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EXPLORING THE WORK OF BLACK WOMEN MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

By

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE WORK OF BLACK WOMEN MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

By

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Research on educational administrators, though extensive, has failed to include the experiences of Black women principals. These women have historically been underrepresented in educational administration. As a result, their voices are absent from the literature. Hence, researchers need to focus attention on the missing element of black women school leaders. Therefore, this study contributes to the field of research on educational administration.

This study was conducted with six Black women middle school principals in urban school settings. The purpose of this study was to investigate how six Black women middle school principals defined and addressed racism, sexism, and class inequality as they worked to create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. Each vignette addressed their individual personal and professional experiences.

Three conceptual lenses were employed in this study. I used a critical Black feminist postmodern model to explore and understand the professional and personal experiences of these Black women middle school principals. Literature was reviewed on the three major theories underlying this study: Black feminist theories, leadership theories, and justice theories. Each of these conceptual lenses was critical in comparing and contrasting themes from the literature and the data.

I used narrative inquiry to collect data from six Black women middle school principals. Their vignettes were collected through a biographical questionnaire, a series of three interviews with each principal, one observation, a group dialogue, and document analysis of critical life maps and artifacts. The main data-analysis technique used in this study involved developing categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize the data from the interviews, observations, and group dialogues.

From this process, four major themes emerged from the study: (a) strength of womanhood, (b) skin color and personal appearance, (c) power, (d) importance of home, and (e) pay it forward.

This dissertation is dedicated to:

My past: my late father, Saborn Isadore Smith, and my late grandmother,
Hattie Levert Bowden

My present: my husband, Jon Maurice Campbell, Sr.

My future: my son, Jon Maurice Campbell, Jr. (Jon-Jon)

My inspiration: my mother, Mary Bowden Smith

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

After decades of civil rights legislation and women's movement activities, there are fewer women and minority school administrators in schools across the United States than there were 35 years ago (Coursen, 1989). The relative scarcity of women and Blacks in educational administration is evident. According to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1992), two basic issues emerge when examining women and minorities as educational administrators. As stated in the U.S. Department of Education report, "First, both groups tend to be underrepresented and lack access to administrative positions; and second, the training they traditionally receive fails to acknowledge that they bring with them a set of unique experiences" (p. 165).

Because of the low percentage of Black women in educational administration, little has been written about these women in the principalship. Allen (1995) acknowledged this in stating, "Because they have been so few in number, there is precious little research about African American women in educational administration" (p. 409). In other words, traditional educational researchers have not addressed the influences of race/ethnicity, gender, and class inequality on Black women principals. Therefore, it is important to hear the voices of Black women administrators in order to understand leadership from their different perspectives.

Need for the Study

Although women's representation in educational administration, especially the principalship, has improved over the past 20 years, Black women's representation has increased only slightly (Coursen, Mazzarella, Jeffress, & Hadderman, 1989). Because so few Black women have held these positions, little research exists on Black women in the middle school principalship; thus, their voices and experiences are not reflected in the mainstream literature in general, and in leadership literature in particular. The literature is "strangely silent" on Blacks in educational administration (Coursen et al., 1989). Dillard (1995) noted that the "experiences of African Americans and other people of color have been conspicuously absent in the literature surrounding teaching and the principalship" (p. 539).

The dearth of research on Black principals weakens the body of research in educational administration because it thus fails to acknowledge the significance of gender and race in educational leadership. Dillard (1995) argued that "mainstream literature surrounding secondary school leadership has historically grounded the school principal's work in 'scientific' theories of motivation and management . . . , with little emphasis on sociocultural or feminist theories of leadership" (p. 541). The absence of literature on Black women administrators confirms that these women's voices are not being heard.

Black women principals' experiences and views need to be addressed in educational research because their experiences can contribute significantly to educational leadership. Banks (1995) explained the significance of including Black women leaders in research. She wrote, "Despite the growing number of research on and conducted by women and people of color in educational leadership, women and people of color are

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adding an exciting element to the study of leadership" (p. 66). According to Banks, these

women make a great contribution to educational leadership because

> their work raises new questions . . . , challenges traditional leadership theory . . . ,
> redefines old concepts and presents new language to describe leadership . . . , and
> is helping to create a new vision of leadership. . . . However, there continues to be
> a dearth of research on both groups. Of the research that is available, there is
> considerably more on women than on people of color. (p. 66)

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this study was to investigate how six Black women middle school

principals defined and addressed racism, sexism, and class inequality as they worked to

create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. I used a critical Black feminist

postmodern model to explore and understand the professional and personal experiences

of these Black women middle school principals. In particular, the principals shared their

professional and personal lives at the intersection of organizational differences, personal

culture and history, and principalship and leadership expectations as they worked to

create socially just and equitable learning environments for children.

Research Questions

To guide the collection of data with which to accomplish the study purpose, I

posed the following overarching research question:

> What is the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by six Black
> women middle school principals?

From this overarching question, I formulated the following subsidiary research questions:

> 1. How do these Black women middle school principals mediate the professional

and personal tensions to create socially just schools?

2. How does each Black woman middle school principal define leadership for social justice? How has each woman practiced social justice in her urban middle school setting?

3. What implications do the study findings have for the preparation of K-12 school leaders? What are the implications of this study for future research on urban K-12 institutions?

Importance of the Study

This study is important because it gives Black women middle school principals an opportunity to be heard. Benham and Cooper (1998) acknowledged the importance of providing the voiceless an opportunity to be heard–that is, "to present often unheard stories of the lives and contributions of diverse women school leaders, in both formal and informal positions of leadership, in an effort to begin to explore the voices that have too long been silent" (p. 3). Therefore, it is imperative to hear the voices of Black women school leaders in an effort to reexamine leadership from the perspectives of these women. In addition, these Black women's experiences with racism, sexism, and class inequality in their efforts to create a socially just environment for urban school children will contribute to the literature on educational administration.

A number of researchers have acknowledged the dearth of information on Black women middle school principals. According to Coursen et al. (1989), "Since the late seventies, it has been more and more difficult to find even the most basic data or information on blacks in educational administration" (p. 99). The literature, they contended, is "strangely silent" on this population. Moreover, despite the growing

numbers of Black women in school leadership positions, their voices have been virtually absent from the literature on school leadership (Benham, 1997; Benham & Cooper, 1998; Casey, 1993; Henry, 1993).

Another reason for conducting research on these women is that the findings will increase the understanding of Black women principals and add to the body of literature on leadership. Little educational administration literature has specifically addressed Black women principals. Rather, some writers continue to view all minority principals and all women principals as one group. It is important for researchers to focus on the Black woman principal separately because these women have unique informal and formal experiences. Similarly, Foster (1990) found that "studies of teacher thinking do not consider the influence of the racial identity of teachers on their belief systems and teaching practice" (p. 123).

Further, the distinct experiences of this cohort of women might inspire other Black women to conduct or participate in similar research. I hope this study will stir other Black women to carry out similar research because few Black women have considered a similar topic where race, gender, and class are central to the research. In addition, this research might encourage Black women administrators to participate in other scholarly studies. In fact, the participants in Benham and Cooper's (1998) study experienced personal growth as a result of participating in that research. Benham and Cooper wrote, "Many participants commented that, as a result of these interviews, they have grown as school leaders, becoming more confident in their thinking and actions" (p. 13).

Assumptions

This research was predicated on four assumptions. The first assumption was that the six Black women school leaders in this study were attempting to create socially just and equitable schools. Second, although I assumed that these women were attempting to create socially just and equitable schools, I did not assume that they had accomplished that goal. The third assumption was that these women were influenced by organizational differences, personal culture and history, and leadership expectations in working to create social change. Finally, I assumed that these Black women were attempting to uplift the life chances of Black children as they interacted with parents, teachers, and community members.

Analytical Lenses

As a Black woman who taught middle school for seven years, I had an opportunity to work with both a Black male principal and a Black female principal. Those experiences enabled me to recognize the vast differences in these principals' leadership styles when interacting with their school communities and their aspirations for their schools. I noticed meaningful differences in how this woman principal approached leadership. Although her superiors constantly pressured her to make do with insufficient staff, funds, and support, she continued to find ways to fight the system. This woman had a desire for her students to be the best, and nothing could deter her quest to make that possible. She found ways to raise money to get technology in her school so that her low-income students would have the same opportunities and experiences as middle- and upper-middle-class students in other school districts.

Through both observations and readings, I was influenced to use Black feminist theory, middle school leadership theories, and justice theories as the conceptual framework for this study. It was through these analytical lenses that I compared and contrasted themes from the literature.

With regard to the first lens, Black feminist theory as it pertains to schools and leadership, three major themes were apparent in the literature. One of the themes is that Black feminists are in triple jeopardy. King (1988) explained that race, class, and gender have an effect on the status of Black women. She also argued that "each discrimination has a single, direct, and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent" (p. 297). Similarly, Omolade (1987) believed that "Black Womanist narratives are grounded in personal histories of racism, classism, and sexism, as well as experiences of marginality and alienation" (p. 43).

Another theme that surfaced in the literature was the oppression that only Black women have endured. hooks (1981) argued that "no other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women" (p. 20).

The third prevalent theme in Black feminist literature is that Black women's voices have been and are being silenced. Collins (1990) cautioned, "Silence is not to be interpreted as submission in this tradition of a self-defined black women's consciousness" (p. 92). She elaborated on the issue of silence by stressing that "the overarching theme of finding a voice to express a self-defined black women's standpoint remains a core theme in Black Feminist thought" (p. 94). Hence, Black feminist theory was helpful in understanding the Black women school leaders in this study.

The next analytical lens was educational leadership theories pertaining to the middle school level, urban schools, and Black women in school leadership. Two themes are prevalent in the literature on middle school leadership. First, middle school principals seem to have a vision for their students, their school, and the community. George and Alexander (1993) noted, "Effective middle school leaders are able to translate their understanding of the commitment to the development of early adolescents into a vision of the school which grows out of an understanding of the needs of those students" (p. 500). The second theme in the writings on middle school leadership is the need for a collaborative decision-making process. McKay (1995) supported the idea that the foundation of middle-level leadership should be a shared role.

Three themes emerged from the literature on Black women in school leadership. The first was that Black women's leadership in urban school settings is transformative. As Dillard (1995) noted, "Effective leadership is transformative political work. School principals always work on behalf of particular values, projects, and peoples, those choices arising from their personal subjective understanding of the world and the work" (p. 560). Second, Black women administrators believe in empowering students and staff through collaboration. Hudson (1995) explained, "Women value the contribution which others connected with the organization have to make. They do not view soliciting assistance as a sign of weakness" (p. 108). The third theme evident in the literature was Black principals' ability to care for their students through "mothering" and "nurturing." Lomotey (1989) wrote, "I have also identified three qualities shared by some African American principals in predominantly African American schools. They are commitment to the education of all students; confidence in the ability of all students to do well; and

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compassion for, and understanding of, all students and the communities in which they live" (p. 430). Thus, educational leadership theory was important in understanding how the subjects brought about justice in their school settings.

The third analytical lens that was used in this study was justice theories, which includes social, organizational, and environmental justice. Social justice can be defined in terms of class, gender, and education. For instance, Blacks face the predicament of how to uplift the Black community, given the diversity of economic classes. According to Lawson (1999), "The idea that middle-class blacks are obligated to help those less well off is not new" (p. 91). On the topic of social justice as defined by gender, Collins (1998) explained that Black women still face inequities because of their race, class, and gender. She stated that some Black women continue to struggle for justice, whereas "other Black women remain disproportionately glued to the bottom of the bag" (p. 13). The theme of social justice as defined by education was also apparent in the literature. Blacks are struggling with organizational justice in an effort to get an equal education. Rawls (1971) explained that "justice might require the maintenance of certain patterns in the distribution of basic goods (e.g., a minimum level income, education, and health), while allowing the market to determine distributions of goods beyond those which satisfy fundamental needs" (p. 241).

Overview

Chapter I contained a statement of the problem of concern in this study, the need for the study, the purpose of the research, and the research questions. The importance of

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the study was discussed, the assumptions were set forth, and the analytical lenses used in the study were explained.

Chapter II is a review of literature on topics relevant to this study. The literature on the three major theories underlying this study–Black feminist theory, leadership theories, and justice theories–is discussed in this chapter.

The research design and methodology are explained in Chapter III. The study sample is described, data-collection methods are delineated, and data-analysis techniques are discussed. Delimitations of the study are set forth, and issues of validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalizability are discussed..

The study findings are presented in Chapter IV. First I describe each Black woman middle school principal in terms of the dance metaphor that I chose to depict her. The remainder of the chapter is devoted to the six principals' vignettes, describing their views on their growing-up years; leadership; their inspiration; defining leadership, power, and justice; and their philosophies..

Chapter V contains a thematic analysis of the vignettes, a summary of the Wisdom-of-Practice model, implications, and the researcher's reflections.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter contains a review of literature pertinent to this study, in which my purpose was to investigate how six Black women middle school principals defined and addressed racism, sexism, and class inequality as they worked to create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. I used a critical Black feminist postmodern model to explore and understand the professional and personal experiences of these Black women middle school principals. The literature on the three major theories underlying this study–Black feminist theory, leadership theories, and justice theories–is discussed in this chapter.

First, Black feminist theory is examined in light of the themes of triple jeopardy, oppression, and silenced voices. Next, leadership theories are explored, especially as they pertain to the journey of the middle school, middle school leadership, urban schools and leadership, and Black women in school leadership. In the third section, justice theories, I examine the myths of social justice for Blacks, as well as the meaning of social justice for Blacks as it is defined by class, gender, and education. This review of literature is designed to lay the foundation for understanding the study findings.

Black Feminist Theory

Black feminists have been scrutinizing feminist theory since the mid-nineteenth century because American feminists have focused exclusively on White women (Davis,

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1981; Giddings, 1984; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; hooks, 1981; King, 1988). Black women were essentially excluded from the women's movement. hooks acknowledged that, during the women's movement, White women failed to acknowledge that Black women were, in fact, more victimized than Whites by the oppression of race, gender, and social class. She criticized the women's movement by stating, "Although the women's movement motivated hundreds of women to write on the woman question, it failed to generate in-depth critical analysis of the black female experience" (p. 12).

Further, hooks argued that, although White women viewed themselves as victims, they failed to acknowledge the severity of victimization that befell women of color. She contended, "The first white women's rights advocates were never seeking social equality for all women; they were seeking social equality for white women" (p. 124). White women refused to support the cause of all women because it would divert attention from themselves. Not only did Black feminists realize they were ignored, but they did not have much in common with White feminists. Beale (1975) noted, "The white women's movement is far from being monolithic. Any white group that does not have an anti-imperialist and antiracist ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the black woman's struggle" (p. 2).

Within the literature on Black feminist theory, three themes were apparent: (a) the triple jeopardy of race, gender, and class; (b) oppression; and (c) silenced voices. Literature on these themes is discussed in the following paragraphs.

The Triple Jeopardy of Race, Gender, and Class

Because they were excluded from the women's movement and American feminism, Black feminists for the most part resisted mainstream feminists' ideas. Nevertheless, Black feminists have acknowledged that race, gender, and class inequality are significantly related to their plight. For instance, King (1988) contended that race, gender, and class have independent effects on the status of Black women. In her eyes, the effects of these types of discrimination are not equivalent. Instead, she argued, "Each discrimination has a single, direct, and independent effect on status, wherein the relative contribution of each is readily apparent" (p. 297). As a result, Black women have found themselves "marginal to both the movements for women's liberation and black liberation irrespective of our victimization under the dual discrimination of racism and sexism" (p. 299). That marginalization is evident in the commonalities that Black women are supposed to share with White women and Black men. For instance, Black women are supposed to share a commonality with White women because of their gender. Furthermore, Black women are supposed to identify with Black men because they both have in common the race and class issues. Hence, Black women have been asked to decide what cause they are fighting for or what interests they are advancing.

Collins (1991) argued that Black women need to address race, gender, and class issues during their struggle for equality. She believed that suppression by White women and by men is a way of "maintaining the invisibility of Black women and our ideas [and] is critical in structuring patterned relations of race, gender, and class inequality that pervade the entire social structure" (p. 5). Furthermore, this Black theorist explained that, despite Black women's experiences of oppression, each woman's experiences may

vary. Such factors as ethnicity, region of the country, urbanization, and age combine to produce a web of experiences shaping diversity among Black women.

Lorde (1984) illuminated how race, gender, and class separate Black women from White women, but said that Black women refuse to recognize those differences. As a result, she claimed that "we do not develop tools for using human differences as a springboard for creative change within our lives. We speak not of human difference, but of human deviance" (p. 285). Therefore, intolerance of race, gender, and class differences by both White and Black women alike has forced White women to make it difficult to acknowledge differences of race and class. In like manner, Grant (1989) identified Black women as "perhaps the most oppressed of all the oppressed" because of race, gender, and class.

Even in religion, Black women are seen as oppressed and invisible. Black women are restricted from the male-dominated culture of religion. Unfortunately, Black men have believed it appropriate to speak for the entire Black community of both women and men.

hooks (1989), Collins (1991), and Lorde (1984) believed that race, gender, and class are major types of discrimination and oppression endured by Black women. These Black feminists encouraged more critical thought about feminism, which would suggest the initiation of more research. The issues of race and class historically have been ignored in educational research; too often, gender has been the sole factor of concern.

<u>Oppression</u>

Another theme in Black feminist theory is that only Black women have critical insights into the oppression they have endured. Collins (1991) concurred; they wrote, "It is more likely for black women as members of an oppressed group to have critical insights into the condition of our own oppression than it is for those who live outside those structures" (p. 33). This Black feminist argued that the experiences of Black women provide them with a unique perspective on Black womanhood that is unavailable to other groups. It is impossible for those who are not Black women to understand race, gender, and class oppression. Collins asserted that "only African-American women occupy this center and can 'feel the iron' that enters Black women's souls, because we are the only group that has experienced race, gender, and class oppression as Black women experience them" (p. 34).

White feminists have attempted to group all Black women with multicultural feminists. However, this is untenable because Black women's experiences of racism, sexism, and classsism can be understood only by other Black women. Jackson (1993) recognized that "not all women [who] share a similar position have similar experiences or similar political priorities" (p. 6). She supported her claim in addressing why the category "women" has been called into question. In her opinion, this label is an attempt to conceal the differences among women. For example, analyses of the subordination of women have been undertaken from the perspective of White middle-class women.

hooks (1981) argued that Black women share a commonality. In her analysis, she explained, "No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and

distinct from black men, or as a present part of the larger group 'women' in this culture"
(p. 7).

Silenced Voices

The theme of silenced voices is prevalent in the work of Black feminists. The lack of voice and exclusion of the Black woman are essential components of Black feminist theory. Sojourner Truth, one of the first Black feminists, strove for her voice to be heard. During the nineteenth century, she was one of the Black women most responsible for voicing critical issues of Black women's gender and racial identities. White women in particular objected to Truth speaking publicly because they believed their cause would be damaged, but she continued to use her voice.

Black women are still having difficulties with a lack of voice. For instance, Christian (1985) wrote that, for Black women, fully using their voice is a continuous struggle. Christian argued, "To be able to use the range of one's voice, to attempt to express the totality of self, is a recurring struggle in the tradition of writers" (p. 172). Similarly, Lorde (1984) claimed that Black feminist thought reflects an effort to find a voice. On the basis of her observations and personal experience she wrote, "Within this country where racial difference creates a constant, if unspoken, distortion of decision, Black women have on the one hand been rendered invisible through the depersonalization of racism" (p. 42).

Black feminists have acknowledged the struggle to have a voice and have attempted to find ways for Black women to have a voice. For example, despite Whites' attempts to silence her, hooks (1989) found her voice through writing. However, she

questioned society's persistence in wanting Black women to keep one voice instead of showing their versatility by speaking with many voices. hooks's struggle for her voice involved a constant battle at the university level, where professors did not want Black students to have multiple voices. She explained, "It seemed that many black students found our situations problematic precisely because our sense of self, and by definition our voice, was not unilateral, monolinguist, or static but rather multi-dimensional" (p. 12).

Black women not only want to have a voice, they want to have a voice of color. Included in Black feminist theory is this theme of a voice of color. hooks (1989) maintained that there are "women within oppressed groups who have contained so many feelings—despair, rage, anguish—who do not speak" (p. 32). As poet Lorde (1984) wrote, "For fear our words will not be heard nor welcome" (p. 12), coming to voice is an act of resistance. Speaking becomes "both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage through which one moves from being object to being subject. As objects, we remain voiceless—our beings defined and interpreted by others" (p. 12).

Excluding Black women from feminist theory has been considered a way of silencing them. Carby (1993) challenged the silencing of Black women due to racism by arguing that "most contemporary feminist theory does not begin to adequately account for the experience of black women. We . . . have to acknowledge that it is not a simple question of their absence; consequently, the task is not one of rendering their visibility" (p. 25). Carby asserted that Black women who were silenced felt excluded from White feminist theory. In fact, the women's movement alienated Black women by not recognizing their lives and experiences. She said that, through Black feminist writings,

women were able to theorize about the interconnection among race, gender, and class in their lives. Cardy suggested that, by expressing these oppressions, Black women have been able to voice how they have been excluded. This writer stressed that Black feminists are still trying to get their White counterparts to realize that the present existence of racism is partly their fault because they stand in a power relation as oppressors of Black women.

Having voice in their lives is significant to Black women's self-affirmation. Lorde (1984) acknowledged that "the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger" (p. 42). Collins (1991) offered a suggestion for how Black women can gain their voice. She said, "Persistence is a fundamental requirement of this journey from silence to language to action" (p. 112).

Summary

Black feminists have laid the groundwork for fundamental research by acknowledging the themes of triple jeopardy, oppression, and silenced voices of Black women. Now educational researchers must begin to focus on these elements as they study Black women school leaders. Historically, educational researchers have not addressed how Black women school leaders define and address the elements of race, gender, and class as they create socially just environments. For that reason, in this study I explored these themes as I examined Black women middle school principals' personal and professional lives as they attempted to create socially just and equitable environments for urban children.

Leadership Theories

This section on leadership theories is organized in four parts: (a) the journey of the middle school, (b) middle school leadership–the principal, (c) urban schools and leadership, and (d) Black women in school leadership. The first part begins by taking the reader on a journey through how middle schools emerged. It is important to explore this journey in order to understand the philosophy of middle schools and their purpose today. Next, middle school leadership is discussed in an effort to explain the characteristics of middle school principals. A general overview is given of their vision and collaborative leadership in decision making. In the section on urban school leadership, I explain what these schools are confronted with and discuss the problems urban schools continue to face. Some of these problems are poor academic achievement, discipline, and principals' lack of power. Also considered are characteristics of effective urban schools. The final part of this section, on Black women in school leadership, focuses on three themes that emerged from the literature on this topic: Black women's transformative, participatory, and caring leadership styles. In the summary of the section on Black women in school leadership, I describe what is missing from the literature on this topic and how the present study will make a valuable contribution to educational research.

The Journey of the Middle School

According to Romano and Georgiady (1994), the middle school emerged as a result of the "growing realization that the changing nature of life made it necessary to reconsider the scope of the educational ladder" (p. 3). Educators found that, instead of having eight years of elementary school and four years of high school, it would be better

to have six years devoted to the elementary level and six years to the secondary level. The six years of secondary education were then divided into three years at the senior high school and three years at the junior high school. Thus, the junior high school was born.

Romano and Georgiady stated that, originally, "the junior high school was intended to provide the educational needs of 12-15-year-old students in grades 7, 8, and 9 or the first three years of the secondary school" (p. 3). However, they explained that, following World War II, there was a rapid increase in the number of students in American schools that was accompanied by a gradual abandonment of the original goals and characteristics of the junior high school.

Romano and Georgiady contended that "junior high schools adopted many characteristics of the senior high school that were not appropriate for the early adolescents. Dissatisfaction with these conditions increased, and the early 1960s saw the emergence of a new educational program for the early adolescent, namely, the middle school" (p. 3). According to their research, several factors motivated the movement toward middle schools. First, many school districts throughout the United States faced the problem of declining student enrollments. With fewer students, there was much empty or unused classroom space. On the other hand, some school districts were experiencing rapid growth in student populations and needed classroom space.

Another reason for changing to the middle school was the problems schools faced with desegregation. Some school districts turned to the middle school as a means of providing racially mixed populations in schools. Also, there was the problem of what to do with obsolete buildings that were no longer needed when new high school facilities were built. Moreover, middle schools were considered to be in the forefront of

educational change, causing a "bandwagon effect." Some communities even changed the names of their existing junior high schools to middle schools as a way to make the public think they were being innovative. In addition, schools had problems meeting the needs of preadolescent and early adolescent children. The middle school provided a means for developing a program that met the needs of this unique group of students. In summary, many factors prompted the movement toward a middle school program.

Middle School Leadership–The Principal

Middle school leadership is a complex, difficult, and life-consuming professional challenge. Many practitioners have described it as a "splendid agony" (George & Alexander, 1992, p. 133). One of the characteristics of middle school leaders is their vision. In George's (1989) study of the long-term survival of high-quality middle school programs, he found that one of the two most important factors in that longevity was a heightened sense of mission and the resulting clarity of vision about the nature of the school. George and Alexander were convinced that "effective middle school leaders are able to translate their commitment to the development of young adolescents into a vision of the school that is authentically rooted in the needs of those students" (p. 114). Similarly, after studying effective middle schools, Lipsitz (1984) concluded that the leaders of those schools had a driving vision that helped everything make sense. Lipsitz noted, "The leaders of these schools are ideologues. They have a vision of what school should be for the age group" (p. 174).

Like Lipsitz, McKay (1995) argued that a compelling vision is the key factor of leadership. He stated, "A leader with a vision has the capacity to create and

communicate a view of the desired state of affairs" (p. 35). The middle school principal

must be able to facilitate the development and communication of the school's vision.

McKay compared a vision to an idea, stating, "A vision is like an idea: It needs nurturing

or it will die. It needs constant attention and must be communicated throughout the

school and community" (p. 35). McKay explained how important it is to communicate

the school vision through a vision statement. According to Tregoe, Zimmerman, Smith,

and Tobia (1989), a clear vision statement establishes a sense of control over the school's

destiny and guides decision making. These authors believed that a clear vision will

"develop a common purpose and a sense of teamwork. The vision provides the common

bond that holds people together and sets the tone for collaboration and team building"

(p. 36).

George and Alexander (1992) believed that "the most effective school leaders in

today's schools are able to make recognizable progress toward the realization of their

vision in organization and operation of the school–through the staff they select, the

programs they encourage, and the scheduling they facilitate" (p. 116). These authors

indicated that "many school leaders have stated that if teams are to work well in school, a

principal has to be comfortable with consensus decision making" (p. 123).

Moreover, the middle school principal must have the flexibility to allow decision

making to be done outside the office and must be able to engage in decision making with

the staff. In addition, McKay (1995) believed the foundation of middle-level leadership

should be a shared role. He noted that "the middle-level school needs more leadership,

not less. Along with middle-level school planning is the expectation that the leaders will

lead other leaders" (p. 32).

<u>Urban Schools and Leadership</u>

Urban schools are in a state of deterioration (Lomotey, in press; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and have been considered the weak link in America's educational system. Urban schools have been under scrutiny with respect to students' academic achievement, discipline, curriculum, teacher quality, and leadership.

Student achievement has been a critical problem in urban schools. Lomotey and Swanson (1989) reported, "In a recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) survey, 17-year-old urban students scored 22 points below the national average. Concurrently, the urban school dropout rate is approaching 50 percent" (p. 439). They also said that the average academic achievement of urban children is well below suburban and rural norms.

Lomotey and Swanson pointed out that many urban schools lack purpose and coherence and often do not have a sense of community. As a result, many students are "unable to establish meaningful relationships with teachers and are often left on their own to succeed or fail" (p. 440). The authors substantiated this claim by saying that "many teachers do not believe that inner-city youth can perform adequately. Attitudes and comments of these teachers frequently cause discomfort, fear, and confusion among the students" (p. 440). Lomotey and Swanson believed these factors contribute to the low level of academic achievement in urban schools.

In contrast, Corcoran et al. (1988) found in their study that many urban teachers wanted better relations with their students. The teachers claimed that their efforts were

hampered by disciplinary problems, large class sizes, lack of time for individual interactions, busing policies, and lack of student participation in extracurricular activities.

Curriculum and staff in urban schools also have come under scrutiny. Despite the diverse curricula in these schools, the lack of proper guidance has been found to hinder achievement. Lomotey and Swanson (1989) maintained that diversity in curricula in urban schools gave the appearance of providing enriched academic experiences that were not available in other schools, but in actuality these urban schools were not providing a quality curriculum. As a result, some urban schools have deliberately limited their curricula by focusing on the basic skills of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Besides curriculum being a problem in urban schools, the Council of the Great City Schools (1987) identified staffing problems of urban schools. The Council reported that "the shortage of teachers is 2½ times as great in urban districts as it is in other districts" (p. 445). According to this report, the shortage of Black and Hispanic teachers is particularly acute. Thus, the multicultural urban school population has an inadequate number of role models with racial and ethnic backgrounds similar to their own.

According to Lomotey and Swanson (1989), even the leadership in urban schools is in turmoil, "partly due to the fact that principals have little control over the curriculum, the hiring of staff, and fiscal matters" (p. 442). One problem is that "most critical decisions are made at the district level, with limited input from the schools. The structure is highly bureaucratic, contributing to many of the problems that arise in these schools" (p. 442).

This sense of lack of control over school matters also is experienced by the teachers, parents, and community. The Carnegie Foundation (1988) observed, "Teachers

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in urban schools . . . have little control over their work. They are three times as likely as their counterparts in non-urban school districts to feel uninvolved in setting goals or selecting books and materials. They are twice as apt to feel they have no control over how classroom time is used or course content selected" (p. 6). In addition, parents and community members often view the neighborhood school as an "alien institution, placed there by an external power and having little to do with the neighborhood itself" (Lomotey & Swanson, 1998, p. 442).

Despite the deficits found in urban schools, these institutions can be effective under the leadership of a strong principal. Lomotey and Swanson (1989) acknowledged that "effective urban schools operate within the same bureaucratic structure as do other urban schools; nevertheless, the principals and teachers, through creative insubordination, have been able to achieve meaningful changes and meet the specific needs of their students" (p. 443). According to these researchers, "Effective urban schools are characterized by strong leadership, manifested primarily by principals who have assumed control whether or not they have been granted formal authority" (p. 443). They also observed,

> Principals of effective urban schools are confident in the ability of their children to learn, are committed to seeing that all of their students receive the necessary tools for success, and have compassion for and understanding of their students and the communities from which they come. The principals of effective schools make an effort to participate in neighborhood affairs and encourage parents to become involved in the education of their children. (p. 443)

Principals of urban schools also are able to create a nurturing school culture by having high expectations of their students, developing a sense of community, and maintaining orderly schools. Children are expected to achieve in this type of urban

school climate. Principals of effective urban schools also focus on developing a sense of community by nurturing and challenging the students. According to Lomotey and Swanson (1989),

> Effective urban schools have developed a nurturing school culture that demonstrates care and respect for the individual and sets high achievement expectations, with student progress carefully monitored. The effective urban school establishes linkages with the community surrounding the school and motivates teachers through involvement and example. Strong professional leadership appears to be key to its success. (p. 447)

The principal might encounter difficulties with creating a positive school culture, depending on the size of the school. Lomotey and Swanson (1989) explained, "A nurturing school culture and community involvement seem to be achieved more easily in small schools than in large ones; however, it is easier to provide diversity in large schools than in small ones" (pp. 450-451).

Black Women in School Leadership

Relating more specifically to Black women middle school principals, Hudson (1995) identified one of the themes found in the literature on Black women administrators—that they are transformative in their attempt to bring about school change. Hudson observed, "Traditional hierarchical and authoritarian approaches to school reform have not succeeded in producing educational programs which decrease the gap between low and high performing students. A different leadership style is needed to effect substantive changes in our schools" (p. 107). She argued that women, more often than not, are already transformational leaders. "Collaboration, cooperation, participatory decision-making, and shared vision are some of the descriptors of transformational leadership and women's approach to school administration," she wrote (p. 107).

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Natale (1994) described Lorraine Monroe, the Black principal of Harlem's Frederick Douglass Academy, a middle school, as a transformative leader. Monroe's perseverance was exhibited in her statement, "I think this is proving ground. When people say, 'What can you do with "these kids,"' I say, 'You can do anything'" (p. 45). Although Monroe had been a principal at Frederick Douglass Academy for just three years, "something more is happening at this school that sits across the street from crack houses: Kids are responding to order and focus" (p. 45). Natale observed, "At Frederick Douglass, Lorraine Monroe is trying to create a public school that exudes private school values—hard work, discipline, and college preparation" (p. 46). According to Monroe, "If the purpose of school is, as I always say, to transform children's lives, you absolutely cannot fool around academically. Poor kids get killed if they are not able to compete academically" (p. 46).

