of the promotion list. It seems that when Black women apply for certain positions to further them in their careers unreasonable obstacles would impede on this growth. No matter how well they are trained or well suited for the job they are often overlooked. Through the narrative of Rose Davis, she spoke on the injustice that is done to great Black candidates including herself.

Rose Davis discussed how becoming an Administrator as a Black woman was difficult. She explains that several Black women that she has encountered are more than qualified to do the job than those who are appointed but are often overlooked or relegated to certain positions due to their race and or their gender.

She goes on to state:

> So just recently there were appointments and promotions that were made. It was very few, you know, black women. That were appointed you know, and I do have some that actually apply. So, you know, it's just, it's, you know, it can be discouraging to see that. So, you just have to stick with your purpose. Just kind of, you know, try to keep that in the forefront as much as possible. Because sometimes I think they look for black women to go and to rescue certain schools or in situations you may have, you know, why women administrators that may go away within two or three years should you see promotions that are that are made. However, you know, Black women administrators, we go in and do the same thing and turn a school around like we're expected to be there for years. Certain opportunities are just sometimes not open to us.

Similar to her statement Audre Height acknowledges that she is aware of the discriminatory practices but despite this does her best to separate her achievements from this long-standing stereotype.

Height states:

> So, people tell me that we have to work twice as hard that we have to leave no room for error. But I don't know if that's true. I've always been a person that has tried to be thorough. I've always been a person that has tried to leave little room for error. That says my work ethic so when people say you have to work twice as hard. Well, I've always worked. I have always worked twice as hard. So as a leader, I think it's sometimes it's frustrating, though, when you see people who have done a lot less getting a lot more. So sometimes I don't meet personally, I don't know that that's because we haven’t, I haven't positioned myself into those places because I have no desire necessarily to be in those

places. But I do have I do see some Black leaders feel as if Oh, okay. Well, guess what, you know, there's a White man over here. And he's running this school and it's way easy. It's not a big deal. But that white man will never be put in a school that's tough to run. Like certain schools, right? So sometimes with the people that I talked to, they feel as if as black women and black men, that there are certain environments, there are certain schools that we are tags for. And those other schools were not good fits for. Not because we can't run them just as efficiently as we run, you know, the rough schools, but because they're reserved for people that may not be able to run our schools as well.

Even though Height attempts to push away from the narrative that Black women have an unfair disadvantage and must work harder, in the end her denial falters. Height reluctantly acknowledges that being of a certain race or gender has advantages and spares certain individuals from a specific workload or certain environments. Furthermore, she recognizes that these privileges allow for certain people, of a different demographic, a smoother journey up the administrative ladder.

Promotion Delayed or Denied

While discrimination is not always explicit, it can manifest in various ways. For my participants they experienced being overlooked for promotions despite being the best candidate. They often experience microaggressions in the workplace and internalize negative ideologies as an explanation for their lack of promotion and stagnation. As a result, at times they developed an overwhelming feeling of not being good enough for the job, causing self-doubt.

Anna Parks worked for ten years as an AP before being promoted to principal and witnessed several other Black women do not reach this goal despite being well suited for the job. Parks understood that while she was a valuable administrator her efforts could only take her so

far. She recalls the frustration while patiently waiting for her chance at leadership. It was rumored that the Area superintendent had a board that listed people around the district who he was going to promote. In her search for answers as to why her time had not come, she directly asked him about the fabled board. Parks stated that her supervisor said:

> You're doing real good things, you know, blah, blah, blah, it's gonna happen. It's gonna happen blah, blah, blah. And like when I came in his office and then was like, look and he says, people always think that there's some board and there's some list and we just moved people to stand and yet I said, Mr. Hughes, didn't you see me looking around like, where is the magic board and he just started laughing because he thought it was funny, but now everybody knew that how they did that (promotion) they had a list. …it must have been like 2000 Until I was ready to move… the position came…an AP position that was open…I had done so much for him at Vereen Junior. And so now that he had the position at Massaline High, he knew I wanted to go to high school, they made it possible for me to leave that junior high to go to high school.

While Parks ultimately attained the promotion, her narrative underscores the unjust hurdles faced by Black women administrators. Numerous chances for her advancement had come and gone. But it was not until her direct supervisor no longer needed her in a role that served him that he decided to promote her. Despite Parks' clear demonstration of her competency, hard work and dedication, her promotion was stunted due to vague expectations outlined on a supposed board. Her story speaks to the women who are held to unattainable standards as opposed to being evaluated and promoted based on merit and job proficiency. As previously stated, these women learn in their personal lives that hard work and dedication are a sure way to get ahead in life. However, from this story it is clear that this is not always the case

in professional settings. In this instance a list was reserved for individuals who held special privileges that Black women are often not granted.

This lack of support, both in terms of mentorship and institutional backing, furthers this theme of navigating (gendered-race) politics of potential. Many of these women feel stuck and no matter what they do, they will not see their desired results. The glass ceiling is high and visible. For participants such as Angela Cooper, in her efforts to prove her worth she was not only met with denial in promotion due to systemic prejudices but was reprimanded even when using a professional district training strategy.

Limited Gendered Race Mentorship

Angela Cooper speaks to the lack of a strong mentor during her time as an administrator. Even when trying to gain mentorship and cling to her superiors for guidance she was met with pushbacks and discouragement. In Cooper's words “that turned out to be a disaster”. Growing up Cooper had always learned to look and lean on others who can provide knowledge and wisdom but in the professional world she learned that not everyone is deserving of trust. Eventually, Cooper grew to mistrust those who were in higher positions, she lost her positive outlook and described herself as naive and gullible. In all Cooper became jaded by the system and turned to leave due to the politics, lack of clear direction, and most notably the lack of sustained appropriate support.

Cooper stated:

> I had no support from her (Cooper’s principal) because she wasn't there. She and I had a great relationship otherwise, but in terms of her leadership style, you know, I was just kind of on my own. And then after that, we got a new principal who, to me, she matches the literature as a whole white savor. I think everyone knew that school was just a pit stop

on her journey to central office, though she had two APs at that school. And the other one was a white man Assistant principal that AP and ESC specialist. They were the leadership team. I was just outside because they will make this, they will be having meetings and I didn't even know until I came out and I will knock on the door and I'm like, so y'all are meeting?

In striving to prove their competence and worthiness, oftentimes Black women turn to training as a tool for growth and proficiency. For Black women administrators often professional training creates a confidence within themselves that encourages them to believe that they are credible and dedicated. After all these professional trainings are meant to provide them with the skills necessary for the job (Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015). It is their hope that the more knowledgeable they are the more accepted they will be. Sadly, these desires are not always realized. This was especially evident when the subject of the training centered around fostering open dialogues and addressing sensitive issues is at the forefront for Cooper.

Angela Cooper discussed trying to utilize her training to facilitate tough conversations and express her concerns, but in the end, it ultimately created more tensions and an uncomfortable environment.

Cooper stated:

I really got a lot out of courageous conversations (district training) because again, I told you, that my conflict resolution style is very direct, and I don't have time for him and hawing. I just go straight to the source. You know, we got a problem, how are we gonna solve it? But in this conversation, I learned about taking a break. You know, writing things down, having talking points, and making sure I think through what I'm going to say before I say it, and I think that helped me tremendously with conflict resolution. So

> after I actually enacted it at a school with the principal, the one I told you where she and the AP and the ESC specialists would be having meetings. One day we were in there, and the ESC specialists was confronting me, and I just said, Please, excuse me, I'll be right back and I went to my office and wrote down what I wanted to say, and then I went back in there a more calm person…. what I said it didn't matter so the principal finally she, she wanted me to transfer or be moved schools.

The district's training "tough conversations" was designed to encourage open discussions and address concerns with members of the faculty to create a more collaborative work. While Cooper had hoped for this lesson to facilitate cohesion and understanding within her school the attempt ultimately failed and backfired. As a result, Angela found herself subjected to chastisement, belittlement, and further alienation. Cooper regarded her attempt to bring about unification as a mistake that she was punished for. She recalled being deliberately obstructed from accessing resources and support and not too long after these experiences Cooper decided to leave the K-12 system. "I was done with K -12, …because I'm like, I can't take it anymore." Cooper's experience exemplifies how the lack of support leaves some Black women administrators feeling defeated. These instances point to a significant contradiction between what is being taught versus the standard being held. While the purpose of professional training is to help individuals advance their careers, Black women who use strategies that do not adhere to their work environment risk marginalization and retaliation.

Confronting the Ceiling: Navigating Resignation and Disengagement

In certain instances, such as Angela Cooper's, these overwhelming challenges lead Black women administrators to feel defeated. This overall disappointment compels them to exit the profession altogether. However, not everyone's approach to lack of recognition is the same. In

some instances, these administrators make the decision to stay. However, when this choice is made, they often feel unsatisfied and become complacent. That once-burning desire to make a real difference is snuffed out due to the lack of recognition or validation. Black women face constant reminders that the work they want to do, if not in the interest of their superiors, will not happen. This can be seen in the narrative of Mary Hammer.

As a young administrator Mary Hammer desired to work as an administrator in tough environments (juvenile centers) but was never afforded the opportunity even though she possessed the background (corrections officer) and the skills needed and necessary for the job. Hammer stated:

> See I like the bad kids. I want the bad. I want Lil Ray Ray who just had a AR, whatever fifty seven…Because my background is in that. I have worked with gang members, I have worked in the prison system, was a juvenile officer. I think in my setting, they should have said okay, you got that background were gonna send you to North Alternative. But they didn't do that even though they had somebody who was willing. Not a lot of people want to work with Ray Ray, and Lil Tay Tay you know, or even Bobby who's you know, who could be a serial killer… So when coming out of the box. I think they should have, I put that on my resume. They should have said Oh, ok you work seven years in corrections, your commitment counselor. Juvenile probation counselor? She was juvenile probation officer. We think you're a good fit. And I would like Sure yeah, let's go. Because I would have implemented programs for Tay Tay and Ray Ray you know, we take Tay Tay and Ray Ray to Florida aquarium. (Pretending to talk to the students) No, put the fish down. Okay, put the damn fish down and get out of that tank!

Mary Hammer discussed how she would have been better if given the opportunity but all of her efforts and request to be transferred fell on deaf ears and now she feels as though it is too late because she is on the verge of retirement. As a result, Hammer is not involved in the school like she was before and no longer works in the same capacity as she did in the past. Hammers passion for work has withered. Her only desire now is to see the students and be there if they are having a hard time. Hammer has become more detached from education and awaits the day she does not have to return.

Hammer stated:

> The best is the interaction with the kids. I'm going back to what I told you before, because my true passion was working with challenging students…But now I'm about to retire. I'm too old to try to get into that particular aspect of it.

Coopers and Hammer's experiences highlight a painful reality faced by many Black women administrators, a continuous battle against systemic barriers, often leaving their fullest potential untapped. Both women, Assistant Principals in the earlier stages of their careers, displayed a drive to improve and be the best that they could. They did not just settle for the responsibilities assigned to them but consistently went above and beyond. They initiated school-wide programs and even assumed duties beyond their defined roles, all in efforts to showcase their leadership potential. However, their dedication and contributions were not enough, and they were not recognized for these talents or utilized in ways that would have facilitated their growth. This painful realization negatively impacted both women. While Cooper left the field entirely Hammer feels completely unmotivated and stuck.

Their stories highlight the struggle that Black women administrators face. Disappointment, isolation, and lack of recognition all stifle upward mobility for Black women

administrators. Every participant in the study, regardless of their position whether they are Principal, Assistant Principal, or district personnel, acknowledged this truth that discrimination is not an isolated incident, nor is it rare. Unfortunately, Black women consistently find themselves overlooked, ignored or bullied.

Self Doubt

Continual discrimination and the need to consistently prove oneself breads self doubt. As young children Black girls are not often held back from being leaders and learn at an early age to be self confident. Sadly, for Black women administrators the more they are discriminated against, the more they begin to internalize negative thoughts or feelings about themselves which in turn makes them question their own capabilities.