Another theme concerning Black women school principals is their participatory style of leadership. According to Hudson (1995), "Women value the contribution which others connected with the organization have to make. They do not view themselves as being the only source of knowledge and expertise and furthermore do not view soliciting assistance as a sign of weakness" (p. 108). Similarly, Rosener (1990) acknowledged that "women are more likely to employ a collaborative approach to decision making, resulting in a sharing of power, as compared to men" (p. 18). In addition, Hudson (1996) said that women administrators share their authority and power. She explained, "Women are inclusive rather than exclusive in their approach to making decisions. More often than not, women operate as 'decision causers' rather than as 'decision makers'" (p. 13).

Likewise, Dorn, O'Rourke, and Papalewis (1997) argued that "women involve themselves with staff and students, ask for and get participation, and maintain more closely knit organizations" (pp. 18-19). Further, Carr (1995) wrote,

> Research is clear that communication behaviors described traditionally as "female" are most effective for working with groups and work teams. Participative leadership is being described as the most effective leadership style in schools, and the vehicle of site-based decision making is pointing toward the necessity for principals and superintendents to model this style. (p. 195)

Lyman et al. (1993) studied 10 women's approaches to change during their first years in administration and found that these women used shared decision making in their schools. They discovered that "the changes made by these women varied from school to school, but the approaches used to bring about these changes were similar. Of the women interviewed, eight said they used shared decision making to bring about change in their schools" (p. 33). Lyman et al. also reported that "all eight of the principals who used shared decision making agreed that two-way communication was critical to the effectiveness of shared decision making as a leadership technique" (p. 34).

Similarly, Sanders (1999) illustrated how one Black urban middle school principal was a transformative leader through her collaboration with students, parents, and the community. Ms. Harris, the principal of Southbend Middle School (a pseudonym), was working to improve the school's climate and reputation through a number of reforms to enhance student achievement and attendance. The principal believed in involving the parents in activities, so she had parents serve as attendance monitors to help them "carry out their parental responsibility to monitor their children's school attendance" (Sanders, 1999, p. 36). This principal also communicated with parents through a variety of channels because Southbend was working to change its long-

standing negative reputation of not communicating with its students' families. Ms. Harris decided to go to the families if they were unwilling to come to the school to meet her. Further, the school organized "Get to Know the Principal" teas to give families throughout the community an opportunity to meet and talk with her. These teas were held at health centers, recreational centers, and local churches to give parents many opportunities to get to know the principal.

Another theme found in the literature on Black women school principals was their ability to care about their students through "mothering" and "nurturing." Lomotey (1993) identified three qualities shared by some Black principals in predominantly Black schools. These qualities were commitment to the education of all students, confidence in the ability of all students to do well, and compassion for and understanding of all students and the communities in which they lived. Hudson (1996) made a similar observation: "For centuries women have been relegated to the role of caretaker of children and men. In recent years the roles of stay-at-home mom, nurse, and teacher have been counterscripted as women travel the path to school administration" (p. 12).

Reitzug and Patterson's (1998) study of urban principals revealed how a Black woman middle school principal exemplified caring in her leadership work. In observing Mrs. Pressley, a Black middle school principal, Reitzug and Patterson found that she exhibited this caring behavior. Her practice of caring was congruent with much of the literature on caring. Reitzug and Patterson noted that

> Mrs. Pressley's behavior in the interaction with Cicely and Mr. Mosely focused the interaction on Cicely as a person with a problem rather than Cicely as a problem. Specifically, Mrs. Pressley's words and actions recognized Cicely as a person who had been working diligently to be successful in school but who had a problem because she was accused of some inappropriate behavior. (p. 168)

Mrs. Pressley also illustrated caring by showing concern through communicating personal expectations to her students. Reitzug and Patterson found that Mrs. Pressley regularly expressed her personal concern for students through the individual expectations she articulated to them. They explained, "For example, while Tricia [a student] was present, [Mrs. Pressley] spoke to the alternative school counselor about her expectations for Tricia: 'I want to see her walk across the stage [at graduation] in May'" (p. 171). This Black middle school principal expressed her high expectations to all of her students. Mrs. Pressley also communicated this concern to a young man by stating, "We're losing you to the streets and I won't permit it! . . . I love you, son, but I'm not going to keep doing it [accepting inappropriate behavior from him]!" (p. 171).

Summary. In summary, three themes emerged from the literature on Black women in school leadership. The first theme was that Black women middle school principals are transformative in their work. A second theme is that these women exhibit a participatory style of leadership. These Black women middle school principals encourage teachers, students, and parents to participate in a collaborative effort to improve their school organization. A third theme of Black women principals' caring through "mothering" and "nurturing" was also evident in the leadership literature. These principals demonstrate through their leadership that they care about their students academically as well as emotionally.

However, with only a small amount of literature on Black women middle school principals, certain elements are missing from the literature. Shakeshaft (1987) noted that characteristics of women in leadership were absent from the literature. She claimed that women administrators need to be able to tell their own stories because their problems and

life experiences are different from those of men. Those studying leadership have not focused on Black women creating socially just environments for their students, from a Black feminist perspective. Hence, this study is valuable because it was undertaken to fill in some of the gaps in leadership theories.

Justice Theories

I reviewed the literature on justice theories to help me understand how the Black women middle school principals in this study worked to create socially just school environments. It is important to understand the myth of social justice for Blacks, as well as the meaning of social justice for Blacks. The meaning of social justice for Blacks can be defined by three specific themes: class, gender, and education. The literature reviewed in this section supports my study because it explains social, organizational, and environmental justice theories, which have a bearing on these Black women principals' leadership experiences.

The Myth of Social Justice for Blacks

Andersen and Collins (1998) asked two questions that impel one to think about social justice. They addressed the reader's own experiences in asking, "What in your life do you care about so much that it would spur you to work for social change? Is it your family, your children, your neighborhood, a concern for a social issue, or an ethical framework that requires not just talk but action?" (p. 507). These theorists set out to dispel the myth that those who seek social justice somehow have to be extraordinary individuals, like Martin Luther King. They argued that most people who engage in social activism are ordinary, everyday people who decide to take action about something that

touches their lives. Many people are not even aware of these social activists' efforts. According to Andersen and Collins, "By making the political activism of everyday people from historically marginalized groups invisible, social institutions suppress the strength of these groups and render them more easily exploited" (p. 507).

People often believe that social activists look and act a certain way. Stereotypes of activists cause people not to recognize or understand a true activist's work. Andersen and Collins said that "often they remain invisible because we do not label their activities as activism" (p. 509). They asserted that there is not a typical kind of activist and that almost anyone can make a difference in the context of his or her everyday life. Yet, women's activity is overlooked. Andersen and Collins recognized that, although academic credentials, positions of authority, and economic resources can do much to help individuals challenge hierarchies of race, class, and gender, it is the individual or collective actions of ordinary people that bring about these social movements.

The Meaning of Social Justice for Blacks

Theorists have attempted to dispel the myth of social justice, but they have confronted a challenge when examining social justice because it does not have one particular meaning. According to Rizvi (1998), "Social justice is embedded within discourses that are historically constituted and that are sites of conflicting and divergent political endeavours. Thus, social justice does not refer to a single set of primary or basic goods, conceivable across all moral and material domains" (p. 47). As Rizvi explained, social justice needs to be articulated in terms of particular values, which, although not fixed across time and space, nevertheless have to be given specific content in particular

struggles for reform. Therefore, social justice has been interpreted in various ways to reflect changing social and economic conditions. Although Rizvi articulated social justice to reflect inequities in social and economic conditions, he did not acknowledge the long-standing hierarchical power relations of race, economic class, gender, and education that are still prevalent today, making Black women and children lower-class citizens.

For this reason, the meaning of social justice for Blacks needs to be elaborated in terms of three themes: class, gender, and education. Blacks often are confronted with how to help members of their race when a wide range of economic classes is included. For instance, affluent Blacks question how to help their "brothers and sisters," whereas middle- and lower-class Blacks are concerned with the fate of their communities. Blacks also define social justice according to gender. Black women are struggling to overcome oppression because of their gender, whereas Black men are more accepted than their female counterparts. Moreover, Blacks define social justice according to the education their children receive. These three themes are explored in the following paragraphs to amplify the meaning of social justice for Blacks.

Social justice defined by class. Blacks often face the problem of how to help one another when they come from diverse economic classes. For example, some more affluent Blacks question whether to stay in the community to help bring about social progress or to move to more affluent locales to better the lives of their families. Wilson (1987) claimed that poor urban communities are deprived of their role models, political clout, and economic base when affluent Blacks move out of those communities. He

thought that if some of the affluent Blacks stayed in the community, the less fortunate

ones would benefit. In a similar vein, Poussaint (1987) asked,

> Are those more affluent blacks obligated to stay in the less-well-off community?
> Should those blacks who can move stay? Does staying in the community help
> social progress? If we take seriously the notion of blacks helping to uplift other
> blacks as members of a family, the answer to these questions would appear to be
> yes. (p. 76)

Although many Blacks feel a sense of commitment to their Black communities, they do

not stay in those communities because of the deterioration and crime prevalent there.

Some Blacks believe they can be just as helpful and committed to their communities in

other ways, such as by rethinking the institutions.

Conversely, some middle-class Blacks make their own needs secondary to those

of the community, believing that staying connected to the neighborhood is part of their

contribution to social justice. According to Lawson (1999), "The idea that middle-class

blacks are obligated to help those less well off is not new" (p. 91). Durant and Louden

(1986) also believed that Blacks, middle-class ones in particular, are pressured to feel

obligated to help other Blacks and are told "not to forget their brothers and sisters as they

succeed" (p. 253). Poussaint (1987) also observed that "middle-class blacks have been

pressured to remain concerned with the fate of the brothers and sisters they have left

behind" (p. 76). This pressure stems from the belief that, because Blacks have been

oppressed as a group, success also must be recognized for the group. The Black

community sees progress as a sign that, if one achieves, then the entire group achieves.

Social justice defined by gender. Black women also experience injustice because

of their gender. Wilson (1987) wrote that "African-American women and their children

remain disproportionately poor, homeless, sick, and undereducated, unemployed, and

discouraged" (p. 13). He said that this has led some social scientists to consider Black women part of a growing, permanent urban "underclass."

Collins (1998) concurred with Wilson's observations on the injustice of how race, class, and gender affect Black women. She acknowledged that Black women's experiencing "social mobility into the middle class by gaining formal entry into historically segregated residential, educational, and employment spaces represents bona fide change" (p. 13). However, Collins acknowledged that Black women are still facing inequities because of their race, class, and gender. She stated that some Black women continue to struggle for justice, whereas "other Black women remain disproportionately glued to the bottom of the bag" (p. 13). In fact, Collins explained, "Black women were taught to see their own needs as secondary to those of a collectivity of some sort, whether it be the family, church, neighborhood, race, or Black nation" (p. 27).

Collins acknowledged that many people feel compelled to take action against injustice when they care deeply about searching for justice. As a result of the oppression they experience, many Black women are concerned with seeking justice. Collins argued that "even though Black women's concern for justice is shared with many others, African-American women have a group history in relationship to justice" (p. 244). In a critical analysis on why Black women are compelled to struggle for justice, Collins asserted that Black women believe "it is the right thing to do." With a deep sense of obligation, many Black women are compelled to move people to action.

Some Black women seek justice in educational and work environments through their leadership in community efforts. As they struggle for their rights, these Black women do not see themselves facing race, class, and gender oppression individually.

Rather, they recognize that race, class, and gender oppression are group based because they affect all Black people. Therefore, Black women reject individual strategies in seeking justice and work collectively with others. As Collins articulated, Black women believe "fighting on behalf of freedom and social justice for the entire community [is], in effect, fighting for one's own personal freedom. . . . Therefore, Black women are taught to see their own needs as secondary to those of a collectivity of some sort, whether it be the family, church, neighborhood, race, or Black nation" (p. 27).

Omolade (1994) supported Collins's position in stating that "Even Black women professionals find ourselves doing 'mammy work' in our jobs, work in which we care for everyone else, often at the expense of our own careers or personal well-being" (p. 49). In short, seeing their own needs as secondary seems to be synonymous with the lives of Black women.

Social justice defined by education. Blacks struggle to achieve not only social justice, but also other types of justice, such as organizational justice. The equity theory concerns distributive, procedural, and interactive justice; these types of justice are described in the following paragraphs.

Distributive justice is a prevalent issue in the Black community because it pertains to the distribution of benefits and burdens through society's major and pervasive institutions. In this sense, distributive justice applies to the distribution of scarce benefits, for which there is some competition (Rawls, 1971). The principle of justice, that "equals ought to be treated equally, is not likely to stir disagreement. But who is equal and who unequal? Presumably, all citizens should have equal political rights, should possess equal access to public services, and should receive equal treatments under

the law" (p. 228). Rawls explained that justice "might require the maintenance of certain patterns in the distribution of basic goods (e.g., a minimum-level income, education, and health), while allowing the market to determine distributions of goods beyond those which satisfy fundamental needs" (p. 241).

Zinn and Eitzen (1998) recognized the growing gap between the rich and the poor since 1970 and the decline of the middle class. They declared, "The old inequalities of class, race, and gender are thriving. New and subtle forms of discrimination are becoming prevalent throughout society as the economic base changes and settles" (p. 233). These authors cited racial as well as class inequities. According to Zinn and Eitzen, "Technology, foreign competition, and the changing distribution of jobs are having devastating effects on minority communities across the United States. Not only are minorities twice as likely as whites to be unemployed, they are more likely to work in dead-end jobs" (p. 236).

Procedural justice is another aspect of organizational justice. Many writers have described the characteristics of fair procedures, either for decision making or resource allocation (Barrett-Howard & Tyler, 1986; Folger & Bies, 1989; Greenberg, 1986; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980). Folger and Greenberg (1985) identified procedural justice as the "perceived fairness of the procedures used in making decisions" (p. 143). Similarly, Leventhal (1985) conceived procedural justice as the fairness of procedures. He believed that fairness of procedures could be evaluated according to particular procedural rules but realized that "individuals apply the rules selectively, giving certain ones different weights at various times" (p. 147).

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Interactional justice also is a criterion for fairness. Bies and Moag (1986)

identified different criteria people use to judge fairness in communication during the

allocation of resources. They argued that "the inclusion of interactional matters such as

communication might also explain why people feel unfairly treated even though they

would characterize the decision-making procedures and the outcome to be fair" (p. 46).

In an effort to analyze interpersonal communication in terms of fairness and justice, they

had to take into consideration the requirements regarding "proper" communication.

Social Justice Defined by Black Women

An example of social justice defined by Black women is their environmental

activism. In their work to achieve environmental justice, Black women use many

strategies in attempting to make a difference. Some engage in individualistic strategies,

whereas others engage in collective actions. In an essay on working-class female

activists, Krauss (1998) addressed some qualities of Black female activists. She wrote,

> African American women's private work as mothers has traditionally extended to
> a more public role in the local community as protectors of the race. As a decade
> of African American feminist history has shown, African American women have
> historically played a central role in community activism and in dealing with
> issues of race and economic injustice. (p. 547)

These women are grass-roots activists. Through their active role in and concern for their

communities, they acknowledge the environmental injustices they face. These women

have been called "race women," responsible for the racial uplift of their communities

(Gilkes, 1983, p. 547).

Environmental justice is directly linked to other justice theories. Black women

have participated in environmental activity as a reflection of their different experiences

of class, race, and ethnicity. As Krauss (1998) explained, "These women define their environmental protests as part of the work that mothers do" (p. 543). She further explained how family forces these women into action. Their activism stems from "less privatized, extended family that is open, permeable, and attached to community" (p. 543).

Unlike White working-class women, Black women recognize how environmental justice is rooted in race, class, and gender issues. In contrast to their White counterparts, Black working-class women are not traumatized when they do not see immediate changes. Krauss (1998) interviewed White women who were fighting for environmental justice and found that "their politicization is rooted in the deep sense of violation, betrayal, and hurt they feel when they find that their government will not protect their families" (p. 454).

On the other hand, Black working-class women begin their involvement with environmental issues from a different perspective. Krauss (1998) found that Black women "bring to their protests a political awareness that is grounded in race and that shares none of the white blue-collar women's initial trust in democratic institutions" (p. 546). Black women mistrust the government because they have been victims of racist policies throughout their lives. Thus, they see it as their duty to be protectors of the race. Krauss recognized that "African American women have historically played a central role in community activism and in dealing with issues of race and economic injustice" (p. 547). For these Black women, environmental issues are also about race, class, and gender. According to Krauss, "For female African American activists, environmental

issues are seen as reflecting environmental racism and linked to other social justice issues, such as jobs, housing and crime" (p. 548).

Summary

In summary, I utilized Black feminist theory, leadership theories, and justice theories to aid in understanding the experiences of these Black women middle school principals. The three themes that emerged from the Black feminist theory were the triple jeopardy of race, gender, and class; oppression; and silenced voices. The leadership theories section was organized in four parts: the journey of the middle school, middle school leadership-the principal, urban schools and leadership, and Black women in school leadership. The justice theories section laid the foundation for the study by explaining the myth of social justice for Blacks and the meaning of social justice for Blacks. The themes that emerged in that section were class, gender, and education. However, there is a lack of literature in the area of the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by Black women middle school principals. Hence, this study is significant because it will add to the literature on Black women who are school leaders and, more specifically, middle school principals.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Methodology: The Narrative

My purpose in this study was to investigate how six Black women middle school

principals defined and addressed racism, sexism, and class inequality as they worked to

create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. Narrative inquiry was the most

appropriate method for carrying out this study. According to Nelson (1993), the

significance of a narrative is that "it is a natural medium since it deals with human

actions and intentions and mediates between the cultural context and the personal

perspective of possibility" (p. 2).

Many educational scholars have used narrative inquiry in their work. For

instance, Benham and Cooper (1998) considered narrative inquiries a valuable tool

because "they allow us to understand the world in new ways and help us communicate

new ideas to others" (p. 10). Benham and Cooper believed that in order to "talk

meaningfully about how life experiences shape one's work as a school leader requires a

storied approach that is descriptive, personal and concrete" (p. 6).

In their study of nine diverse women school leaders, Benham and Cooper's

rationale for using narrative was that "narrative methods might very well be more

responsive to the researcher's and practitioner's intent to bring to the surface those

experiences that go beyond superficial masks and stereotypes" (p. 7). As Benham and

Cooper told the stories of these diverse women school leaders, they became aware of

how the women had encountered oppression, either as children or as adults in educational

bureaucracies and society. As a result, they asserted that "narrative inquiry can . . . provide school leaders with tacit knowledge of the field as they navigate multiple realities" (p. 8).

Henry's (1998) analysis of African Canadian women teachers through narrative allowed her to "generate theory and raise questions about how Black women teachers' consciousness and understandings at the intersections of race, class, gender, and culture contribute to and shape their pedagogical practice" (p. 3). She wanted each narrative to navigate its own course and explore different themes. Henry believed that each narrative illustrated "how race and racism, along with gender and class, shape one's everyday life–her thoughts, her actions, what she can do or cannot do" (p. 5). Through narrative, Henry's aspiration was to "focus on the voices of Black women teachers, neglected and discounted from educational literature" (p. 8). She used narrative inquiry as a vehicle to "refute commonsensical racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women" (p. 9). In the narratives, Henry used these African Canadian women teachers' own words, not editing the transcripts but allowing their voices to be heard. As she wove herself in and out of the narratives by organizing patterns and themes to share with the reader, Henry also provided a commentary in an effort to clarify or point out important thematic signposts.

In Lawrence-Lightfoot's (1994) two decades of research and writing about matters related to education and human experiences, she also used narrative to navigate her studies. She considered her participants and herself to be storytellers who were working within a powerful cultural tradition of storytelling. Lawrence-Lightfoot wrote, "The African-American legacy of storytelling infuses these narratives and serves as a source of deep resonance between us" (p. 606). She supported her contention that the

Black culture is rooted in stories by stating, "A strong and persistent African-American tradition links the process of narrative to discovering and attaining identity" (p. 606). It is through narrative that Lawrence-Lightfoot's Black storytellers could reveal their life's journey. She allowed her participants to be active storytellers and considered them "modern day griots, perceptive and courageous narrators of personal and cultural experience" (p. 606) who found storytelling to be a creative process.

Lawrence-Lightfoot asserted that, through storytelling, "these journeyers are continually strengthened by returning to the source" (p. 606). Despite narrative inquiry's having such a positive influence on both the researcher and participants, though, Lawrence-Lightfoot was aware of moments of silence and resistance during this process. She acknowledged that, in taking this journey of reconstructing life stories, "there are always things left unsaid, secrets untold or repressed, skeletons kept closeted. There is in good storytelling, then, the critical element of restraint and the discipline of disclosure" (p. 612).

Casey (1993) also used narrative in exploring the life histories of women teachers creating social justice. Her invitation to create a life history of these women was significant to them because they were able to talk about things that were important to them. As a result, these women teachers "could not resist the opportunity to talk about things that were so important to them, and once again to tell their stories to a usually indifferent world" (p. 13). Casey explained that, "for these women who had never expected to write an autobiography, the life history narrative became a task with enormous personal meaning" (p. 17). As a researcher she knew that it was her duty to

carry their intimate meanings into the public sphere by having mutual trust and respect for one another.

Researchers have described the strengths as well as the weaknesses of conducting narrative inquiry. Benham and Cooper (1998) explained that "narrative as research method provides us with glimpses of previously hidden reflections on school-life phenomena rather than the traditional quantified external views provided by earlier studies" (p. 8). They viewed their narrative text as a valuable transformative tool because it both "informs and transforms our knowledge of school leadership through the inclusion of diverse voices, those at the margins who have not been heard in the past" (p. 10). However, Tierney (1993) warned that understanding the life of an individual requires "an analysis of the multiple, sometimes opposing edges of truth; the manifold narrative voices of the person" (pp. 119-120).

Bloom (1998) also identified the pros and cons of narrative. She believed that focusing on women's lives through their personal narratives is significant because such narratives "illuminate the course of a life over time and the relationship between the individual and society" (p. 146). However, she cautioned researchers about the limitations of using personal narratives uncritically. As researchers collect and interpret women's life stories, they must recall that "people are invested in maintaining particular identities and forms of cohesion of 'the self'" (p. 146). Therefore, although researchers need to approach participants with an empathetic heart and open mind, Bloom cautioned that "we must also approach the analysis of narratives with a somewhat skeptical or, at least, un-idealistic eye, remembering that narratives never are able to represent either an absolute truth or a lived experience" (p. 146).

A narrative approach has become prevalent in educational research. Narrative is synonymous with storytelling, which reveals life's journey through a dynamic reinterpretation of home, a chance to reconcile roots and destinations (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994). Through narrative, one is able to "organize, articulate, and communicate what we believe . . . and to reveal, in narrative style, what we have become as educators" (Jalongo, 1992, p. 69). The present study contributes to the narrative works of Maenette Benham, Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, Annette Henry, and Kathleen Casey by exploring the perspectives of Black women middle school principals in their work to create socially just and equitable learning environments for children. Because narrative encourages interacting and establishing trust between researcher and subject, themes and metaphors emerge as a result of capturing the subjects' lives and lived experiences.

Data-Presentation Method: Vignettes

According to Babcock (1972), a vignette is a "short, subtle, compact literary composition" (p. 102). Babcock provided an extensive discussion of vignettes and their usage. He said that vignettes "are used in different ways, depending on the intended purposes" (p. 121). The writing conventions used in educational vignettes "are typical unto themselves. . . . Paragraphs are short, sometimes consisting of only one or two sentences. Sentences are often choppy. Occasionally, sentences are not sentences, but are capitalized phrases or single words. Sometimes items of a grammatical series appear independent of the mother sentence" (p. 102). In addition, vignettes "vary in their degree of subtlety. The intention of the variation is to urge the reader to see only what he will in

each composition" (p. 102). Babcock further described the characteristics of educational

vignettes. He wrote,

> Educational vignettes generally focus on happenings near to education. Most
> vignettes are about people and actual events. Names of people have been
> changed and made fictitious to protect the innocent. Few educational thoughts
> from vignettes are straight moralizing. Most educational vignettes are stories
> with concrete examples of people-to-people living. (p. 103).

Engleman, Ellena, and Cooper (1963) provided vignettes on educational issues;

their vignettes concerned the theory and practice of school administration. The writers'

intention was to "open windows at critical points in the whole process of school

administration rather than to treat school administration in totality" (p. xii). In addition,

the researchers' vignettes were intended to "aid school board members, superintendents,

and other educational leaders in charting a true course for the educational program for

which they are responsible" (p. xii).

Burnet (1986) provided readers with the tools to wend their way through vignettes

on diverse women. This author gave an overview of the lives of women in migration

from a historical perspective. Each vignette took the reader on a journey, and the "skilled

interweaving of family, socio-economic and cultural history show[ed] that immigrant and

ethnic women clearly possessed tactics to try to impose their work in the work place, at

home, or in outside employment" (p. x).

Whereas Babcock (1972) used vignettes in his study as "a vehicle for the

presentation of school-related ideas to teachers of young children," my purpose for using

vignettes to portray the lived experiences, views, and philosophies of Black women

middle school principals was to allow the voices of these administrators to be heard.

Through the use of vignettes, the voices of the Black school leaders in this study were

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maximized. Black feminist theorists have argued that, too often, Black women's voices have been silenced (Carby, 1993; Christian, 1985; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989; Lorde, 1984).

Babcock's (1972) use of vignettes was similar in some ways to mine. The vignettes are "intended to pose generalized topics for the consideration of the reader. No specific demands are placed on the reader. The only intention is to provide a thought which each reader may use or discard at his discretion" (p. 103). In addition, the vignettes used in Babcock's study as well as in this one varied from one another.

The vignettes in this study are centered on the lives of Black women middle school principals. They encompass complex issues of race, class, gender, leadership, and social justice. Each of the vignettes provides a glimpse into the professional and personal lives of these principals. The vignettes contain the views of these women, as seen through their eyes. Further, the vignettes revolve around the nature of school leadership for social justice. In this regard, Babcock (1972) described educational vignettes as "multifaceted, leaving the prime thrust to be judged by the reader. However, all have something in them regarding children" (p. 103).

<u>The Study Sample</u>

Six Black women principals from urban middle schools were selected as the sample for this study. The women were selected on the basis of recommendations from individuals who were familiar with their outstanding work in establishing socially just and equitable learning environments for urban children. Some of the women were recommended by colleagues, teachers, other school community members, school district

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officials, and school district superintendents. As I networked and shared my dissertation proposal with people in the educational sector, they recommended these women to me. I selected principals whose names were mentioned repeatedly by various people who knew of their work. This verified the significant impression they had made on the larger community.

In addition, each of the women met the following criteria for inclusion in this study:

1. Identified herself as African American or Black.

2. Was between 45 and 65 years of age. Black female administrators tend to be older than male administrators, and most women are in their middle 40s to middle 50s before they become administrators (Doughty, 1980).

3. Was currently a middle school principal in an urban setting.

4. Had been identified by the school community or the broader community for her educational contributions and work toward bringing about social change.

I explored the life stories of these six Black women to understand how they defined and addressed racism, sexism, and class inequality as they worked to create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. I also investigated the organizational differences, personal culture and history, and leadership expectations that influenced these women as they worked to bring about social change. In carrying out the study, I did not focus on the principals' entire lives but rather examined specific aspects of their professional and personal experiences and work as they attempted to create socially just and equitable learning environments for children.

I sent each of the principals selected for the study a letter introducing myself and the nature of the study. I assured the potential subjects that I would make every effort to maintain their anonymity and ensure the confidentiality of their responses. Included with the introductory letter was a consent form, which the women were asked to sign (Appendix A).

Data-Collection Methods

Interviews

Three interviews, each of which lasted 1 to 2 hours, were conducted with each Black woman middle school principal who participated in the study. The purpose of these interviews was to gather information on the subject's life history, experiences, and learning as an educator, as well as the connections between her work and her life. I based the interview protocol on those used by Benham (1995), Colflesh (1996), Phendla (1999), and Sanders-Lawson (2000), although I adapted the interview questions for these particular participants. (See Appendix B for the interview protocol.) Fontana and Frey (1994) saw interviews as "a way to reach groups and individuals who have been ignored, oppressed, and/or forgotten" (p. 368). In their interviews, feminists have been finding oral history to be a powerful tool. As Gluck (1984) wrote, "Refusing to be rendered historically voiceless any longer, women are creating a new history–using our own voices and experiences" (p. 222).

During the interviews, I became the learner as these women shared their personal and professional experiences with me. As the principals responded to questions from the in-depth interview protocol, I took careful notes on their answers as well as their facial

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expressions and gestures. With the subjects' permission, I also tape recorded the interviews in case I needed to check my notes later for accuracy. The women were in control of their vignettes and could choose what they wanted to share and when they wanted to end the interview. Occasionally, someone wanted to strike a comment she had made or asked me to turn off the tape recorder so she could talk candidly about personal experiences that she did not want made public.

The interviews were held in a variety of locations. I met a couple of principals at restaurants where they could give me their undivided attention. Other women felt more comfortable in their offices, where their secretaries had been instructed not to disturb them during our interviews. Still other interviews took place in secluded conference rooms and offices that were private and free of distractions. Regardless of the location of the interviews, they were learning atmospheres in which I listened intently and observed the women's gestures as they shared their experiences and philosophies with me.

Observations

Data also were collected through observations of these Black women middle school principals in their work environments. Observing these women's interactions with teachers, parents, students, community members, and other staff members enabled me to better understand their activities in pursuit of socially just and equitable learning environments for children. According to Adler and Adler (1994), "Qualitative observers are not bound . . . by predetermined categories of measurement or response, but are free to search for concepts or categories that appear meaningful to subjects" (p. 378). These writers also stressed the significance of combining observation with other methods. They

argued that observations are valuable as an "alternate source of data for enhancing cross-checking or triangulation against information gathered through other means" (p. 382). Through observation, the researcher is able to gain information about the subjects' environment and interactions.

Collecting data through observations afforded me an opportunity to get a better perspective on each Black woman middle school principal. I was able to see the complexity and simplicity of the principals' diverse interactions with others in their school communities and jotted down my observations in a notebook. All of the principals felt comfortable with my observing them and encouraged me to arrive before our interviews and group dialogues and to stay after these interactions to gain a better perspective on them. The women continued to carry on their daily tasks, despite my presence. On only a few occasions did the principals ask their staff members whether it was all right for me to be present during a personal conversation. None of those staff members objected to my being there. After these observations, I found a private area without distractions so that I could add to and clarify my notes while the observations were clear in my mind.

Some researchers have found field notes (researcher journals) and memoirs to be helpful during the data analysis. Fontana and Frey (1994) agreed with Lofland (1971) that "regardless of the circumstances one ought to take notes regularly and promptly, [and] write everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time" (p. 368). By taking notes throughout the data-collection phase, I captured the women's emotions and gestures, as well as noting my own interpretations of these actions. Barrie Thorne (personal communication, September 2, 1992) described these notes as having "a

private and intimate character." The researcher's field notes should contain "full description, avoiding sociological jargon, staying close to what I saw, while letting my imagination roam around the event, searching for patterns and larger chains of significance" (Richardson, 1994, p. 525).

<u>Group Dialogue</u>

Group dialogue was another component of the research process. Group dialogue allowed me to understand each participant from the perspective of other people who surrounded the principal in the school environment and her personal life. According to Fontana and Frey (1994), group dialogues are not meant to replace individual interviews, but can provide another level of data gathering. They believed that group dialogues have the advantages of being "inexpensive, data rich, flexible, stimulating to respondents, recall aiding, and cumulative and elaborative, over and beyond individual responses" (p. 365).

I scheduled group dialogues with each principal's staff to gain clarity on the principal from outside sources. The principals assisted me in selecting group-dialogue participants. After these participants were selected, the principals and I invited them to participate in the group dialogues; all of them accepted. The principals did not participate in these dialogues. As a result, the more questions I asked, the more comfortable the participants became in answering my inquiries. Numerous times, the group-dialogue participants offered additional information and wanted to stay longer than our scheduled time.

The group dialogues were carried out in areas that were conducive to having a conversation without distractions. Some of the principals let me use their offices, whereas others arranged for me to use a conference room or an empty classroom. The selected group of participants shared with me some of their perspectives on the principals and cited examples of their work to achieve socially just and equitable learning environments. I tape recorded the dialogue as participants shared information with me; I also took notes in a journal to capture in detail the voices of the speakers and their reactions. The group dialogues reinforced the work of these Black women principals and the respect they received from the school community.

Critical Life Maps

Another data-collection tool that was employed in this study was critical life maps. To construct such a map, each participant was asked to think of the most significant events that had happened on her journey to her current leadership position. Scholars such as Anderson (1988) and Benham and Cooper (1998) have used critical life maps in their work. Anderson used such maps in studying narrative accounts of the Minnesota Indian War of 1862. He collected accounts of significant events with the assistance of collaborators and interpreters. Similarly, Benham and Cooper asked participants in their study to "recount critical incidents in their lives that they felt framed their knowing and practice of leadership" (p. 13). Critical life maps not only provide information on significant events, but also encourage participants to reflect on their life journeys.

The Black women middle school principals provided multiple interpretations of their critical life maps. Each map took on a story of its own, through the participant's navigation. These principals designed their critical life maps through both written and oral communication. One principal typed her critical life map on the computer, whereas others drew a diagram incorporating pictures. Some principals wrote an outline, including in-depth details. A few principals wanted to share their critical life moments orally because they did not have time to write them down, whereas others chose to share them orally because they thought that was the best way to do justice to those critical life moments. (See Appendix C for an example of a critical life map.)

Artifacts and Documents

The final data-collection tool was analysis of artifacts, documents, personal journals and diaries, and meaningful objects. Participants were asked to choose and explain three artifacts that depicted their leadership. In addition, a variety of documents was collected from each participant as representations of her leadership in creating socially just and equitable learning environments for children. By analyzing documents that were important in these women's lives, I was better able to understand the participants as Black women leaders. Hodder (1994) said that document analysis is important for qualitative researchers "who wish to explore multiple and conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations" (p. 394).

Each of the principals shared a variety of artifacts, documents, and meaningful objects with me. Some of the women shared artwork such as paintings and figurines as representations of their leadership, whereas others provided personal and professional

pictures and yearbooks to represent their work for social justice. Some of the principals enjoyed this part of the data-collection process so much that they brought in numerous artifacts and documents throughout our interactions with one another. I took notes about some of the materials that I could not take with me because of their sentimental value.

<div align="center">Data-Analysis Techniques</div>

The main data-analysis technique used in this study involved developing categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize the data from the interviews, observations, and group dialogues. As a new researcher, I had to go through the data repeatedly, with an open mind, to identify themes and patterns. As the analysis continued, I reviewed the field notes (researcher journals), interview transcripts, and other sources. As patterns and themes emerged from the data, I developed a coding system and matrices to help in categorizing the data. Using codes and matrices was beneficial because it enabled me to make comparisons across interviews. I then revised and modified the emerging themes. Similarly, Benham and Cooper (1998) used narrative-type analysis to synthesize the data from a series of interviews with diverse women, observations, journals, and other sources. They then developed stories from this synthesis to "describe each woman's understanding of her own career as an administrator, both how it unfolded within her cultural and historical context and how she understands her profession as a school leader today" (p. 13). Many of their participants found the experience to be rewarding because they could see how they had grown as school leaders by becoming more confident in their thinking and actions.

In addition, I used Black feminist theory, leadership theories, and justice theories to help me understand the data. I looked through the lenses of these theories to critically analyze the principals' work for social justice. Using each of the lenses enabled me to better understand and critically identify how the literature supported and justified their actions. Using the lenses also allowed me to be critical of and make amendments to the themes and categories that were prevalent in the literature. Through writing the narratives, I was able to see areas that were visible through the narratives that affirmed the theories and areas that opened the window to what had before been invisible. Therefore, the literature provided me the foundation for critically analyzing the data.

In an effort to evaluate the trustworthiness of the data, I did three things. First, I sought the advice of an expert on the issue of skin color, which emerged as a theme in this study. Dr. Ronald Hall, assistant professor in the David Walker Research Institute at Michigan State University, provided me with greater insight into the complex issue of skin color. He encouraged me to consider how this issue had influenced the Black women principals' work for social justice and whether it had any bearing on their style of leadership. As a result of our conversation, I was able to examine the theme more critically and explored publications that he recommended to assist in analyzing and corroborating the data. Second, I had an ongoing conversation with the Black women middle school principals to make sure that I had accurately interpreted what they had been expressing. These conversations offered them an opportunity to affirm or provide more information to clarify various issues. Also, this ongoing dialogue afforded me an opportunity to clarify certain ideas and experiences with the women. Third, I sought the advice of my dissertation committee members, who are experts in the field of research.

They suggested ways to critically analyze the data. These individuals also pointed out other resources and avenues through which to scrutinize the data.

Thus, as a result of seeking an expert's advice, having an ongoing conversation with the women, and seeking the advice of my dissertation committee members, I was able to triangulate to ensure the trustworthiness of the data. According to Fontana and Frey (1994),

> Many scholars are now realizing that to put one type of interviewing against another is a futile effort, a leftover from the paradigmatic quantitative/qualitative hostility of past generations. Thus, an increasing number of researchers are using multimethod approaches to achieve broader and often better results. . . . In triangulating, a researcher may use several methods in different combinations. (p. 373)

Moreover, I used the interview data to develop a narrative relating each Black woman middle school principal's understanding of her own leadership within the contexts of gender, culture, and history. Analysis was done throughout the interview process. According to Manning and Cullum-Swan, "The narrative analysis typically takes the perspective of the teller, rather than that of the society" (p. 465). These authors explained that "narratives can take many forms, are told in many settings, before many audiences, and with various degrees of connection to actual events or persons" (p. 465). As a result, I used vignettes as a way to capture the essence of these women's work. It was important for me as a researcher to use this dissertation as a vehicle for these women's voices to be heard. Through the vignettes, the women's voices were maintained; however, I edited the transcripts for grammar and to reduce redundancy.

In addition, I employed observations and group dialogue in each participant's school setting. In an effort to get a real sense of the principals' personalities and

interactions, I initially scheduled two-hour observation sessions in their schools. As I followed the principals in their daily activities of meetings and interactions with staff, students, parents, and family members, I gained a better perspective on these women. All of the women felt comfortable with my shadowing them and often forgot I was present. Also, I was able to schedule group dialogues with each principal's staff to gain clarity on the principal from outside sources. The principals assisted me in selecting group-dialogue participants. After these participants were selected, the principals and I invited them to participate in the group dialogues; all of them accepted. The group dialogues took place in private conference areas. The principals did not participate in these dialogues. As a result, the more questions I asked, the more comfortable the participants became in answering my inquiries. Numerous times, the group-dialogue participants offered additional information and wanted to stay longer than our scheduled time.

Ethical Concerns

Some of the ethical concerns involved in conducting qualitative research include ensuring participants' right to privacy, protection from harm, and anonymity. Fontana and Frey (1994) discussed ethical considerations when conducting interviews. They cautioned researchers, "Because the objects of inquiry in interviewing are human beings, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them" (p. 372). These participants should have their identity protected from physical, emotional, or any other kind of harm. Fontana and Frey suggested that, "to learn about people we must remember to treat them

as people, and they will uncover their lives to us" (p. 374). In carrying out this study, I made every effort to abide by each of the above-mentioned ethical concerns.

Before beginning the data collection, I submitted an outline of the proposed study to the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects and requested their approval to conduct the study. That approval was granted (see Appendix A). In addition, I spoke with the participants and provided them with an opportunity through the data-collection process to voice any concerns they might have. Moreover, all of the participants signed consent forms to verify their participation and understanding of anonymity in this study. Finally, the participants could turn off the tape recorded any time during the data-collection process to ensure their rights of privacy and protection from harm.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS: DANCING TO A DIFFERENT BEAT

When a dance performance succeeds, it can transform passive spectators into active collaborators who may actually feel their bodies moving in sympathy with the dancers onstage; at such moments, energy flows back and forth between performers and audience, and exciting, unpredictable things can happen. This transforming experience is not restricted to the theater. No stage, costumes, make-up, or music are required for what might be called the impromptu dance performances of everyday life. (Jonas, 1992, p. 25)

Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the principalship by presenting the vignettes of six Black women middle school principals. Each dancelike vignette entertains the reader through the woman's performance to bring about a socially just and equitable learning environment. These dancelike vignettes allow the school leaders' voices to be heard. The women share their leadership journeys in their own voices. As a researcher, I wanted to present the data in such a way as to maintain the subjects' voices. Collins (1990) explained that "the overarching theme of finding a voice to express a self-defined Black woman's standpoint remains a core theme in Black Feminist thought" (p. 94). As a result, I reviewed the interview data and framed a vignette for each principal. The participants' transcripts were edited for grammar, clarity, and brevity, but I endeavored to retain the letter and spirit of these women's narratives.

In an effort to mask the identities of the six women, I used pseudonyms related to various kinds of dance. I came up with the dance metaphor as a way to understand the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by these Black women middle

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school principals. In this chapter I present vignettes of the women's growing-up years, leadership experiences, and inspiration; their ideas about the meaning of leadership, power, and social justice; and reflections on their philosophies. In addition, I infused the narrative with my own observations about the nature of these women's work. My purpose in participating in each vignette is to provide insight into these women's lives and to elucidate common themes that emerged from their conversations.

This chapter is intended to help the reader come to know these women and the nature of their leadership for social justice. So sit back and enjoy the dance performances of these women as you read the chapter. The thematic analysis, conclusions, and recommendations and implications are presented in Chapter V.

The Birth of a Metaphor

As I began my dissertation journey, I thought about how I could best capture the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by Black women middle school principals. I thought that illuminating their work for social justice by employing a metaphor would be the best path to take. Through countless days, weeks, and months, I found myself becoming more absorbed in creating a metaphor than in letting the metaphor emerge from the women's conversations and interactions. As my struggle to devise a metaphor continued, I found myself overlooking the richness of the data I was collecting. Although I used a biographical questionnaire, a series of interviews, an observation, a group dialogue, a critical life map, and a collection of artifacts and objects as data-collection tools, I was exploring each piece of information separately.

Unfortunately, though, I was disregarding what these women were really doing as they created socially just and equitable urban middle schools.

Even so, I shall never forget the day the metaphor of dance surfaced. I was talking to my mother on the telephone, expressing my enthusiasm for collecting data and interacting with these phenomenal women who had allowed me to become part of their world. The more I told my mother about my interactions with and observations of these women, the more eager I became to capture the essence of their work. My mother was well aware of my efforts to develop a metaphor to explain these principals' work for equitable urban middle schools. During our conversation, she continuously urged me to verbalize what I was seeing through my data. She kept asking, "What does their work for social justice look like? What do they look like as they are doing this?" In frustration, I blurted out, "It looks like they're dancing!" And suddenly we both became silent. I knew right then that these women's metaphor had been born. I exclaimed, "I'm on my way over. Don't move!" To this day, I am not sure whether my mother was silent because she was surprised at my tone of voice or at the intense delivery of this metaphor.

As I grabbed my car keys and my newborn son, Jon-Jon, and drove to her house, my mind was churning with how each of these women danced and what her dance looked like. When I arrived at my mother's house, she was waiting for us in the vestibule, eager to hear my ideas. Throughout the ensuing conversation, I explained the work of these women and the dance style I envisioned for each of them. As we talked, we danced each dance style with the baby, who was oblivious to what had just transpired but enjoyed the attention nevertheless. After our four-hour dance session, I was eager to get to the computer and continue to develop this metaphor.

I telephoned my husband, Jon, and screamed, "I have it! I have the metaphor! They're dancing! They're dancing!" Jon was just as excited as I was because he knew of my obsession with finding a metaphor. He wanted to hear more about each dance style and encouraged me to write down everything so that I would not forget a single thought. Jon pressed me to think of the dance styles in various ways. Then he asked me what the title of Chapter IV was going to be. After pondering this difficult question, I explained that each of these women was dancing to a different beat. My husband, mother, and I simultaneously exclaimed, "Dancing to a Different Beat!" I hung up the telephone, kissed my mother on the cheek, and thanked her as my son and I danced to the car and drove home.

The Meaning of Dancing

Jonas's (1992) journey in search of the most appropriate meaning of dance led him to Keali'inohomoku's definition. He explained,

> After careful consideration, anthropologist Joann Keali'inohomoku has proposed a somewhat more elaborate definition: "Dance is a transient mode of expression, performed in a given form and style by the human body moving through space. Dance occurs through purposefully selected and controlled rhythmic movements; the resulting phenomenon is recognized as dance both by the performer and the observing members of a given group. (p. 35)

Through his book *Dancing,* Jonas found himself adding to the meaning of dancing. He wrote,

> For all its scholarly breadth and depth, the most admirable thing about this formulation is that it leaves the final decision about what is and what is not dance to the people with the most at stake: the dancers and their audiences. Even the most traditional settings, the forms and meanings of dance change when dancers feel the need to come up with something new, or to alter or adapt something old, to fit new circumstances. (p. 35)

One of my favorite descriptions of dancing is Jonas's statement that dancing is "charged with power" (p. 17). He claimed that dance, like language, is found in all human societies. And, like language, dance has power. In the earliest societies, dance helped people survive–it was a way for communities to learn cooperation in working and hunting together–and, like today, dance was probably used to communicate and express feelings that are difficult to convey in any other way (Grau, 1998). Most dance styles are about the way dancers use their feet. Whether shaped by special shoes or left free, dancers' feet determine their basic postures and the movements of a dance. According to Jonas (1992), "In order to comprehend a dance, we must open ourselves to the culture from which it springs; conversely, as we begin to gain insight into a dance, we are on a path to understanding the culture that produced it" (p. 10).

Historically, Blacks have been stereotyped as being natural dancers. In The African American Encyclopedia (1993), it says that

> Although the image of the African American as a natural dancer with innate rhythm is an enduring stereotype in America, blacks have not had the same access to dance as a career as have whites. . . . By the 1920's, black dancers had become familiar on the stage as they performed tap, soft-shoe, and jazz routines. These styles of dances were considered acceptable for blacks, as such dancers tended to reinforce the image of the black with natural rhythm who required little or no training. . . .
>   Not all people of color, however, were content to limit themselves to certain styles of dance. In fact, some clearly resented the image of what was acceptable for them as dancers. The desire of blacks to enter the larger world of dance in some respects parallels the struggles of African Americans to gain entry to and recognition in other areas of American life during the twentieth century. (pp. 407-408)

In this dissertation I do not want to oppress my people by reinforcing the image of the Black as having "natural rhythm." Rather, my purpose in using the dancing metaphor is to provide the reader with a visual image of how these Black women middle school

principals used multiple complex movements or practices in their work to create socially just and equitable urban middle schools. The image of these Black women that I want to portray is that of successful women who challenged prevailing stereotypes as they contributed to their communities. Similarly, these school leaders performed various complex choreographed dances in their tireless efforts to achieve leadership for justice. It is through their personal and professional experiences, likened to their style of dance, that they had been able to create socially just learning environments.

In this study, I viewed dancing as more than just a series of movements performed in patterns and set to an accompaniment (Grau, 1992). I perceived dancing as a form of artistic expression that is characterized by movements with a particular goal in mind. Therefore, dancing in this study symbolized the variety of movements and maneuvers the principals used in order to create socially just and equitable urban middle school settings. As a result, I decided to use the names of various kinds of dances to describe how the women went about creating the desired school settings. For instance, "Encoded in the form, technique, and structure of every dance are meanings and values of importance to the dancers and to those who share their view of the world" (Jonas, 1992, p. 17). Moreover, there are many kinds of dances in which people engage. Some of these dances may be performed as a solo, whereas others are performed in couples or groups. Dance embraces forms ranging from ballet to religion. The distinctions among these types of dances are significant in examining the characteristics of the six middle school principals in this study.

Introduction to the Principals

Ballet

When I think of ballet, I envision a graceful woman dressed in a pastel-pink leotard accented by an ornate wrap skirt and wearing satin pointe shoes with satin ribbons that encircle her feet and ankles. This dancer has an erect posture and holds her head high with confidence. Her movements convey the illusion of weightlessness as she performs. What people do not realize is that the ballerina's techniques have been refined for decades to create an ideal of beauty.

As I think of this form of dance, I immediately envision the soft-spoken, graceful principal with the most leadership experience. I named her Ballet because, "while a classical art is by definition respectful of tradition, ballet is also daring, ambitious, as restless as the culture from which it springs" (Jonas, 1992, p. 134). Like ballet, this woman, "under changing circumstances, continue[d] to find beauty in the struggle of the human body to overcome its limitations, to rise (often literally) above all constraints, and to leave a clear imprint of its improbable triumphs in the mind of the beholder (Jonas, 1992, p. 134).

Ballet, like the form of dance, had refined her techniques through dedicating her life to dancing, learning her skills through discipline and years of leadership training, beginning in childhood. She explained that she was a "born leader" and had always been that "leader child." The first time I spoke with her, I recognized that she was, in fact, a born leader with confidence and strength. For instance, Ballet telephoned me an hour after someone in her school district had recommended her as a participant in my study. She assured me she wanted to help me in any way.

Although our first meeting was at a local mall and I had no idea what Ballet looked like, as soon as I saw her enter the mall I knew that she was the principal I was meeting. She glided through the doors and immediately greeted me. As we sat in the food court for our first interview, Ballet took her time and answered each question precisely and thoroughly.

Ballet continued to be exuberant as she took me on a tour of her school and introduced me to both staff and students. The principal's interactions with her school community were genuine and thoughtful. She spoke every word delicately and softly. She never changed her tone as she spoke with people on numerous topics. This principal astounded those who interacted with her. Several teachers confided in me during my visits that Ballet was an excellent principal who genuinely cared about her students and staff.

One important characteristic that Ballet exemplified that was similar to that of the dance was her high standards. Ballet made sure that her school had the same activities and materials that an upper-class suburban school would have. Just as ballet initially was for the upper class to enjoy, Ballet had made it possible for her urban students to enjoy the same activities in which upper-class children participated. For instance, Ballet's school had football, baseball, and soccer fields and tennis courts that were strategically placed on the well-manicured school property. In addition, her students could participate in other activities, like golf and swimming, at other sites.

At the time of the study, Ballet was 63 years old and had served 30 years in the same school district. She was the youngest of seven children of Tennessee farmers. Although the entire family helped with everything that needed to be done on the farm,

Ballet's parents made education the highest priority for their children. The youngsters never had to stay home from school to help harvest the crops. Ballet had dedicated her life to this dance of social justice and had learned her skills through holding such positions as a teacher in her hometown and then as a student service assistant, assistant principal, and principal, all in her current district. She was married and had two children—a 34-year-old daughter and a 31-year-old son.

Square Dance

The second dance that comes to mind is square dance. When I think of square dance, I envision people enthusiastically doing Do-si-do's, Spin Chain the Gears, and Ferris Wheels as the fiddler announces the calls, directing dancers what to do next. I picture a single caller for an entire dance hall, giving calls to large groups of people to perform. The caller intensely watches in anticipation before giving the next directions to eager dancers who smile and continue to dance.

According to Parson (1969), square dancing "is the ability of the leader, referred to as the 'caller,' to apply with perfect rhythmic incantation the 'singing' and 'patter calls' which provide instructions for the dancers to follow" (p. 96). The caller is a leader because "the spirit and personality injected into these calls account for much of the vigorous response on the part of the dancers, and rattling off the patters can be compared with an auctioneer's efforts to obtain more dollars for the item up for sale" (p. 96).

As I think of this style of dance, I am reminded of the second principal. From our first meeting at her school, I could tell that she was in control as I observed her giving orders to her staff. Square Dance stood tall, and people could not help but heed her every

comment. As I waited for her to signal me to enter her office, Square Dance told one of her two secretaries to hold her telephone calls, for the other to call a child's parent, and for one of the assistant principals to check on a budget issue. Immediately, those three school participants began responding to her calls.

Square Dance had characteristics similar to those of the dance. She performed daily rituals that were like the formal techniques and sequences of the dance. This principal awoke at the same time daily and prepared her morning coffee as she awaited her morning call from one of her sisters. The consistency of this principal's home routine was mirrored at her school. Square Dance maintained order in her school by setting the tone. Members of the school community respected her and were eager to please her. Despite her large student population, this principal was able to maintain order and discipline throughout the school.

At the time of the study, Square Dance was 54 years old and served the same school district in which she had been educated. She was born and reared in Michigan, where her father was a carpenter and her mother a secretary. This principal's relationship with her two younger sisters was a close one. Some of her previous professional positions included teacher, unit head, and assistant principal. She was married and had a 33-year-old son.

Jazz Tap

Jazz tap is the dance style that comes to mind as I envision the third principal. When I reflect on jazz tap, I am mesmerized by the fancy percussive footwork of the dancer as she marks out precise rhythmic patterns on the floor. This performer wears a

sophisticated dress that lets the audience see her legs and feet move to the complex beats. The tap dancer's shoes are mysterious because they resemble ordinary shoes until the dancer wants to express a dance through sound. Because metal plates, or taps, are added to the leather-soled shoes, she can be seen and heard. As I watch a tap dancer perform, I am captivated by her acrobatic moves and rhythmic patterns. I can see her using combinations of brush, flap, shuffle, ball change, and cramp roll. One of the great moves of the tap dancer is appearing to nearly trip herself up. This makes her performance exciting, as you wonder whether she will stay on her feet until the dance ends.

I named the third woman Jazz Tap because this form of dance has "a long, proud tradition. It began as the voice of a people who had no other voice" (Johnson, 1999, p. 55). Johnson claimed that "Jazz tap is partly a technical skill, but it is also a form of self-expression that comes from the soul of the dancer" (p. 19). This principal made her presence known by being both seen and heard at her school, at school board meetings, in the district office, and in the community. Jazz Tap was an assertive principal who vocalized her concerns and opinions. When an issue concerned her "babies," she made sure that everyone was well aware of her mission to do whatever she needed to do for those children. I first met Jazz Tap at a principal's conference at which she was a speaker. In her energetic and enlightening presentation on her role as an urban principal, I found this woman to be very straightforward and articulate.

When I conducted the study, Jazz Tap was a confident, serious-looking 59-year-old. She effectively communicated with her staff and students, whom she affectionately called her "family." Despite her stern facial expression, everyone gravitated to this woman. The students, teachers, and parents were entranced by her musical voice as she

greeted each member of her school community every morning. This principal's mission was to make her school into a family oriented organization. As she strode through the school, her footsteps echoed from the floor and walls. Whenever someone wanted to find Jazz Tap in the school, all they had to do was listen for her, regardless of whether she was in the halls, a classroom, the office, or the auditorium.

In a deep, raspy voice, Jazz Tap constantly challenged her restrictive boundaries as a principal. Whenever she attended an educational workshop and disagreed with the presenter, she expressed her views directly to that person; she was not afraid to voice her opinion. Many of her colleagues in the district knew her as an articulate and confident principal with a sense of purpose.

Jazz Tap had no hesitancy in articulating her concerns when she called the district office. Once I was in her office when she asked her secretary to order some resource materials for her students through the school's computer system. The secretary informed her that the computer would not accept the school's account number for ordering the materials. Jazz Tap immediately dialed the district's budget department and asked to speak to Carol. When the receptionist explained that Carol was unavailable, Jazz Tap told her to find someone with whom she could discuss her budget. Another supervisor then came to the phone, and Jazz Tap explained that she needed to order some materials for her students and that she should be able to do so. After a few minutes on the telephone, she succeeded in ordering the resource materials she needed.

Jazz Tap had been able to voice her opinion all of her life. The second oldest of five children, she grew up in an upper-middle-class family in Temple, Texas, where her parents owned a farm and a hotel. Both of Jazz Tap's parents died when they were in

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their thirties, and an aunt raised her and her siblings. Jazz Tap had held positions as a classroom teacher, math lab teacher, reading coordinator, and assistant principal, all in the same school district. She was divorced and had two sons, who were 32 and 34 years old.

Modern

As I envision modern dance, I see an invigorated dancer who is draped with a light silk tunic gathered only at the breast and hips as her bare feet glide across the floor. When the dancer moves, the fabric flutters through the air as she twirls and leaps across the stage. Her movements, based on the natural rhythms of walking, running, and jumping, are matched to the music. This form of dance is not constricting or inhibiting, but daring. The modern dancer feels free as she runs across the stage, her upper body and head bent backward and her arms extended behind her. The audience revels in the dancer's fluidity of movement.

I named the fourth principal Modern because she is "nontraditional and is dedicated to the service of the contemporary man" (Colliers Encyclopedia, 1957, p. 265). According to this encyclopedia, "If modern dance has no set technique, it nevertheless has a clear concept of purpose and intelligently exploits–perhaps more than any other way of dance–the movement possibilities of the human body" (p. 263). This principal created a variety of movements throughout her school as she asserted herself. Similar to modern dance, she espoused "the right to follow personal inspiration without catering to the tastes of some private or institutional patron" (Jonas, 1992, p. 191). Modern resembled the women who created modern dance because they, too, "were asserting for

themselves something that poets and painters in the West had come to take for granted by the nineteenth century: the right to follow personal inspiration without catering to the tastes of some private or institutional patron" (Jonas, 1992, p. 191).

Modern embodied the characteristics of the dance style for which I named her. Her toned, petite body resembled that of a modern dancer. Her movements were quick and precise. She was perpetually in motion as she leaped from her office, dashed through the main office for a requisition form, and skipped through the halls to meet with a teacher. I made the mistake of wearing high heels during our first meeting as Modern twirled me from conference room to classroom to office to outside. Although I had planned to stay for only two hours to conduct our first interview, I found myself part of her spiraling action of training a new secretary, informing a veteran secretary of an important call that she was expecting, scheduling a colleague to work part of summer school, introducing herself to new students who were touring the school, and dismissing youngsters after school. By the time I left her school that day, my feet were as sore as those of an untrained dancer trying to keep up with a seasoned performer.

This energetic 48-year-old principal came from a middle-class background. Although her parents were never married, they respected one another. Her father made a career out of military service, and her mother was a computer analyst. Modern was born in Checotah, Oklahoma, the third of seven children. Her previous positions included teacher, alternative program teacher, and assistant principal. Although Modern began her educational career by teaching in her hometown, most of her positions had been in the current school district. This principal had been divorced twice and had no children.

<u>Waltz</u>

As I envision a woman and a man moving as a unit, I think of the waltz. This couple is dressed in formal attire as they dance to the romantic music. The man is wearing a black tuxedo with tails; a white boutonniere and silk handkerchief accent his jacket. His patent leather shoes glide across the floor as he twirls his partner. The woman is wearing a formal, flowing ballgown. Her coiffure and make-up are flawless. This couple, who are attuned to each other's every move, appear to be from society's higher echelon.

I named the fifth principal Waltz because she was a well-dressed woman who faced a partner in a formal embrace to get what she needed for her students, their parents, and her staff. Her demeanor was regal and sophisticated. As in the dance, Waltz realized that an audience was observing her every move, so she performed faultlessly. She had learned through various mentors the importance of dressing appropriately, maintaining her appearance, and observing rules of etiquette. Similarly, according to Jonas (1996), "Waltzing for the ruling classes remained embedded in a hierarchical social setting. Only one couple took the floor at a time. During their few minutes together in the limelight, the partners (who had been rigorously coached by professional dancing masters) went through the prescribed figures of a dance" (p. 168). Waltz embraced various dance partners, depending on what she was seeking to achieve. Thus, at different times she "danced" with the school superintendent, assistant principal, parents, community, teachers, and students.

Reversing the characteristic roles in dance of the man leading and the woman being led, Waltz was the leader in her dance. She was able to gain her partners' attention

and lead them in the direction she wanted to dance. On numerous occasions, Waltz admitted, "I am well aware of the game and I know how to play it. [As a] matter of fact, I am good at playing the game." This leader knew how to steer a safe course around the ballroom. Regardless of her partner's gender or part in the school system, she was able to assume a leading role without saying a word. During one of our conversations, Waltz explained that her school needed certain things in order to run effectively and efficiently, and she was determined to obtain those items. She said she was involved in numerous organizations to network and make herself visible. Waltz considered herself the best and always wanted to be the first to accomplish something.

This 51-year-old principal was the eldest of seven children. Waltz was born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas. Her working-class parents were a carpenter/custodian and a homemaker. After her mother died at a young age, Waltz helped her father raise her six siblings and another child whom they had adopted. This principal had 33 years of experience in education and 26 years in her present district, where she had been a teacher and an assistant principal. A widow, Waltz had two daughters, ages 20 and 24.

Religious

Another form of dance that comes to mind is religious dancing. This form of dance is a way to praise God through movement and to glorify His name. The worshipers lift up their hands, not only to express joy but also to praise and worship the Lord. As I reminisce about visiting various churches, I think of a woman wearing a flowing white dress, her bare feet twirling in spirals to spiritual hymns. Her expression of joy illuminates the church. The spontaneous movements of rhythmic stomping and

hopping steps continue through the worship service. Her dancing is biblically based and spirit filled. The dancer arouses the congregation to praise the Lord. As she dances, the connection between her soul and body is evident.

I immediately knew that the sixth principal would be named Religious because of her strong spirituality. Our initial meeting consisted of quoting the Bible, giving praise to God, and praying together. This principal was filled with love for and devotion to Jesus Christ. I was touched by her compassion when I told her we would have to reschedule an interview because my uncle had died. She immediately came around her desk and clasped my hand and asked if we could pray for my family. Religious asked God to watch over my family during our time of mourning and to help my aunt and cousins cope with the death of their husband and father. As we held hands and prayed, a warm feeling of comfort came to rest in my heart. With tears in my eyes, I thanked Religious for her compassion. After our meeting, Religious prayed for my safe travel back home.

I named this principal Religious because "the initiate (who has undergone a long period of instruction and training) dances to invite a particular god to visit the world of the living" (Jonas, 1992, p. 37). It was clear that this principal's spirituality guided her work to achieve justice through her conversations and interactions with others. On several occasions, I observed Religious voice her love for God. This principal's staff and students were aware of her spirituality and were used to hearing her declare, "God is good," "Praise God," and "Thank you, Jesus." Religious spoke openly of her religious conviction, and she prayed and meditated before starting each day in her leadership role. Religious also extensively cited Bible passages that related to her work.

This 45-year-old principal was born in Michigan and grew up as the middle child in a single-parent, working-class family. After this woman's parents divorced, her mother was able to support the family by working and going to school. The deaths of her mother and husband had greatly affected Religious's life. She called on her strength in accepting the principalship a week after her husband died. This woman had been a teacher, social worker, assistant principal, deputy principal, and principal in the same district. Religious had two sons, who were 14 and 16 years old at the time of this study.

Summary

Similar to the various expressions of dancing, the six principals who participated in this study showed that "even in the most traditional settings, the forms and meanings of dance change when dancers feel the need to come up with something new or to alter or adapt something old to fit new circumstances" (Jonas, 1992, p. 35). These women represented various forms of dancing. Insights into their personal characteristics, including their ages, social background during their formative years, marital status, educational qualifications, and career experience, are furnished in Table 4.1.

In the following section, vignettes are presented in the voices of the six participants. Each vignette begins with a quotation that captures the woman's view of her work, followed by an exploration of the following aspects of her journey: (a) growing-up years; (b) leadership; (c) her inspiration; (d) defining leadership, power, and social justice; and (e) her philosophy. The discussion of each aspect begins with my own observations. These are followed by the principal's recounting of her journey, in her own voice.

Table 1: Profiles of the Black women middle school principals.

Name	Age	Social Background During Formative Years	Marital Status	Educational Qualifications	Career Experience
Ballet	63	Working-class parents Father: not much formal education; farmer Mother: not much formal education; farmer	Married	B.A., M.A.	Taught in hometown & held all other positions in current district
Square Dance	54	Middle-class parents Father: college (sophomore; carpenter Mother: college (sophomore); secretary	Married	B.A., M.A., M.A.+30	Held all positions in same district born & raised in
Jazz Tap	59	Upper-middle-class parents Father: high school; agricultural experimentalist, entrepreneur Mother: high school; entrepreneur	Divorced	B.A., M.A.	Held all positions in same district
Modern	48	Middle-class parents Father: high school diploma; military Mother: high school (senior); computer analyst	Divorced	B.A., M.A.	Taught in hometown & held all other positions in current district
Waltz	51	Working-class parents Father: elementary (6th grade); carpenter/ custodian Mother: high school (9th grade); homemaker	Widowed	B.A., M.A.	Held all positions in same district
Religious	45	Working-class parents Father: high school diploma; industrial fireman Mother: registered nurse; registered nurse	Widowed	B.A., M.A.	Held all positions in same district born & raised in

"As public educators we need to find out who we are and where we want to go. School systems have got to do this, or we are going to lose this battle. "

Growing-Up Years

Researcher's observations. Ballet was my first participant, and my anxiety was mounting as I traveled three hours to meet with her. Before leaving on my journey, I had checked and rechecked to make sure that I had all of my data-collection materials because I did not want anything to hinder me from gathering as much information as possible. My first impression of this seasoned principal was that she was soft-spoken and reserved. As we talked, she became more comfortable with my asking such personal questions.

When I asked Ballet about her growing-up years, she began to smile as she reflected on her family. One thing that stood out about her experiences was that her parents valued education and expected all of their children to get an education. Although Ballet's parents were farmers, they know that having a good education would take their children further in life. Despite her father's lack of formal education, he knew the importance of educating Black people to vote and strongly encouraged them to get out and vote. As Ballet spoke about her father, her eyes glistened and on several occasions she affectionately referred to him as "Daddy."