Growth and promotion are not just about breaking individual glass ceilings, but about addressing the deeply rooted biases that continue to stifle the aspirations and potential of Black women in educational leadership. These women are striving for personal advancement, challenging a system meant to devalue them, and fighting for a place where they can display their worth and capabilities. The potential of Black women is immense but means very little if they are not allowed access into leadership positions. With this said, at times Black women are placed into positions of power but are plagued with the imposter syndrome. The imposter syndrome is a daunting frame of mind that impedes an individual's confidence and prevents them from reaching new heights. Black women often come to believe that they are tokens, undeserving, incapable or just a placeholder. All the while, they navigate the subtle boundaries of where they are permitted to or not permitted to advance.

This sentiment can be seen in the narrative shared by Shirley Truth. Even at the height of her profession as an assistant superintendent when the possibility of becoming a Superintendent

came up, she was denied the opportunity to apply for the position despite her various accomplishments and accolades. In reality, Truth's impressive resume was a testament of the numerous ways that she had served her district. She was the first Black woman Principal of a high school in her district, later went on to create curriculum and developing trainings for administrators, was a well-known trainer in the region for principals and was well known for turning around failing schools in said district. Despite these accomplishments Truth rejected the idea of applying for superintendency in the district. When questioned about why she would not apply she responded that the likelihood of her being hired was impossible. This belief was solely determined by the way she looked being a woman and a person of color. In the end the position went to one of her former subordinates (white man) who she had hired and trained. Truth stated "No, I cannot apply for that job. I will not get it the governor of our state is probably going to hand pick those seats." In stating this, Truth recognizes that there is a power dynamic where one political party, race and gender has a monopoly on educational leadership positions within the entire state.

From this section it is clear how the interplay of personal and professional lessons impacts Black women administrators. With this said, there are several ambitious Black women who have many gifts and talents to share but are unable to due to systematic barriers that often fail to recognize or acknowledge their abilities. Daily macroaggressions and the lack of recognition can be draining and discouraging. In these moments, sometimes they believe that their lack of recognition stems from the need to improve. In this, Black women turn to professional training as a key to improving but discover that the glass ceiling is too high. As a result of the lack of recognition and continual denial they can develop self-doubt. In this study,

my participants Cooper, Hammer, and Truth shed light on how missed opportunities and navigating (gendered-race) politics of potential stifled their ambitions.

Expressing Power Within Power

This chart "Expressing Power within power" explores the influence and control within the context of Black women administrators in K-12 education. By categorizing distinct characteristics of power, it visually represents the various factors that shape their leadership experiences.

Table 5.
Expressing Power Within Power

Expressing Power within Power							
Categories	Angela	Rose	Shirley	Andre	Mary	Eliza	Anna
Family influence	✕	■	■	■	■	✕	✕
Impact of societal norms	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Fostering student success	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Pursuing leadership	✕	■	■	■	✕	■	■
Economic background	✕	■	■	■	✕	■	■
Mandated transitions	■	■	■	■	■	■	✕
Proximity to Power	■	■	✕	■	■	■	✕
At the table	✕	■	✕	✕	✕	✕	✕
Tokenism	■	✕	■	✕	■	■	■
Defying Convention	■	■	■	✕	■	■	■
Leading with Autonomy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Sisterhood in Leadership	✕	■	■	✕	■	■	■
Influence of Superiors	■	■	✕	■	■	■	■

The final theme is the concept of the expression of power within power as it relates to Black women administrators. Power in this section is presented as the idea or notion that both opportunities and obstacles are given by the same societal factors. For these women race and gender play a role in how power is wielded for or against them. In reconciling their personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead their ability to navigate through this power dynamic is unique. Through my participants' journey's it becomes apparent that elements of compliance, defiance, leveraging, and influence are all used to navigate through systemic biases and discrimination making their stories unique and impressive.

Barriers and the Power Structure

In the realm of educational leadership, there is a complex relationship between racial dynamics and hierarchical power structures. In stating this, the power structure has created numerous challenges for Black women administrators like Angela Cooper, Mary Hammer, and Anna Parks. In their personal lives they had always learned that through hard work your efforts would be seen, and you would be recognized for it. However, in professional settings this was not the case. These women soon found that in spite of their work ethic, effectiveness, and commitment as assistant principals, each of them were confronted with racial prejudices that limited their advancement within their careers. These limitations were imposed by their superiors, who were often white.

Cooper's narrative as an elementary school administrator illuminates societal stereotypes and the longstanding hierarchical power within the educational system. During her fourteen-year tenure as an assistant principal, Cooper became known for her innovative curriculum and program implementations. However, despite her significant contributions and excellent work ethic, Cooper's work was often minimized by her principals. She recalled that it was not

uncommon for principals to take credit for her ideas and present them as their own. For a time, she stayed silent because the work that she had done was for the students. She later realized that she had been taken advantage of by a power structure that persistently failed to recognize her originality and contributions. This lack of recognition was further exacerbated when Cooper pursued principalship through the PNP program (Preparing New Principals Program).

Cooper had ambitions of becoming a principal and was encouraged to apply. Her then-principal was initially supportive and shared in Cooper's excitement. The principal told Cooper that she intended to retire and wanted Cooper to succeed her. In entering the PNP program, Cooper was elated to be offered valuable training, overseen by top trainers in the district, including the district's principal coordinator. At one point, Cooper was even able to rejoin the cohort after briefly leaving to care for her dying mother. Even so, her time within the program was short-lived when all of a sudden, her trajectory came to a sudden halt by another Black woman (district personnel) within the district. Pulling her rank over both Cooper and her principal, she unreasonably and openly criticized Cooper's appearance. At the time, Cooper shared that her hair was styled in a blonde pixie cut. The district personnel did not think that it was appropriate for Cooper's hair to be blonde because she was a Black woman and discouraged the principal from supporting her.

Cooper stated:

> My principal said to me I don't know how to tell you this, but Lisa (district personnel) said to me to stop telling you that you're going to be principal…the district decides that…and you need to calm down and look at your hair.

This seemingly minor conversation wielded a surprising degree of power and control over Coopers pending promotion. In the end, the principal gradually withdrew their support of Cooper

becoming a principal. For Cooper this brief conversation was not only frustrating but cruel. This incident caused Cooper to become self-conscious about her ability to grow in the profession and more notably it impacted how she viewed her outward appearance. In the end not only was Cooper's advancement stifled but she grew to distrust her superiors. “I felt like principals were threatened by my intelligence and confidence in my leadership abilities, and they would not teach me about budgeting, finance, FTE, and unit allocation until my last year because that's when she (the principal) needed me to learn it.” The accumulation of these experiences led to Cooper's departure from K-12 education, frustrated by a lack of support and the barriers placed on her.

Nonetheless, Cooper's experience is not unique or isolated but rather a small part of a larger narrative. Black women often go into a profession trusting that they will be accepted because they have earned their place or position but once taking on these roles, they often face discrimination based on their appearance, speech, or attire. These biases are upheld and often reinforced by individuals in positions of power who equate outward appearance with a person's worth or abilities. In reality, the district personnel, although not white, held views influenced by white standards of appearance and status. To the extent that she fervently opposed another woman of color to please a status quo that was outside of her community. This power structure is formidable, to the point that even Black individuals may act against their own for the sake of upholding white-centric viewpoints.

Cooper's eventual departure from K-12 education is the result of feeling devalued and unsupported. In her story she paints a clear picture of how power structures can lead to the potential loss of Black women in educational leadership.

In addition to the above, Anna Parks also presents a narrative that illustrates how the structured power dynamic interfered with her career trajectory and acted as a barrier to her promotion. As an assistant principal, Parks had been passed over for better positions for more than a decade, despite being highly effective and competent. She was even asked to train individuals that had been hired for the job she herself applied to. In addition to this, Parks was also asked on numerous occasions to perform in roles that she would not be compensated for. Parks states:

> I was an AP for a very long time. I was an assistant principal until 2002 (Middle School) then I went to high school in 2007. In high school I was the dean then I became the assistant principal… because I knew the curriculum, they had me help them, but I wasn't the curriculum person. My boss knew, I knew how to do it. So, he gave me FTE, you know that kind of stuff. So, I was still doing it but that was not my title. And so, when the lady retired for the AP two for magnet curriculum, I got her job. And I was there until 2015.

Parks' story presents an interesting dynamic of both success and disappointment. Although Parks successfully broke through barriers, becoming the first Black Administrator at Mobley Middle in 1995, her goal of moving into high school administration was deferred until 2007. Once Parks became a High School Assistant principal she would remain there for the next eight years before being awarded a principal position despite her accomplishments and knowledge base.

At last, in 2015 Parks was promoted to the principalship of her own school, where she served until 2020. Unfortunately, a family loss led to her early retirement. It was only then that the district recognized her for all of her hard work and begged her back.

> So, they called me (the district) and asked if I could come and train principals because they liked my work. But I was like I'm not doing that I would lose my retirement. Ha, they said they would pay me 60 dollars an hour.

The story of Parks' career is one of both triumph and frustration; her achievements and her leadership were clear, but the delay in acknowledgment and advancement took its toll, leading to burnout and an early retirement after several years of unfulfillment.

Parks' story sheds light on how Black women are often treated in terms of leadership. While Parks more than proved that she was worthy of a promotion and better opportunities she was constantly refused. Parks was not only turned down for certain positions in the county but asked by her superior to train the individuals who were selected in her stead. These experiences highlighting a pattern of systemic issue within educational leadership were White power structures effect Black women's upward mobility. These barriers not only stagnate professional growth but can lead to feelings of discouragement, fatigue, and can even cause an individual to leave a field where their contributions are desperately needed.

In the United States societal norms are deeply rooted within its historical context. Black women in administrative roles often face an uphill battle where these norms do not fit within their cultural background. These norms often act as invisible barriers that dictate not only their rate of promotion and progression. At times these women do not understand why they are not placed into positions that they have worked hard for or have earned but realize later that there was nothing that could be done to change their fate. No matter how hard they worked or proved that they belonged, the power structure that is in place prevents them from moving.

Mary Hammer's journey within educational administration is another example of how ambiguous power structures can obstruct upward mobility for Black women. Hammer's story

displays how discriminatory practices within the district impacted her ability to grow. In Hammer's narrative she believed herself to be an outstanding educator who was known for her creative lesson plans, leadership capabilities and commitment to her students. Once she had mastered being a classroom teacher, she sought out leadership positions. Sadly, Hammer would hold her leadership certificate for more than a decade. For some unexplainable reason, she was consistently denied entry into a leadership position. She recalls applying 116 times across the district before she was finally promoted.

In her reflection, she adamantly stated that for a long time she honestly did not know exactly what caused her such a delay in obtaining the job as an AP. Hammer goes on to state that later she assumed that her denial was in direct correlation with her being the niece of another individual within the district. Hammer suggested that her aunt had a damaging past with the district because of her advocacy for students and the Black community. In any case she felt as though her consistent rejection was unjust and was not relevant to the work that she had done. Overall, her perception of being held back, because of familial connections to a relative who was blackballed, adds another layer to the complex power dynamics at hand. Her struggles to gain recognition in the county were in direct conflict with her personal life lessons. She admitted that she always felt the need to shine and work hard due to the fact that she had relatives in the county, however at this point in her professional life these relationships were proving to be harmful.

Hammer states that:

> I applied 116 times. I told them you're either gonna hire me now or its going to be a marathon and I will come back and haunt your ass… I went through every single freaking thing me… and so I told my aunt, she was a professor at Alabama State. And she went

> through the same thing. She was actually blackballed by Virgil County, and I know that for a fact because somebody who was in the district office told me. My aunt was the first black guidance counselor to help everybody and they mama. A lot of the kids, a lot of administrators that are now retired, my aunt helped them because my aunt was the first woman in Plant City born first Black woman and playing city to receive a PhD from Florida State in educational leadership.

At the close of Hammers story, she displayed an unwavering determination and resiliency to the power structure. In spite of being denied an obscene amount of times Hammer pushed through because despite all the doors that had been closed, she was going to make space for herself. In doing so she sought out help and was given support by a Black male district assistant superintendent who recognized her. This intervention illuminates the importance of advocacy and mentorship, especially within the structure of the district. His active support, noticing her repeated applications, and eventually placing her in a desired school, suggests a more positive model of how power can be used, when those in positions of influence actively work to identify and promote talent.