Ballet's self-esteem was like that of a well-trained dancer. She grew up with the confidence that she could do anything, regardless of her skin color; she knew that "Black was great." She did not allow gender or class stereotypes to keep her from excelling in school and extracurricular activities. This principal participated in various activities and

was the president of numerous organizations. As Ballet grew older, her parents instilled in her the value of helping others. Regardless of whether these people were family or not, she had to give something back. She even took part in political movements because she thought it was necessary to voice her concerns.

In her own voice. I grew up in a rural community on a farm where my parents were farmers. We children all helped with everything that needed to be done on the farm, but education was always number one. We didn't have to stay out of school to harvest crops or anything because my parents always worked around that. My father didn't have much education himself, but he saw to it that all of his children received an education and went to college. We were expected to go to school and do well. There was no discussion about it. My dad was supportive and would be there when the doors opened, no matter what was going on.

We didn't have anything [material], but we had a lot. We were just always very proud as a family. Independent. I didn't have any negative feelings. I just thought that I could do what the next person could do, and I still feel that way. I have always operated that way, having faith in myself. We grew up in church and we grew up as a strong family. There wasn't a feeling of less. We couldn't feel anything but good. My parents were very motivational.

My father was a farmer and a great politician. He was always trying to get Black people to vote by educating them on how important it was for them to vote. I remember how hard he worked for the Gore family; they have been in Tennessee for a long time. He was very assertive at motivating Blacks to vote, much more than people are nowadays. I think he was before his time. We just don't have those kind of people now.

We have the NAACP, but they so often get caught up in a different political arena by being more into their own selves. But being out there individually for their people, there are not a lot of people doing that. On the other hand, my mother was the supporter, and my father was more take care of the home and kids. My father was the voice.

I had an uncle who was a CME bishop, and he just sort of took all of us under his wing. Our entire family was Methodist. As a matter of fact, there is a Methodist church in Detroit named after my uncle. He was also a very motivational person, like my father. Also, I had teachers whom I loved and idolized.

I was always a very active student, more in a leadership capacity. I played a little athletics because I wanted to, but I was always that leader child. I was a leader on our school's student government, yearbook, honor society, and those kinds of organizations all the way through school. I have been at it for a long time, and I don't stop to think about it. Even now I am the president of some organizations.

I think the most valuable lesson that I learned growing up was to recognize the work of people, to be humble, to be helpful, and to share. That is me and who I am. The work of people stands out the most in my mind, all people, regardless of situations and circumstances. I usually can find a way to help others. If nobody else can get it done, I normally can or I know who to go to, to get it done.

Growing up in Tennessee helped me to know who I was. I think so often our students are thrust into certain situations and don't have a good feeling of who they are. I have students in my school who don't think they are as good as others. I grew up knowing that Black was great, knowing that my high school and college were great. When I stepped into the diverse world, it was not difficult because I was superior myself.

I'm not saying that growing up in a diverse society is bad, but I think, as Black people, we missed some basic teaching that we need to do for our children. There are groups that go to Saturday schools to make sure they know who they are. We don't do that with Black children, to keep them truly knowing who they are.

I graduated from college in 1960, and at that time we were heavily involved in political movements. There were marches and pickets; you were in it. You just did it. On the college campus, you had to be part of it. We were fighting for our community. I felt it was the thing I had to do. You didn't sit and think about "Do I or don't I?" You just did it. That's the way I am now when addressing issues. If I see something that is not going to be for the betterment of people, I will address it. I think there are pros and cons, but I think we have to address issues.

I don't believe that we Blacks as a people did enough for ourselves when the change came. We fought for the change, we wanted the change, but with change there are some other processes that must take place, and not enough took place for us. We were happy about being able to go to school and about busing. Many people have fought to break down the barriers, but we didn't as a base of people. We expected everybody to do something for us. We still are not doing enough to help our own Blacks. The perception of Black women and Blacks in general was that we were less competent, not aggressive, and more laid back. I would say less competent would be the biggest stereotype. Less accepted. That is changing, though, but I think when I was growing up we were considered less competent because Whites didn't think we had much to offer.

Leadership

<u>Researcher's observations.</u> As Ballet discussed her views on and experiences with leadership, I envisioned her as a ballerina who had given many performances. Ballet told me about the many positions she had held in the same school district. I found it interesting that she had moved to various schools but had stayed in the same district. She had even been an assistant principal at a particular school, moved to another school, and returned to her previous school to become its principal. Her dedication to the school district as well as the school was remarkable. On numerous occasions, she stressed the point that she loved her school district, school, and students. When I asked her about retirement, she said she was not going anywhere and that she "would hurt somebody" if they attempted to remove her from her school. She said she would not even entertain the idea of retirement until she got her own grandchildren through middle school. Ballet was able to keep a watchful eye on them because they attended her school.

Along with her school experience, Ballet had been able to be innovative in getting programs funded for both Black and White students. I knew from our conversations that she was proud of her work to help students. She was well aware of racial tensions and thought it was necessary to combat this problem. During our conversations, Ballet expressed her concerns about the structure of middle schools. She believed that middle schools should include ninth grade because children of that age are too immature to make the transition to high school.

This principal also believed she should keep abreast of what was going on around her as she helped students and their families. She wanted to know about changes in educational laws that might affect her students. Ballet's concern with how she could

assist families took precedence in her role as a principal. She provided many activities for parents and students in order for them to get the support they needed. But she did not do this alone. Ballet gave most of the credit for these activities to her staff, who worked collaboratively to make positive things happen in their school. Because of Ballet's genuine thoughtfulness, many of her previous students enrolled their children in her school.

In her own voice. I would say middle school is more demanding than elementary and high school because a middle school child has to have good knowledge and a physiological base. [Middle school] is a very difficult area to put together. I have worked at the elementary, high school, and college levels. It is more difficult to work at this level, but it is what I want to do. My brother tells me that I am crazy, but I think it takes a special person to be in the middle school. You have to have the right skill to get the right staff to work with the middle school kids and to be patient. This is the age when they are really developing emotionally and physically. I don't think we helped ourselves when we moved ninth graders and put them into high school. I think we lose more kids than what people think. They are not ready for a high school mind-set. The adults want them to come already mature and independent, but they are not ready. That's why we lose them.

I studied school law because, as a principal, I wanted to be knowledgeable about educational laws. You'd better know the law because, if you don't, you can make a major mistake that you could regret or end up taking up all of your time trying to work your way out of it. In fact, I know all of the laws that are coming from the state. I don't like them, but I know them. For instance, I had to know the recent school code because I

have to stay abreast in order to work with the mind-set of the law and yet realize that I am dealing with children. The one piece of the middle school program that bothers me is expulsion. Schools are expelling kids for normal situations, so I read the law and look at the situation. I assess how I can help the child or the parents and still uphold the law. It is a fine line. It is easy to kick a kid out of school, but I can't always do that. Then, if you are in that tough situation, the laws are always changing. But I must be aware of all of the new laws that affect my kids.

I developed student-involvement programs for White and Black students to become more involved so they wouldn't be at each other's throats. I got federal funding to continue that program and chose to work with the most difficult school. The school was dealing with racial issues because it had been an all-White school and then they started busing Blacks into that school. So I went into that school along with my colleagues and put the school together so that [White and Black kids] could learn together. I got kids involved and had them make decisions about different issues in their school. I did that until they merged two middle schools and the funding ran out.

I left that position and became the assistant principal at the school where I am now. I went into this whole new setting and continued working. I am big on student involvement, even now as the principal at this school. I stayed at this school for three years as an assistant principal; then another opportunity came where I became the assistant principal at the elementary school and middle school at the same time. It was difficult being an assistant principal in two schools. However, it worked out because the principal in one school was so good that she didn't need me. I was put there because the

school was out of order, so they thought that I would be needed. However, I was needed more at the middle school, so I spent most of my time there.

I then started an alternative school. I put that together for students who were not achieving academically, had poor attendance and behavioral problems. I worked as an assistant in the alternative school for two years. Then I came back to this school when the principalship became available; I got the job because they wanted me back.

I have been in education for the past 30 years; I will retire out of this place. I don't want to go to central office. I would hurt somebody. This school is home for me. I am right here with the kids, and I can give back to the kids here.

The structure in my school is like this: We operate as a full staff, where any topics are brainstormed by the staff. For instance, the school improvement team makes recommendations on different issues, and then it goes to the staff for their stamp of approval. Then from there it begins to happen with those people who want to move it. They want their students to be great, so they get the movement going. I don't mind sharing my power; I don't have to be a part of everything. I give them the power to take something and run with it. I think that is why I am successful–because I can trust people to do a job and get it done. I am a monitor; I know how to do that and not be dictatorial because it is going to ultimately come by me anyway.

The staff love to work because I let them work. They feel comfortable running things by me. I have to be able, through my staff, to teach a lesson that I want them to teach in their classrooms. For example, the students learn through my staff the issues of being timely, not lollygagging, not standing around in the hall drinking coffee. They

know that when they see me I am doing something, I am on a mission, I am helping them.

I see myself as a fairly strong, decisive person. It doesn't take me all day to make a decision. I can think it through real quick, and if I need more time to think it through, I will take the time. You don't want people to read you right off or get an upper on you. You want to ease into the position with your competence and your skills and catch them off guard and come across as being very profound. If you go in there all bubbly and volunteering for everything, they can read that right off. If you go in and do your job and do it well, then people will see that and respect you for it. There is no need to be too aggressive because you are smarter than they are anyway. You can sit back and still do the same things; it is just your approach, the way you do it.

I learned that in your professional career you want to stay broad. I have some really close friends on this staff, but I don't buddy with them in this professional setting. We do things once we get out of here, but we keep our work on a professional level; otherwise it could be detrimental. My brother always told me that you never date anybody on your staff. That's a powerful piece of advice–not that [dating a staff member] is wrong, but you will lose something in the professional arena, especially if the relationship doesn't work out.

I have an excellent relationship with the staff and with the parents. We had our first parent meeting Monday night, and of course you think you might have only six or seven people at the first meeting. We had a room full of people; we were moving tables, getting set up. I have an excellent relationship with the constituents of this building and within the community, and that has come about because I have been in the system for so

long. It is not a huge town, so if I did well for you and your children, now I have your grandchildren here. People want to put their kids in this school because I am here. Not that I am doing any more, but it is a relationship that I have established. It has definitely helped the reputation of the school. A lot of people think this school is like heaven. We try to maintain it, and the staff is proud of it. This is not to say that we are different, because our kids do get into trouble.

Now that doesn't mean that there aren't some staff members who aren't eager. As long as teaching is number one and they are doing their job in the classroom, then I can go with that. There are a few teachers who come to school, teach, and go home. If they are doing their best in the classroom, then it doesn't bother me. It's when they come, don't teach, and go home [that I get upset]. Most of the staff go beyond because they know it is for the children. Some will do it if I go to them and ask them to do it. There isn't usually any defiance; they just don't initiate it. They don't take ownership and do it, but if I ask, they will do it.

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. As Ballet danced around the idea of her inspiration, she expressed that all of her staff were compassionate and concerned about children. As she reflected on things that had inspired her, Ballet discussed how a White male principal had not wanted to give her an opportunity to teach in his school because he was looking for a male teacher. She was well aware of the gender stereotypes that had plagued Black women. As a matter of fact, she still communicated with the principal who had been reluctant to give her an opportunity to teach.

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In her own voice. When I came from Tennessee, my husband got a job at a company by the name of Wilson's. My first job interview, with a White male principal, did not go as I had planned. He said to me, "You know, I am looking for a man because I don't think a woman can do this job." I don't know if he meant Black woman or woman period. But I came here, interviewed well, and he gave me the job. We still talk about that. I was a good teacher, and he grew to respect me. He just had wanted a man. I guess we as Black women have to be so much better than men to get in. Often we prove ourselves, and then we are able to move on.

My role models have always been people who I thought were concerned about children and who were focused on what schools should be about. I remember my high school principal being about business. I also remember receiving advice from other role models while I was in college. They encouraged me to take on various leadership roles. As I took on those leadership positions, I enjoyed them more and more. As a result of those leadership experiences, I knew that being an educational leader was my calling.

I would say the person who helped me the most in becoming an educational leader was a principal I worked with for a long time. I first worked with him as a student services coordinator. Although he was the principal, I planned activities and helped with student cases. I think he did more to help me firm up how to be effective than anyone else did. We really did wonders together because he was an excellent principal and I had the other side of it, which was the people side. We balanced each other. That helped me find exactly where I felt I needed to be. He would always tell me I spent too much time with one child. He would tell me that I had to process them and get them out. But that wasn't me. I wanted to work the problems through. I wanted the change to occur within

the child, rather than saying, "This is your punishment for what you did." After working with student services, I became his assistant principal for 11 to 12 years. That experience helped me know what I wanted to do and how to do it effectively.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Social Justice

Researcher's observations. Although Ballet was soft-spoken, she had no problem voicing her thoughts on educating her students. She expected teachers to do their jobs and educate children. When she visited classrooms, she expected to see children engaged in cooperative learning. Ballet expected nothing but the best from both her staff and her students. As she spoke about her expectations, I could see her reasons for staying at the school level. She really wanted to be there, working side by side with the students. This principal advocated collaboration. Ballet knew that her teachers wanted to be responsible and believed they were able to make decisions. She used her power in this creative manner and still achieved the desired outcome of educating her students. One of the characteristics of the ballerina is her ability to listen to and observe what is going on around her before interjecting her leadership role.

In her own voice. I define leadership as the ability to establish an environment where people want to work, and go beyond what is expected of them. Leaders are able to set goals that will maximize the institution and get people to want to work and set goals. I am all about change. I stay abreast of what is going on; I can adapt to change, and I know we have to change. I constantly involve my staff in what is going to make a good school for 2000. This doesn't mean that you change everything. Some basics still need to remain basic, but you have to keep up with technology. You have to keep up with all of what is going on with education that will enable students to learn.

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Students are changing; they are coming with so much, so if I were going to try to operate as I operated in the 1960s or 1970s, it would not work. I would sit here and spin my wheels. I want to go into the classroom and see some cooperative learning. I want to see that you are skilled in multiple intelligences. It is a myth that all Black teachers can deal with Black kids. You have to know kids to be able to care about them. You have to love what you do. I don't want just any Black teacher who comes along. I hate to say that, but I don't. I'm looking out for the kids.

The teachers are responsible for teaching the curriculum. I am responsible for making sure that it happens according to the way it has been set up to happen. We have to monitor our own budget, too. I don't like that; I don't think that is fair. We haven't been taught that; it is a learned skill. I am good with math, but that is a piece that I don't like. I don't think we should have to do it. I think central administrators should be aware that our job with kids is demanding, so we don't have time during the day to worry about the budget. There are a lot of times I have to take it home in order to make sure that it is done right.

Power is the ability to affect an organization to bring about needed change and to maximize what it is that you do. I see it as a very important piece and that you have to be able to comment. I see that as power. I guess I like the word "empower" at the same time because, to be able to empower, you must be able to understand power—not in a negative sense, not to flaunt it, but as a strength, a firmness, a security, and the ability to make things happen. I believe in the power, and I use the power.

To have a good school, you have to have good parent involvement. You cannot have a good school without parents. They are the ones who are going to talk about it and
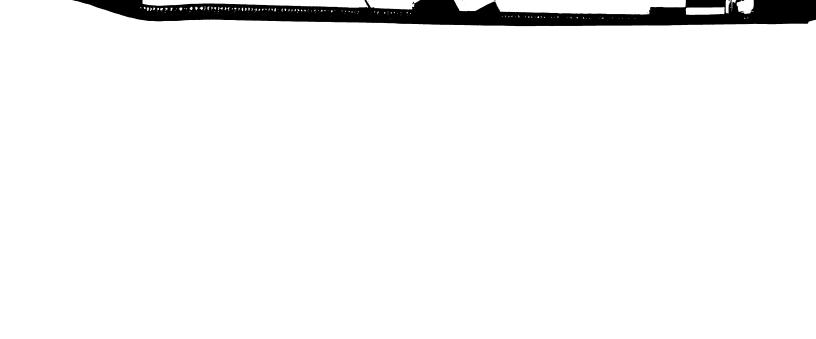
give your school a good name because something good has happened for them or for their children. You have to find ways to get all parents involved. I have never believed that parents don't care about their children. When I hear this I usually address it. Somewhere there is a place in their heart that you can get to if it relates to their children. You just have to get them at a good moment. You have to find that time or that opportunity to get something from them for their children.

The community is very important to what happens in education. We have to maximize community participation and efforts. I think the word "power" itself brings the negative connotation that they are going to make me do it because they have power over me. You have to be able to understand power to be able to empower.

Social justice is treating all people right and providing opportunities to everyone regardless of their race or gender. Social justice is the right thing happening to all people. You know what is right for all people and you do it, as a community, as a school, or whatever. What I think would impede my progress would be the way the school system dictates the way I have to do things. I have learned to operate within the frameworks of the system and yet do my thing. Those things happen, and I will fuss about it and get it out, then keep on trucking. Sometimes you have to sit quietly and shut your mouth and see what is happening.

I get kids from all parts of town. One thing I point out to teachers or counselors is that this could be the group of kids that represent the school for school activities and trips. It would be easy to take the first 10 kids you have in mind and write them down as representatives for the school. But you have to be thinking about kids from the north side

and from the east side, as well, so this group is represented fairly. You have to think about what is representative and make sure that this is a well-rounded group.

You have to realize that you need to give kids opportunities. You have to form a mixture, make sure that you are being fair. You have to get the kids in with sports and create a mind-set within the staff that you accept every student who comes through the door. We didn't design them, but we have to recognize the work of every child. We want our students involved.

There are things that impede but don't stop me. I'll find a way to get done what I know needs to be done for the children. Certainly there is the need to get it done faster and quicker. Sometimes you have to take a step back and say, "Okay, how do I get this done? This needs to be done, a roadblock has been thrown," so you work it through. I don't care where you are; something or someone will try to get in the way of progress, but you can't let it.

An example of a roadblock is a situation that occurred recently when I was trying to keep our library clerk. Some schools decided to cut their libraries and library clerks out of their site base by having management work on their own budgets. The contract of the library clerk says the person who is cut can bump somebody else. So my excellent person was about to be bumped out by a person that I don't know but that I was told was pretty incompetent. Her technology skills were not good, and the library is going high tech this year. I have been fighting that roadblock because the contract and administration say this will happen, and they are going to let it happen. I have had to leap some hurdles and say, "No, I am not going to accept this person. I don't know this person." I even called this person and said, "I don't know you and you don't know me,

but I have this person that I want in my building." It is something that shouldn't happen. If I see the need to keep a staff member who can move my school forward, there shouldn't be a way that somebody else can just bump out my staff because the one thing schools need is stability.

I'm not always seeking change for change's sake. I easily adapt to change because I know change is necessary. To keep up, you do have to change, and even at my age, change is not hard for me. I just went through an in-service with my staff, dealing with discipline in the classroom. I have to try to help my staff of young people understand that your mind-set must change because new children will come to you with some of the same needs. But your bank of strategies needs to be different to serve the students with special educational needs.

So it is not hard for me to change. I know that you have to change; technology has caused us to change. I could say we are not going to do this, we are not going to put the kids on the Internet, or we are not going to move to this level. That, to me, would be too stagnant; I'm not that kind of person. I can adapt to change. I am not always wanting to change because I think those things that are working well can be left alone, but change needs to be interwoven into what you do.

A part of leadership is the ability to do what needs to be done for the organization, and in this case my school is the organization. I realize that I am only a part of my school; I don't operate on an island, so pieces have to fit within a school and must fit within a system. If I get a directive to do something that I don't necessarily like, I will ask questions, I will point out pros and cons; then whatever the ultimate decision is

from my superior, I will do to the best of my ability. I have had to do that as a leader. It is an adjustment sometimes to do something that you don't particularly like.

For example, the last two years our system went overboard with student assessment. I disagreed with it, but I did it because that is what I had to do. But I never stopped addressing the issue that we were testing too much. In the process, I did all the tests, got them in on time, organized them, sent them back, and made sure that the staff did what they were supposed to do. I would say to my staff, "We are hired into a job and it is not always our philosophy, and we are going to be told some things to do that we don't like to do." We do those things, but it doesn't mean that we aren't going to address them. This year, they have backed off a lot of the tests. We did them, our kids did okay, and we kept it positive. I let them know my philosophy that this is what we have to do. I have a philosophy about MEAP [Michigan Educational Assessment Program] tests, but at this point it doesn't matter; I have to do it.

I have some deep feelings about what we are doing, and I don't know if it is by design, but it is not good for our students. I don't like putting my students through it, but I have to do it. The testing has been my biggest piece in the last two years. The district often will listen to me on issues. At the beginning of the school year, they were going to take administrators for the first two days for an in-service. I told them, "Absolutely not!" Every principal needs to at least go to his or her building first, and meet with the secretaries. They had it so we were going to go to this nice little place and be in-serviced. The district did change. I am pretty emphatic, but I have been in the system probably longer than anybody that I am dealing with. I express my views in a

professional, tactful way. People need to go to the building and get the secretaries started. I don't let much go by without voicing my opinion, and they usually listen.

As a transformational leader, you have to fight and expose and go through the turmoil. You don't want board members who are so narrow minded as to even go in that direction. They are not about children, they are about their own personal egos. I have some concerns with allocations, but they are not major concerns. We have a lot of waste in our district, as in other systems, but this is not an issue that I am going to take on. The district pays $10,000 per administrator for a swanky in-service, when we could have gone to one of the air-conditioned high schools and had the same thing. I voiced my concern about that. I thought that was a real waste–$10,000 per person to help three children. It's that kind of mentality. You have to be totally about schools and kids, and I would never be put in a position of agreeing to pay $10,000 for this in-service.

You have to be careful that you are not hiring minority staff members just to represent the student population. Rather, you should be selecting competent minorities who would be an asset to the school. I don't have any data or research to back this up, but I think having a bad Black teacher for Black kids is unacceptable. We tend to hold each other in such high esteem that when we are not the models we ought to be, it is frustrating for Black kids. I don't think they can deal with an incompetent Black teacher. We ought to know what we are doing, and we ought to be about those Black kids. If you get somebody who is not about them, they know it. They realize that some White teachers are not about them, but if a Black teacher is not about them, it solidifies a negative image. It hurts Black kids' esteem because they look at us to boost their self-image. It affects them differently than having a White teacher.

I think the allocation of monies is fair because a formula is used to determine the amounts of funding. My background was not one of funding because when I started teaching, we didn't have anything. Sometimes we are so into money and not productivity that our sights get focused on it. There is a lot of money in education, but we still seem to be struggling. Money has been flowing out of Washington, and we aren't making a dent in education. I take the money and do with it what is necessary for my kids. I don't think you need all that money to improve kids' academic achievement.

I have noticed since I've been in education that the White schools always get much more, but this hasn't stopped us from doing all that we can for the kids. Learning and teaching don't always take money. I can teach math with or without a computer. I can build students with or without one. I think we can do all that we know we can do to enhance learning with what we have. As long as we sit back and think that school over there has more than we do, we are going to be stagnant. You do with what you have, and you work at getting those things you want to have for your children.

I do think that most policies are helpful because they stem from issues of what we need to do. We need a plan or a policy. I don't see any detrimental or binding policies. You can be creative and stay within the policy. If you don't have some parameters, people will bat you around. People and board members have to cover themselves with policies. We have to live within the policies or we don't have any support. Policy is only part of the structure, and you have to have structure, especially with liability. Principals who get into trouble are those who choose to do things their way. You can't do it your way. Your creativity has to be within policy.

Last year, I had a student who knew all of the rules regarding *expulsion*. *One* morning, he had gotten mad at the bus driver, who had passed him up *at the bus stop* because the kid wasn't exactly where he was supposed to be. The *bus driver just left the* kid in the neighborhood, and a neighbor brought him to school. I knew nothing about the incident because the driver didn't report it. That afternoon, the boy got on the bus and backhanded the driver, who was fit to be tied. I was in the parking lot at the time, and I was glad I was there. After the boy slapped the driver, he sat down in a seat. The driver got out of his seat, grabbed the kid, and dragged him off the bus. By then, I had noticed the commotion and thought it was two kids fighting. I hurried over to the scene, and the driver had just lost it. I sent the kid into the building. Of course, the rule says that a child can't hit an adult. That calls for a 180-day expulsion. That is the rule you are supposed to abide by. I weighed the whole situation. I had a child who was wrong, but I also had an adult who was wrong.

I immediately got the boy's parents in to the school because I didn't want them to get mad and brew up trouble. The mother didn't believe her child had slapped the bus driver, but the kid was definitely wrong. However, the driver had grabbed the kid by the neck; he hadn't handled it right. I didn't follow any basic rules, but I thought of a creative way to save both the child and the adult. I had to meet with the bus company and student services to explain why I didn't want the kid expelled and the driver fired. As a result, they suspended the driver for three days, and I suspended the kid for eight days. I kept them apart and the kid off the bus for the rest of the year. I had to handle it that way because it was all about saving people. That poor driver did not need to lose his job, and the poor kid didn't need to be out of school for 180 days. I figured, if this kid

was going to do the same thing again, I could still get him later on. If he felt good about not getting expelled, then I had saved him and that was a positive result from working within the system but not exactly following the rules.

Her Philosophy

Researcher's observations. Ballet's strength and endurance had stood the test of time. With her dedication to the same school district and school, she had been able to look out for her students, parents, and community. When I looked at Ballet, I thought of a mother who liked to stay home with her children to watch them grow and develop. Her commitment set her apart from many principals who had a connection to her community. This Black woman believed she had an obligation to her people, and she had the confidence to carry it out. I commend her dedication to the same school district and her patience in waiting for job promotions.

In her own voice. Learning is expanding one's knowledge, making that reach from baseline knowledge to something more, something greater. It is improvement; it is enhancing what you may already know and learning what you may not know. Learning never stops; it is an expansion. I have learned to read people. I have learned to learn. I have come to realize that I need to expand my abilities to comprehend what is going on, comprehend people, to stay abreast. Those are reasons that I have had to continue learning.

I don't know if there is such a thing as a born leader, but I tend to think that I have some characteristics of a good leader. I never took leadership classes. I don't remember a lot of what I learned that made me the kind of leader that I am. I just think that my being about people and recognizing that all people are important has helped to

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solidify my ability to be who I am. You don't think of yourself as being a leader. You think of yourself as doing a job. But people thrust that leadership on you in terms of what type of leader you are.

I see that my main function is the education of students. None of the other functions are nearly as important as that. Children must come here, must learn, must feel good that they are learning, and feel good about moving on to the next level. They have to feel comfortable about doing that. That is the role of the principal–putting the education of the children first. Children have to be first in a school.

I have to make a conscientious effort to involve all students in whatever is going on and find a way to meet their interests outside and inside the classroom. We do those things that will help all children feel good about their school. We don't have kids running through the building, saying this school stinks and writing on the walls. It is an effort that you must exercise, to get all of your students feeling a part of the school and that they are not being left out. I do that by using the talents and expertise of the students in whatever way I can. I'm not going to always pick the same students to do what needs to be done. I will have some of them work in the office to assist with attendance to boost their egos. I will find something that children can do to keep them busy and make them feel good about themselves.

Some schools have one little group of kids who get to do everything, and the other students sit back feeling that they are nobodies. That is a conscientious mind thing. We have 650 students in the school, and by November I know the name of every child in this building; I call them by name and earn their respect. That is my goal. I'm in the lunchroom, and most of the time kids sit in the same spots and with the same friends.

You find ways to learn their names. You read announcements over the PA about basketball or football or whatever, and that makes them feel good, too.

Black women are seen as strong, no nonsense, productive, responsive, get the job done, and competent. But the advice that I would give them is to make sure they know who they are, have a clear definition of their roots, and not lose that regardless of the setting they are in. They must know that they can always stand tall as a Black woman, that they don't have to bow down. Be strong and know who you are. It is not that you are always going to support Black folks. I think a lot of people think that if you are a Black leader, you are always going to be for the Black person. If it is right, you stand up for what is right.

I think women principals have more demands than males. A male principal is seen as a person who is supposed to be in that position, so I think there are more demands on female principals to survive. I have seen male principals, in elementary schools, dictate to staff and students. I think it is harder at the secondary level. The greater the demand, the harder the job. Usually Black men aren't accommodating of that kind of job from Black females. They see us as their mothers, who were at home. We haven't always been in these jobs. It is just in the last 15 to 20 years that we have had the kinds of jobs that keep us at the office until seven to nine o'clock at night, and the Black man hasn't adjusted to it.

I think the school district is doing a great job of placing more Black women in leadership positions. I see us as developing; we are not afraid of the challenge. We will take on the hard jobs and do well; that hasn't always been, but it is becoming the way. We will step out there and take those top CEO positions. I think that is why we are

getting more Black superintendents. They used to be nonexistent. Usually when we take the job, the job gets done faster and better [than if a man were doing it].

I think my contribution has been to help children see that they can move themselves in the right direction and as high as they want to go. I can pick up children who do not have the security and don't know their potential, and I enjoy watching them move. At the same time, I support those students who are highly motivated and seem to have a road map of where they want to go. I pick them up and promote them. I think my skill is to help kids see their worth and that they can do what the next child can do. If their skills are low, I find the assistance to help them. You have to be a child-oriented person to pick up a child and move them. You have to know the worth of all of them, even those who curse and do crazy stuff, and you have to be strong enough to know that this is still a child who needs to maximize his or her potential. I enjoy getting the "bad ones" and turning them around. Sometimes it doesn't take a lot, but sometimes it takes more. All of them are highly motivated, even the "bad child." They all will gravitate to me. When I go to church, they just gravitate to me; I don't know what I do, they just respond and come to me. It is like they want to be in my company. I just like children.

The part of my job that I like the least is dealing with the mail. I hate having my box filled with all that junk mail. I want to be productive. I enjoy seeing the kids do well while they are in the building and then go on to high school and do well. I like hearing people in the community say that our school is doing great things. We built that kind of reputation, and that is not just in our city, that's all over. Our kids know how to act because I will kill them if they don't. It is rewarding to see a productive staff and

watch them grow. I like to see people better themselves; I think that is what I feel good about, that I am able to do that.

I don't like it when people don't treat children right. I don't like it when parents don't respect teachers; I can deal with it, but I can also beat the parents down, too, in a professional way, of course. But I think the worst is the lack of parental support for their kids. I was always there for my children, and I worked. I guess that bothers me a lot. I think we can move education if we can move parents to be about their children and to reach out to two or three others. It would be wonderful if we could come up with something creative with parents who are about their children and reach out to others, like passing it on through networking. Overall I love my job, and that's why I still do it. I always thought that when I got to the point that I didn't like it, I would retire.

When I do retire, I would like to work with principals to help them maximize their potential. You have to teach leaders that they must recognize all children and not just those whom some people want to work with because they came ready. You have to get people to understand that you can move an organization when you have something for all of the children, those who give you a hard time as well as those who don't. Help the person understand the type of leader they are and what they need to do to enhance that. You have to take the person and scrutinize what type of leader they are and then figure out where they need help. That's what I would like to do when I retire—work with principals to help them maximize who they are. You can't change everybody, but you can help people to be more productive.

Through my own experience I've learned that we have to create some stability in education. I think we can move it faster and gain respect when we do that. I think we

have to have pockets of continuity and stability among educators and educational institutions. We don't sell our product as we should. Everybody has their own agenda. Sure, you can have your art school and I can have this, but the overall picture has to be an umbrella that this falls under so the community and business can see who we are. Right now they don't know who we are and where we are going.

Also, education is becoming so diluted; you have your private school, your charter school. If that voucher system comes in, we are in trouble. Then you have your Edison project and those businesses that are in it for dollars. Those people are about money. I think, as public educators, we need to find out who we are and where we want to go. School systems have to do this, or we are going to lose this battle. I think it is going to get worse before it gets better. I think the big educational organizations have to do something or public education is not going to survive.

Vignette Two: Square Dance

"I think basically whatever we have needed, I have just gone after and gotten it. I look at what the staff and I feel is needed to do whatever we can for the children. We just go after it."

Growing-Up Years

Researcher's observations. When I entered Square Dance's middle school for the first time, I thought I had stumbled across a high school. This huge school had, in fact, been a high school at one time. As I sat in the main office waiting to meet with Square Dance, I noticed that the secretaries were working intently, with little interaction. The moment the principal came out of her office, she gave everyone specific directions, and they all immediately began to work on the tasks she had assigned them. I got the

impression that Square Dance was an efficient principal who liked to get things done well in advance of deadlines. After Square Dance gave her secretaries their instructions, she signaled me to come to her office.

Square Dance appeared stern as she sat at her desk and listened to me talk about my dissertation. As we began to discuss her family, she reminisced about how close her family was. She was humorous, although she rarely cracked a smile. This principal truly enjoyed her family experience and had been greatly influenced by her parents. Although her parents never pushed her to attend college, they expected her to succeed. Square Dance and her sisters had to overcome gender and class stereotypes. They grew up knowing that appearance was important and that they had to present themselves as ladies at all times. Their mother and grandmother would never leave the house without their hair and make-up done. Square Dance was the same way. Every time I met with her, she had on a suit, a perfect hair-do, and manicured fingernails.

In her own voice. My sisters and I didn't realize we were poor Blacks until we were grown. We had a very stable home: mother, father, two sisters, and grandparents. All of my grandparents lived right here in the city, so I didn't have the experience of going down South to visit. Family has always been the main thing for me, and that is a carry-over today. My family has never been very large; neither of my parents came from a large family. Whenever we had family functions, it was always a small group. Whenever someone had something, we were automatically there, whether we were formally invited or not. It was assumed that you were going to be there. A lot of our activities centered around family outings. On Friday nights it was cheap—drive-ins, walking in the park, Monopoly—and it was the three of us siblings; we didn't have

anybody but us, and we relied on each other. Although my sisters and I had our own friends, the bottom line was still the family.

My parents always tried to give us what we thought we wanted. You discover that a lot of things you thought you wanted, you really didn't want. The church has been a strong part of our lives, as well. We are still actively involved in the church that we were raised in. This is the church that my dad joined in 1931. When he died, he was the longest member of that church. I have no ambition to change; I like our church because that is where our roots are. It's not like we haven't visited different churches, but that is home. There are people in our church who still think I'm a child because they knew me back then. My church is a good, strong foundation that fills the voids that were created by the deaths of my parents. Church friends have been there since we were little kids, and they are still there.

My dad always treated the three of us sisters as equals, but individuals as well. We laugh about it today. Whenever it was one's birthday, she got the gift she wanted, but the other two also received something. Like the time it was my birthday and I got the typewriter that I wanted and they both got bicycles. Although I was the oldest, I was never responsible for babysitting for my sisters; my parents didn't believe in that. Both of my parents worked, and we had a lady who came on Sunday night and stayed with us all week. She oversaw all of us, but I, of course, thought she didn't need to watch me.

My father was funny. He was the youngest and had two older sisters. He always claimed he never wanted sons; he didn't need a namesake. You value life and do the best you can. My father and mother never pushed us to go to college. But you were going to get your high school diploma, there was no doubt about it–they valued education. We

learned very early not to tell my dad that we didn't have homework because he would then invent some, and it was worse than our actual homework. Although my mother was the head of our household, we learned very early, too, that you don't play mom and dad against each other. My sisters and I received only one whipping in our lives, and we all got whipped on the same day. We had done something really crazy. I knew better but did it anyway. That one time was enough, and Dad never had to whip us again.

My parents set values for us. For instance, if you wanted something, you worked for it. My dad would never accept lying. The best lesson I learned was from my dad one day, with the lying. He had bought a bag of cashew nuts, and I loved them. They were sitting on the kitchen table. I would go through the kitchen 20 times an hour, eating cashews every time. So finally, Dad asked me who had been into the cashews, and I claimed I didn't know. He replied, "You don't have any idea?" Then he looked at my tongue and asked again who had eaten them. There was nobody in the house but him and me. He stood there and said, "Well, okay." Then he threw the rest of the nuts in the trash. He said, "I bought them for you anyway; you did not have to lie to me!" That was it, and that was his philosophy. That's the way he did things. I got the message, and he didn't have to say much. I think it hurt him just as badly because I lied to him instead of admitting that I had eaten the cashews.

It wasn't until May 1967 that I had my first experience with racism, on a trip to New Orleans. My mother's family was from there, and when we went down on Bourbon Street I had doors slammed in my face in some places because of my color. My cousin's husband, who was head of the Urban League, explained to me that Blacks couldn't go to those places. I had a similar experience when we went to the beach on the Gulf of

Mexico. It was like there was an invisible line; one side of the beach was beautifully cleaned, and the other side was littered as if someone had just dumped trash. Well, one side was for Whites and the other was for Blacks. Watching Martin Luther King and the movements, I couldn't identify with it; I just thought it was terrible what they had to go through, and wondered whether it really was like that. In fact, I can recall thinking that some of them were exaggerating, but age has taught me that it wasn't exaggerated.

Image wasn't a problem for me growing up. I have been 5'10½" tall since I was 13 years old. My grandmother was 6' and my dad was 6'4", so I thought being tall was the norm. I never realized differently until I was in junior high; by then the girls had outgrown the boys, and I would stoop to make myself shorter. My dad told me, "If you don't straighten up, I'm going to put a brace on you." The first thing I thought of was a big metal brace, so I straightened up real fast. It wasn't an issue. I've just always been tall, and it was an advantage for me because when I got to high school, people could see me first when I entered a room.

I learned a lesson from my grandmother, who was a very stately lady. You never saw my grandmother during the day without her makeup and jewelry, and fully dressed. That was something that my sisters and I were taught. We didn't lounge around. My mother was the same way; she was always fully dressed. She always wore a housecoat over her street clothes, and house shoes. Her hair was always combed. As a result, we never went out in public with rollers in our hair, and we were always fully dressed. My mother had been raised like that by her mother, and she raised my sisters and me that way. The morning my mother had her heart attack, she had all of her jewelry and clothes laid out that she was going to wear that day. That was the way she operated.

My sisters and I weren't raised in a home where the man was the boss. My parents handled things pretty evenly. It was unusual to see my father cook, but he taught the rest of us to cook, including my mother. If something had to be done, it was done. We didn't have any boys in the house, so we girls had to mop floors and take out the trash. We couldn't wait for daddy to do it. He said we lived there, too, and our mother shouldn't have to do it all because she worked every day. It was not a household where one person was the boss. My mother was very calm and rarely got upset over anything. Daddy was the one everybody thought was loud; he was the jokester.

Leadership

Researcher's observations. Square Dance definitely made the calls at her school. She expressed her interest in her students and dared anyone to challenge her. At one time Square Dance had become frustrated that some students did not have much desire to learn. But, through her innovations, she shared with the staff possible ways to get the children interested in their education. She had embraced the Chaldean girls and motivated them to continue their education. Despite enduring criticism from the Chaldean community, she influenced many parents to let their daughters go to school instead of focusing on their getting married at 13 or 14 years of age. Square Dance nonchalantly explained that she did not care if parents were offended by her efforts because she was thinking about the girls' best interests. With her tall stature, she did not think she had to be submissive to the Chaldean fathers, who did not respect women in leadership positions.

In her own voice. The biggest thing I have had to learn is that not every child you come in contact with has the same desires you had as a child. Although as a child I loved

to learn, some of our kids don't have that same inner drive, and some of their parents reinforce that attitude. You have to show them that this is something they need to know or really should want to know about.

When I taught first and second grades, for years many children came ready and eager to learn, but they didn't have any reinforcement at home, so I had to spend the time with them. With that age group, if kids are not taught correctly, you break their desire to learn. I have told my teachers that they need to be careful that homework doesn't reach the point that kids don't want to learn. You can really turn a kid off with overkill.

We learned that the kids have to be able to trust you, but our children, now even more so, don't have the same drive from home. Many do, and it is coming back. But we went through a spell for a while where the parents weren't helping at all. They started to see the mistakes that they made. For some it is too late, but for the group that is coming through now, there may be help for them. But you can't teach it and can't instill it. I tell the teachers not to give a child the reason why, but just make them want to know more about something.

We have a significant number of children from other countries whom I am trying to motivate to value education. For instance, some of the Chaldean girls do not see education as a key priority because they have arranged marriages. Some of these girls just come to school because they have to. If their families haven't been Americanized and are still adhering to their own cultural practices, the girls are just biding their time until their parents find them a husband. We had a situation where a 13-year-old girl was taken out of school to get married. I am getting better results now with the girls staying in school, and I think the parents are starting to see that you can't do these arranged

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marriages. Although many marriages now are arranged in their own homeland, I have been able to encourage some of the Chaldean families to allow their girls to continue their education. But when I first came to this school 14 years ago, it was not unusual to see a 13- or 14-year-old girl be married and sent back to her homeland.

For the most part, our parents are interested in their children. There is something about middle school parents. They don't get as involved in the actual day-to-day functioning of the school as parents of elementary students do. We could have a parent meeting, and it would not be unusual for nobody to come. Perhaps it is because they are satisfied, or because they are happy their child is in middle school and they don't have to put in much time. We have a large number of parents who work, and with the large number of bused students, we have parents who are unable to come to school because of the distance. Many of our parents have younger children, so they are really tuned in to the elementary child. That's not unusual; you can look at any data across the country.

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. Family was Square Dance's inspiration, regardless of whether it was blood related or community related. She spoke intensely about her family and also her church. The oldest child in her family, she had a close bond with her siblings. Square Dance talked to her sister every day and sometimes more than once a day. Her commitment to the community was exhibited in her devotion to her church. She attended a small church and considered the whole congregation her family. I had difficulty scheduling appointments with her because she was taking part in numerous church activities. I spoke to her husband so often that he felt comfortable telling me about the church activities in which Square Dance was participating.

In her own voice. I grew up in a home where my sisters and I were treated equally. As a result of my parents' fair treatment of us, I always wanted to treat others the same way. Besides my parents being my role models, I think Doris Jackson, an English teacher I had in middle school, also inspired me. She was a White woman who made me want to get into education. Ms. Jackson treated all of us equally and had no tolerance for lying. I also was inspired by a kindergarten teacher in the school where I was a sixth grader. I remember Jennifer Reese being a guiding force and doing a lot of interesting things at the school. I just admired her and watched her and learned how to be a lady.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Social Justice

Researcher's observations. Square Dance excelled at getting what she needed for her teachers and students, and she did not mind asking for these things. Her philosophy was, "It doesn't hurt to ask. All they can say is no." This principal used her leadership to be innovative and get the necessary materials and supplies for her school. Encountering some difficulties in accomplishing this goal, she used various tactics to acquire what her students needed. Square Dance made calls to the CEO, area superintendents, and area office personnel to ask for what she needed. As she did so, the dancers began to move to her calls.

In her own voice. I define leadership as a guide, an example. In a way I see myself as a transformative leader, but only with the help of those around me. You can't change anything without people's help. I think there is a need to make a lot of changes at the middle school level and also in schools in general. Children today are not the same as they were, so you have to change to go along with the type of child you are working

with. As a matter of fact, we were talking about that yesterday in the staff meeting. The children we have today are not the same type of children we had five or six years ago. You have to be willing to change your mode of operation to get to them.

I go back even 10 years ago when crack first started coming to the forefront. People didn't know much about it. Maybe they realized a person was smoking it, but they didn't have any idea what the impact would be on the babies born to pregnant women who were using crack. We were warned that we would possibly have crack babies. What is interesting to me is that recently they have been starting to look at how to deal with these children. When they came onto the scene 10 years ago, nobody spent any time figuring out how to work with a child who was born addicted to crack. That is one of the reasons we have such a new generation of children. They are products of what happened to them, in many cases, before they were born. Staff people in general were not prepared to work with that type of child.

The trend now is to go to more local school authorities such as principals and CEOs. Although there are things that I can institute on my own, there are still things that have to be done based on what the CEO considers as policy. The school board and the CEO make the majority of the decisions for the school district. I think now we are seeing that we have a board that is allowing the CEO to make more policies. Past practices have been that the board pretty much made the policies. That has changed. I can see the CEO making policies more independently, without the board's approval and guidance. I don't think this board is so tuned in to actually running the district. I think they have given the CEO the authority to do what is necessary. In the past, superintendents' hands were tied

because basically everything had to go through the board instead of giving them an opportunity to make decisions without first getting approval.

The dictionary defines power as somebody having all the control. In reality, that's not true. What is power? Power for what—to make decisions? Is that power? Power to run everything that we want to? We don't have that power. Power is a burst of energy. Power is someone who is in total control, and we don't have that. I don't think you need power; I think you need authority. There are people who say they have the power, by having the authority to do some things. I think those are intertwined words. I think power is just a word that seems to have been overplayed and that it is too forceful. Everybody, even children, has some authority in terms of making decisions. Children have the right to decide whether to learn or not. Teachers have the authority to decide how they are going to teach, but not what they are going to teach. I think everyone has an authoritarian position, just different amounts of authority, some more than others.

I define social justice as a principal being entitled to the same thing as anyone else. I probably would not have used that term as far as my quest for equality for this school is concerned. I think that, basically, whatever the staff and I thought we needed, I have just gone after and gotten it. Our biggest obstacles have been how much something is going to cost and which way we are going to go with the money. When I came to this school, we were the last school with an electric typewriter classroom. We were very proud of it. Then technology came in and we decided to discard that and go with high technology. We now have a beautiful media lab. It's a case of, if we think we need it, I figure out how we are going to get it and whom to ask for help.

We also needed a gated parking lot. I discussed this with people downtown, and we got the lot. We needed a PA system, so I called downtown and a man was sent out and we got one. I don't have a problem asking for things. All they can do is tell me no, and if they tell me no they had better give me a good reason. In another instance, the music teacher wanted choir robes because we were tired of looking at the kids in white blouses and dark skirts. As a result of her suggestion, we got a choir robe and had the kids model it. Everyone loved the new look, so we held a pledge drive and raised enough money to buy robes.

In another instance, our band had no uniforms and had to wear T-shirts for their performances. When our superintendent saw the band perform, he was impressed with their playing but said we needed to do something about the T-shirts. First we used donated uniforms from a suburban school. Although they were not our school colors, the uniforms were nice looking and we used them for a while. Finally, the staff decided the band deserved new uniforms. So again we held a fund-raiser and bought the uniforms.

I think the governing body plays a significant role in my school. They set a lot of the policies that we have to go by, either directly or indirectly. Basically, it is my responsibility to set the tone. The governing body decides how they want the lower half of these local schools to operate; they are basically the policy setters. However, they should be our resources, as well. If they set the policies, then they need to make sure they have the resources available to help us carry out their plans.

As far as resources go, supplies are naturally ordered; if we don't have it, we will get it. We participate in various science and math programs in order to get extra supplies for our children. When we got our computer lab, I allowed the teachers to take the old

computers to their classrooms. It was the same with the typewriters–if they wanted them, they could have them. We have learned to beg. I don't have a problem asking for something; if we want it, we ask for it. I've found that a lot of people don't get things because they don't ask. Sometimes I have to use my outside resources to get things. For instance, the local hospital was putting in a health center. One of the workers was over there putting in the carpet, and I asked him for some. He said we could have some carpet, but he couldn't install it for us, so my husband put it in. If the painters come out to paint five classrooms, I will get them to paint 10 classrooms. If you are nice to them, it is amazing what you can get when you ask.

The biggest problem is that our kids have a lot of issues and take a lot of time trying to resolve them. They need some assistance. About four years ago when they started busing children over from another school, we ran into problems that we didn't have before. That is, the area was heavily populated with gangs. For the first month or two, kids started to form gangs. We had parent meetings, but I couldn't control what the kids did outside of school. But in my school I am in control. They put us in a position where the schools are trying to solve every difficulty, and we spend a lot of time working with parents on various problems.

Just recently a mother called to tell me why her daughter wasn't in school. She wanted to bring me the hospital papers because she had concerns about them. I told the mother to talk to her doctor about it, but she didn't want to. As it turned out, she couldn't read. She wanted me to read the papers for her.

We find the resources we need for our kids and their families. For instance, if kids need coats and things, we have resources. We just do what we can. We even had a family burned out of their home, and we got our resources.

Her Philosophy

Researcher's observations. One thing I found unique about Square Dance was her sense of community, as evidenced by her staying and working for social justice in the same school district in which she had been born and educated. Square Dance was proud of her commitment to her community. She had helped a diverse population of students by working through cultural and moral differences. Although she had been challenged by some Chaldean fathers, Square Dance had stood her ground and made the calls. When I asked her how she reacted to Chaldean men who had no respect for women in leadership positions, she humorously replied, "They have learned to deal with it because I am a Black woman and I'm not going anywhere." Square Dance also shared that the Chaldean men had begun to adjust to seeing her in a leadership role, and they had come to respect her.

In her own voice. We were raised to be independent, to believe that nothing can stop you but yourself. As far as being a Black woman, I am the first Black female principal here. This school had a Black male principal, and then I think the staff got to know me because I was an assistant principal for a year before becoming the principal. I don't make race an issue in this school because we have a multicultural student population. I'm not going to say there aren't some who go home and say negative things, but that is not acceptable here at school.

I don't think my color has stopped me. I may have been one of those who got into the position during the time when females were being promoted. But I think I earned it. I don't think I got it because I was a female; it just came about the time when females were moving along in administrative positions. There is a minor issue of race, but there is not so much blatant racism. I have dealt with cultures here that are not used to a Black female being a principal. Some of our Chaldean students were not used to having a female principal, much less a Black female. Their parents also had to adjust to me because their culture does not accept females in such positions. But that has not been a major factor.

There was a situation where we had a parent who had just come here from another country. In one instance the parent had a difficult attitude to begin with. It was hard for him to deal with the fact that a Black female was in change, but that was because, in his culture, the men are the head and the women are not. I basically told him, "You have a choice–here it is and here I am." So that was not a big issue. It is just not going to be a factor. The kids know it, and they have shared that with their parents.

I found through my experiences that you must always make a decision and stick by it, right or wrong. The worst thing you can do is not make a decision. Even if it is wrong and you admit later that it was wrong, it is better than not making any decision; that would mess up a lot of things. At least you were strong enough to make a decision instead of saying, "I don't know."

Patience is another quality I learned. I learned the significance of being patient when I was a teacher. Being honest and fair has also been important in my work. Even when you are getting on a child or an adult, if they understand where you are coming

from, if you are honest and fair with them, you won't have problems. I have also learned

the significance of improving myself through learning. You can make yourself learn

some things that don't pertain to school. You could learn a new game. Another thing,

the more you learn, the more it expands your ability to interact with people. The more

you know, the more people you can interact with on various subjects.

I think that I became an educational leader through a hit-or-miss situation. I think

some of it is ingrained and some of it you learn hands-on. You can learn some things in

the educational process, but some comes with practice. Use common sense based on

things you have learned. I don't think there is a category of educational learning per se.

I don't think that can be taught. It's a common-sense thing. Most of the things that you

deal with in the day-to-day operation of a school revolve around using common sense. I

think a lot of people coming into administration find that a shocker. A lot of the issues I

deal with don't come from the books. They don't have books teaching you how to deal

with parents. It's a common-sense thing. I became a principal because I was willing to

be an active participant inside and outside of school. I have never been afraid to make or

adapt to changes. Getting involved gave me a lot of experience, especially asking others

what to do and not being afraid to ask people and listen to them.

Vignette Three: Jazz Tap

*"I had opportunities for promotions, but I need the hands-on with children. I
need to be able to touch, feel, and protect. My reward is right there in that
building with those kids."*

Growing-Up Years

Researcher's observations. When I first met Jazz Tap, she gave the impression that she was aloof. However, it did not take long for me to recognize the sensitive and compassionate person that she truly was. Jazz Tap was very accommodating as we scheduled our first interview. She told me to name the place and the time, and she would change her schedule to meet with me. I was amazed by her trust in inviting me to her home, where she thought we would not be disturbed. She also invited me to interview her on her boat, which she called her second home. However, I was relieved that we could not meet at the marina; I probably would not have been able to concentrate because I am afraid of water.

As I arrived at Jazz Tap's beautiful historical home, I was entranced by the landscape surrounding this miniature castle. When I rang the doorbell, I was greeted by a relative of Jazz Tap, who explained that the principal had not arrived from work yet, but that she would be home soon. Just as I was sitting down, Jazz Tap arrived and was greeted by the most beautiful, well-groomed dogs that I had ever seen. These dogs, which were the size of small ponies, were friendly and excited to see their mother as she arrived home from work.

During the first interview, Jazz Tap showed a sensitive side that I shall never forget. When I asked the principal about some of her growing-up experiences, she reminisced about how she had been treated because of her light skin color. I found myself feeling her pain as she recalled instances in which she had been called such derogatory names as "yellow hammer." As she shared these experiences, Jazz Tap explained that one reason she felt so much pain was that Blacks had done this to one of

their own people. As she explained that form of intraracism, tears rolled down her cheeks. I began to cry as well because, as a brown-skinned African American, I knew how it felt to be called names. I just did not realize that people with lighter complexions also had problems being accepted. After our interview, I went home and thought about Jazz Tap's pain and how it had affected her.

In her own voice. I grew up in a rural area where we owned a 150-acre farm. In addition to that, we owned a hotel, restaurant, and barber shop in the city. We had immigrants working for us during the week, and we lived in the hotel and went to school from there. On the weekends, we went back out to the farm, and my father would do the managing of the farm.

Dad went beyond high school, although he never completed college. My mother never finished high school, but you would never know that from talking to her. She was the one who ran the business, and Daddy ran the farm. He was an agricultural experimentalist; he experimented with farm products, mutations of plants, and those kinds of things. He used to be very disappointed with me when he would take me out to show me off and I didn't know a tomato plant from a pea. But he would be proud of me now because I am interested in plants. Although he worked his farm, he would not allow me to go into the fields.

My father had a weird kind of sense of raising his daughters. He was from a very, very traditional family, but he had set roles for his daughters to play, and it wasn't out in the fields. I think some of that could have been protectiveness. When you are in a rural area, there are a lot of unprotected places. I understand a lot of that now, but I didn't then.

He used to tell us there was nothing that we couldn't do, and yet there were very rigid kinds of standards that he had for us. I was not allowed to do certain things, being the oldest girl. But my sister could do such things as wear pants and climb trees. There was absolute freedom for her, whereas I could never do those things. I never quite understood why, except that in the fourth grade I was the same height I am now. I matured very quickly and then just stopped. I think the protectiveness was because of that. Everybody always thought I was much older than I actually was.

My aunt and my mother-in-law were both significant in my life. My aunt raised me because my father died when he was 36 and my mother died at 32. Sometimes you see things in someone that you know you don't want to become, and that can be influential. For instance, my aunt was very passive, whereas my uncle ran the household. My aunt just went along with things because she wanted everyone to be happy. I knew I didn't want that, so just by the nature of her personality, she influenced me not to be like her. Although I loved her dearly, she wasn't the model of an adult I wanted to become.

My mother-in-law is a very strong lady. I think our personalities are similar because my ex-husband always told me that he had married his mother. She had a great influence on my life and became my second mother. It was not a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship. We became a real team, and she became my mother for the second part of my life, especially because I married at the young age of 21. We didn't get along when I first came here, but after her first grandchild was born we just became a team. She loved that child, and I think he solidified our relationship. There was something significant about her baby having a baby, and we just made a pact. I have a

mother figure now who is very close to me. She is not much older than I am, but she is my older figure.

My grandparents were also influential in my life. My maternal grandfather was old, but he was always around us. I didn't know that he wasn't Black until he died, at age 105. My mother's family was always ashamed of this. My maternal great-grandmother was from a very proud Black family who disinherited her for marrying my grandfather because he was White. Even though Papa and I talked about different experiences he had coming over on the wagon train, there are so many other tales I wish I had listened to as a child. I can remember how he rolled his own cigarettes; he still thought he was the cat's meow. He was always part of our lives, and it was he who taught us to be very racist against White people.

I was discriminated against, too, but I never realized the extent of it or how serious it was. I never grew up thinking about how I looked, although I was called a "yellow hammer." The racist things that were said and done to me hurt even more because they were done not just by Whites, but also by Blacks. I can recall when I got my first whipping from my father. He did not know what precipitated it, but he heard me saying to a girl, "Well, you are Black." I got my first whipping then. He didn't know that she had been calling me a "yellow hammer." I don't know what the hammer part meant, but I knew it was something that you didn't want to be. After that, he told me he was sorry. But he explained that there had been times when people of my complexion weren't nice.

I grew up believing I could do anything. I just wasn't allowed to. I grew up knowing that I was going to college and that greater things were expected of me. Even

though there was a gender role for me, I looked at my mother and saw her do a lot of untraditional things for a woman. Sometimes she would drive the tractor. She even did small-appliance repairs in our home. So I grew up being taught that I was capable of doing anything.

My brothers and sisters and I are a combination of both parents. The love in our family was evident because I don't remember there ever being just the five of us in the house. We always had some other family member residing with us--a cousin or somebody. My mother was a very giving, loving person. If it wasn't family, it was a neighbor's child that she was helping. That was a model for my life also.

I think I am very hard-nosed, like my father, when it comes to what is right and wrong. But I think I have both of their personalities. I will cry in a minute, like my mother did. The compassion, the humility, I got from my mother. From my father, I learned that if I have to buckle down to something, I will. I look back now and realize that was really instrumental in helping to raise a brother and sister who were not that much younger than I was. The way we were brought up, the oldest child told the others what to do. When my parents died, that continued.

I don't think I went through a preteen or adolescent stage. I probably would have, but my parents died and I didn't have time. They had already instilled the responsibility for my siblings in me, and I had to carry on their mission, so to speak. I had to be an adult, but I don't think I missed out on anything. Although my aunt raised us after my parents died, I thought I had to raise my siblings. I remember thinking I would quit school and care for my brothers and sisters, and my aunt said I couldn't do that. She explained that that would not be what my parents would have wanted. So she motivated

me to finish high school. Then she talked me into going to college. She explained that it would be better for my brothers and sisters if I did that. I had to set an example for the younger ones. My brother went through a lot of trauma after our parents died, so I had to set a good example. And my aunt was foolish enough, silly enough, to be able to manipulate me to do what she wanted me to do.

Leadership

Researcher's observations. As I listened to and watched Jazz Tap, I noticed that she was a strong Black woman who refused to be defeated in any way. She often challenged herself to do more things for her students, whom she affectionately called her "babies." This sense of motherhood is prevalent in the Black community. This principal felt obligated to help these children succeed, because she had seen her own family help so many people.

She also believed that it was her calling to stay at her school and help as many students, parents, and teachers as possible. Jazz Tap stated on numerous occasions that she had had many opportunities for promotions, but she believed that she was needed at the school level. Her attachment to her school family was evident as she mentored new teachers, talked with students, and called on parents for their support. She wanted to make the world a better place by touching as many people's hearts as possible.

Although Jazz Tap had a sensitive side, one would not like to cross her. Jazz Tap got very protective of her "babies" and would not allow them to be slighted in any way. Whenever her babies needed something, she got it by making the need known. One could really hear the sounds of her dance when she tried to level the playing field between her urban babies and children from affluent suburban school districts.

<u>In her own voice.</u> I believe that I have received the gift of being a parent and an even greater gift, my choice of careers. I never intended to be an educator. I can truly say that, from the time I began my career in teaching, there hasn't been a day that I did not want to go to work. I can't remember when I missed a day of school; I have to be awfully sick not to go. I have had opportunities for promotions, but I need the hands-on with children. I need to be able to touch, feel, hug, and protect them. My reward is right there in that building with those kids.

I found where my niche was, and I didn't want to leave it. I can remember when I didn't want to leave teaching. I didn't want to become an administrator, but I was dragged into that and into being an assistant principal. When I was given the principalship, I wasn't that gung-ho about it; I wanted to continue being the assistant principal. I interviewed and then was told that I was the principal, but I wasn't ready. But now I love my position and the school, and I have to be awfully sick to miss school. No matter how bad I might feel physically, once I get there I kind of forget about it. My attention is then on the kids.

I genuinely love what I am doing. If I didn't love what I was doing, I wouldn't do it well. There was always that fear that the next move I made, I wouldn't like it. I think that is one of the reasons I stayed as a principal. First of all, I am nearing retirement. Now I have young teachers whom I am mentoring, and some of them are not ready. So I stay because I have another task to complete; there is another commitment, there is more joy there. So when you genuinely love what you are doing, you usually do it well.

I have enjoyed every job that I have had. Every move has been a kick-me-out kind of thing, and maybe knowing that you do that job well becomes a security blanket. I

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see myself as a very, very intense person when it comes to doing what I think is my responsibility or my job. There is a great deal of love, but a great deal of myself put into every job that I have done. Sometimes it has been like giving birth; you just don't want to give the baby away.

I have a very strong personality. Many men find that threatening. Also, I am very plain spoken. I am honest about what I think and feel, and there aren't a lot of people who can deal with that. A principal at one of the schools where I was a teacher thought I was not part of the team because I was so outspoken. But we just miscommunicated with each other. I focus on the problem, focus on fixing the problem. There might be a zillion things going on, but my thought is on how I can make it better.

My ex-husband called my teachers my baby crew. My babies now are my grandchildren. They see me in that role, and I have begun to see myself there. I do love them; there is a genuine caring. My kids at the previous school where I was an assistant principal left that school and followed me to this school. I cried like a baby when they left to go to high school. At their promotional ceremony, I couldn't get up and say anything because they were taking my babies. Still, I have about five or six of those kids who have been with me. One comes from the East Side; his father drops that kid off every day.

When I was a child, we lived in the city; even though it was urban, it was rural compared to Detroit. My father transported us to a one-room school house for many years for the same kind of reason [the father I mentioned drops his son off at my school]. He felt safe with a certain teacher. He thought the teacher, who taught all grades, was so dynamic. He drove us 40 miles round trip every day, even though he passed other

schools on the way. I now understand that need to have your children where you know they are safe and loved.

My parents instilled in us that we must give everything in order to succeed. We don't coast in our family. I remember something that was said repeatedly in our family: "You don't coast unless you are going downhill." My mother was my best friend. When she was in the hotel or restaurant working, I was doing something there also. I wanted to because it made me a part of being with her. From the time I was about 10, I was ordering linens for the hotel and supplies for the restaurant. They let us become a part of that business, and it was such a natural extension.

I don't think I went through an adolescent stage. My husband used to tell me that I was never a child. However, I never felt deprived, although I do know that my background and upbringing were different from a lot of people's.

All of us are stakeholders; my staff, my students, my parents, and the community-at-large are all partners. Anyone who is involved in the educational process or is affected by it is a stakeholder. They play as large a role in my school as they choose to. The decisions that affect the school are made by teams and staff, and I try to be as inclusive as I possibly can. For instance, I don't do the hiring, but I stand by my team members' decisions. Some stakeholders don't want to be involved in all operations, but that is fine. Whatever they feel comfortable doing, that's fine.

Because the stakeholders play a large role in the school, we must have a shared vision that moves the children ahead. I have a vision for the school, and it does not differ from the vision that the district and the state have of my students performing to their

optimum. All of us involved in that will then determine and develop expectations based on that.

My major concern with the district is how we use the test results. Hold me accountable for moving my kids forward. Hold me accountable for one day of instruction, one day of growth. If I get them in the seventh grade and I move them that one day ahead, then I have done wonders. It has been shown that achievement and free lunch go hand in hand. Writers have found a correlation between free lunch and student achievement. If children are deprived at home of the basic necessities, they are going to come to me less ready to learn. Hence, I have to do more to get them ready. Most likely I am going to do that with fewer resources, but I will be able to move those children forward. So don't look at the students I get and expect the same results as with students from other districts. Yes, I am moving them forward, but don't judge my effectiveness by how fast or how far I can move them because I am dealing with a different commodity altogether.

As a principal, I have to get resources for my children. I do know that when I can get people to buy in, I can better implement what I want to do. For instance, I am talking about all the sides that affect my children. I can get coats for my kids. I am always busy trying to get those resources, such as trying to get my children glasses. I can buy shirts and have them laundered. I can even provide some of the love, stability, and consistency and structure these children need, but I cannot provide everything they are missing. God knows, if I could, I would.

I am plagued with questions like, How do you provide a quiet place for a child to study? How do you provide a computer at home? How do you give counseling to a child

who is having economic problems at home? I can refer to social work services, but there are limitations. With all of the resources in the world, I can't make that child's environment fit with the students that he is being compared to in other districts. I was telling a friend of mine that I would love to have a residential school so that the kids would be mine for major care. But what the chance of doing that is, I don't know. Maybe when I leave this position, that will be the next way for me.

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. Jazz Tap's genuine love for children stemmed from her own experience of coming from a loving family. She remembered her parents instilling values in her at an early age. Although this principal's parents died when she was very young, she had received the support she needed from her extended family. As a result, she opened her arms to those around her. Jazz Tap believed that it was her calling to help others.

In her own voice. I love middle school. That's supposed to be the crazy stage, but that's the stage that I love the best. It is hugs and kisses one minute, and the next minute you are having an adult conversation and you never know where the kids are coming from, but they still have honesty. It is helping them to do the things that they don't think they can do. That, to me, is the reward. There is just a joy that is irreplaceable. I don't see myself transforming, except transforming kids' attitudes about themselves.

I have role models, but I think every experience that you have in life teaches you to be the person you are. Then it becomes how you sell them on the theory. I had a good female role model as a principal who helped me see the importance of being hands-on.