Hammer states:

> So basically, Dr. Hyde knew what I was doing (creating and implementing college ready programs for students) … Dr Hyde interviewed me, and I showed him all of the times that I was interviewed. So, every time I was interviewed, I would save the resume in the cover letter from my records… I showed him 60 something applications. I had documentation to show it. One of my friends usually jokes with me, and asks why (does she stays in the field). I said, I just love kids. So you know I applied 116 times so when he saw it, he saw the stuff that I do. I showed him my evaluations and I have nothing bad

on my record. I showed him all the things that I did with the kids. And then he said well, okay, I'm gonna send you to a couple interviews, and then you get back with me. So I went on the interviews. He said, Well, how was it? It was, it went well. And he said, Well, which school do you really want to be and I said Rains middle I ended up being an asset there and did not want to leave. And basically, I show up and I showed my worth. That was at the beginning stages when I was gung ho I ain't gung ho now. But um, but yeah, that's how I got into administration. I did not give up."

Overall, Hammer's story speaks to how Black women often come into their positions with zeal, drive, work hard and fight for every little thing each step of the way. Unfortunately, this type of work is not sustainable, and it can become exhausting and extremely draining. In the end, even if these women finally cross that finish line and are promoted into better positions, much of their ambition and desire to work in that same capacity has faded. While Hammers commitment is commendable the time it took for her to reach an AP position which caused her to be apathetic. Much of her earlier career enthusiasm was wasted due to being stagnant when she wanted to grow. In this her story reflects a real problem with the power structure within education. Black women are not often recognized for their talents and will spend more time at entry level positions than others.

Hammer states:

> I don't have zest like I used to have because there was things that I know that I've done and I accomplished in which I mean I don't need accolades but I know I put my work in but everybody wants to have a kudos. Right. Everybody wants you to do a good job and I haven't gotten that.

Power and Societal Norms

In the narratives of my participants, it is apparent that they are aware of societal social norms and views. With this said, the complexity of race, racism and gender biases are a part of their everyday lives. From childhood to adulthood, they have been made acutely aware of this societal underpinning. Living in a predominantly white society, they are aware of some unspoken rules that dictate their professional lives. In this, Black women are often conscientious about how they conduct themselves, meaning it is not okay to be too Black. While they are taught to be outspoken and sure of themselves in their personal lives in professional settings, being too authentic or outspoken could be detrimental to their career advancement. This awareness ultimately shapes the behavior of these individuals and provides a rationale as to why certain opportunities are not afforded to them.

Through the stories of Mary Hammer and Shirley Truth's, there was a clear understanding that in mixed settings authenticity is not only unwise but can be harmful. In Hammer's story she illustrates her behavior in meetings and discusses her own self-awareness in these settings. In her story there are undertones of strategic self-awareness, and using conscious decision-making skills in knowing when and how to voice her opinions and thoughts recognizing that if she did not her chances for promotion could be jeopardized. Similarly, Truth's experience echoes this notion, as she found herself biting her tongue in meetings, aware that certain statements could be viewed negatively and have lasting impacts on her future.

Hammer paints a picture of her family and the dynamics that she was raised in. For her, being an educator was more than teaching, but it was a legacy that she had to uphold. As a teacher Hammer strove to sustain this legacy of being a strong educator and creating impressive lessons that made students want to learn. Therefore, the work that she was doing was a direct

reflection of her family and the longstanding connection that they had with the district. However, this effort was not always recognized, and she was even patronized by a particular administrator who targeted her because of her unique teaching practices. Nonetheless, Hammer understood that this administrator was not only her direct supervisor but held power within the district. Hammer knew that if she were to confront the administrator or speak out against her there would be consequences. Inevitably Hammer chose silence over confrontation allowing her reputation to speak for itself.

Hammer states that:

> She (the administrator) was just on a power trip, and I wouldn't give her that (negative feedback). And I was trying to become an administrator. So, I was very humble, because I didn't want those challenges to come up and say that, okay, Mary is this type of person (argumentative or headstrong). So, I would let her do it in front of other people (be demeaning) So I had witnesses. I wouldn't respond because I knew to choose your battles in order to win the war. And the war was me trying to get into administration. So, I didn't entertain her stupidity. I let other people see that (her actions). I did win the war because I'm about to retire.

In Truth's narrative, she furthers this notion that Black women, even in positions of power, must conform to prescribed standards. Having a seat at the table and contributing to decisions made by the district comes with its limitations. Truth had earned her place as one of the district's top contributors and as a profound principal trainer. However, in settings attended by top district personnel, she came to understand there were constraints on what she or anyone else could say. This professional lesson was in direct contradiction to the personal lesson she had growing up. As the daughter of very influential community leaders, she learned that when you

have a voice and influence, you should use it to make improvements. However, at these district meetings, she discovered that individuals were not expected to be free thinkers. District personnel, in fact, were discouraged from stepping outside the status quo, and rooms full of people would become silent. Truth shares that there was a genuine fear that if someone were to step out of line and speak against what was being said, it would jeopardize their possible future promotions.

To further her narrative Truth shares a story where she was in attendance at a closed meeting with top administrators of her district. The discussion at hand focused on helping inner-city schools and achievement schools. As the meeting progressed tensions began to rise. Prominent figures in the district were reluctant to allocate funds for these schools even though the help was needed. These funds would alleviate some of the disparities within the district by improving educational opportunities for marginalized communities and providing more resources. Nonetheless, no one in the room spoke up for these changes despite there being actors who wanted and advocated for this type of reform in the district. As previously stated, the fear of speaking up, the awareness that voicing certain opinions could ruin their chances of being promoted, created this tension that overshadowed the very purpose of their gathering.
Truth states that:

> I would keep up with a strategic plan. And I work with all those different offices to ensure that we were getting what we need for achievement schools. Which was hard. Because you start working with other people…and they're not on the same page…because their focus may not be on helping inner city kids.
>
> Interviewer: "Does it take away from them? If you're helping inner city kids?"

> Shirley Truth: “It doesn't take away from them but there's a politics of it all. You know, and just because you're black doesn't mean that you are for inner city kids and just because a person in a dominant culture says they are. Maybe you're not when it comes to certain things… It's about their reputation and they want to move up. If it's positive, they work with you. If it's something they don't like, they don't want to get involved in that because they want to save their reputation.

Truth herself admits that she too felt pressure and remained silent in the story that she shared. In all, Truth story speaks to the larger picture and that is if you are a person of color and are seated with others you are only permitted to move so far, you can only be so Black and you can only advocate so much before you are cast out. Her story is not a mere reflection, but an up-close view of how societal power dynamics dictate the behavior of people. These powers that may allow some change that they approve of, but seemingly radical changes are unacceptable even if these changes would improve the lives of thousands of students and community members.

Truth states:

> But during that time, we were hearing and listening to people around a table (Truth and her team) that I had access to that. Sometimes we don't speak up how we should speak up around the table. Yeah, because people want to get promoted, and they want to be on the side of whoever can give them that promotion.

Unfortunately, the meeting aimed at improving education for the most vulnerable population within the district was unfruitful due to those in attendance feeling constrained by reputation and proportion opportunities. Truth's experience serves as a reminder that the true

power of leadership lies not merely in occupying a seat at the table but in having the courage to speak and act with one's values, even if it may come at a personal cost.

The experiences of these women serve as a reminder of the ways in which societal power can influence and limit the potential of Black women administrators. Through the narratives of Hammer and Truth, it is clear how the power structure dictates individuals' actions and forces them into silence. While Hammer was a subordinate and had to remain silent in the face of humiliation and ridicule for the sake of future job mobility, Truth was already in a position of power but still felt this same pressure to remain silent, even if it meant not advocating for something she truly believed in.

Power of Obedience

In my study, power dynamics are intricate, as illustrated by my participants. Their narratives reveal how Black women are often willing to conform to district policies, even when they contradict their own thoughts or beliefs. In many instances, these women face unique situations that they are better able to handle more effectively, but they still choose to comply in efforts to adhere to the rules of the district.

Shirley Truth, Rose Davis, Anna Parks, and Eliza Murray's approach to navigating this system highlights the balance between being compliant and exercising cultural autonomy within their schools. While my participants were reluctant to directly oppose the district, they were not entirely passive either. When faced with decisions they disagreed with, they sought out alternative solutions including engaging with their area superintendent. Davis and Murray share in their narratives how they maneuvered around district desires and made a compromising decision. Both women have had to defend their hiring decisions in spite of the district's recommendations or attempts to dissuade them. Fortunately, both women possessed valuable

foresight and were right in making their decisions. However, before coming to their decision they were cautious and still tried to comply.

Davis's experience highlights her determination and ability to recognize what was best for her school, even when it conflicted with the district's desires. Davis was told by the district to hire an individual that they recommended believing that they would be a perfect fit. However, Davis already had someone in mind and politely declined the district's recommendation. In this story, while Davis did not comply with the district's demands she made sure to communicate with her direct supervisor. Her intention was simply to hire the best candidate for the job and stand firm in her decision. Davis knew intimately the need of her school and fought for more support to help the teachers and students at her sight. She was proved correct, and the person became a valuable asset to the school.

Davis stated that:

> I was looking for a reading coach and there was one reading coach that I was interviewing, and she came from another school and my regional superintendent at the time wasn't quite sure if that coach skill set would meet the needs of my of my teachers…So, you know, of course, you always appreciate suggestions. You know, the inside that they have to share. I went ahead and actually still hired to coach and it was the best thing for teachers… The reading coach was able to speak to the data they were able to, you know, read this richness, it was able to see the impact that the coach had made."

Murray's situation mirrors Davis's in some respects but with a different twist. She, too, found herself at odds with the district over a hiring decision. However, in her case, the district wanted her to hire someone that she did not believe was right for her school. Despite the need to fulfill the position. Murray declined the district's recommendation. When trying to set up an

interview with the individual it was obvious that they did not have the desire to work at her school. She later found someone who was the perfect fit. Like Davis, Murray also ensured that the district was informed about her decision but made sure that she was transparent with the district.

Murray states:

> I had a situation where there was a counselor that they (the district) wanted me to consider. And I didn't feel that person would be great here. Not even good. So then I had people call me from the district. Tell me how wonderful that person is and how the person needs a different setting…. I'm straightforward. So, I just told her I don't even think you want this job… So when I didn't even choose who the district wanted me to choose. I had nobody you know, that said I prayed about it. And I want to get in someone really good too. And she's coming from out of county. But yes, I have somebody in that position now.. Yeah, that was just an absolute blessing, nothing but God."

Davis and Murray's experiences display how power, intuition, judgment, and courage come into play in educational leadership. They managed to find a balance between using their authority and making decisions even if these decisions were not ideal for the district. Overall, their stories highlight how Black women in leadership roles must deal with power dynamics while maintaining a sense of agency.

On the other hand, Angela Cooper and Mary's Hammers experiences shed light on how these same power dynamics can be punitive. Despite their best efforts to comply with their principals' wishes and district policies, they found themselves subject to verbal reprimands for perceived transgressions. Cooper's questioning in a meeting and Hammer's handling of a sensitive student situation led to both administrators being reprimanded. These incidents display

how making a mistake or not being in full compliance with a superior can lead to an uncomfortable and stifling atmosphere.

To further this point, in Cooper's story she shares her experience with a domineering and overly scrutinizing superior administrator. As a young AP Cooper was eager to learn all aspects of her job and would often attend meetings and district trainings. However, she was explicitly directed, by her principal at the time, to refrain from asking questions at these meetings. Despite this command, in one particular meeting Cooper asked a question about the financial aspects of her responsibilities. As a result, word got back to the principle and Cooper was not only chastised but belittled. The justification for this verbal assault was that Cooper was making her (the principle) look bad. Davis admits that during the conversation she was shocked to discover that she was not only being watched but monitored and tattled on if she stepped out of line. This incident not only discouraged Davis from engaging in active learning but made her feel insecure. This experience left Angela with a sense of being constrained and surveilled, undermining trust and collaboration.

Angela states that:

> She told me she didn't want me asking questions…because she didn't want the district to think there was something wrong with our school. So, I guess she has spies at a meeting one time…So when I got back, she was like, come in my office. She said, "What did you say at that AP meeting? I said, Excuse me. She said, what did I tell you about asking questions? Somebody told them called me and told me that you in the meeting asking questions.