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I'm sure somewhere back in the mind-set of past experiences you have a lot of things that get you to a certain point in your life. I believe in being hands-on. As a matter of fact, I am exhausted today because I taught classes, did lunch duty, and visited classrooms because my kids were getting a little spacey, so it was necessary to do all of that. That is hands-on. Can I model what is to be done by being that hands-on person?

One of the things I say to my staff is that we are not bound by job descriptions here. You walk in one day and see me cleaning the halls, and it is okay for them to take on the other leadership roles sometimes. What we want to do is run a good, safe, educationally sound building. That means that my kids know that every adult in this building loves them and cares about them. Therefore, all of us can tell them to stop running in the hallway or pick up the paper that they are stepping over. We try to teach all of them respect by giving them that respect.

I want my school to resemble a family atmosphere. I hope that I am providing that because I am a family oriented person. We have teams as families. I think to even equate it to family is positive to me because you grow up to love family, to make compromises for family, to make adjustments for family, and I hope the center for our family here at school is our students. I think my staff feels that way, too.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Social Justice

Researcher's observations. As she defined leadership, Jazz Tap exhibited a collaborative style. She had transformed her style of leadership over the years. Jazz Tap explained that her staff wanted to help, but she attempted to take on every task. However, because she promoted a family atmosphere in the school, her teachers did not have a problem telling her when she was being too authoritarian and that they wanted to

work together with her. She explained that it was difficult for her not to have her hands in every activity.

Jazz Tap said some people found her authoritarian tone to be offensive, although many did not see that side of her unless someone had done something to one of her "babies." When she voiced her opinion, the loud sounds of tap dance permeated the school, and some people thought she was being a "bitch" that day. But Jazz Tap explained that, as a female school leader, she had learned to wear the title well.

In her own voice. My definition of leadership is motivating people to reach their potential, whatever that potential is. That's how I feel as a leader. I would like to think that, if I change anything, it is people's attitudes about themselves. Many of us don't grow up knowing what our potentials are. Some of us automatically know that and others don't. Most very bright people that I have seen don't see themselves as that. I think it is easier to transform these young people to see themselves in a positive light. I think you can change attitudes about things. So most of the time, I see potential in people that they don't see, and I try to bring that potential out. Leadership means just what it says, to lead by setting examples, by including team members, group decision making, setting goals and standards, and having high expectations of myself and my staff.

As a leader, I go out and seek candidates to fit our school family. They become our family because we do act as a family at our school. I can say, I think this person is a good prospect. How are they going to fit into the family? What do they know, and are they willing to go beyond? I love that in them. They have bought into the notion that it is not my school, but it is our school. They demand say-so, and I love that part of them.

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I know the final vote is mine, and they all know that. But I don't want the decisions to totally be mine because, without their input, they don't have ownership about those decisions.

For instance, this past year we concentrated on science. That was a group effort and we scored over the top. I am so proud of them because two years ago they told me I was doing too much directing. They felt that I was overdirecting or being overly pushy. That made me do some thinking. We all must continue to grow; it is painful at times, but we don't mature without it. I thought they were crushing my leadership style, but I grew from that, too. That is why it can't be just my program, it has to be our program. The area superintendent had been telling all of the principals that. We thought we were doing it, but we weren't; I wasn't letting them feel that they were part of the decision process. I was telling them everything to do, but they said, "We are professionals, let us do it." I told them they were right, and from that point on I totally backed off.

However, there were times as a leader that I had to be in the forefront. For example, it is important that you have the kids' tests ready, and that was it. At the end of that year, the scores came back and they had bottomed out. They invited me back, and I was more than happy, even at the sacrifice of our test scores. I wasn't satisfied with the scores, but they needed to know that it takes all of us as a team. Now we have become consolidated.

My definition of social justice has to be broken down into separate words. Social means all of us together, and the justice part is the fairness of decisions—society decision making. I think, at my age, where you grew up fighting for justice, for fairness, for equity, it probably is not so different from what I do as a leader. It is also very easy to

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talk about the social injustices that females have experienced and we still experience; it is a constant fight. As Black females, we are at the bottom of the pile, often with our own, as well as with the rest of society. So you are always conscious of that. It is very unusual in this society to find someone who sees you as an equal. I have learned from being a female administrator that I have to be the mother, the grandmother, the aunt, the sister. I cannot just be the boss. And so you do what you have to do; you play the role that you have to play in order to get things done.

By having a succession of male bosses, I learned that the way they operate is totally different from women. Some of the things men can say and do, we could never get away with. You learn to wear the title of "bitch" well. In fact, I used to come home crying when I first became an administrator. I could not understand; I had had such good rapport with staff when I was their peer, but now all of a sudden I had become such a "bitch." My husband kept telling me it was only because I was a female. I couldn't understand that. It was not like I was discriminating; in fact, I am very conscious of not doing that. That's just the way it is, he kept telling me. Then I started to accept that. Now, every time I go through it, I have my "Mrs. Bitch" sign to wear.

I have seen a transformation in the philosophy of the school district. I look at the influence that business philosophy has rather than a humanitarian approach, and it does not set well with me. Educators and education was the balancing act. It was not about the money. It was not always about what was most effective, it was not always about what was cost effective, but there were other variables that you had to consider, other factors that had a direct relationship to whatever decision you were making. Now you hear the term "bottom line." They keep saying it is a transformation in a positive sense.

I don't know if I always agree with that. As I tell my staff, if you are employed by Ford and you don't like the design of the tail light, you don't change it, you either have to start your own company or you put in the tail light that the engineer wants.

I find it the same way with the district. Either I buy totally into the philosophy or I try to influence that philosophy. I am trying to do both. I do feel that I have a lot to offer. I am still sure that I am capable of offering rational, logical, balanced decision making. When I feel that the philosophy is so totally different that I can't buy into it, then I won't be around any more.

Gender plays a big role in the choices that are offered and the perceptions that are painted and the ones that we grow up with. Education is the same. It wasn't that long ago that it was considered a waste for women to go into higher education. So how did it play a role for me? I happened to have a male figure, my father, in my life who believed that I could do anything I chose to do. It was a lot of hard work and sacrifice. I also knew the barriers. Did it shape me? Yes, in different ways. I see myself as a strong person, and different because of [the barriers I have encountered]. I don't know whether having obstacles in your life makes for strength, but I do believe honestly and truly that, rather than looking at obstacles as problems, I see them as challenges. That is another way of motivating myself to learn to deal with different challenges.

Power, in terms of individual power, is the right to make choices. That does not mean always having all the choices available, but the right to make choices based on the parameters you are in. That is, within a set boundary, I have power to make the choices that are available to me and I try to make the very best that I can of those available. I know that I don't have power over anybody else. I grew up with the adage that you can't

change anyone except yourself. That gave me power for me, but that doesn't extend to anyone else.

I always feel like I have power because of the way that I define it, and that is to make certain choices. I can make certain choices and I can make them in isolation, but if I expect other people to follow me, then I have to be able to sell them on my dreams, my ideals, my goals. I use my power to motivate them and to kind of prod them along to where I want them to go. You can't make lasting change by dictating change.

We have to nurture the whole child. I try to provide the resources that my children need by finding grants and sponsors. I tell my staff, "Whatever you need to help you succeed for my kids, ask. The only thing I promise you is that I will not work the ugly corner of the street." Other than that, if there is a way humanly to provide something, I am going to. Sometimes that means going into my own purse. I see the board as trying to clean up some practices that have not served the district well and not served the students well. Like I said, we see things from a different perspective. My scope is much narrower than that of the people sitting down there. So when they change their operating procedure, I am assuming it is because it was necessary. I don't fight it; that's a waste of energy. I don't think they are asking us to deny our kids anything; they just want us to follow certain procedures in order to get those things.

I know that different districts do not spend equal amounts on students. Do I have a problem with that? Yes. Every child should be of equal value, but our children need more because they are missing so much. We have to compensate for their home environment, personal experiences, and all the rest. I think about how unfair it is that kids with more are given more per dollar. I could spend my time crying over that, or I

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could spend my time trying to make sure that I effectively use every cent for my kids. I would rather spend my time doing that. Crying over what I can't change is a waste of my time. I grew up thinking that things are equal in this society, but that belief leads to nothing but heartache because everything is not equal and neither are people. We don't all have the same values; that is unfortunate, but true.

I see the purpose of schooling as preparing children to function as able-bodied adults, self-confident and productive. I tease my children about being my social security check, but this is not just teasing. I have a selfish, vested interest in them. If they come out of here doing well, then I know that somebody out there is going to do well. I want them to go out there and succeed. Every child who is walking this earth is our investment in the future; they are going to be there when we get old. I hope that I am shaping and molding a world that I want to live in, with individuals I like.

Her Philosophy

Researcher's observations. One of the many things that stands out in my mind as I think about Jazz Tap is the family wall in her home. That wall was adorned with pictures of her two sons, herself, extended family members, her staff members, and their families. When Jazz Tap escorted me out of her home following one of our interviews, she called my attention to her family wall. At first, I could not remember where I had seem some of the people in the pictures; it was not until she told me that they worked at her school that I remembered seeing some of those individuals during one of my visits. This principal's sense of home and family was remarkable.

In her own voice. I am a Black, almost-60-year-old female, and that has taught me that all things are a challenge and that I can jump over any hurdle. After all, I am

Black, I am a female, I am sitting here in the principal's office, sitting here working with the staff, and I am working for my children. All of those things were hurdles or could have been hurdles. I don't see them as limitations because if they were, I wouldn't be here. Going to college was a hurdle, but it wasn't limiting. It was just another hurdle to jump. I may have to go back and take a long start to get over it, but could I make it over the hurdle? Sure I could. Sometimes it is a problem being a workaholic because I don't see where I can't jump any hurdle. That is self-taught. I think endurance is the lesson that really has affected me. Don't give up, don't quit. I grew up hearing that over and over. I think it helped to build character, but it also helped to build determination. I think that's what it takes sometimes is the determination not to be defeated.

My mother was a professional woman at a time when women weren't professionals. She ran a business at a time when women didn't do that. I have always had the example of the adults in my life who went beyond the expected. I hope that I model that for my babies; I hope that I have modeled an example that they can follow. The problem with analyzing myself is that sometimes I don't know when to stop. I am back in here when I should not be. I keep telling myself that, if I can push myself to do it, it is going to be okay. It could be a gift, but it can also be a problem.

I consider myself a transformational leader because I assume this kind of leader is changing or reforming, and being the change agent to whatever is necessary. I think that if you are a leader and making changes outside and inside your organization, you are always in transformation. I see change as a challenge and something to look forward to as motivation. I think, right now, we are operating from a political as well as a nonpolitical arena and we always have. Right now, a lot of the changes that are going on

nationally have affected the changes locally, and vice versa. Any time that parameter changes, it automatically changes where I operate. Sometimes we have to take what is given to us and reach the goals that we have set. We have to look at how we get a child from point A to point B. When the district sets goals and objectives, it is my job as the leader in this building to move my staff toward a positive result.

I know that I work within a perimeter; nobody has complete freedom. When you work in an environment where someone else is boss, you always have to adjust and readjust to whatever those demands are. I can make choices, within a perimeter, and I am satisfied with that. However, I think it is a very difficult task for the CEO, the board, anyone in decision making at that level to make wide-ranging decisions that would affect the district. My perimeter, my scope, and my vision are not at that level at this time. I have learned how to take what they have given us, a task or a goal, and fit it into this environment. To me, that is my job. I tell my staff that we are seamstresses. We take what the board has given us, we look at our students and our parents, and we try to sew all of that together so it makes a nicely fitting garment.

I think it has to do with your life experiences, the way you analyze, and the broader perspective of life. Not all of us can be red roses; orange is okay, white is okay, all of the colors make for the beauty of the blossoming bouquet of flowers. We have to be different kinds of roses or different kinds of flowers, even, but that doesn't devalue us.

I see myself as transforming and evolving every day with every experience. Effective, but evolving, because nothing is consistent. I look forward to change and look forward to being a better me—a better person, a better principal, a better everything—because I can change. I have a figurine that I gave my husband, I guess we had been

married about 20 years. It says, "God isn't finished with me yet." I truly feel that every day I owe it to me and to all those people who so positively affected my life to try to be better, to be the best person I can be. That comes from learning each day, from changing each day, from getting better each day, from the effort to get better each day.

Vignette Four: Modern

"I am a firm believer that if you keep doing what you have been doing, you are going to keep getting what you have been getting."

Growing-Up Years

Researcher's observations. I knew I was in for a dance lesson when I met Modern. As soon as I arrived at her school and asked to see Modern, the secretary directed me across the hall, where she thought Modern was still training a secretary. Across the hall, the secretary told me that the principal had returned to her office. When I arrived at the office, the secretary said I had just missed Modern and that she was down the hall talking to a teacher. When I went down the hall, the teacher told me Modern had just left and was on her way downstairs. After about 20 minutes of looking for this busy principal, I found her back in the office across the hall, helping the new secretary enter students' names into the computer. When I finally found Modern and introduced myself to her, she hurriedly told me she would be with me in a moment. I then found myself following Modern around the school as she performed a variety of tasks. She noticed that I was unable to keep up with her skips, jumps, and runs, so she looked me over from head to toe and told me that I should not have worn high heels if I was planning on keeping up with her.

When I was finally able to get Modern to sit down in her office, she told me about her growing-up years. Modern shared with me some very warm and heart-wrenching personal experiences. She described her mother's determination that all of her children went to college. Modern did not want to go to college, but after her mother encouraged her to try it for a year, she found herself going back. Modern had received a lot of support from her family, extended family, and the community. Because of that support, Modern now believed she needed to give something back to others through her leadership and mentorship.

In her own voice. I have to admit that my mom and dad were never married. I had what you could call an extended family, where my mom, grandmother, and aunts—all those folks—lived around us. If one person saw you do something wrong, they would tell you right or wrong, and you just couldn't sneak. It was like having your mom and 10 other moms and dads down the street. Although my parents weren't married, they kept having babies. Three of us were from one man, and then the other four siblings were from another man. But my sisters and brothers don't claim each other as half brothers and sisters because my mom raised all of us as one family.

My mother suffered a lot; she had seven kids as a single mom. Although she had the support of relatives and the extended community, raising seven kids was still a big job. I guess my mom and dad never taught us to be against one another; I never learned how not to like any of the others. My mom had enough mother-wit to teach me and my siblings how to respect my dad for who he was, and we spent weekends with him. It was difficult because he was an alcoholic. I think my daddy's family were farmers and had lots of money. I think they thought their family was too good for my family; they

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thought my mom was going to teach us against them, but she never did. She was always very nice and taught us how to love and respect him. Yet, they wouldn't let my dad marry her, and I think because of that my dad developed a drinking problem.

I went to public school years ago when they had one-room schoolhouses that were kindergarten through twelfth grade. I remember being in a kindergarten through eighth-grade classroom where everyone was in the same room. I did get a chance to start at that school, but when I got to first grade we started to integrate; that had to be about 1959. I remember that first day, being different. I never considered myself socioeconomically different because we had a lot of love in my community, but then again, what you don't know doesn't hurt you. If you've never been anywhere, you don't know any better. So when I got to first grade and got ready to go to school, I remember hearing the older people talking about how difficult it was for them to integrate into the White schools. So I kind of had this fear about going, and on the first day my mom had to drag me to the school.

When we got to the school, I noticed it was made of huge rocks-not like bricks that are mortared together, but huge rocks of all shapes; they were beautiful. There were two entrances to the school, one on the east side and one on the west side, and the halls just went straight down. I remember entering on the west side, and my mom was just dragging me down the hall to get to class. As she was dragging me, I was looking at those kids and just not wanting to be there, and I bumped my nose on an old, rusty doorknob, and my nose started bleeding so I got to go home.

I never intended to go to college; being a housewife was sufficient for me. I was very proud of my mom, and I didn't mind being like her. But she didn't have the same

idea I did. She said, "You will not do this. You will not do as I have done. I want better for you, so you must spend at least a year in college. You do what you want after that, but you must go for a year." I was dreading it because I was in love with my high school sweetheart. I was just head over heels in love. So I said, "Oh no, Mom, I don't want to go to college. I know what I want, and this is the man." Well, Mom said no. And when she spoke, everybody listened. So I ended up going away to college.

When I was growing up, the adults in my life were very significant. Of course, I thought I was as mature as they were. I used to live with a great-aunt and uncle who were part of my extended family. I ate and did everything at my mom's house, but when it was time to go to bed, I would sleep at the house of my great-aunt and uncle, who lived in a cabin. They were elderly and needed someone to spend the night with them. So I would spend the night, but in the morning I'd jump up and run home to shower and get ready for school. All of those adults meant so much to me. When I think back about them now, it hurts me so much that I am so far from my nieces and nephews because I can't do for them what those people did for me. I mean, in their eyes, I could do no wrong. If I did do wrong, they spanked my butt and chastised me real good, and would do whatever they had to do.

Before I started dating, I used to go to Oklahoma City and stay with my mom's married cousin. She was a beautician, and her husband worked at the post office. She had two kids, one of whom was killed in a car wreck, and I guess she just dedicated her life to exposing her relatives and other kids to different areas of the United States. She used to have an organization called Help Other Children's Club, whose purpose was to take young children traveling around the country every summer. They had a big blue and

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white Volkswagen bus with a sign on the side that said Help Other Children's Club, and we traveled to California, Washington, and Virginia. My mom's cousin thought she should expose us to the world, so she would take 10 to 12 youngsters on a trip every summer. We would stay with her for three months, and during that time we would travel. On one of our first trips, we went to Washington, D.C., and saw the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. My mom would pin some money to the inside of our clothes and send us on our way. Her cousin would drive us around all summer long. You name a city where something was going on, and we were there. Right now, that woman is 90 years old, and I talk to her once a month. She is still driving, doing things like backing up the exit ramp on the expressway.

I can also remember the Black Power movement when I graduated from college. It was so ironic because I had attended an integrated school, but Blacks could not teach there. But when I went back to teach there, two other African Americans were teaching in that system. The Caucasians could get their paychecks on Friday, but the Black people had to wait until Monday or even Wednesday for their checks. I refused to humble myself and wait to get my paycheck days later; I had earned my money and I wanted it then. The other Blacks were subdued, and they would say, "Oh, no, we aren't going to ask them for it," and I would tell them that was their business, but I was asking for my check and they were going to give it to me. I would go to the main office and say, "Today is payday; I'm ready for my money." They had no problem with giving it to me if I asked, but I had to ask. These other folks couldn't believe that I had done that. As a lifetime member of NAACP, I got the support I needed to be assertive. Even now, I go to the national conventions every year, and I still support them financially.

Leadership

Researcher's observations. Although Modern was very energetic, she did have a collaborative style of leadership. She devoted all of her time and energy to her job as principal. Modern told me that she worked so hard that she had lost 20 pounds in the previous few months because she had constantly been on the run. I had no difficulty believing that because I could not keep up with her, and I was 17 years her junior. This principal had been able to cope with the stereotypes about Black women by proving that she was competent, compassionate, and a hard worker.

In her own voice. I define leadership as being able to back off and empower people to do whatever it is that needs to be done. But the leader knows what the desired direction is and can articulate what direction he or she wants to move people toward. Sometimes it is a little difficult to get people to move in the same direction as you are because they aren't always interested in doing so. As a leader, you may have to let some of your friends know what it is that you need, and then they will tend to spread the word.

I am a transformative leader, but by the same token I have to take a picture of what is going on first and then decide what changes need to be made. However, there are some things that I don't care about and others that need immediate attention. Like when I moved here, there were more than 900 children coming in one door. I knew that it wasn't going to work and it didn't make sense to me, so I changed that immediately. As a result, I assigned sixth, seventh, and eighth graders to specific entrances. I knew winter was coming, and I got on the intercom and said to the kids, "It is different for those of you who have been here, and I understand that it is different, but we are going to have to figure this thing out so that it works for all of us. I don't want you standing out in a two-

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mile-long line in the winter time getting wet because we don't have a canopy or anything to shelter you from the elements." The kids were very good with helping me figure it out.

I don't do everything. I'm not perfect and I make mistakes, and we are all going to make them. But one thing about it, if we continue to do what we have been doing, we are going to continue to get what we have been getting. So we have to try new things and sometimes go completely off the cuff. I'm a risk taker, and if taking a risk is going to benefit a child, then I am willing to take that risk. That's how it has been with me all my life.

As a leader, I had to make some sacrifices in order to take on this leadership position. I asked my husband, "You know, I'm going to apply for this job and it is going to be time consuming, so do you think you can handle it?" He said he could. I told him that he would have to work with me on this because it usually takes two to three years to learn a job. He reassured me that I would have his support. Well, as luck would have it, two years later, it wasn't quite like he thought it was going to be. So instead of us growing together and enjoying each other, we grew apart. And I promised myself that I could do well by myself.

When I first moved here, I had to learn the area and the surroundings. Because I am a go-getter, I took the initiative to pursue the principalship. Nothing holds me back. When I got my principal job, there were probably people in this district who had been here for some 20-odd years, just sitting back on their cans thinking, "I should [pursue an administrative position]." But I'm not one who sits back and says I should do something. I do it because I don't want to regret what I could have gotten. That is why it is to my

advantage that I say what it is that I am going to do and I go for it. I don't think about the outcome of there maybe being a failure down the way. I assume that I am going to win under any condition.

I hate to say this, but I have worked in three different buildings as an administrator, and most of our African American men, even the ones I have worked with, think that African American women get opportunities that they don't. They think they have been held down and that African American women have been uplifted in career ways. African American men get very angry when they see us in these positions because they think they should be our superiors. The problems that I have had in administration, and I mean the deep-rooted problems, have been with African American men. That is unfortunate because I love my brothers and I will do anything for them. But to me, if you think that you are going to get somewhere for nothing, that's not going to happen. On the other hand, I have received the most support from White males. I don't mean that in a derogatory way, that they have to touch you, but they just respect you more.

However, I have known a few males, whether Black or White, with gender issues. There are a lot of people with gender issues who just think that a woman doesn't have a right to make a decision that they must follow. When I first started, I used to deal with this by crying about it; now it doesn't bother me because I realize it is their ignorance. If they can't accept whatever my thoughts are, I can move ahead, without dwelling on it forever. I have to be able to think about it, research it, decide what I am going to do, and move on with it quickly because I get bored. If you aren't ready to move on with me, you are going to get left behind because this train is leaving. The men usually realize that, too, after a while. White men usually say, "This woman knows what she is doing

and we are going to move ahead." The people who are apprehensive sit back and think I don't know where I am going or what I'm doing and do not know if they want to be a part of this. Due to determination and experiences of failure, whatever I set my heart on doing, I am determined to do it. I could sacrifice the world.

So I applied for the job, but the other people in the district had been so used to the tables not being turned in the way of there being no opportunities. But it was just coming to a peak where administrators were retiring and positions were available. I, along with everybody who applied for an assistant principalship that year, got it. Well, of course, then you hear all the chitchat about "She is doing this and doing that and screwed her way to the top." That's not what happened, but the opportunity came along and I just happened to be there. One man said to me, "People wonder how you got to the top." I was so stunned by his statement that I couldn't even come back with a retort. I went home that night, called my mom, and told her that another teacher that I had worked with had said these terrible things. My mom said, "The next time I know you are not going to let him get away with that." A little later, he said the same thing to me again, and I said, "If I remember correctly, your wife got a promotion as well. Is that what she did to get to the top?" After that he never said another word about it.

The biggest part of my thing is opportunities. When the opportunity presents itself and you are ready to jump at it without second guessing yourself, it works. But you must be willing to work for it. Some days I have to do a little bit more. Now I have to tell you, when I first got into administration, there were many days that I worked Saturdays and Sundays, especially the first two years until I learned what I was doing.

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My boyfriend now says that I work too much because when I leave here I go home and work. I just work all the time. I am a workaholic.

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. Giving to her community was a major part of Modern's work. She wanted to be able to enhance the lives of others through mentoring. Modern found herself keeping in touch with so many children that it was clear that she had influenced them in some way. This principal had a close bond with several of her students, but one more than the others. She constantly kept in touch with Tiffany. This former student referred to Modern as "mom, sis, and best friend." It is clear that their close friendship had come about from her work as a principal.

In her own voice. My freshman year at the university I took a literature class. I will never forget my instructor, Dr. Hudson, a Black woman; I was so impressed with her. She wasn't gorgeous or anything; it was just that she was such a professional, dainty lady. I thought, "The kids in my community deserve to be able to see someone like her, who looks a lot like them, who comes from their community, and who teaches and sets goals for them to work toward." Of course, education plays a big part, but let's face it, education is just a process. An educator, to me, really just opens doors and shows you how to educate yourself. From then on, it is up to you to work at it and move it forward.

I still have kids [who keep in contact with me] and whose mothers still call me. A young lady by the name of Tiffany continues to keep in touch with me. I met her when I first came to the district. She graduated from Eastern and works for General Motors now. We have a very close relationship. As an educational leader, you have to have kids see that you love and care about them, and that you are interested in whatever they do.

That's what motivated me through school and my career, so I think it's time for me to give back what was given to me. When Tiffany went off to school, her mom was a single parent, so I would send her a little gas money, a book, or whatever. It wasn't much because I could not afford much, but whatever I could do for her I would. When she would come home, I would give her a little something to go back to school with. And I'm not bragging, by no stretch of the imagination, because whatever little bit that I have done for her, I certainly know that I can't do what my folks and the extended community did for me. But I know that I have a lasting friend, and she is just like my daughter.

Just the other day, Tiffany called me and left me a message: "Hi mom, hi sis, hi best friend. Give me a call when you can." At first I thought, who in the world was that? She used all of those adjectives describing our relationship. Then I thought that those are the kinds of relationships that you need to build with kids to let them know that you care about what they do. The reward comes when they are successful in their educational endeavor. That's when you know that you have made a difference.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Justice

Researcher's observations. Modern's strength was exhibited through her personal and professional experiences. She was a Black leader who gave her all to her work for social justice. This principal liked to participate in every activity in some way so that she could stay abreast of what was going on around her. Although she worked in collaboration with her staff, she found comfort in participating herself. As a principal, she enjoyed working closely with the students every chance she got. She disliked working with the budget, though, because she thought her time could be better spent working with the children.

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In her own voice. I am a team player, even though I am a leader. I don't mind other people bringing ideas to me if they work. I'll listen to anything you have to say. If you can sell me on it and if it makes sense, I am willing to try it. I am a firm believer that if you keep doing what you have been doing, you are going to keep getting what you have been getting. Needless to say, that hasn't been working very well in the district.

In the last couple of years that our district has been restructuring, I have had to keep my eye on the district's goals. As I am moving toward the district's goals, I have to make sure that those things that I support and want to initiate are in line with where our district is going. It is up to me to try to articulate that and to bring in the professional development and do what is necessary for the whole staff in order for all of us to be moving in the direction in which the district wants to go. People ask me, "How do you get into so much? How do you remember so much?" I can do it as long as I keep focused on the reason we are here is, number one, for the kids. If a child can benefit in some way from what we have done, then I feel like I have done my job.

The district is not shaped in a cut-and-dried manner. They leave you room to tweak it any way that you, as a building, see fit. They leave us enough leverage that we can veer off, and I have always been one to do that. There are some things that I don't think that I, personally, should have to deal with, like a whole lot of budgetary issues, because I don't have the expertise. If the district is not going to train me and my staff to do that, don't expect us to do it. There are some things in the budget that I want control over, and then there are some things that I don't want to deal with. So I think it ought to be that if you are going to train me, train me so that my staff and I can function without us getting bogged down in too many managerial business kinds of things because we are

here to teach kids. I can't deal with too much of the business aspect when I have to be talking about one on one with children; neither can the staff.

I have always been one to listen to what others have to say. I can either agree or disagree. If I disagree, then I have a solution as to how I think I can do it. I always say to my staff, "Okay, if we think there is a problem with the district's perception of what we do, let's come up with a solution as to how we want to do it." I don't want to go there and say, "This is a problem for us; we don't want to do A, B, and C." I want to give them an alternative. "We don't think that A, B, and C will fit with our learning community, but we have come up with a solution: We would like to try D, E, and F."

There are some experiences that have influenced the way I carry out my role as a leader. I have to say that the experience of being able to substitute in an educational leadership position did help. Also, getting the opportunity to work with many social and economic groups of kids earlier in my career helped me to see that there is always another side to any situation. From the standpoint of being able to make decisions, sometimes you want to do things in a cut-and-dried way and say, "Okay, there are no exceptions; these are the rules and we are not going to veer off any." After you have been a leader for a while, you find out that there are so many different types of kids coming from all over, and professional staff with personal problems that you have to bend. I never say what the kids or staff can do.

I know that I must be a little bit more lenient in understanding various situations. A leader must have compassion for people. At one point in my professional life, I was straight down to the core. But my experiences have taught me that when you deal with people, whether it be professionals or students, you have to learn how to bend and give

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because things happen. I've learned from my experiences with staff and students that you have to roll with the punches and be more flexible. I don't think that anybody could have taught me that in a methods class. Or even if someone had told me that, compassion is something that you can't get from a book; that is something that comes from the heart. I don't know how to weigh out what is compassion and when somebody totally takes advantage of you. I don't know that you can teach that; it is something that is weighed. You just know it when it is there.

I don't know that I even wanted to go in the direction of being a principal until there was one thing that happened to me. I taught an alternative class where I built a curriculum. That was magic for me, even though I would wake up at night and think of the class and try to work out the curriculum by making sure it was integrated across all four core subject areas with an activity base. But I thought, if I have such a knack, I ought to try to help on a larger scale. People had said to me all along, "You have a way with folks, a way of motivating, and a way of having people follow you." So they told me that I should try education because I have a way with kids, a way of motivating them. I thought, well, if I am such a motivator and can help this many kids, why not become a principal and use a broader scale to try and move along more forceful numbers of students and teachers as well?

As a principal, I don't mind dealing with any of my duties, but train me to deal with them. For instance, give me the expertise or offer me whatever is needed for me to work with my budget. I don't want to go in half cocked, if you will. I have been a principal now for five years, and budgeting was the area I knew the least about. I basically haven't had any training. Everything I have learned I have learned on my own,

after I make a mistake. You take classes and it doesn't stick or it doesn't apply because things change in education. So I'm just saying that for me, personally, if I have to deal with a budget . . . even if I learned something in class, the way things are done in the district is totally different from what I learned in the class. I just need the training to know what it means.

For example, when I tried to learn about Title I monies, the Internet stated that it is free and reduced lunch, and they multiply that by the number of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, and that is how I get my Title I budget. But when I talked to people in the district, they stated that it is almost free. I want to know why the Internet says one thing and downtown says another, which amounts to a difference of $100,000. It is those people in the middle, the reduced lunch kids, who are throwing it off. I counted it as free and reduced, which meant that I was supposed to get big bucks. When I go downtown they tell me, "No, it is this number on this date," but when I look at what the government says, according to the Internet, it is totally different. People give you bits and pieces of information--and I know this sounds terrible, but it happens--and they lie to their benefit.

There is no equity, but I am hoping that our school, being an Explore 4 school this year, will get some things. Normally, when a principal is new to a building, they say you are honeymooning, so ask for everything because you normally get the things that you need when you are honeymooning. My honeymoon is over; it took me that year to learn just the building itself. So now I know there is a whole lot of stuff that we need; I need everything for my school. The people at central office are so far removed from the schools that they do not understand all the ins and outs of running the school. They are

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continuously giving me all this crap and they keep sending me the wrong stuff. Send me what I need and let me spend my time trying to work with the children and let's move ahead. With a district this large, I can understand there being some problems and things, and I hate to take everything to the superintendent because he is only one person, too.

The financial issues confine me. This is a major problem because I don't feel that I have enough expertise to know the difference and know how to do it. The other piece of it is, I guess, if I had a real understanding of that financial piece, then that would help me maneuver and manipulate all of these other pieces to put them together. Financially, that's what curtails the maintenance and operation, the hiring, so if I had a good understanding of the financial piece of it, I could manipulate the monies. That's part of this Explore 4 school; we will be going to some training and trying to work as a high-performance work team. We have three days of training that will hopefully teach us to manipulate, and I don't mean manipulate in an unprofessional way, but maneuver my resources. I will learn how to be smarter about spending the resources that we have, so that we get the most for our dollar.

I guess the only thing that I can do, from my perspective, is use the money that I receive for my kids, but I only get so many dollars, depending on the kids I have. Whatever my free and reduced lunch is, I will use it; then they try to tell you how to use it. The district says you can't spend that federal money, you can't buy certain things with that. It is earmarked for certain supplies and things, so you can't go out and buy carpet or paint for the upkeep of the school. You have to spend it based on the Title I monies. The other money that we get is from student enrollment, but they don't give it all to you, they hold these little carrots in front of you and say, "Here, you can have this to spend."

To me, if it is equitable and I have more than 900 kids, it seems to me that everybody

who has that same number of kids should get the same number of dollars across the

board.

Let's say I get $900,000, a hypothetical number. Let's say $300,000 is going to

go to maintenance and operation. If my site-based team says we want to put $300,000

here and $300,000 there, and $300,000 here, then let us do that. If we see that we can

save some of the $300,000 this year and move it over here to the building and structural

things, let's do that and then live with it, instead of the $300,000 going to another school.

I have to beg and plead and beg and plead, and ask and ask and ask. You may get it and

you may not.

Right now, I feel like I have been surviving, learning the community, just trying

to keep afloat. I do see the land, so I can see that I will be able to tread water to get over

there. It is going to be a hard fight, but I just saw myself barely keeping my head above

water and swallowing some. Now I see myself as trying to articulate to my staff what is

going on; it is not an isolated piece. We are all in this together, so we should pool all of

our resources and see where they are needed the most. That's where I see myself trying

to help this team of teachers and staff go: Let's try to pool our resources, whether it be

academic, maintenance, or whatever it may be. Let's pool it together, find out where we

need to make those adjustments, put that money there to support that, and when we get

that fixed, move on to a new project. Rome wasn't built in a day and you can't fix it all,

so you have to focus on one thing and get that going to where it is manageable because

you cannot have all of these pieces in isolated pockets and perfect it all. I see myself as a

motivator, helping staff move in that direction. I know where it is that we want to go, and then I map how we are going to get there.

A socially just organization can look a variety of ways, but looks are deceiving. It is how it progresses and moves forward that counts. The organization would be equitable in terms of gender, race, and socioeconomic status. However, when we talk of those three elements, you are going to get all levels of intelligences. Some people think that students from families of very high socioeconomic status with two parents and who were born with silver spoons in their mouths have a higher intelligence. That is not the case; our children may not have the same background as more affluent kids, but they can and do achieve at the same level. We have parents from the lowest socioeconomic status who are just as valuable and have important information to share. I see a socially equitable group member as a valued member who brings to the table an expertise or experience that can help the group bond and work together to achieve success. A socially just organization succeeds in bringing people of diverse ethnicities and economic conditions to the table to solve problems.

It is hard to accomplish a socially just organization because, let's face it, this is a man's world and many people don't think African Americans know anything or bring anything to the table that is of value. I have learned so much by being a principal. When I was an assistant principal, the buck didn't stop with me because I had a male superior over me. There are these men who don't value you or your expertise as a Black female principal. There are also women who don't respect you because they are used to this man's world, as well. You have it coming from all different perspectives.

Her Philosophy

I enjoyed my athletic workout with Modern as she danced me from place to place. It was nearly impossible for me to keep up with her. However, I appreciate her giving me the time to work with her in this endeavor. I was not aware of the multiple tasks of a principal until I met her. As I glanced around her office while we were taking a break from our busy schedules, I noticed a beautiful painting entitled "Reading From All Sides" by an artist named Lovejoy. It showed children surrounding a book, which lay open on the floor; the youngsters looked intrigued by what they saw. When I asked about the painting, Modern explained that the picture depicted her philosophy that people should be able to read from all sides.

In her own voice. I see myself as a fairly decent, hard worker—one who works relatively hard and puts myself into it. I'm hands-on; I'm not one to give up very easily, and I think people see me that way. When I talk to other principals, they say they just ignore things that bother them in the district. That's the problem with this district and society. Most of them let it go, and things just happen. I am not that kind of person; I want to make sure I'm a part of it. If it is a problem, I am going to be part of the problem. If it is the solution, I am going to be part of the solution. Whatever it is, I'm going to be part of it, rather than say, "Oh, yeah, it happened and that's the way it is." I way to say, "Yeah, that happened, and boy we screwed up then, but we learned a valuable lesson. So from this point on we are going to have to make adjustments and change and move on in this direction."

I think that people respect me and believe that I'm a hard worker. There are some who think that I probably got my position because of some of the people I knew. But

those who know me know that I am a hard worker and that I go beyond the call of duty to get a job done. Those who don't know me and know nothing about me probably wonder, "How did she get there?"

Most women are much more open minded about accepting and listening to what your point of view is than men are. Most women will listen and will try something new. They are more risk takers. I think men are closed minded and have a tendency to be more traditionalist; they want to do things the way they have always done them because it worked that way for so many years. Women would just jump right out there on a limb and give it a shot and say, "Hey, let's go with it." One thing we know, if we keep doing things the way we have been doing them, we are going to be getting what we have been getting.

From my experience, Black women have more of a struggle because it is almost as if they are left to sink or swim alone. For instance, when my White friend and I got assistant principal positions, she received support from both the White and Black men who worked with her. But it was almost as if a Black woman was not supposed to be in that position anyway, so why should my colleagues help support me? So there I was working and not getting the same support as she was. I was just blessed, though, to be able to call someone and ask what I should do in that situation.

One of the challenges facing an African American woman principal is the ability to network. You have to let your guard down and network with others. Since I have been in administration, my biggest problems have been with brothers [African American men]. I don't know why. I think that they just don't want me here, but I don't know why. So most of the time, if given an opportunity, African American women can just

shoot off and take advantage of the opportunities. But sometimes we, as a cultural group, don't know how much we are supposed to share. You try to protect that. Sometimes it is better to let it go because that process is a part of growing, to know from where you have come and where you are going. We, as African Americans, can be protective sometimes rather than sharing our information and resources. We have a real problem being able to express what is happening. I can normally do it and do it quite well. Most of my brothers and sisters [African American men and women] have a problem with me because I can do it. We as Black people have a problem communicating in our professional world, so we move on.

I would advise Black women interested in pursuing the principalship to learn everything they can about the job, talk to everybody they know within the realm, and learn every in and out about the job that they can. After they have learned that, they should keep the networking and the support system open because they will need it. I think shadowing and on-the-job training are important. On-the-job training gives them an opportunity to get their feet wet. A lot of Black women have not been in leadership positions other than at home as single parents.

The other piece is, the principalship is a lot of work. It is a challenge to manipulate monies for the kids. I have a hard time trying to balance my personal life and my business life because I really try to do a good job. It is tough; sometimes you just walk away. I see a lot of people walk away because you end up working all of the time, and if you want a life, you can't do it. You have to delegate and start trusting people, surround yourself with people you can trust and who you can depend on to get things done.

<u>Vignette Five: Waltz</u>

"Either you get in the system and let the system guide you, or you get in the system and try to make some significant changes. That's what I am trying to do now is make some significant changes. I am not letting the system guide me."

<u>Growing-Up Years</u>

<u>Researcher's observations.</u> When I first met Waltz, she was dressed to perfection, with manicured nails and not a hair out of place. She spoke with an elegant, sweet voice that was light and airy. Waltz assured me that she was more than happy to participate in my study and did not mind accommodating my schedule. Because of the commute to her school, she thought it would be better for me to travel there on weekends. This hard-working principal devoted every Saturday and Sunday to her job. Everyone was aware of her hard work and devotion. I could not believe the amount of patience Waltz had with me. Once I left her school at seven o'clock in the evening, and she stayed until midnight to get some work done.

One thing that stood out about this principal was her elegance. Waltz took pride in her appearance and made her presence known wherever she went. Her former classmates had called her "ashpuppy" because of her skin color, but she overcame such torments by proving herself to others. She reiterated throughout our conversations that she always wanted to be the first and the best. As a principal, she also believed it was her duty as a Black woman to help others by giving back to the community.

<u>In her own voice.</u> My mother got as far as ninth grade. Then she broke her leg and fell so far behind in school that she didn't go back. I believe my dad got as far as fourth grade, but he had to quit school to work on the family farm at an early age. The Black community believed that some education was better than none. Unfortunately, my

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father was very, very fair skinned. I say unfortunately because if he had been darker he would have been able to finish school. He got a lot of breaks because of his skin color. He was given jobs and was allowed to do things because of his skin color. He didn't need to finish school, and I don't think that people even realized that my dad hadn't finished school. Back then, if you were fair skinned, the doors were opened for you. My dad walked through a lot of doors without a degree.

My mother, on the other hand, was very dark. She was very smart and a beautiful woman, and I think her beauty opened a lot of doors for her. She was very intelligent for having just a ninth-grade education. She was an excellent reader, and this helped her to achieve a lot back then. What she wanted to do was be a housewife. It didn't call for a degree and my dad was a hard worker, so they managed. Although they never said it, I think they realized that it was not going to be the way for their children. So my mother taught me how to read when I was quite young. When I went to school, I knew how to read, I knew my numbers, and I knew other things that other kids didn't know because my mother would read me the newspaper and work with me. She would have me read to the younger kids while she fixed dinner.

My parents always wanted the best for us. I can remember my dad telling us that one day we would be on stage or in the White House. We grew up with a college across the street, so going to college was expected. I knew I would graduate from high school and from college, and I knew that I was not going to get pregnant because that was not in the plan. The plan was high school, college, excel and get a degree, and come out and be a professional. That was the plan. Anything I needed in school, my parents gave it to me. Anywhere I wanted to go, my parents financed it.

I was born in 1950, and we grew up in a segregated school system. My elementary school was excellent, and I had a great childhood. There were a lot of us, and society would have classified us as middle to lower class. However, I would say we were middle class because my dad worked two jobs to make sure that we had everything we needed. We had a beautiful home, and I grew up in a nice environment. Elementary school was a plus for me. I was an above-average student in elementary school; middle school was a transition because I broke state records in sports. Although I participated in sports, it wasn't something I really cared for. I just wanted to be the first one to break records.

Middle school was an eye opener because that's when I realized what racial prejudice against African American people was. In seventh and eighth grades, I learned there was a distinction between darker complexioned African American girls and fair-complexioned ones. My parents never taught me to hate Caucasians or anybody. They said to take people at face value.

In high school I got into politics. I ran for a lot of offices, winning a few and losing a few. I got involved in cheerleading and continued to focus on academics and became an A student. I decided that if I was going to study, I wanted to be first to get the A. I always wanted to be first. I was really successful in high school; I graduated seventh in a class of 520 and ended up getting a full scholarship to college. I went to college, and it was good for me. I lived across the street from the college. I couldn't go away to school because my mom had died and I was helping my dad raise my brothers and sisters.

My dark complexion has never been a problem for me because, when it might have been a problem, my parents sheltered me. I was fortunate to grow up in an age when James Brown declared, "I'm Black and I'm proud." I was old enough then to realize that I was different because I was an African American. Being tall was a problem in middle school because all the boys were shorter than me. However, my dad made sure that wasn't a problem for me because he instilled self-esteem in me.

There was one episode in my life, in elementary or early middle school, where some kids said I was Black and ugly. I didn't think I was ugly, but I was told that I was ugly because there were fair-skinned African American girls in my class, and there were certain things I couldn't do because I was dark skinned. I couldn't be on the dance team, and I wasn't chosen for certain roles in plays because I was dark. The girls who had longer hair and fairer skin were the ones who were put up front during performances. That bothered me for a little while. That's when I decided to beat them and be the first. Even though the teachers were calling on those girls for everything, they were the airheads. That's when I decided to excel, and I did it in academics and sports. I wanted boys to know that I could beat them. Just because they were boys and I was a girl, that didn't mean they were faster.

Although the fair-skinned girls teased me, the boys were the worst. They were the ones who called me "blackie" and "ashpuppy" and stuff like that. It didn't bother me, though. What bothered me was the fact that I didn't have enough sense to call them names back; my mother had raised me too well. I could have laid some names on them, but I didn't; I just kept walking and ignored them. I remember a boy scratched me just so the ash would show on my arms. I let him scratch me for a long time. But when we got

into high school, he came up to me at a dance and asked me to dance with him. I remember it to this day. I looked at him and said, "No, I'm not going to dance with you because I am too black."

There was a fair-skinned girl who used to tease me all the time. She works in a supermarket now, and when I go back home, I make sure I stand in her grocery line. I make a point of giving her a $100 bill. I figure I'm on vacation and she is working. I have a subtle way of getting back at people by either being first or beating them at their own game. All they could do was pick on me about my skin color because it had nothing to do with academics.

I did well in college, not because I wanted recognition but because I needed to keep my scholarship. Also, I still wanted to be first. So I kept the scholarship and graduated from college summa cum laude. To me it was no big deal because I had to study to keep my scholarship.

[After graduating from college], I left Arkansas and came to Michigan. Michigan was not a destination, it was a money thing. I had 35 offers and I laid them all out and picked the one that had the highest salary and had requirements for getting a master's degree that I could work with. Some states have a three-year requirement to get a permanent teaching certificate, and some states have five. That was another reason I came to Michigan–to get a permanent teaching certificate. And the university was right here, so I knew I could get my master's degree at the university and teach in the district.

I learned a lot of life lessons from my community, as well. The women in my community taught us that we had to be ladies, number one. I am old fashioned about that, and I raised my girls like that. One thing that I was taught was that, as a lady and

being Black, you had to be perfect. My parents told us that we had to be well behaved and perfect since we didn't want folks to think we were stupid because we were Black. We had to act like adults in public. You would never hear me curse in public.

If I had a choice, I would never be the first-born child; there is so much pressure. I don't care if you are born a minute before your sibling, as the first born you are expected to know better. You are also told in many ways that you are different because you are the oldest. You can either be an older kid who is a good little kid, or you can be an older kid who is a brat. Growing up in my family, I had no choice but to be a good little kid. Even now, I am still plagued with that.

Leadership

Researcher's observations. Waltz had been a successful principal because she knew how to dance with various partners to get what she needed. As she danced, she networked with each partner with whom she came into contact. Her selectivity in choosing dance partners allowed her to associate with people who could assist her and her students in multiple ways. Waltz had many concerns that she voiced to her peers. She had a charismatic way of getting what she needed through her chosen partners.

In her own voice. I participated in the political movement by attending a rally at my university. When the Soul Dad Brothers got killed with the Black Panther Party movement, I was right there. Unfortunately, during the moment of silence, a commotion broke out, chairs were flying, and the whole convention center was destroyed. Although it started off as a peaceful meeting, it turned into an unfortunate situation where the police cornered all of us, got our names and social security numbers, and sent us back to our dorms. Then they closed down the political rally and we went back home. That's as

close as I came; it made *Life* magazine, and that was it for me. Other than that, I haven't gotten involved in politics; I just vote.

I would say I am conservative, a little bit because of my age; I came through the era when so much was tried as far as management and teaching were concerned. I am very conservative, but still progressive and adaptive. That's the kind of leader I am. Number one, I don't hear about something new and then jump into it. I'm not that trendy. But neither am I the kind of person who sits back behind my desk and says, "This isn't going to work." I am the kind of person who, if I am going to bring something new into the building, I have thought it through. I have seen trends come and go, and it all goes back to the basics.

In a leadership position, you have to know your job and treat people how you want to be treated and treat children like you want your children to be treated. In teaching, you have to teach the child. I don't care how much technology comes in, you really have to teach and have a knowledge-based system. If the child can't read, you can put him in front of a computer, but you still have to do that one-on-one, hands-on style of teaching. You can't tell the kid, "Here is a workbook, here is a computer, and here is a recorder"; you still have to do that ground work. I am very conservative in knowing that, but I am also very progressive in recognizing that you need that knowledge-based system to get to the kids.

I have also learned another lesson in this profession, as well as from my mom and dad: No matter what people say or do to you, don't hate them for it. I tell my teachers that they'd better be glad that it is me that they are saying these things to because somebody else might hurt them. When teachers blow off kids' parents, I have to

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intervene and take the steam. I allow them to air their opinions, but I let them know that I don't appreciate it. I've learned that if people hate you, it is not really you they hate. There is something else, but you are the one that they feel most comfortable with. It doesn't mean that I am a weak person, though.

Even now there are things going on in the district, and I am keeping my eyes open because I think there are things coming about. I am the only African American female principal in the district. I am really watching that because I have gone through different changes in my life. From 18 to 25 years old, I was trying to make it. From 25 to 35, I was trying to be a mother and wife, and then from 35 on I was dealing with physical changes in my life, such as menopause. Now I am going through a political change in my life, where I am taking a more active role in what is going on around me. Now I am looking at some of the prejudice out there, whereas I didn't before because I was too busy just trying to make it. Now my life is more relaxed and I am taking a closer look at it. I am going to start taking a stand against the system because I'm concerned about the "good old boy" network. Even though we have a female superintendent, there are still some "good old boy" things that arise.

[Breaking into that network] is going to be a challenge, but I am working on that right now, making myself known so that if people want to look me up they can. I am out there and getting more involved; I am going into different circles that I have never gone into before. Last night I was with senators and state representatives. I have done a lot of things to help raise money for scholarships, and they know me from that. I am getting out there and volunteering and leaving little marks so I will be asked to serve on some committees. Then I will know that the changes will be positive ones. As a matter of fact,

I am going to be an advocate for a certain group when I retire. People will listen to me because I will be working with them; then I will step aside and say, "Let me change roles for a while."

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. Waltz had been influenced by several mentors who taught her how to conduct herself and dress like a lady. The way she presented herself was a reflection of how her family, extended family, and community embraced her. Despite having to deal with skin-color issues growing up, she found comfort in visiting a neighbor who taught her proper etiquette. All she had learned through the years was part of who she was and how she behaved. Her attitudes and beliefs were centered on how one must appear with respect to others.

In her own voice. My teachers were all role models in a sense; they taught me how to dress, and I watched them do certain things or observed how they acted. I have taught my own daughters manners, as well–the old-fashioned manners, such as a woman shouldn't chew gum in public, or whenever you pass a mirror, check your hair and your slip to make sure everything is in place. Those are things that other people taught me. My aunt was very old-fashioned. She taught me how I should speak outside as well as inside a building, and she reprimanded me if I did not behave appropriately. I emulated a lot of people such as my aunt, a neighbor, and a lot of my teachers because they were my mentors. When I go back home, I always visit them.

[When I was a teenager], I would visit my next-door neighbor and prepare tea for us. I knew where the teacups were and how to fix the tea and drink it properly. As we sat together, my neighbor would tell me, "I saw you with that boy yesterday, with his arm

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around your waist. If you want a boy to touch you, you hold his hand. When walking down the street, you should walk on the inside and he should walk on the outside [by the curb]. Never let him have his arm around your neck in public; that's not ladylike." I learned a lot by sitting and drinking tea with her. We still do that when I go home. Here I am 50 years old, and she is still correcting me.

Other people, such as my choir teacher, also taught me life lessons. She taught me a lady's face should never look oily. Take your finger and wipe it across your face. If your finger feels oily, then take the time to wipe your face. Another teacher taught me how to deal with academics. She told me, "It is not important what you don't know; what is important is how you let a person know you don't know. She taught me that, if I didn't understand something in class, I should raise my hand or else nobody would know that I didn't understand. She explained that there were appropriate ways to ask and answer questions. Challenges in education were never embarrassing to me because I was taught how to say "I don't know." Even now, when I am talking with somebody and they use a word that I don't understand, I ask them what they mean by that. I feel very comfortable doing that.

Growing up, I was surrounded by teachers. My next-door neighbor was a teacher and she was an elegant lady and taught me out-of-the-home manners. She taught me how to eat, speak, and set the table. She even taught me to sit with my ankles crossed. Once she slapped me across the face because I waved at her. She told me that young adults do not wave at grown people; they open their mouths and speak to grown-ups and wave at friends. She taught me how to show respect for my elders. This woman even taught me how to take care of a house properly.

In every situation, I have to have a plan. The day my husband died, I had to come up with a plan for the next day. My plan was to continue with life and see that my children graduated. I couldn't bring him back, and life goes on. I have had enough ups and downs. Right now, this building could blow up, and I would stand on the street and direct traffic. Even when things happen at school, we have plans. I have learned how to deal with the unknown. I have been at the bottom, and I'm not going back down there. When my mom died, my whole world crashed; when your husband dies, your whole world crashes. I learned at an early age that if I couldn't do anything about a situation, then I asked God to help me. Part of my goal as a little girl was to be a housewife, teacher, or nurse. At that time we weren't exposed to many other possibilities. In my neighborhood, being a principal in a Black neighborhood was like being the president of the United States.

My mother was an inspiration to me because she taught me how to be a lady. She explained that ladies don't curse or chew gum in public. If you sat back in a chair, you slouched or your breasts stuck out, and that was not ladylike. My parents always told me to look at the person I was walking toward or talking to, with my shoulders back, chest out, and butt in. Even now, when I walk through the halls the teachers say that I walk with demand. My youngest daughter is the same way; she can walk into a room and be noticed right away. People respect her because of the way she carries herself. I tell my girls to be known by their presence because their presence is positive. I say, "If you walk into a room withdrawn, people aren't going to notice you." We will walk into a restaurant like we are queen bees to be noticed. Not strutting our stuff, but to project ourselves in a positive manner; we are Black and we are proud!

Projecting ourselves positively is something my mother taught me. She also taught us to speak our minds. Those are things that I was raised with, and they still stick with me now. I was raised to believe that, just because I am a Black female, that doesn't mean that Black males or White males are better than I am. My mother would always say, "They don't hold a candle to you." If there were things that I couldn't do, my mother always said to ask for help. She didn't finish school, and when I had questions that she couldn't answer, she would get the answer from someone else.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Social Justice

<u>Researcher's observations.</u> Waltz was a principal who created equity through innovation. She used her dance steps to maneuver resources to her students. Although she thought that the school district had become too absorbed with standardized tests, she planned to voice her disagreement at the right time. She had learned how to wait for the appropriate time to address certain issues. She had also learned the importance of her school community in getting what they needed for the students. Waltz was constantly keeping her eyes open for opportunities.

<u>In her own voice.</u> When you have been around as long as I have, you become part of the system. Either you get in the system and let it guide you, or you get in the system and try to make some significant changes. That's what I am trying to do now, is make some significant changes. I am not letting the system guide me. I can come here from Monday through Friday, take home my little satchel, and delegate. But delegation is one of my weak points. I don't seem to delegate enough because I am still trying to make that difference; making a difference is one of my goals.

School administration is getting more political because now we have to adhere to so many policies. Anytime you get a dollar from the federal government, you have to play their game. Now that the federal government is getting more involved in education, the game isn't fun any more. I see my career in administration coming to an end soon because now we are dancing to the tune of the federal government. I don't know what the federal government is requiring, and they don't know what they are requiring. In the meantime, it has caused the administration and superintendents to have a lot of headaches. The more dollars you get, the more paperwork you have to fill out and the more people you have to answer to as to how, when, and why this money is being spent.

I want people to vocalize their disapproval of standardized tests. I know it is going to be hard and I can't do it by myself, but I know a lot of us got riled up about schools and children being graded according to the state tests, such as the MEAP. Children don't have to take the MEAP because the test is not mandated. I am going to challenge the state with grading the schools according to MEAP scores, either now or after I retire. There are so many factors, mainly that children don't perform well on a test but they perform well in the classroom. I think I have enough other administrators who will support me on this issue. Another thing is that, here in our city, parents love their children and want them to succeed, but they don't feel the doors are open in the schools. As soon as parents come into a school and their child is not achieving well or is misbehaving, they have to sit at a table and listen to a lot of put-downs.

Also, I want to create awareness and be an advocate for parents. We had a support group in the city that advocated for parents, but it died out because members got political and opposition was powerful enough that they ended up disbanding. This

support group got the state legislature to say that if parents wanted to get into the school's personnel files, they could. If you want to go down and look into my personnel file you can, because I am paid by the state. So my evaluation and my personnel file are open to the public. We fought that here, but the support group won the court battle. But they were going in the wrong direction in many areas and were getting into some negative things, so they disbanded.

I would like to establish a parent support group for regular education kids. We have advocates for special education kids, but nothing for those in regular education. I want to get a base at each school in the district so that parents don't have to leave their neighborhood to talk to a principal or teacher about their child's behavior or academics. I think such an organization would be positive for the school district, to guide parents into networking more with their child's teacher, in order to make the child more successful.

One must understand what leadership is. I have other friends who are administrators, and their idea of leadership is totally different from mine. My definition of leadership involves guidance and a knowledge base. As a principal, I have to know what is needed in my community because kids are coming in from that community. A leader, to me, has to know the make-up of the community and get out into the community. That is one of the reasons I continue to go to church and do my shopping in this community; even though I don't live here any more, I keep tabs on this community by doing that. In learning the needs of the community and where the parents are, a leader can come into a school and guide the teachers in providing a knowledge base for their clients. Then you have to establish in your teachers a mind-set to serve the clientele they

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are dealing with. A leader must expose teachers to new educational strategies and ideas. I recommend books for them to read, like Oprah Winfrey does with her nationwide book club.

There are some hindrances to being a leader. I have friends in the building, and I let them know that I am their friend but I am still their supervisor, so they shouldn't cross that line. We can joke away from the office, but I am the supervisor and they are employees while we are here. Knowing the rules and being familiar with each employee's contact can be difficult. I do not know the details of the contracts of all our employees in various positions—teachers, custodians, security, cafeteria workers, aides, special education aides, and support staff. Six unions are represented in this building, some of whose contracts change every year. If employees have a question about their contract, I tell them that I don't know the answer but I will use my resources to find an answer to their questions.

Social justice in education can be divided into two areas: social justice for the students and for the society. When I think of social justice, I think of how race and socioeconomic status are barriers for our children. You are either rich or poor, Black or White. A Caucasian kid taught me that lesson by having a fight with a Black kid. A large group of students was circling them, while he was standing with a dozen or so of his friends—an Asian, a Hispanic, and 10 Caucasians. The rest of the kids were African Americans. As I walked up to the group, they were arguing. The White student told everyone standing around that if they were White they could go with him, and if they were Black they were the other boy's friends. He drew the line right there. Everybody who was not African American considered themselves White, and when I saw that, I

learned a lesson: If you are Black, you are in a race by yourself. If you are non-Black, then you are considered to be Caucasian until you grow up; by then you have learned the difference between Russian, German, or whatever. That kid was a sixth grader, and he drew the line right there. That kid is going to multiply, and those kids who went with him will have that same thought. I always remember that kid, and if I ever see him again, I will let him know that he taught me a lesson.

The way I look at it, there will never be social justice because if you are poor you are poor, if you are White you are White, and if you are Black you are Black, and that's the bottom line. Here in this school it is the same way. If you are Black, the Caucasian teachers look at you as a different type of person. They don't want to understand you, so they just categorize you. If you are not Black, that's when they consider the socioeconomic part. If you are White and you dress all right and your mom and dad have pretty good jobs, then you are okay. I learned that from the kids. If you are Black, it doesn't matter if your parents are well off. If seven Black boys from high-income families were standing in the hallway arguing, a teacher would say, "There is a gang of Black boys down there about to fight." However, if seven White kids were arguing in the hallway, the teachers would say there was something going down around the corner, some boys were arguing. The tone is always softer [with White kids].

So we look at social justice inside the building. To change some of the attitudes of the teachers, we bring ethnic workshops into the building, and things are different for about a week. If we constantly bombard the teachers with that kind of awareness, then we can make a difference. They understand that once you come inside the school building, you have to leave your differences outside. I treat people inside this building

differently than I treat them outside. It is like you have to exist differently in here; this is your world of work. I think they understand that, but they revert to the way they were raised.

I think if we get ethnic training every other month at staff meetings, it will help by making the teachers aware of our clients; I call our kids clients because that is what they are. I want our teachers to expose the kids to what is out there. I also have been working with children. I wish that the school district would switch teachers because I would bring in more diverse teachers from different ethnic backgrounds, states, and educational systems. I stopped letting children be described by race at this school. If you want to report somebody for running down the hall, give me a descriptive word without being racist. They should be reporting the behavior and not the race.

I define power as respect and knowledge. I have to give power and then I demand it back. You have to know what you are in charge of; you can fake it for only so long. Respect comes first. People say that, in order to have power, you have to know what you are good at. However, you can be a powerful leader and not be good at it but be powerful at it. You can delegate a lot. You have to be respected as a leader.

Her Philosophy

Researcher's observations. Waltz was the only principal in this study who used a partner consistently as she created equity. Waltz was a people-person and used her skills to find resources for her students. She knew how to network with others in order to accomplish her objectives. In addition, Waltz reciprocated by giving a lot of herself to others. This principal was aware of her dance skills and enjoyed using them to her advantage.

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In her own voice. I consider myself a darn good principal. There is no recognition in it, but I consider myself good. At first I thought I had to be recognized, but that's not necessary. We get recognized as a building. I step back and let the teachers take the glory. People ask me who I admire, and I reply Harriet Tubman and the character Scarlett O'Hara from *Gone With the Wind.* I also say Lena Horne and Josephine Baker because these women did whatever they had to do to make it. The reason I admire Scarlett is that, no matter what, she knew where she came from, knew who she was, and knew what she needed to do to succeed. In that famous scene from *Gone With the Wind,* she told her Mammy to rip those ragged curtains off that wall, make her a dress, and go and ask Rhett Butler for some money so that she could get the farm going again, holding her head up just as proud as could be. There were times in the movie when Scarlett would go someplace and cry, but not let anybody else see her cry. I admire her character, not so much because that is what I want to be like, but if you want to make it, there are things you have to do, things that you have to sacrifice. Scarlett knew what she had to do and did it under any circumstances. I admire Lena Horne because she did what she had to do to make it, and so did Josephine Baker.

Anybody Black who has done something positive, I admire them. It wasn't easy for them because they had to do what they had to do at the time. We always say we can never walk in their shoes because of the hardships, but African American history is of major importance. I try to understand other cultures, but I can't understand them; I can't understand Indian culture and I can't understand Hispanic culture because it is not something that I was born into. African American culture is what I can understand. Black women is what I understand because they always had to make it right.

Sometimes I can be overbearing, and I need to learn how to delegate more. I look at myself as a caring leader, one who knows everything. But I am not a technology person. I empower someone to fill that gap for me. I don't speak the foreign languages that we offer, but I empower my foreign language people to make decisions for me. So I know the decisions that I have to make are for the good of the school. Like my budget–it is so crazy because we have 120 different accounts for this building. We have soft account money and hard account money. All of the numbers drive me crazy. I don't have a handle on the budget, but the teachers don't know that because I know how much money I have. I inherited the budget in the red; I am still in the red, and am still not able to balance my budget. I am working with administration to wipe out those negative accounts.

I look at myself as a workaholic, and that is not good. I am still new at this. I am an ambitious leader, a knowledgeable leader. I am overbearing because I feel like I have to do everything, which can be used against me sometimes. There is not much in life that I haven't experienced. My life has not been sheltered. I bring all of that into my leadership. I go to all the educational workshops. If I can't attend, I send somebody in my place. I think I would make a hell of a good superintendent, but I would never do it because the older I get, the more unaccommodating I am getting with people who try to use and abuse the system.

I share things with the staff through staff notes. Things that don't go into the newsletter, I share with them during the staff meetings. In the staff meetings, nobody talks but me. The meetings are for me to tell them what is going on in the district. We don't get into a discussion during that time. The very next day, I meet with the grade

levels and they can bring up issues then. Then I will take it to the entire staff. I was

taught in college never to have a dialogue in a staff meeting because they will turn on

you. Then you will be by yourself up there and you may lose it; then you will give in and

they've got you. Never do anything like that in a large group. Even the ones who like

you, they are all in the same union.

When I meet with these 15 people at a staff meeting, I ask what's on their minds.

I write down everything and go over it again. We talk, and I let them make decisions.

For instance, they told me that we needed a time-out room for students so that, instead of

suspending them, the teacher can send them out of the class for an hour. I told my staff

that I would be in the cafeteria and ring the bell, and then they could send their kids down

for a time out. If you respect the teachers, that room will be quiet and kids will learn

something.

Vignette Six: Religious

"Dear Lord, I know that You are anointing me. Through Your presence I can do Your work with Your arms around me."

Growing-Up Years

Researcher's observations. When I first met Religious, I was taken aback by her

height. This six-foot-tall principal stood erect and proud as she walked through her

school greeting students and staff. When we got to her office for our initial meeting, I

found myself admiring her artwork. She had several Annie Lee figurines in her office.

When I told her that I, too, collected these Black figurines, she told me that her teachers

and parents had given them to her on different occasions.

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Through the interviews and observations, I had an opportunity to get to know Religious. She was an intelligent, spiritually minded woman who took pride in her spirituality and did not try to conceal her relationship with God. I was surprised on one occasion when she asked if we could pray together for my family and my safe travel home. Her feeling of oneness with God guided her work for social justice.

In her own voice. I really enjoyed my growing-up years because my extended family was large; my father had several brothers and sisters. My mother's sisters both lived with us, and we were pretty closely knit. My parents were separated and divorced, probably when I was in the third grade. Despite being on welfare, my mother was determined to make a good life for us, so we moved a lot. However, my mother made up her mind when she arrived in *this* city that she was going to stay here. I actually can remember all the places that we lived, except for the earliest one.