Hammer's experience reveals a different but equally troubling aspect of power dynamics. Hammer's situation involved handling a sensitive issue where a student claimed they were going

to shoot someone and had written it in a letter. Following the procedure, Hammer gave a follow up of the situation to the guidance counselor, who failed to read it following the set protocol. Though the student turned out not to have written the letter, Hammer was still reprimanded while the counselor faced no consequences. Hammer believed that she was the only one to suffer consequences due to the fact that she was a Black woman whereas the counselor involved was not. This incident illustrates how discrimination plays a hand in the system and how rules are inconsistently enforced. Hammer's efforts to handle the situation responsibly were met with punishment even though the power structure knew who was at fault.

Mary states that:

> The guidance counselor who was a Caucasian lady had a letter before me, but I'm the one that got reprimanded. She should have gotten reprimanded as well or neither one of us. but the information was of severity… come to find out the officer I got to call... found it and the girl was lying. So, I got recommended all because of a lie.

The general picture that emerges from these narratives is one where the balance of power is heavily skewed towards the district and higher authorities. The participants recognize themselves as workers within a larger entity, and their actions reflect an understanding of the constraints and expectations that govern their roles. At moments they have to maneuver between their personal beliefs and their professional ones in order to maintain a sense of agency and individual decision-making. In doing so they try their best to still be cautious and try to avoid potential reprimands.

Overall, these stories highlight the complex task that Black women administrators face when trying to reconcile personal and professional lessons in their leadership practices. They desire to prioritize the needs of their schools by creating culturally appropriate ways to solve

problems that reflect the needs of their school but are often met with resistance from higher authorities. However, this undertaking requires these women to have a careful balance between doing things their own way and ensuring that their actions align with district expectations. Their ability to navigate these tensions and contradictions demonstrates an understanding of leadership and ability to be innovative within the constraints of the system.

Wielding Power for Uplift

On the other hand, the story of Black women administrators is not just one of injustice and discrimination. It is also one of strength and determination. In some instances, these Black women administrators, wield power for the uplift and improvement of their own communities. They have deep-rooted connections within the Black community and navigate their power to provide great aid to the surrounding community. Their family legacies or community presence allows them to exert influence in these spaces and for the people. In addition to this, they are also able to flex this ability when it comes to standing in the gap to defend these communities and fight for their needs. These rebellions are often for the betterment and enhancement of their students. By fostering nurturing and empowering environments, they not only challenge the stereotypical perceptions held against them but also catalyze real change. Their classrooms and schools become sanctuaries of confidence, learning, and growth.

At the core of leadership for Black women administrators is often the desire to uplift, inspire and transform the lives of their students. For the Black women administrators in my study they used their authority and background to help shape the future of their students. They viewed their role as a calling or duty to service their vulnerable populations of students. This is visible particularly in the stories shared by Eliza Murray and Audre Height, both of whom used their positions as catalysts for student growth and transformation. As a principal of an alternative

school Murray worked hard to redefine student expectations and foster a culture where students are challenged to achieve beyond their initial circumstances. In Heights's journey she mirrored Murray's determination and commitment to turning around her school, which was low achieving. This proactive approach to empowerment illustrates the unique and vital role that Black women principals play in education.

Murray took on a leadership role in an alternative school, a place designated for students removed from the general population. When she first entered the school, there were low expectations and a culture of underachievement. However, Murray was able to see how these students were given up on by not only their previous administrations but the district. She made it her mission to change this culture and give real care to the students and the school. Her influence led to noticeable improvements on her campus. The work that she is doing is not only reshaping the school's environment, but it is altering the way others perceive her students.

Murray stated:

> We're not a traditional school with traditional ways to lead students to success. And then I'm going to have the cap and gown frame photos in the cafeteria. And they all know that there'll be my seniors are 11th graders because I had an 11th grader graduate early a year early. She did that. I want to put those pictures up in the cafeteria. So provide strength, hope, dedication, commitment, excuse me, so they know that they can do it.

With a clear vision and an understanding of the transformative power she held as a principal, Murray was determined to change the culture and environment of the school. She raised the bar, instilling new expectations that challenged students to strive for more. Eliza worked hard to develop new programs and support systems. She even took the time to personally

encourage students to believe in themselves and their abilities to return to traditional schools. For Murray her students not only needed a role model but a true advocate.

Murray states:

> I feel like I give them more than the benefit of the doubt in situations more so than I even would give myself but at the same time trying to hold them to a higher standard because we do, we do have to push out excellence because our kids need that. The kids that come to me, I think is different than from being in a traditional setting in the sense that, um, all my kids are coming in crisis, and they all need help, like every day my students need me, which is why I always pride myself on being at my job, and really not taking days off unless it's absolutely necessary. But being here at the school is it's imperative that I follow that out".

The impact of Murray's influence became apparent as she observed improvements across her campus. Students started to respond to the higher expectations, demonstrating both academic and personal growth. Murray's unwavering belief in them led to a change not only in their achievements but also in how others viewed and treated them. Her story speaks to how perception is everything. Murray saw her students for who they were and brought out the best in them. Her vision as a leader and the power that she held helped nurture a space for uplift in her school.

Similar to Murray, Height became a principal at a low-achieving school, faced with numerous challenges including a threat from the district to close the school. But Height was not going to let that stop her from achieving. She recognized the power she possessed as a principal and was determined to use it to change the culture and environment of the school. She not only set high expectations but also invested in the school's overall appearance. Improving the overall

feel of the school. With fresh paint and top-of-the-line technology she was able to create an environment that tells the students, faculty, staff and all other stakeholders that they matter. Heights is rooted in the understanding that students have to feel wanted and know that they are not second best. Overall, her vision is to equip students with tools needed to succeed. In her three-year tenure, she has witnessed a profound change in her student attitudes and behaviors. As a self-proclaimed servant leader, Height encapsulates the idea of doing whatever is necessary for the students, recognizing the power she holds can be and will be used to shape not only their educational outcomes but their lives.

Height states that:

> when we start to teach students and build that foundation, when they go other places (schools or environments that are not structured) and they see some of the things…, then they understand, okay, this is why we why we do this at this school, you know, case in point we got some kids in summer school.., there's some kids that came from other schools not doing what they should be doing and our kids are like looking around like, what is going on, right? Because they're in a totally different environment. And even though from the inside, we feel like oh my gosh, it's chaotic. But when you put our kids up against kids from other schools, our kids are like, little angels… So, then they realize this is why we this is why we're being taught and told to do a x, y, & z.

Height believed in setting high expectations, but she also knew that the environment played a crucial role in student success. Not only does she instill in her students how to behave and teach what success looks like, but she also improved the schools aesthetic. In doing so she wanted the students to feel good about the school they attended and know that they are cared about. In all, Height's vision was to provide her students with everything they needed to succeed.

Her focus on both the external environment and internal growth displayed an understanding of the factors that contribute to academic achievement.

Height states that:

> My philosophy of leadership is that there's no task, there's nothing that I can't do, which means basically, if there's a toilet that needs to be clean, then I can't be good enough to clean the toilet. I view leadership is that you have to also be a servant. You have to be willing to be a servant leader and to serve the people that you're leading in order to make the environment a better place for everybody. And so, in covering classes for me, that's a service to not just the students, but to the other teachers who don't have to cover that class that day. I see myself as a servant to the community, as a servant to the school and the servant to the people that are charged with following me. And so, I think that's, that's the biggest thing for me as a leader and that sets me apart from other of my colleagues or other of my people that that I've experienced, that are leaders, but that's the way that I was taught.

Under her leadership, the school began to transform. The students' attitudes and behaviors started to change as well as their academic achievement, reflecting the new culture of excellence and opportunity that Height had fostered. Over her three years at the school, the transformation was evident. The school is currently thriving according to Height and the community around it also has a new respect for it. Height’s philosophy of servant leadership was central to this transformation. She approached her role with humility and a commitment to serving her students, recognizing that her power as a principal could be a driving force in their lives. Her story reflects a belief in the ability to effect real, lasting change, using power not for self-gain but for the benefit and growth of those she led.

Overall, Murray and Height’s stories reflect a profound understanding of the power wielded by Black women principals. They used their power to create environments where students can not only grow but thrive. Their commitment to the success of their students stands as a powerful example of transformative leadership in educational settings. Their stories speak to the larger narrative surrounding Black women administrators. As administrators, Black women are acutely aware of how far they can go but will push boundaries for the sake of their students. For these women, systemic barriers are ever-present, and they wish to tear them down themselves, knowing that if they do not give opportunities to their students, no one else will.

The narrative of their power is not merely about the positions they hold but the spaces they create, and how they will defy norms to bring about change. As they reconcile their personal and professional lessons of leadership, these Black women administrators illustrate that power is not just about authority; it's about making a difference. They challenge stereotypes and become agents of change in their communities. Their story highlights the importance of recognizing how power can be used especially in the face of adversity.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine how Black women use personal and professional lessons to reconcile tensions and contradictions in their administrative roles in public schools. This research was informed by the frameworks Black Feminist Thought and Critical Race Theory. Through this study it was my goal to not only extend the existing literature, but it was an attempt to shed light on the inner works of the educational system through the lens of Black women administrators. With this said, I attempted to capture their leadership journeys through the life histories approach. The participants' cultural backgrounds played a pivotal role in their unique yet interconnected stories. This shared cultural heritage and personal narratives allowed for a deeper exploration of their experiences. By amplifying these voices, these narratives have the potential to challenge the stereotypes that often cloud the understanding of their leadership capacities.

Moreover, with these narratives, my research sought to reshape the perception of Black women leaders and contribute to a deeper comprehension of their leadership practices. In this, I envision that the development of future leadership preparation programs will integrate cultural considerations as a crucial factor shaping leadership styles. Furthermore, I advocate for candid dialogues within the education domain, particularly concerning issues of discrimination, promotion, and training.

The findings of this study provide insight into how Black women administrators reconcile their tensions and contradictions between their personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead. This study aligns with and adds to existing literature regarding principal

preparation. The themes from the thematic analysis of this study are used to organize the discussion. With this said, in the following section, I will discuss the findings as outlined in each theme. Later in this chapter I will explain how these findings and overall themes align with the literature and the theoretical framework.

Adapting to Professional Settings while Maintaining Personal Worldview

The first theme was Adapting to professional settings while maintaining a personal worldview. Through the narratives of my participants, it became clear that one of the ways Black women reconcile tensions and contradictions between their personal and professional lessons was through their ability to adapt. For these women adaptation was not simply a happening but a necessity for survival which tied into both their personal and professional lives. This quality seemed to be an inherited trait that was taught in adolescence and honed in in their professional settings. Billingsley's early work in the 1960’s confirms that the Black family has reconstructed itself to fit the societal structure of the U.S (1969). However, many of these women maintain their personal worldviews and moral compass.

The adaptability of Black women administrators can be easily seen when examining the experiences of my participants. The first narratives shared by my participants, Shirley Truth and Anna Parks, who both grew up in the 1960’s experienced being at the helm of desegregation as children. They primarily attended Black schools but upon entering college and the workforce, they became pioneers within these integrated settings. With no professional training aside from collegiate coursework they quickly had to adapt to their district but remain true to their cultural backgrounds. Black women entering into Eurocentric settings are often encouraged to adapt and socialize in the same manner as their counterparts (Lewis,1975; Lorde, 2005; Ramirez et al.,

2020; Story, 2018). In all, they had to learn rather quickly how to conduct themselves in this changing environment and apply personal lessons in professional settings.

These personal lessons later became professional teachings that they would incorporate into lectures and studies for future administrators. When entering into these integrated schools it was believed that there would be structure but in reality, no training was offered. As a result, these women became aware that what they did professionally would have to come from personal knowledge. They maneuvered their understanding of the world and applied it to the creation of professional training, creating a culturally relevant leadership style aimed at aiding their students and improving their own practice. Stokes et al., discusses in their study how Black children are taught how to combat racism and discrimination (2020).

Similar to this, other participants such as Angela Cooper, Mary Hammer, and Audre Height also experienced desegregation but as students. They too learned how to adapt to their environments. At school they learned from Black teachers and other professional mentors the importance of culture, hard work and responsibility. Cooper discussed her awareness of race as a child even though she did not quite understand discrimination and racism. In this, she became acutely aware that Black schools were somehow different from White schools. As a child she came to believe that White schools were better. She later came to realize that this assumption was not true. However, this understanding was something that she not only adapted to as a child but as an administrator she also recognized this mindset within the district.

For Height, similar to Cooper, Black teachers, even in integrated schools, Black women educators ensured that she learned the importance of Black history and the need for culture and representation (Billingsley,1969). In Roane & Newcom's study they found that Black women teach those in the community customs, traditions and culture (2013). In professional settings i.e.

school, the participants learned personal lessons. Peter's states kinship is not a matter of blood but it is associated with culture and race (2012). With this said it is clear that, at an early age, Black girls who then become women are able to take personal lessons within professional settings and use them later in their professional lives. Therefore, my participants are aware that their school's climate and culture are an extension of their practices and leadership (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Newcomb & Niemeyer, 2015; Roane & Newcomb, 2013). They must lead with culture in mind, knowing that there might not always be training that focuses on their issues (Black and/or low income) because the problem has never happened before or it is unique to their schools.

Resilience In Adolescence

Alongside adaptability is resilience. For several of my participants to adapt was to be resilient. In the stories of both Angela Cooper and Eliza Murray it is apparent that at an early age the foundation of resiliency emerged. As children they were forced to assume the role as primary caregivers to their mothers due to illness. This personal lesson became a part of who they grew to be, and this characteristic seemed to seamlessly merge into their professional lives as educators. In stating this there are parallels between the work of Blee & Tickamyer, 1978; Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983 where Black women are found to be the primary caregivers and/or breadwinners of their families.

As young administrators they had to deal with change in their position, change in direct leadership, change of schools, change in training format, and so on. Similar to their childhood, these administrators had to adapt to new environments and be resilient (Blee & Tickamyer,1978; Green, 1990). With this said, in education change is inevitable and continuous, Black women often possess a unique capacity to thrive through challenges and transitions.

Navigating Through Shift in Careers

Navigation is also a part of adaptability. In order to adapt to their environment Black women must often know what path to take. In the narratives of Angela Cooper, Eliza Murray, and Marry Hammer they discuss transitioning from outside fields into education. These three women undergo numerous challenges as they transition from one career to the next. Similarly, their transition was marked with the politics of education. While working in the military Cooper and Murray were used to teamwork and bluntness. However, as new educators they were taken aback and unaware of the isolation and social constraints within education. As a result, they had to learn how to navigate and adapt to the culture and environments of their schools (Everett et al., 2018; Jones et.al 2018). As for Hammer, transitioning from a corrections facility, she learned that her approach to the students had to change in order for her to be successful. Being strict and harsh did not work within classroom settings therefore she had to change her approach when dealing with students.

All three participants had the bird's eye view when it came to the district. With this said, they were able to have a fresh perspective as new teachers. Their prior careers outside of education allowed them to spot inconsistencies and pinpoint areas for improvement within their schools. However, they also realized the need for further training. Through district trainings they were able to refine their skills as educators. The cohesion of experience, prescribed pedagogy and classroom management is an attest of how Black women reconcile their personal and professional lessons. Ultimately this aids them into ascending to administrative positions.

Navigating Through Educational Career Shifts

All of my participants shared detailed narratives discussing how they navigated and adapted when becoming an administrator. For Truth and Parks their transition into administration

was filled with trial and error. Where they would eventually create tools and resources for those who would come behind them. Their story displays how adaptability and navigation are used in the place of professional guidance.

As for the younger participants, their transition was more professional because a path had already been created. Cooper, Davis, Height, Hammer and Murray all had access to professional training but experienced very generic courses where much of the information given to them had to be altered to fit the needs of their school. Unfortunately, these trainings were short lived due to the shift in the district's leadership. This loss marked a significant disruption in their professional development, contrasting with the stability found in their personal lives where certain elements remained constant.

Nonetheless, Height spoke fondly of the training that was offered by the district, even though it lacked relevant tools for the school she worked in. In doing so My participant was made to cope with the trainings and adapt them to the school. In doing so this is a lesson that was brought from childhood that Black women as children are taught to be resistant and cope (Everet et al.,2018; Hall, 2015). These accounts unveil how personal and professional lessons are reconciled by Black women administrators.

Maintaining Work Life Balance

The ability to maintain a work life balance is another aspect of being a Black woman administrator. As Black girls grow up into Black women, they learn to carry the load. However, as administrators they relearn this notion and must become delegators to survive. In the narratives of Audre Height, Eliza Murray and Anna Parks, they bring to light this notion of balance between work and personal life. From their stories it becomes apparent that Black women administrators must often navigate and adapt to the demands of both their professional

and personal responsibilities. As an administrator Height is not only responsible for her school but is also a caregiver to her mother and disabled nephew. She states that finding this balance is not always easy, but it has to be done. Similarly, Murray discusses how her role as a long-term caregiver for her sickly husband was not only a challenge but impacted her ability to be excited even when being promoted to principalship. Parks on the other hand became overwhelmed by this work life balance and when her bother passed during COVID-19 she knew it was time to give it up.

Collectively, these stories illuminate how adaptability goes beyond professional duties and responsibilities but extends into personal life. These narratives display how Black women administrators are resilient and navigate the tensions of their roles while dealing with personal happenings. They must learn how to separate work from their personal lives. Within the context of the Black family many of their characteristics are aspects of resilience and in dong so they reconcile what they have been taught as children and what they have learned in the professional settings (Everet et al., 2016)

Navigating through COVID

Adaptability also was displayed by my participants during the emergence of the global pandemic COVID-19. This pandemic displayed how Black women administrators were made to adapt in unprecedented times within the educational realm. Angela Cooper's story offers an intimate view of how this disaster created a moment of togetherness among the schools and district. Initially, everyone worked together to provide the best services for the students, but this moment was fleeting as the severity of the pandemic lessened. Pre-existing societal divides returned, and Cooper once again had to adapt to this happening. Cooper's experiences illustrated

how fragile unity is and the space that she believed to have had where she could voice her opinions and concerns was quickly taken away.

For Eliza Murray, COVID-19 brought a wave of challenges that had never been seen before. However, it was up to her and her team to find swift solutions. Through her narrative she shares how this pressure to adapt to the new environment created a positive impact on her as well as the students. She was now able to view the upside of online learning and training. Overall, both narratives reflect the resilience and adaptability inherent in Black women administrators, demonstrating their ability to adapt with unforeseen circumstances. Their response to the pandemic mirrors the adaptability theme that is embedded within the journey of Black women administrators.

Adapting and Navigating Microaggressions

As stated above Black women administrators often have to adapt and navigate through a slew of challenges that directly impact their ability to carry out their roles. But perhaps one of the most challenging occurrences that they face is microaggressions. Microaggressions are rooted in systemic barriers that contribute to both racial and gender discrimination. For my participants they had come to believe in their personal lives that they are capable; however in professional settings not only do they have to prove their abilities as leaders but they frequently must defend their schools and students who inhabit them. These women were taught at very early ages to resist racism and sexism stereotypes and like them they purposely stand in the gap to protect their students similar to how a mother would protect their child (Elliott et al., 2018)

In the narratives of Davis and Parks it becomes apparent how they must navigate through discrimination in order to improve their schools. In Davis's story she speaks of how she had to convince teachers (who shared the same racial background as her and the students) that the

students were capable of learning. These students just needed a new approach and teachers who were willing to work with them. It was not until certain teachers left and her plan was put into action that change started to occur. In this the participant carries on this idea or notion that it is the job of the school to nurture the whole child and develop the community as stated in the Collins (1991) when she states that African American heritage views childcare as a collective responsibility and this system of care is a stable in the Black community (Bass,2012); McCleallan, 2020). Similarly, Parks was made to seek outside aid in order to get the necessary materials for her students. Once Parks was able to get these items and implement her plans the school started showing vast improvements.

In all, both administrators experienced racial and gender discrimination. As leaders, they were not initially taken seriously and were doubted by others in their abilities to lead. It was not until they proved themselves that they gained approval. Unfortunately, discrimination is not limited to people outside of the Black community as seen in Davis's case, but community members can also cast doubts. Their narratives reveal how personal lessons are applied in professional settings where they overcome barriers. Davis states "Building relationships, establishing trust, and listening to concerns helped us shift our school culture. We aligned data protocols with collaborative planning, giving students ownership of their learning. Although some teachers initially resisted, we adjusted based on their concerns, leading to a more streamlined practice." From this section it is evident that adaptability is necessary.

Engaging with Coalitions to Fulfill Personal and Professional Needs

The second theme in my study is Engaging with coalitions to fulfill personal and professional needs. For the participants in my study, networking plays a pivotal role in their advancement and ability to thrive as administrators. In this, networking begins in childhood as a

personal teaching that is later adapted as a useful skill further developed in both personal and professional settings. Family and community ties have not only provided a solid foundation for nurturing and care but have also been intertwined with the church. This form of teaching has instilled values and lessons that influence Black women as educational leaders.

Family Coalitions and Spirituality

As small children and even as adults my participants first learned that engaging with coalitions starts through your community, family relations and through the church. Many of my participants' families played a huge role in their life as they laid the foundation. In this, their families were involved in the community where they would go sit and watch the adults. These adults inadvertently taught them personally how to behave, connect, uplift, and be a part of the community. As administrators these same skills are used as they lead their schools.

For several of my participants in tough times they had been taught to lean on God to answer their prayers. Spirituality is to be used in their everyday lives as administrators. In Audre Heights' narrative she states that her leadership role in the church as a child pushed her into wanting to become a leader. Learning about leadership in church would later transfer over in her work ethic as an educator and it essentially paved a way for her to be promoted to principal. Similarly, Eliza Murray stated that "God is above all else" and he led her in all her decision making. In these examples it is evident that the participants merge their personal and professional lessons.

In my research it becomes apparent that my participants utilize both their personal and professional training reconciling the tensions and contradictions by effectively crafting a leadership practice that adheres to both. Through engagement in coalitions, they understand from an early age that the community, church and school are interconnected. They find themselves

leading with this in mind holding on to their early lessons and the teachings of God. Professionally they are taught pedagogy and strategy; these understandings allow them to bridge together these two worlds. As a result, these administrators are able to create strong relationships in the school that allows for a positive school culture and climate.

Building Professional Friendships And Coalitions

In my study, building professional friendships and forming coalitions is not merely a professional happening but can develop into a deep connection between individuals that form into sincere friendships. In the professional world, it's common for mentors to be assigned, yet Black women often find that this opportunity is not always extended to them. Therefore, these connections foster robust support networks, and alliances within the educational system. Several of my participants learned early on that making professional connections was a valuable resource. These friendships passed on vital information that could be used both personally and professionally. McClain (2019) discusses how Black women share in community networking. For the Black community the system of care is a staple (Bass, 2012; McClean, 2020). In this, Black women often seek out personal mentors who can bridge gaps in their understanding and teach train them on how to do a job more efficiently. In the narratives of Davis, Parks and Cooper this is evident.

Parks shares in her narrative that if it were not for her mentor who later became a friend, she might not have been given the opportunity to lead in the capacity that she had. In Davis's narrative, she shares how her friendships within the district created lifelong bonds. From her friends she was able to network and become a stronger leader because of their mentorship and teachings. Cooper also echoes this notion by sharing that in the early years of her becoming an educator that there were not many Black educators therefore the friendships that she built were

vital for her continuation within the field. Black girls who then become Black women are often influenced by what they see. In order to be leaders these women have based their faith in those who came before them similar to the study of Mims and Jones (2020). Overall, these friendships aided her in being resilient and played a role in her success.

In essence, these narratives paint a vivid picture of a coalition where they were able to grow along the way. Having someone who can support you, mentor you and teach you is vital to success. Again, it becomes clear how Black women administrators are able to reconcile personal and professional lessons. They are often taught and led by others who have had to do the same (Hailliday et al.2019). These friendships allow candidness and room for growth, demystifying what is needed to get the job done.

Coalitions Made Through Black Cultural Similarities

By forming coalitions grounded in Black cultural similarities these administrators are able to reconcile tensions and contradictions between their personal and professional lessons that allow them to lead. As black women are personally taught that they are different from the dominant culture. Within these settings they find solace amongst members of their own community. These community members bring forth reassurance, comfort, guidance and more. Nyachae (2016) found in their study that social support helps Black people cope which leads to self acceptance and resilience. As a result, Black women do not feel isolated or unheard. This network is a lifeline that knits together personal and professional lessons. In education diversity and understanding is needed and at times can only be given by those who share the same background.

Angela Cooper highlights the importance of having a strong community of colleagues who provide a space where authenticity is welcomed. She found that her close circle of Black

women administrators helped her in times of need and provided her with a safety net when she needed it. Knowing that she would not be judged or looked at differently because of what she might say or do is liberating. Audre Height also discusses how her mentor, a Black woman, was a pillar of strength and support for her. She challenged and pushed Height to persevere even in the face of adversity. Constantly being a confidant and friend for her. Similarly, Peyton- Claire (2000) found in her study that Black women lean on their matriarchs for encouragement when forming their identity and taking on leadership roles.

Overall, these relationships offer more than just guidance on job strategies, but they provide a space where Black women can be themselves. In a world where you have to put on a mask in order to look professional or appear not too Black it is nice to have an escape. A place where microaggressions and prejudice cannot touch you. This support is both personal and professional, reminding these women that they are not alone in their journey. Representation within these networks not only matters but can be empowering. Black women lean on both their personal and professional leadership skills through mentorship relationships (2014).

Networking with Others Outside Cultural and or Gendered Background

In the realm of education, Black women administrators often have to collaborate beyond their immediate racial or gender communities. In their personal lives they are able to be truly authentic and it is accepted, however in professional settings they have learned to codeswitch. With this said several of my participants share instances where their professional advancement was influenced by people who did not share their racial or gender background. They understand the nature of the profession and recognize that support and guidance can come from anyone. For instance, Mary Hammer's relied on her male counterpart to acclimate to her new duties as an

administrator stating that he helped her grow tremendously. His role in her life speaks to the importance of cross-gender collaborations.

For black women administrators networking is a valuable skill. In large districts such as the one my participants resided in; the Black community could not sustain itself alone. Being a part of a larger district and even being placed in diverse schools means that individuals must learn to reconcile what they have been taught personally about race and culture and integrate it with their professional training. Another participant Audre Height speaks fondly of her mentor a white woman who saw potential in Height. As a result, she pushed Height into leadership and guided her through the process. Building these relationships are important and ensure that Black women can work anywhere and thrive in diverse environments.

Therefore, networking and building relationships outside of their immediate communities speaks to how Black women administrators navigate through reconciling the lessons that they learn in both personal and professional settings. As professionals it is imperative to form a strong network of individuals that you can rely on. These relationships can be valuable resources in times of need and offer a different perspective. While fostering strong inner communities ties are invaluable, creating outside relationships can also afford them new opportunities and experiences that they might not otherwise have.

Networking with Students of Color

Lastly, for many of my participants being an administrator means that they are able to improve the lives of their students. As a result, they are able to build relationships and network with them. Creating relationships with students and coming to understand them brings intrinsic joy to many. Black women administrators find education is a form of giving back to the community. In doing so, they are able to use both their personal and professional lessons when

guiding their students. This relationship that is built can be mirrors of the ones they built with their mentors or superiors. Bloom & Erlandson state that in addition to Black women being taught how to resist injustice they are also taught how to nurture their students and pass down customs that are utilized in their everyday roles as leaders (2003). In Eliza Murrays narrative she recalled becoming a mentor in the lives of one of her students despite a bullying incident involving her son. Her kindness and guidance allowed for the student to open up to her and change the course of his life, which in turn created a long-lasting relationship into his adulthood.

For my participants, they seemed to have a deep understanding of their students and know some of the struggles that they faced. As a result they strive to be a beacon of light and guide them. Understanding the gaps in their life, they willingly step onto the path knowing that the small things do matter. For Audre Height she approaches her role as a servant leader. She aims to empower her students and lay a foundation that will equip them with the necessary tools to be successful. She uses opportunities to speak with the students and get to know them emphasizing that she cares about their well being not just at school but in their lives as a whole.

Thus, this section illustrates how Black women administrators reconcile the tensions and contradictions between personal and professional lessons as leaders. These women go beyond what is required of the job to nurture, guide and lead their students. In doing so they give opportunities for their students to learn from their mistakes and open up for deeper relationships that extend beyond the school building. These leaders use familial understandings and norms within the context of their leadership, and this is visible in their schools according to Ronane & Newcomb (2013). These women also make sure to treat their students like they matter and give them space to be kids. Professional lessons teach what leadership should look like or sound but it is personal lessons that foster personal relationship building, community values and cultural

understanding (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Newcomb & Nieymeyer, 2015; Roane & Newcomb,2013). Nonetheless, both are needed to shape their leadership styles.

Navigating (Gendered-Race) Politics of Potential

The next theme is navigating (gendered-race) politics of potential, this theme captures how Black women administrators face many struggles due to their race and or gender (Reed, 2012). These women seem to carefully navigate through their educational journeys despite their potential not always being fully recognized or realized (Haynes, 2016). In stating this they are often hindered. Gender politics directly contradict the personal belief that hard work and dedication alone can open more opportunities.

Perhaps one of the greatest struggles that these women face is this notion that if they follow their professional teachings and work hard, they will see the fruits of their labor. Promotion and accolades are given to those who are deserving however, for many Black women this is not the case (Berry & Reardon, 2021). As a result, Black women are taught personally that gender and racial biases can play a crucial role in their success.

Racial and Gender Barriers

In the stories of Rose Davis, Anna Parks and Mary Hammer they recall how undervalued Black women are when seeking or when being placed in administrator roles. The first account is that of Davis. In her narrative she discussed how being a Black woman administrator was difficult. She often viewed Black women who were more capable and qualified for a position being passed over for someone else despite being the more qualified or suitable person for the job. This occurrence created a sad reality in Davis's mind that Black women are not going to be treated fairly no matter how hard they work or how deserving they are. Similarly, Parks not only witnessed blatant discrimination but experienced it as well. Park's recalls being a talented

administrator who was often called to help and train others but was often overlooked. As an AP she would get passed over for desired positions and then told to train the individuals who received the job that she wanted.

Mary Hammer, too, desired to work as an administrator in challenging environments but was never afforded the opportunity, despite possessing the background and skills necessary for the job. Hammer's journey demonstrates the loss of potential. She openly expresses her passion for working with challenging students and her frustration at not being given the chance to make a difference. These above examples are not only displayed in my study but in other research studies echoes the sentiment that Black women have to often fight for visibility (Flores, 2018; Reed & Evans, 2008).

Thus, despite facing these systemic barriers and discrimination, my participants were determined not to give up. Not only did they not give up battling individual setbacks but challenged a system that is seemingly not made for them. In Karanxha's et al. (2014) study the authors discuss the devaluation of people with diverse backgrounds and the hidden curriculum. These experiences shared a collective story of struggle that are not isolated events but represent a pattern within the educational realm. The story showcases their resilience, portraying leaders who persist in their efforts to forge ahead even when faced with setbacks that threaten to diminish their confidence and aspirations (Horsford,2012).

Expressing Power Within Power

The last theme is expressing power within power. The concept of power has played a pivotal role in the lives of my participants. In this final section, the narratives of my participants reveal how various happenings shape their experiences in administrative roles. Unsurprisingly themes of gender stereotypes and sexism plague the educational system. From a young age Black

girls are encouraged to believe that they can achieve anything, due to flexible gender identity roles in their personal lives. Alongside this notion that hard work and dedication are the keys to success, these early lessons form a strong foundation of who these women become. However, as they transition into professional environments there is a stark contradiction to this lesson and as a result, they must reevaluate how power is exercised and negotiated.

Nonetheless, all of these women believed that despite their race or gender they are fully capable of performing their job. This mindset is a part of the Black cultural family dynamic found in the studies of Allen, Billingsleym Lewis who assert that in Black household's sex/gender roles are loosely defined and children are taught fluidity. In addition, these women were emboldened to take on these positions despite discriminatory practices and happenings due to encouragement and embedded confidence as adolescents (Lewis,1957).

In the Angela Cooper story, she recalls being an assistant principal for 14 years and was well known for her creativity and work ethic. However, she often felt like she was being minimized and not recognized for the work that she had done and never had a proper mentor. Several studies discuss how Black women struggle for visibility and recognition as leaders (Reed & Evans, 2008).

However, this was not always the case. At one point in her career she was pushed by her principal to pursue principalship but was quickly turned away when district personnel openly decided that she was not a good fit based on her appearance. Copper's experience highlights how Black women are often discriminated against. In this power structure Black women are often at a disadvantage due to white central views and mindsets. This is also confirmed in the literature written by Jang & Alexander (2020) and Lomotey (2019).

Another example of how power plays a role in the success and ascension of Black women in education is that of Mary Hammer. Hammer recalls applying for administration roles 116 times before being promoted. She believed that excessive application process was due to her being a niece of a prominent activist within the county who pointed out unfairness within the district. As a result, Hammer was discriminated against even though she was not the one to cause the offense. It was not until she talked to a Black man in the district that she was able to get hired. Sadly, Hammers story is not in isolation. Berry & Reardon found that Black women candidates are often marginalized which limits their opportunity into administration (2021).

Overall, they often have to reconcile the tensions and contradictions between personal and professional lessons in order to overcome these setbacks. For Black women who aim to ascend into administrative roles they must be determined.

Barriers and the Power Structure

Several participants were aware of the unspoken rules in professional settings. In their narratives they share how cautious they were when speaking, recognizing that being too authentic or outspoken could jeopardize their career advancement. This awareness reflects the influence of societal power.

Mary Hammer's story illustrates this self-awareness. Hammer shared how she would tailor herself in educational settings. She stated that she was very conscious and chose when and how to speak, making sure that her thoughts and opinions were not offensive. Hammer fully understood that if she did not follow it her chances of promotion would be limited. She states “I was very humble because I didn't want challenges to affect my goal of becoming an administrator. So, I chose to persevere quietly, allowing my work to speak for itself."

Similarly, Shirley Truth's experience as a principal coach sheds light on the dynamics of power within administrative circles. Despite having a seat at the table and the potential to influence district policies, meetings were often bleak. She stated that open dialogue was welcomed because individuals feared that if they spoke out, they would jeopardize the potential for future promotions.

Therefore, these narratives directly address the research question, shedding light on how Black women reconcile the tensions between personal lessons and professional ones. The stories of Mary Hammer and Shirley Truth display how the power structure can limit autonomy. For Black women in order to be accepted they must conform to a certain role that was created by the dominant group. The explanation for this happening can be found in the writings of Karanxha et al. (2014) when studying the hidden curriculum. They state that it is an implicit embedded educational experience wherein students are taught social norms that reinforce the status quo.

Power of Obedience

In trying to understand Black women administrators it is important to recognize how power dictates not only the way they behave in mixed settings but their overall actions within their schools. In the narratives of my participants, it becomes obvious that these individuals seldom defy district policies. In stating this many of them are obedient but attempt to work around district mandates if they feel as though they will not benefit their schools.

Shirley Truth, Rose Davis, Anna Parks, and Eliza Murray's experiences illuminate this idea of obedience in that they were cautious about directly opposing district decisions; however, they did not passively conform either. When faced with decisions they disagreed with, they engaged in constructive dialogue with their area superintendents, seeking approval for alternative solutions.

Davis's and Murray's stories both display how they prioritized their schools' needs over what their district desired. They were both told to hire individuals who they knew would not be a good fit for their school. In the end they requested to hire different individuals and their decision proved to be the right one. Their experiences showed how they were able to exercise limited power within their leadership, making sure to communicate with the district before making a decision. These decisions reflect the body of literature that focuses on ethics of care. Bass (2012) articulates that Black women administrators lead with care. Their practices promote how they make decisions (Koonce & Kreassig, 2020).

In contrast to the above, both Angela Cooper and Mary Hammer's experiences were more punitive. Despite their efforts to comply with district policies, they faced verbal reprimands. Cooper's situation highlights how even when doing what she believed was the right thing she was reprimanded, and Hammer's experience demonstrates how power dynamics can choose who is at fault.

In conclusion, the narratives of Black women administrators provide valuable insights into the power dynamics within the educational system. They illuminate the challenges and opportunities that come forth when reconciling personal and professional lessons in their leadership practices.

Wielding Power for Uplift

While power is often in the hands of the dominant culture in the narratives of my participants, there are other instances where they wielded power for uplift. Horsford (2012) als describes Black women administrators as leaders who serve as social justice advocates who push for equality and create opportunities for their students. With this said, some of these administrators have deep-rooted connections within the Black community and use their power

and influence to cultivate and nurture. These administrators create environments where they challenge stereotypes and help create real change. As a result, their schools become safe spaces where students can be confident, learn, and grow.

The administrators in my study recognize the power they wield in shaping students' future. For instance, in the stories of Eliza Murray and Audre Height, both participants use their positions as catalysts for student growth and transformation.

Eliza Murray's story centers on her leadership role in an alternative school. She inherited what others said to be an underachieving school where the expectations were low. However, Murray refused to be confined by these limitations. She redefined student expectations and fostered an environment where students were challenged to achieve. Through her work she was able to reshape her school and transform student learning. Similarly, Height used her power to improve her students' environment and be an agent of change at a school who had a reputation for being underachieving. With her innovations and servant leadership attitude she was able to see vast improvements in the first three years of her tenure.

These narratives directly correlate with the research question, which seeks to understand how Black women administrators reconcile tensions and contradictions between their personal and professional lessons in their leadership practices. Black women administrators provide compelling insights into how the dynamic of power is used. They are both subject to power and are wielders. Their stories show that power is not solely about authority, but it is about making a difference.

Overall, my findings reveal that true reconciliation for my participants stemmed from their ability to adapt to professional settings without compromising who they were. The women took significant steps to ensure that their cultural roots stayed intact preserving their worldview.

They were able to achieve this by forming or engaging in supportive coalitions. Family, friends, and colleagues became strong allies that were instrumental in helping them navigate through the intersection of personal identity and professional roles amidst various challenges. These challenges included navigating the gendered and racial politics of potential and the element of power within the educational system. Acknowledging the systemic biases they faced allowed them to strategize their advancement with clarity and precision. This awareness empowered them to assert their influence within the power structures they navigated, utilizing their positions to encourage and aide their students.

Alignment of The Findings to the Theoretical Framework

As previously stated, Both Black Feminist Thought (BFT) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) were employed for this study. Black feminist Thought emerged as a by-product of the feminist movement and focused on intellectualism (McCann et al., 2013). Black women insisted that there were distinct differences between them and their white counterparts historically, culturally and even gendered norms were strikingly different. Therefore, their experiences and understandings were unparalleled and how they navigated through these differences grew out of necessity (Collins,2000; Johnson, 2015).

Black Feminist Thought encapsulates the lived experiences of my participants. In my study, all of the participants were not only Black women but African American women with a common cultural historical background. Consequently, this framework proved that ongoing trends within the findings were not merely coincidental but emphasizes the inherent patterns that emerge from having this shared cultural connection. Several participants experienced desegregation firsthand as pioneers of schools or as newly integrated students during a wave of Black feminism. For my participants they had to grapple with institutional practices in the U.S and navigate through the complexities of oppression tied to both their race and gender. They

understood that as Black women they were subject to different treatment and even viewed differently than their white marking a unique experience. As a result, many of my participants became resilient in the face of their challenges leading to self actualization. Many of my participants displayed a strong sense of self and created their own narratives for themselves as leaders and the schools they led. Nonetheless, while all of their stories are connected creating this universal understanding, they also remain unique deviating from a prescribed monolith.

Similarly, the use of Critical race theory also proved to be a valid framework when analyzing the participants. As previously stated, Critical Race Theory was developed in the 1970's by Derrick Bell as a Critical legal studies. Currently, it is used as a theory that examines and challenges the way race and racism impact society (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). The five tenets of CRT seek to transform and create an equitable society. In this, CRT was an appropriate tool employed in my study. Through the rich narratives of my participants each tenant was unveiled. At the center of the study race and racism came to the surface and how each participant interacted within the confines of the dominant culture attest to the relevancy of the theory.

The first tenant is racism is permanent within the United States (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2016). As Black women living in a predominantly white society, they understood that the construct of the world that they live in is not created for them. In stating this, participants acknowledge that even in a diverse professional setting, training remained monocultural. The second tenant is interest convergence is displayed in the narrative of Anna Parks; she states that the superintendent only promoted her because he no longer needed her as his personal assistant. In addition to this all of my participants were boxed into typical positions for Black women (high needs schools with the majority of the population Black low-income students). There were instances where the promotion of these women served the needs of the

dominant group. Third is this notion that race is a social construct, for my participants, even when utilizing training as strategic aids in the school system, my participants understood that they are Black women and in order to prevail it is imperative to make connections with other Black women for safe spaces to be authentic. The last tenant is counter storytelling. Throughout this entire process my participants' perspectives of how the district functions and their experiences were illuminated. I was eager to listen and learn while they candidly shared their side of the story.

Overall, the use and implementation of BFT and CRT were essential in capturing the multifaceted stories of my participants. BFT served as a tool to recognize the special circumstances and personal experiences of my participants while highlighting the impact of race and gender. CRT on the other hand, guided the way I viewed my participants and analyzed the world around them.

Implications for Practice

This study has several implications for practice regarding principal preparation programs. Through the narratives of several participants, it has come to my attention that there is a severe need for practical preparation and training opportunities. While there are some trainings available within the district many of these programs are generic and fail to reach the unique needs of schools who host a population where the majority of the students are a high minority with low socio-economic backgrounds.

Over the past thirty years, training administered by the district has continuously changed, according to my participants. The 1980s were riddled by a period of trial and error. Moving into the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a surge of robust trainings, and intentional networking was a top priority. However, by the mid-2000s to the current period, much of this vigor has ceased.

This is due to the departure of many key actors who took the lead in creating training and networking within the district. The effects of their departure were felt by the younger participants who entered into the field under their tutelage. They stated that when these leaders left the district, all of their ideas, materials, and push for strong administration died down.

With this said, the younger participants stated that they really appreciated and used those training sessions to help them in their practices. Nevertheless, while they believed that the training courses were good, some modifications were still needed to meet the needs of their schools and/or students. Trainings that included cultural relevancy or practices that would better equip them with the tools needed to provide certain services for their students would have been even more beneficial.

Another significant implication for practice from my study pertains to the establishment of cultural communities and networking opportunities. Currently, the participants in this study rely on professional relationships to guide them when they are met with challenges. However, it would be more beneficial if there was a designated group or platform where women of color working within the same educational settings and facing similar issues could come together to discuss their shared experiences, challenges, achievements and solutions.

The implementation of area specific meetings, tailored to the demographics of these schools, could potentially bolster participants' confidence, and provide a unique avenue for the district to connect individuals who work with similar populations and experience similar challenges. These interactions would not only foster a sense of community but also facilitate valuable exchanges of knowledge and insights for best practices. Overall, they would contribute not only to best leadership practices but to the enhancement of student learning.

The last implication for this study is the district's hiring process and practices. As revealed in the study the promotion process is unfair and biased. Apparently, due to systemic racism and gendered biases the district's promotion opportunities are limited. Black women are not afforded the same opportunities as their white or male counterparts as a result they have a lower chance to ascend into administrative roles. To address this issue, there is a significant need for the implementation of a blind promotion system.

The employment of a blind system would ensure that an individual's time spent in service, achievements and ability would be at the forefront of the decision to promote. In addition to this the panel of reviewers should be diverse furthering the prevention of bias selection. At the time of the interview a number of points should have already been counted making the decision difficult to reverse. In all, this hiring process would be based on points instead of outward appearance thus promoting fairness in the hiring process.

Furthermore, it is essential to offer Black women numerous opportunities. These women should not just be relegated to schools with high needs but offered chances to lead in diverse schools and settings. Black women administrators need experiences outside of their immediate communities. Moreover, when these women fill out applications, if there is a desire by an educator to serve in preferential settings this should be taken into consideration. Recognizing and accommodations to the dreams and desires of individuals can often motivate them to work harder and be more effective.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, all participants worked in low socioeconomic schools with a predominantly African American student population within the same district. This occurrence restricts the findings to a certain

demographic of Black women Administrators. As a result, these findings might not fit the experiences of individuals who work in schools with varying demographics.

Secondly, my personal relationship with one of the participants presented some hesitation and secrecy. In order to prevent me from recognizing individuals or schools at times the narrative became too vague. This impacted the openness of their narrative and limited the depth of the stories shared.

Thirdly, the study was limited to women who identified as Black American biological women born in or have lived in the U.S the majority of their childhood and adulthood. Therefore, the findings may not fully align with the experiences and perspectives of women of color with different backgrounds.

Lastly, the study focused on women who had at least ten years of experience within the last five years. Future research could explore the viewpoints and experiences of newer individuals entering administration. The viewpoint of newer administrators would provide valuable insight to how race and gender are currently viewed. In addition to this an updated standpoint on how changes in Policy and practice have altered in (PNP). Future studies on younger administrators could draw interesting comparisons to those involving older administrators.

Furthermore, I would like to present additional recommendations for future studies. These suggestions were inspired by existing literature and reflect my own personal convictions. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Diverse School Demographics: While much of the research on Black women in educational administration concentrates on principals in predominantly Black schools. While these studies are essential to understanding the practices of these women, they do

not paint an entire picture. Exploring the experiences of Black women in various demographic contexts may reveal some nuances and offer insights into educational practices, race, racism, and gender biases.

2. Comparative Analysis: A comparative study between Black women and non-Black women in leadership roles within education could offer an interesting take on the leadership of women. While cultural differences may impact perspectives, examining the shared experiences and gender biases that women encounter in leadership positions could yield valuable insights.
3. Methodological Diversity: The majority of studies on Black women administrators have been qualitative. To enrich the literature, it would be beneficial to see more mixed-method studies or quantitative studies. These types of studies may offer a broader understanding of the research.
4. Resigned/terminated: Most studies focus on current or retired administrators. Conducting research on those who have left the field, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, could provide invaluable insights into job retention issues within the educational system.
5. Post-Pandemic Education: Given the changes brought about by the global pandemic, future studies should also investigate the impact of COVID-19 on educational leadership and practices. As the world undergoes transformation, it is imperative that research evolves to reflect the current happenings within education.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it was conducted through a life history approach which not only captured the narrative of the participants in the study but took an analysis of their childhood and compared to their practices as administrators. These stories underpin how their

lives shaped who they became and how they practice their leadership. Much of their childhood beliefs and experiences are mirrored in their schools. This culturally relevant leadership practice not only helps the climate and culture of the school but it creates student achievement. Where stereotypes and barriers can slowly be broken down. Like my participants, if you understand the history and culture of a school, and its surrounding community the possibilities are limitless.

The findings and recommendations of the participants, if implemented, will greatly improve principal preparation. Moreover, the participants of this study have great insight to the needs of their students but even more so what is needed to lead these schools. Training would be helpful so that others who are trying to climb the ladder know what works and what does not and that Black women are given their fair share of opportunities.

Personal Reflections

As I embarked on the journey of writing this dissertation, my focus has always been on discussing the experiences of Black women in administration, a topic close to my heart as I aspire to become an administrator myself. I admittedly was intimidated by the dissertation and believed that I would not write it well. However, when what it truly means to be a leader and listened to the stories of my participants, I realized that my feelings of inadequacy were not unique to me. Many Black women grapple with similar feelings, possibly influenced by racial and gender biases or the pressure to attain perfection. This realization has become a personal growth opportunity for me as I work on overcoming these challenges.

My participants' stories are incredible, and I was only able to capture a fraction of their lives. It was challenging trying to piece together their narratives in a way that would truly embody the essence of who they are. It was my goal to analyze them not only as professionals but as real people and share what they had done. Perhaps one of my favorite hobbies is talking,

therefore listening and asking questions was my favorite aspect of this work. There is so much untapped knowledge just within the experiences of my seven participants. It is my hope that this dissertation did them justice.

As I immersed myself in data collection, I grappled with concerns about safeguarding the identities of my participants, especially when incorporating archival documents. To maintain their anonymity, I exercised caution in selecting documents, redacted certain references, and omitted specific details about participants. Preserving the richness of their stories while respecting their privacy was crucial.

Another challenge that I constantly faced as a researcher was navigating beyond my own beliefs. There were instances during interviews when I anticipated the direction of the narrative based on my own background and experiences as a Black woman. I believed I had a clear understanding of the expected responses and actions. However, I consistently encountered unexpected outcomes. For example, I often searched for instances where my participants would openly push back or resist power dynamics using phrases like “I’m not doing that” or say, “I stood up for myself,” but that never occurred. In reality, the power struggle was more covert, and my participants worked around disagreements in much more amicable ways than I imagined. I am not sure if this was because as teachers we have more protection or rather administrators are just more mature. Regardless, I now have more of an understanding than I did prior to my study.

I have also thought long and hard about administration and entering into administration but after this study I will proceed with a bit more caution. I have had a reality check. In stating this, I now know that just because I am a good teacher or may present good leadership skills that I might be delayed a promotion because of my gender, race, or perhaps I have offended someone

unintentionally. I am more aware of the disparities that can plague Black women administrators. But for now I can only await the future to find out what my fate will be.

In closing, this dissertation has been a real challenge in my life. I have had to deal with great losses and a hit to my self esteem as a student. I believed that I could not do this without my big brother (Stephen Mobley) who pushed me to pursue my doctorate degree but sadly passed away in 2018. Needless to say, I pushed through and if it were not for my family, friends and amazing committee I do not think I would have been able to come this far. I now have a better view of the work it takes and the commitment to take on a task such as this. I am ever grateful to God for getting me through.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Current info: employment questions

Formative Years

1. Tell me a little about yourself, like where you were born, grew up, and some of your earliest memories about your school experience.
   - a) Where else have you lived for a year or longer?

2. Describe those who helped to raise you?
   - a) What were your interests growing up?
   - b) Did you live in a nuclear family?
   - c) What was the education level of your parents?
   - d) What was your parents' attitude about education?
   - e) Did they support your educational decisions?
   - f) What roles and responsibilities did you have?
   - g) Did you live in a religious or spiritual family/household growing up?

3. Who besides your parents had a positive influence on your life?
   - a) How did they influence you?
   - b) What was their relation to you?
   - c) What was it about this person that drew you to them?
   - d) What did you learn from them?

e) Are there any negative influences that you are willing to share with me?

f) What did these positive or negative experiences teach you?

g) Are there specific lessons you have into your career?

h) Give you give me some examples of how you apply those lessons?

Employment

4. When did you decide to become an educator?

   a) What inspired you to pursue a career in education?

   b) Did you seek out help/advice when pursuing education? (Why or why not?)

   c) What form of advice or help did you receive? (solicited/unsolicited) (encouragement/ discouragement)

   d) Were you ever a classroom teacher/counselor? (How long did you teach?)

   e) At what level did you teach/counsel?

5. How did your educational experiences/ trainings shape who you became as an educator?

   a) What professional training did you receive in your position?

   b) How did this impact the way you carried out your role?

   c) What are some personal trainings did you bring with you into your position?

   d) How did this impact the way you carried out your role?

   e) How did you improve your practice as an educator/counselor?

6. How did you get into educational leadership?

   a) Did you apply, or did someone promote you?

   b) What training did you have or had to take?

   c) Can you describe to me the courses outline

   d) How did the course impact your ability to lead as a new/budding administrator?

7. What was your first role as an administrator?

   a) What level was it? (Elementary, middle, high school)

   b) Did you have a mentor/s or were you the first person in your position?

   c) How did your mentor/ lack of mentorship impact your experience as a new leader?

   d) Did not having a mentor hurt you in any way?

8. What were your responsibilities in your first role as an administrator?

   a) What were the lessons that you learned from that first position?

   b) How long were you in this position?

   c) What were some of the good things that you learned?

   d) What were some of the things that were not so good that you learned?

9. What other administrative positions have you held? (Did you have any subsequent positions?)

   a) Was there any available help?

b) What kind of help?

c) Who helped you if so and how did they help?

d) What was your title?

e) How long were you in these positions?

f) What were they?

g) What were your responsibilities?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS II

Today we are going to concentrate on your current position/ your last position working as an administrator.

Last time I asked you what some of the lessons were that you learned from your first position as an administrator. Today I would like to know what some of the lessons are that you learned overall from all your positions.

1. What aspects of your personal life dictate how you view your role as a leader?
    a. What about your family?
    b. What about religion/spirituality?
    c. Participation in the community?
    a. What about safety issues?
    b. What about Continual education?
    c. What about Mentorship?

2. How do you apply your personal life lessons to your leadership?
    a. In what ways does your personal beliefs not align with your professional beliefs?
    b. Can you give me examples?

3. Has there ever been a time where your personal beliefs conflicted with your professional beliefs?

    a. How did you resolve this issue?

    b. What was the outcome?

    c. If given the opportunity to go back in time would you behave in the same manner?

    feel?

4. Who currently inspires you?

    a. Does this individual impact how you lead?

    b. How does it impact your leadership?

5. As a seasoned Administrator has your leadership changed?

    a. What are some things that you do different now than when you were in your first position?

    b. Can you give me an example?

    c. Who do you go to when you need help?

    d. Is it another administrator from another school or district?

    e. Is it a mentor?

    f. Is it a person from your personal life?

    g. Is it a religious/ or spiritual guidance?

6. Do you feel as though you are supported within your district?

    a. How are you supported/ not supported?

    b. Why do you think that is?

    c. What does support look like?

    d. How does support feel?

7. What is something that you bring to your leadership that makes it unique to you?

    a. Where did this concept or idea come from?

    b. How was it/ is it received?

8. What is it like being a Black woman administrator?

    a. What are your current responsibilities?

    b. Are there any racial interactions or tensions that you experience?

    c. Are there any gender interactions or tensions that you experience?

9. Do you face any challenges as an administrator?

    a. Have you ever gotten push back?

    b. Can you give me an example?

    c. How did it make you feel?

10. How do people respond to you being a leader?

    a. How do other administrators respond to you?

    b. How does your staff respond?

c. How do your students respond?

d. How do your parents respond?

11. What keeps you coming back/ made you want to leave to your position as an administrator?

a. What professionally keeps you coming back?

b. What personally keeps you coming back?

c. What pushed you to leave administration?

d. Retirement

i. After how long did you retire?

ii. Was it an early retirement?

iii. Did your district force you out?

iv. Why?

e. Why did you decide to leave your position?

12. Have you/did you implemented any changes to your school/s?

a. What were the changes?

b. How long did it take for you to implement these changes?

c. How were the changes received?

d. What were the results?

13. How did covid impact your position?

a. Methods

b. Collegiality / personal interactions with others

c. Quality (educational offerings)

d. Training

15. What do you like best about your position?

a. What do you like least about your position?

b. What suggestions do you have for improvement in relation to your job?

c. What changes would you like to see?

16. Is there anything that you would like me to know about you that you find particularly important in understanding your life, motives, or actions that we didn’t already cover?

a. Personally

b. Professionally

If you think of anything that you think about after this interview, please feel free to call me.

Have you ever felt marginalized or had any marginalized experiences

Thank you for all of your time!

If you think of anything that you think about after this interview, please feel free to call me.

APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Before beginning

Hello (state participant's first name),

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. Before we begin, I would like to make sure that you are comfortable and understand the purpose of this study. Today you will be interviewed through a series of questions pertaining to your life including topics that focus on your family background, culture, personal accounts, professional practices and so on. I am conducting a study that focuses on the Life histories of Black women administrators and their leadership preparation. This is a three-part interview session where I will ask you some initial questions then have two more follow up interviews to check for clarity and refinement for my analysis. I expect each interview to last anywhere between an hour to 90 minutes.

As a participant of my study, I would like to assure you that all your answers are confidential and will be used solely for the purpose of conducting this research. Your personal identifiers will be absent from the results, and you will be given pseudonyms. No university personnel, employers, employees or any other affiliates will be privy of your involvement in my study.

Do you have any questions so far?

Great, at this time I would like to verbally confirm that you are consenting to this interview.

Each time we meet, if you choose to continue to participate in my study, I will

ask for your verbal agreement.

Please remember that you may choose to discontinue the interview at any time.

At this time, do you consent to this interview?

Do you have any questions before I explain the structure of the interview?

This interview will be semi-structured meaning I have some guiding questions that will be used to drive this interview. They consist of a series of open-ended questions that you are to answer freely. I will use an audio-recording device during our conversation and journal to capture the dialogue. I am recording and taking notes to later review and analyze once our interview is complete.

I will start by asking fundamental background questions, then substantial questions related to your experiences, before exploring concepts correlating to the research questions in the study. Due to the nature of this study, we will stop and continue a week or so from today. We will then continue the interview at said time and date. During the second interview I will also ask you to provide any clarification if needed from the first interview. Once I have both interviews completed and transcribed during the final interview. I will again ask for clarification and present to you, my analysis. This is to ensure that I have truly captured what you wanted to share. Overall, the interviews will be taken to create a narrative of your life.

Do you have any questions about the process?

Lastly, I ask that your responses are 100% truthful and without fear of what I or anyone else may think. I am not here to judge your answers or actions, I am just collecting data that will hopefully help improve the field of education. Remember your participation in this study is completely confidential. All information will stay in my possession and interviews will be disposed of once the study is complete.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

[If there are no questions]

Let's get started

After concluding

Thank you (state participant's first name)

This is the end of our interview today. Your contribution was very meaningful and insightful.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I will review the content for clarity but if I am unclear or any of your responses, I will follow up with you in our next interview. I will contact you via email or your preferred method of communication. The transcriptions will be emailed however, if you prefer, I will have a hard copy for you at our next meeting. At that time, we will follow a similar format as today.

Do you have any questions?

(If there are no questions, thank the participant again, and allow participant to leave first).

Thank you again for your time, and honesty (state participant's first name) have a wonderful day.

APPENDIX D: INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Dear (Insert Name):

My name is Ann Marie Mobley, the principal investigator for STUDY Life histories of Black women in educational administration. [Insert Name of Person who Referred] stated that I should contact you about you participating in this research study. This research study will interview Black women educational administrators and examine how they reconcile tensions and contradictions between the personal and professional lessons that prepared them to lead from administrative roles.

While there is no compensation for your participation, your involvement will help us identify strategies that can help improve principal preparation programs. In addition to this, the information from this study may also help in identifying commonalities between Black women administrators and bring their perspectives to light by including it into academia.
Participants in the study will be asked to participate in three 1-hour interview sessions over Microsoft Teams, in person or via telephone to discuss their life histories and experiences as administrators.

To qualify for this study, you must identify as an African American woman who has been an administrator for at least ten years and is currently or recently have worked in the field (within the last five years).
Please respond to me at amobley1@usf.edu if you are willing to participate in this study.
I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely, Ann Marie Mobley

APPENDIX E: FLYER

K-12 Administrators Needed for Research Study

Who can participate?

- Do you consider yourself or identify as an African American woman?
- Were you raised by parents/guardians /caregivers who also identify that way
- Were you of your parents/guardians/ primary caregivers born in the United States
- Have you worked at least 10 years (retired within the last five years) or currently work as a school/district administration?

Participation includes completing three (3) 1 -hour interviews this academic school year

This study is being conducted through the University of South Florida

IRB study 005350

Study title: Life Histories of Black women in Educational Administration

APPENDIX F: COMPLETION OF CITI COURSE

Completion Date 25-Apr-2022
Expiration Date 24-Apr-2025
Record ID 47387233

This is to certify that:

Ann Marie Mobley

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Human Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social / Behavioral Investigators and Key Personnel
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of South Florida

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w760ddb71-6530-4027-b297-dc4952149d83-47387233

Completion Date 27-Apr-2022
Expiration Date N/A
Record ID 47387234

This is to certify that:

Ann Marie Mobley

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research
(Curriculum Group)
Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research
(Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

University of South Florida

Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

101 NE 3rd Avenue, Suite 320
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301 US
www.citiprogram.org

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w259c5042-6955-4974-b612-2826cd40b7c6-47387234

APPENDIX G: IRB LETTER

EXEMPT DETERMINATION

May 25, 2023

Ann Marie Mobley

Dear Ann Marie Mobley:

On 5/24/2023, the IRB reviewed and approved the following protocol:

Application Type:	Initial Study
IRB ID:	STUDY005350
Review Type:	Exempt 2
Title:	Life Histories of Black Women in Educational Administration
Funding:	None
Protocol:	• Protocol;

The IRB determined that this protocol meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review.

In conducting this protocol, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).

Please note, as per USF policy, once the exempt determination is made, the application is closed in BullsIRB. This does not limit your ability to conduct the research. Any proposed or anticipated change to the study design that was previously declared exempt from IRB oversight must be submitted to the IRB as a new study prior to initiation of the change. However, administrative changes, including changes in research personnel, do not warrant a modification or new application.

Ongoing IRB review and approval by this organization is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these activities impact the exempt determination, please submit a new request to the IRB for a determination.

Sincerely,

Laura Alfonso
IRB Research Compliance Administrator