My mother always worked, and she always told us she wanted us to have a stable home. Of course, I didn't know what that meant at the time. My mother was either working or in school, so she was not a very warm mother. Because she worked two jobs, we stayed with my grandmother a lot. Granny was a very principled woman. She was the one with flavor during her time; she wasn't a typical grandmother with a bun and an apron. My grandmother partied, but she was still a very devout woman and kept us on the straight and narrow.

Even with my grandmother's support, I remember longing for my mother. She would come to see us every day, but my siblings and I would see her back as she was leaving. It was very, very painful, but then, when we moved to our final growing-up home, the stability was there. Also, my siblings were older by then, and we were able to

stay by ourselves while my mother worked. I had a good time growing up; we didn't have a lot of things because my mother was a single parent, but we had good food and a good home. We had a beautiful home, a small home, but my mother was very meticulous about her house and the yard. Because my mother was working so much, it was my job to kind of run the house from the time I was about 12 years old. I would have dinner ready by the time she got home. I was responsible for my sister who was seven years younger than I, so there was a lot of structure there, too.

I remember the sense of community during those years. It used to be so many kids running, playing hide and seek; it seemed that nothing bad happened to children at that time. Things did happen to children, of course they did, but it wasn't as prevalent as it is now. We were all victims of child abuse because our parents would whip our butts. But when it came to children, there was a real sense of community, a sense of pride. People would talk to you about your accomplishments and compliment you, and ask what your future plans were. We were not allowed to get into adult business; children were children, and that is where they stayed.

There were adults in my life who were very supportive, acknowledging what my strengths were, giving me praise and also trying to help me grow up. Everybody watched you—neighbors, even men. If a male neighbor saw you doing something inappropriate, he wouldn't say anything to you directly because you were a young lady, nor would he tell your mother. But he would tell your father. For instance, if someone thought they saw you talking to a boy too long, or if grown men were casting eyes at you, there was an immediate reaction.

There was so much love around me when I was growing up. Both of my grandmothers were concerned about how I perceived myself because I was extremely tall and they were short. My grandmothers always told me that I was beautiful. They would say, "Don't worry about it, your eyes are beautiful." They would always tell me to stand up straight. My mother also instilled a sense of pride in me. I didn't think I was cute because I was buck-toothed and skinny, but I did have nice hair. The girls around were always teasing me because of my height, and because I was tall, my clothes were always too short or too big.

I can remember dealing with those things, but the turning point for me came when I read an article in *Essence* magazine. I have always been an avid reader. There was a writer who was instrumental in my making that paradigm shift. Whenever I read books, the protagonist in the story was always petite, always conservative, and always beautiful. I never saw myself in those stories. But one day I was reading a story in *Essence* that discussed what it was like to be tall, what it was like to be different. It was just a one-page story, but after I read that, I was okay.

When my mother got very sick, the very last year of her life, she asked me, "If you could go to that child within, what is it that the child within would want?" I told her that I wished she would have held me. I said, "Mom, I really wanted to hug you, but I was afraid." She said, "You know, I loved you children very much, but I couldn't show it because of where I was emotionally and psychologically." After that, we developed a really strong friendship. She was my mother, but she became my friend also. That was a turning point in our relationship. We could talk about her friends and their craziness and my friends; we could talk about sex, relationships, and the things we enjoyed. I saw her

as a person, going through the life challenges of getting married, having children, and getting divorced. Through it all, she always wanted and hoped for the best for her children. When she died, it was very difficult for me. She had helped me get through so many things, but she never took credit for anything I did. She told me that, even when I was a young girl, she never thought I needed her. I don't know where she got that idea.

I was influenced by many educators growing up, but one teacher in particular was really important to me. Ms. Beard, a Black math teacher, treated us like her own children, but she demanded a lot from us. She, like a lot of Black teachers, would take that control and call our parents [if we misbehaved], but I can't say that I experienced that a lot with White teachers in elementary and middle school. But the Black teachers and principals lived in the neighborhood with us. So in a way, segregation was a wonderful thing because we had our own doctors, lawyers, and morals. We lived with the doctors and lawyers, and everybody's kids were everybody else's kids. But when we were able to move out as a result of desegregation, we lost that sense of community, and I think it has had a major effect on our kids.

I can remember being involved in a political movement during the time when riots were going on. There was the Detroit riot, the blackout, and the Black power movement. The situations we were involved in took place in 1972, 1973, and 1974. I was on the student council, and we thought the White staff members were trying to water down our curriculum, [eliminating rigorous classes because they thought the Black kids couldn't handle them]. Black staff members secretly told us how to do things. So we decided to have sit-ins and marches. When I went to the University of Michigan, we had another Black action movement. I called my mother from the administration building sit-

in, and she said, "What are you doing there? Girl, you'd better get your butt out of there. What if they bomb the building?" So, peripherally, I've always been active in those things.

Sometimes I don't mind being on the front line. I consider myself a moderate, not an extremist. I am able to negotiate well, and I'm able to see different sides of a situation; in leadership I do it all the time. I've always been a negotiator. I think that stems from my father's being abusive to my mother. I saw that and found it very scary, so I knew some things could potentially result in violence. Thus, negotiating became my tactic in relationships. I always knew that I did not want to be a fighter, but I knew that I did not have to be a doormat, either. I wanted people to know where I stood through my use of words; I wanted to be seen as a mediator, like when I gave my life to Christ.

When I look at a problem, I look at the issues I face before I decide. Then I'll do some talking and listening to people's perspectives on that so-called apple. I look at the stem, the body, the bite that's missing, and those kinds of things before I actually react. I believe you must have your own perspective, even if you don't voice it, because many people react and act too quickly. They might not know the whole situation between the people involved, their relationships, and why they are there. You need to look at those things, but then you can't be so careful that you don't take a stand. However, your stand must be well thought out and have some substance to it. All of those experiences helped me get to where I am.

Leadership

Researcher's observations. Religious found comfort in her work because she knew that she was on a mission from God. She told me she knew that what she was

doing at the time was a calling from God and that she enjoyed serving Him. This

principal had found multiple ways to get the resources she needed for her students. One

of her major concerns was making her children well-rounded by exposing them to all

kinds of experiences and people. She looked forward to taking her students on a tour of

Black colleges, camping, sight-seeing, and meeting professionals who might spark their

interest in learning. To expose the children to a variety of activities, she empowered the

staff to collaborate on ideas with her.

In her own voice. Ironically, the principal of the high school where I taught

became my mentor for administration. I had no idea or desire to be a principal, but she

had approached me and asked whether I was interested in administration. I told her I

was, but I knew how it worked–it's who you know and not what you know. She didn't

say anything to me for about a month, and then she came back again. This time, instead

of asking me if I wanted to be an administrator, she said she had noticed some things

about me that would make me a good leader. She explained that she had watched

teachers, students, and parents come to me, and she'd observed my involvement and that

I should think about administration. However, although she encouraged my pursuit, she

said, "I must tell you that if you do pursue administration, you're going to have to take

out those braids [in your hair]." When I asked why, she explained that the administrators

in that district were quite conservative and that "braids are considered militant." I said,

"Well, I am militant!"

When I discussed my concerns with my husband, he didn't understand what the

fuss was about. I explained that I just wanted to be me, and by telling me that I must

wear my hair a certain way, she was telling me that I must look like a White woman to do

my job. My hair is not naturally straight, and an afro is not militant, nor are braids. But then I realized that it was about getting in, getting that first job. So three weeks after I got my first administrative position, I had my braids back. The next time the principal saw me, she just looked at me in disbelief. As a matter of fact, after I got the braids, I started seeing more and more Black women throughout the district wearing braids. I think it was just a matter of somebody taking the first step.

As an administrator, I want to work with children in a different way. I still want to save lives, but I want to make children whole. I want them academically ready to go into the world of work or a good university, but more than that I want them to be good people, I want them to be smart consumers. I do not want them to be taken advantage of. I want them to see everything out there, and know whether to be a part of it or against it, to know how to make decisions and know what they stand for.

I used to complain about the kids reading below their grade level and worried how to bring them up, and I would go on and on and on. And the Lord came to me and said, "I don't expect you to make geniuses, but I do expect you to save lives." So I said, "Lord, I am so sorry, and I have to keep focused." When I know this, it gives me strength to walk in here and say to a teacher, "You're not teaching my kids, and I have a problem with that." People ask me how I can tell them that and insult their job, but it's not about their job, it's about the job they do with the children. And the only reason teachers walk in here is to take care of these children. If they are not here to do that, then I don't need them. As hard as it is to find teachers, I don't need them.

I think that all leaders must have their own vision and must observe what other middle schools are doing. It's not all about the MEAP test; it's about other measures that

I am interested in. I want to be able to network with people to get more resources to bring something to the kids. One of my bosses who called just a moment ago said, "It's all about her babies. She's always looking out for her babies." And I said, "I sure am. It's all about these babies." I want to have an ongoing career awareness, where we bring people in once a week to talk about their job and all that kind of thing. For instance, I have no problem telling business people, "I want to do a day on the job. If I sent you some kids, would you mind having some people talk to them about their occupation?" People are all very interested; they all say, "Bring them in."

I learned that, as a principal, you must be able to network; you have to be able to keep your business under control and know what's going on. You have to be connected with your clients, parents, and staff. You have to learn to really listen, and you have to know that you cannot do it by yourself. I have to talk to the staff about being able to share our knowledge with each other to build culture; that's a shift because the teachers used to stay in their classrooms. They used to think, "This is my thing; I'll do whatever you say within the perimeters of the school, but this is my classroom." But I want more than that. I want us to assist each other for the good of the entire building and also for the individual classroom. I want the teachers to collaborate; I want them to know that they have input into what the culture of the school will look like.

I would say that I am more of a transformational leader. One thing about transformational leaders is that we empower more. That's what I do; my strength lies in the staff. I really tried to bring the dance team back. Also, I have an excellent drama teacher and an art teacher who are instrumental in making my kids successful.

One thing that I will tell you in terms of things that happen to women in dealing with staff is that, unless you have established yourself as a person of authority, your staff members, male and female, will give you the absolute blues that they would not give a man. We have a "Big Daddy" mentality. We have "Big Daddy" telling us what to do. On the other hand, when you see a woman, you think, "Oh, that's just Momma." We ignore her until she becomes "Big B" [Big Bitch] when she is trying to enforce herself. When it's a man, it's okay because he's just doing his job. When it's a woman, she is a bitch when she tries to enforce herself. As a woman, you have to be very wise in the way that you assert yourself. There are times when you have to say, "You are wrong and I am writing you up." That takes a lot of guts. You find even some male principals who cannot confront others. For a woman, it takes a lot to do it.

Even with my experience in this job it is difficult, but the thing that saves me is that I keep thinking about my kids. My kids don't deserve anything but the best, so it does not take much for me to say, "You are ill prepared; kids are not in class on time, you are not doing your job. If it doesn't change, you and I will have a problem." When I think about my kids, it becomes an easy thing to do because I think, "How dare you fail them, then blame them for their failure?" Or they will say it is the kids' fault that they did not perform well on the standardized tests.

I don't mind having a confrontation with the staff whenever my students' best interests are at stake. I never like to use the word "confrontation" because I am not in a fight with you; to me, that is what a confrontation is. Rather, we are having words. Well, the confrontation is hard when you have to look eyeball to eyeball and say this to

someone who has had his or her own way of doing things because you never know what the outcome will be.

As a principal I have to think ahead in every situation. I have to think about how to handle a person who goes back and talks about you all over the building or who has to get himself or herself together. When you deal with someone like that, you have created an angry person who is going to try to put up a stumbling block every time you turn around. You have to be prepared to deal with all that and to out-think that person before he or she comes in. That's the part of the wisdom that you need. You have to know your staff and look at how they interact with others. Are they negative or are they positive? What happens when something happens and they do not get their way? What happens when they are praised? The same positive reinforcements that we give our kids in the classroom we have to give our staff. That is a difficult thing to do. I think there are some women who shy away from all those parts of leadership. They find the part they like, and they do that part.

I have also learned that if you stand in front and you are the only one with the answer, you become the lightning rod for all the decisions. People don't understand what it takes on the work side, so when you dictate, you fail to empower the staff and that is not the way to get input. If the staff is unable to make decisions and gets a chance to feel the steam that you get when you have done all this work, they begin to question and pick apart every aspect of what you have done. By collaborating, they ask me questions such as whether I considered this or that. Then it becomes a growth factor because no, you didn't think of everything. You need to go back and reconsider some things. Then, it

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becomes a positive experience for everyone. It is also a way of helping the staff members grow.

Her Inspiration

Researcher's observations. Religious found strength in her spirituality as well as in her experiences with her mother. As she reflected on her growing-up years, she reminisced about what her mother had done in order to provide for her and her siblings. She was thankful for all of her experiences and now saw it as her duty to serve her community because she knew what it was like to come from a single-parent household. This principal recognized that she must give to those who had less than she did.

In her own voice. I am so tired of hearing people blame the children for their lack of success when we, as adults, are in total control of the situation. Kids react to their circumstances; they react to the way they are treated. I know that the kid teachers are talking about is the one from a single-parent home, the kid whose father is not in his life. I was the kid teachers were talking about, and I was always offended by that. Although they were not talking about my mother specifically, they were talking about mothers who were in a similar situation—that is, on welfare. My siblings and I mourned the loss of our mother in the sense that she had to work two jobs and go to school. So we had a lot of responsibility as children, and we missed having a mother who was carefree, who could laugh and interact with us more. She was always stressed and trying to work and make a better life for us.

When I grew up, I was always looking out for the underdog who teachers talked about. That is what I am feeling in this position. Don't talk about my kids; you don't know which one will be the next Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the next Bill Clinton, the

next Carl Sagan, or the one who will discover a cure for cancer. You don't know who these kids are. You have no right to talk about them, or not teach them. You have no right to keep them from fulfilling their potential.

When people talk about conspiracy theories, my conspiracy theory has always had to do with the underserving of children from broken family situations. I don't want people of other races and in other classes to compete with my kids. There was an instance when I was complaining to the human resource director, saying, "These children are reading at the first-grade level," and so on. Her response was, "Did you think the Lord was going to send you just geniuses?"

I make no apology for being spiritually connected. I make no apology because God has put me in this job–not this job per se, but in whatever job I can best be of service to children. I am truly serving children and the adults who work with children; that is why power and responsibility are keen elements. It's not just a job, it's a calling. This is what I have to do. I have no choice, I have to do it.

Defining Leadership, Power, and Social Justice

Researcher's observations. Religious made sure that everyone understood her mission. As a leader she made the staff aware of her objectives so that she could have the collaboration she needed to get the task done. She made decisions so that people would perceive her as an efficient leader. This principal wanted her community to be involved with what went on in her school. Her focus was the children and exposing them to the world surrounding them. She wanted her students to be able to say that they had read great novels and had traveled to other states. Religious wanted her students to have the same advantages as students in other districts.

In her own voice. I define leadership as having a vision and a focus for myself and for others. Leadership also means understanding my philosophies in order to do the job that I do and knowing the foundation from which I take a standpoint. Leadership is being wise enough and being able to trust people. The one thing that I have learned this year is that people can help get the job done, and they have. Although we could have been more effective than we have been, the bottom line is that we worked together. It was not a matter of their having the skills, but that I had to trust them to do it. As a leader, I must know enough about leadership for me to give it to them in order for the task to get done. Telling them "Okay, now do it," that's not good leadership. Good leadership really involves being able to delegate things to get done and then overseeing it. I must make sure to have the right framework for communication, to stay on top of things, to keep that vision, in order to move forward for the staff, parents, children, and community that we serve. I must always keep a simple focus in my life.

Although you want to focus on achievement, your focus must be a holistic one. I have to be able to look far ahead of the game, look at all the implications, look at the depth and breadth we can go. I have to be able to motivate the workers and be able to stay in tune with them and keep their motivation up. I took this job the week after my husband died, and I haven't stopped since. And every day this year I really haven't had time to breathe, yet I didn't want to sacrifice the children. Now, looking back, I realize I should have taken the time to mourn, but I didn't because I became the principal of a company. And I really didn't know what I was getting into.

Another part of leadership is addressing power. What I have recognized power to mean is being able to wield influence, and that happens in so many ways. You can use

power as a hammer because you are in a position of authority, or you can use power very softly and never have to say that you are in authority. I choose to use my power in a soft manner. I don't have to tell anyone that I am a principal. They know when I walk in, not because of any badge that I am wearing, but because I walk with authority. I think that is God's place in me. Power is the ability to not only influence people, but to persuade–and even that ugly word "manipulate"–people to get the desired results. The greatest use of power is not to use it.

Even now, I share with all my people. I ask them what they can do because I am not the one to see it all. I don't have to stand on top of tables and scream and all that kind of thing, but they know I will follow through. I am never afraid to say that I need their help to make this vision a reality. I am prepared to say that. I am also very aware that I am working with educators, and I want them to feel that way. So I give them the tools that they need, but I set parameters.

I like to see people grow, and I would hope that if anybody has ambitions to be a principal, that I would be a role model for them, that I would encourage, assist, and critique them. I want to do this in such a way that they will grow because I don't want to keep people under me. I am learning to eradicate from my vocabulary the words "my staff." We don't own people. It is the staff of our school. We are all in this together– teachers, parents, and the kids. So when I think of "our," I think of a heavy responsibility that ultimately starts with me. In the Old Testament books of Jeremiah, Joshua, and Leviticus, it talks about leadership. I continuously ask the Lord to lead me in the right direction. I was reading the scriptures, and that is what I mean by leadership through adversity. As a principal, I am constantly under pressure and being sought after.

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Nonetheless, leadership means I won't give it up. So as I think about those things, I think about my style and who I am. I want to empower people, to give them a sense of ownership and cohesion. I really see leadership as my ability to seek out and envision where we need to be, to see the connecting links and the resources that I have available and bring them into a whole. That is a very heavy responsibility. But the minute I think that it's me and not the anointing of the Lord, the minute I think it is me and not the work that the staff does, not the parents who trust us with their kids, not the kids who are doing their work to stay in here, the minute that I forget that . . . I lose everything that power is. If I think that, I just have the name of being a principal in general, and I no longer have any influence because then I will have become an egomaniac.

If anything, when one has power, people perceive him or her as having status. There are people who bow to those with power in so many ways. I don't mean physically, but they do things when you are walking down the street. They say, "That's the principal. That's the principal." Sometimes it's good and sometimes it's bad. But if you are a good leader with your power, then it is well worth it. When people seek me out to do speaking engagements, serve on boards, and those kinds of things, that is another opportunity to influence. So that becomes more power because I am reaching a larger audience. For example, I was asked to serve on my son's Boy Scout board. It really gives me a bigger voice because people listen to me in a different way. They respect what I say. And they might follow up on what I say. However, I have to be very careful about what I say, so that I won't become an egomaniac. I refuse to do anything just for name's sake.

I've learned that I have to be very judicious about the way that I give my time. With my power I will bring influence or prestige to what I am serving as long as I continue to have a good name in the community. As I said, I see more of a boom when I get the things for my babies. I am able to go in and say, "My children need this; is there any way that you can donate?" I am always trying to see how new things will work for my kids. I think, "How can I use this person to help my kids?" I haven't seen it in a negative sense, but it is not as much power as it is position.

I define social justice as there being some equity for all people and also that there is equity and opportunity. Actually, I would not say that I have tried to do anything along those lines specifically as much as live it daily. One of the first things I think of in respect to social justice is the make-up of my school and how diverse it is. I think we need a more diverse school community because we are in an African American community, and yet our staff is 80% Caucasian. We also do not have the number of Hispanic children that I would like to have. I have been talking to the Hispanic community to find out from a cultural standpoint what is going on with that. I would also love to have Asian teachers, to increase the diversity of our staff, but that is not the case.

So increasing diversity is the first thing that is on my agenda; of course, we would do the same things with the children. We have some Caucasians here, but they do not work around anything less than 51% of their race. They do not like to be in a 50-50 situation because they are dominant. It takes a brave parent to say, "I don't want my child in this school." I can respect that because there are some parents who would not be

that honest. They would say that they wanted their child to be closer to home. They should just tell the truth; there's nothing wrong with that.

When I think of what social justice in an organization looks like, I think of equal opportunity. It means that everyone has an equal opportunity. Also, as soon as opportunity is available, there would be the same criteria for everybody. So the more talents you have, the more you can use. If I had to envision something, I would envision the United Nations as an example of social justice. In the United Nations, diversity is there first. Not just racial diversity but economic diversity, educational diversity, diverse ways of thinking, and even the way people were educated–whether it is public, private, parochial, or boarding school. I see a welcoming environment for people who are different, including people who are handicapped. Therefore, it is a utopian world. That is what I see, and I know that can happen.

Whenever I visit New York, I am struck by the multiplicity of relationships that I see with people who look nothing alike. When one goes to Toronto, it is the same thing. However, we come to the simple Midwest, and the first thing they look at is skin color, then they look at your gender, and then they make decisions according to those elements. So when I think of the United Nations, I think that barriers are coming down. I think you can be truly judged on the content of your character and your work performance and contributions.

In terms of equal opportunity, I talk to my staff about equity and equal opportunity, and I tell them not to do anything to or for these kids that they would not do to or for their own. I had one teacher who told the students to memorize the presidents for their final exam. He thought he would give them a break because they had been

working hard all year. I said, "Excuse me! List the presidents?" I asked him, "If your child came home and said, 'Look, Dad, I only have to know the presidents of the United States for my final exam,' what would your reaction be?" The teacher said he would want his son to be challenged. So I told him that his "easy" exam wouldn't happen anymore. I think children should be challenged and should not be treated differently.

I had another instance with three counselors, two Black and one White, who doubted whether my children could succeed. I had to address them about some things that I had heard, so I asked them, "Do you believe these children can learn?" One started to say, "Well . . ." I said, "No, no, no. All I want is a yes or no." One counselor said, "I have to qualify something first." I immediately said, "No, you don't have to qualify anything. Yes or no?" One of the counselors said, "No." I told her, "I don't need you to work for me because if you don't believe these children can learn, considering the many variables and circumstances in their home lives and all that, then you don't need to be working with my children. We may not be able to change their home lives, but what we can deal with for the eight hours that we have those kids is where we can move them from academically to emotionally." Now that just about knocked her out of her chair.

But that is my whole message: You have to believe in each child. It does not make sense to just talk about these children; we must make things happen. We have to do job fairs. There are things that they should learn about, like the environment; they should have head phones on and listen to the earth. I need teachers to go outside of the classroom and connect the students to the world. Students are so much more sophisticated than adults realize. Those are some of the things that I have to help my

teachers see and do with our kids. That is the problem with leadership—you always want to teach everything.

<u>Her Philosophy</u>

<u>Researcher's observations.</u> Religious was a delightful person with whom to interact. Her spirituality genuinely guided her work. I was touched by her love for God and her students. This principal's prayers were being answered daily. During one of my interviews with her, she told me that she had been searching for teachers to fill vacancies at her school. At the end of our final interview, Religious told me that she had prayed for teachers and then left matters in the Lord's hands. Now her prayers had been answered because, seemingly out of nowhere, teachers had been calling to schedule interviews to teach at her school. As she said, "God is good."

<u>In her own voice.</u> I need to be a mother, more than being an employee. But in five years, I think my school will be exactly where I want it to be. I've been here for 20 years, and if I were offered an opportunity to move to a different position, I might be more inclined to move on if the next principal would make changes and not just have business as usual. For instance, I don't want parents to be concerned, but I do want them to be informed. I want them to understand what this testing really means and how they can help us to help their children. I want them to understand that they have a responsibility as parents, and it's not just sending their children out the door, either. They have a responsibility to make sure their children have done their homework. As parents, they have a responsibility to get on that computer and check out what's going on.

We have parents sign a contract that they will contribute 10 hours each school year. With 10 hours, just come to a parent-teacher conference—that is one hour; a parent

advisory meeting, that's another one of their hours. They can volunteer to eat lunch with their child, or walk the halls when we're doing MEAP to make sure we have a testing atmosphere, or come to a game at the school. There are so many things they can do, such as volunteer in the office to help distribute correspondence, volunteer in the classroom, or help put up a bulletin board.

Although I have not had any difficulties, I have heard different perceptions of me. For example, size does make a difference. Now, I have not always been this girth, but I have always been this tall. There is always a sexual tension between men and women. Some women use their little feminine wiles to make their points, and that is what men respond to. I don't do that; I've never been good at that, maybe because I am tall and gumpy. So I have had to be efficient in everything I do. I have not had men challenge my ability by saying that I was not the person for this position because my leadership skills have always been apparent.

I do think there are some condescending attitudes toward women, Black or White. I think that I probably watched other females being treated in different ways, just as I watched other Black women being treated in different ways. Sometimes I ask, "Why do they accept it?" I think the women have put themselves into certain categories and have allowed their male counterparts to do some things. But for myself, I have not personally thought that anyone in a leadership role has really tried to manipulate me in any way. But that does not mean that I did not have to justify what I was doing. There is a difference; you don't just get [carte blanche] to run around.

I've had two male principals who were my superiors who gave me free range. They would encourage me to continue to make decisions; if I made mistakes, we would

do just like everybody else—we would correct them. They said they would always have my back. So I have been blessed with that in terms of mentoring by my male counterparts. I have served on many, many, many committees in this district and have been involved with men at various levels, and I have always had a voice. They have always listened to my counsel. I think that is one of the areas that I have seen women misjudge themselves on—like Kenny Rogers sings, not knowing "when to fold them, when to walk away, when to run." All of those things are really true.

Principals have to take the time to understand who they are with, what the purpose is, where they stand in the group, and what their contribution is that is going to make a difference. Sometimes a principal can make a difference just by being quiet and listening, and reflecting later. Then possibly they can come back a little bit down the road because they may need to do some research to make sure their point is valid. The ability to look at things from all perspectives and not just one's own is important. Gender has not been a problem for me. When I think of race, I believe that it is just something that someone created to place separation and barriers. I am a child of God and He made me this race; therefore, I am proud of it.

Yesterday I was sitting in a classroom, talking with an emotionally disturbed young man. We were talking about his future and the kinds of things he wants to do. He said, "Religious, you know what I want to do when I get grown? I want to do like the White people and get a motor home and take my family and just drive across the country and stop at all these different places you talk about." He thought of it as a fantasy.

We talk about taking things for granted. [Normal things people do] should not be a fantasy for our kids, such as being able to go camping. Some of my children would be

scared to death to go camping. I want us to go camping out back [of the school] for a weekend so that we can pitch these tents and do the campfire; we would still be close to the school, so at least they wouldn't be terrified of bears. At least they won't be running around with bears, but we can make it work right here.

The job at hand is being able to establish resources and getting the things needed for the kids. We have to do more than our counterparts. But I don't think it is anything unusual for women. I don't have time to dwell on the negative stuff. When someone puts a barrier in front of me, I just have to decide whether to go over it, around it, underneath it, or to push on through it. Black women in leadership cannot be cowardly. We cannot be bowed by division, or by people not believing in us. We can't worry about being liked; we have to be grounded in our faith because putting on that coat of armor is the only thing that will protect us.

If we don't have [that spiritual protection], how can we persevere when we see that plot against us or our kids? How do we do that? How do we not see that? How do we not internalize that? How do we not hear that? How do we not question ourselves? And when trouble comes, how do we hold on and get past that and wait it out? How do we do those things? We have to understand who we are, first and foremost. We have to understand why we are here and who we are. We have to be able to envision what it is that we want and how we are going to get it. We have to know how to be submissive, and we have to know how to be assertive.

Opportunity has shaped me as a transformational leader. Every time I [had a contribution published] in a professional journal, I had an opportunity to travel abroad. There was always an opportunity to do an exchange with another program or another

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culture; there was always an opportunity to serve on a board that altered, enhanced, or changed previous thinking. When I look at other programs, I ask, Why not my kids? I like change; I do not like stagnation. Looking back at the different principalships I have held, I would probably dwell more on this school because I always wanted to work with the kids who folks like to throw away, thinking, "Ah, they can't make it" or whatever. There are special kinds of people for those kids, and I happen to be one of them.

I really want to expose these kids [to diverse experiences]. That's why we had a ski club last year; we are going to have one this year also because there is an interest here. We have an art teacher, a single White woman, who is committed to this school and has extended herself. She has been skiing with the Tyroleans out at Mount Holly for a long time. They sponsored our kids and gave them the equipment they needed; all they had to do was show up. So with that support I know our participation is going to expand this year. Also, I am going to take my kids to NASA Space Camp; I want to take them to the Aviation Challenge.

I also want the kids to go on a Black college tour. I want them to have that experience because I know it will last a lifetime, and it goes way past book learning. I want them to visit a college campus. We have several great colleges right here. I want to make sure they hit these colleges. They need to see what is available right here because some may be scared to go away from home. I want to take them to junior colleges so they know what their options are. They need to know that they are not limited. They only are limited by not getting the exposure.

I know God has something else for me to do; I just have to discover what it is. Through these experiences I have had to go back and say, "Dear Lord, I know that You

are anointing me. Through your presence I can do Your work, with Your arms around me." What people say to me all the time is that they could not have gotten a better person for the job. I have gotten more support from people I did not even know about. So I say, "Lord, help me, help me, help me." And I have to thank the Lord for making things a lot better than what I had hoped for in the present circumstance. This is the place where I can be successful, this is the place where I can be helpful, and this is the place where I can be comfortable. When I envision myself, I see myself as an oak tree, standing on the bank of a river, being fed by all those things around me. Water is the continuing change in evolution, but the grounding in that soil is the foundation.

CHAPTER V

THEMATIC ANALYSIS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
AND REFLECTIONS

Introduction

What have we learned about the nature of school leadership for social justice as a

result of studying the vignettes of these Black women middle school principals' dances?

In the ensuing pages I will respond to this question by presenting the Wisdom-of-Practice

model, which captures the nature of school leadership for social justice. To address

subquestions regarding how these leaders mediated professional and personal tensions to

create socially just schools and how they defined and practiced leadership for social

justice, I will analyze and summarize the themes that emerged from the women's

vignettes, related literature, and the lenses of Black feminist theories, middle school

leadership theories, and justice theories. I articulate what it means to these women to

lead for social justice and why other school leaders should care about what these women

think. To answer the last subquestion, I discuss the implications for the study findings

for organizations that are culturally based.

Before beginning the analytical and philosophical discussion, it is important to

frame practice with the construct of social justice. One must first understand that social

justice does not have one particular meaning. It is clearly possible for people to have

their own opinions on how they would like to define social justice. The definition of

social justice depends largely on the context in which it is being applied. However, as a

result of this study, the meaning of social justice for these Black women middle school

principals can be defined by three specific themes: class, gender, and education. Social justice to these women meant being able to help one another, regardless of economic class, in an effort to uplift the community. In addition, these Black women sought justice in education and the work environment through their leadership in the community.

Also, social justice for these women encompassed the equity theory of distributive, procedural, and interactive justice. The women believed that their school community should receive equal rights, services, and treatment (distributive justice). They also believed that they should receive fair procedures of decision making and resource allocation (procedural justice). These women also believed that decision making should take place in the same manner of interactions (interactional justice). In short, social justice calls for equity for all people in all three areas: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice.

One of the biggest misconceptions about social justice is that only well-known, high-profile people can create social justice. That is far from the truth. To create a socially just and equitable environment, one does not have to be well known. Anyone can do this as long as he or she has the desire and motivation to create equity and fairness for all people.

The Wisdom-of-Practice Model
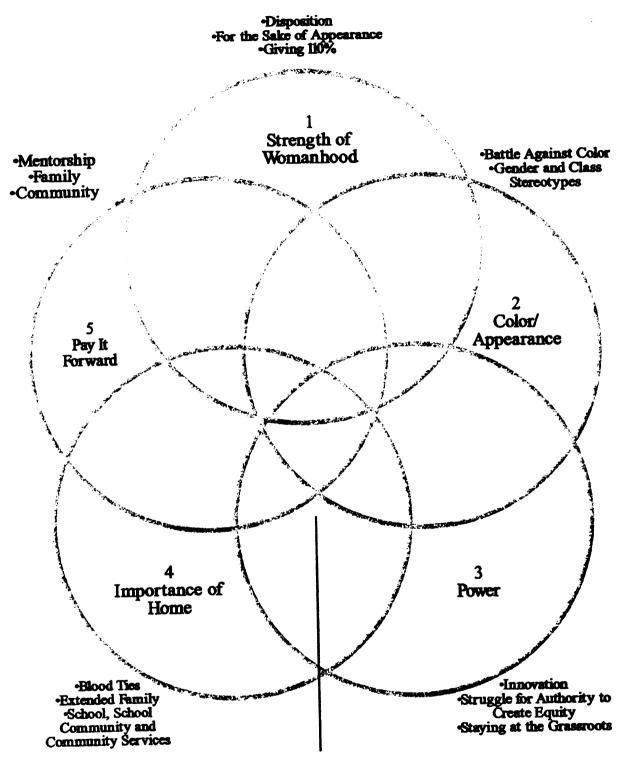
As a result of my data analysis, I put forward a pedagogical framework, the Wisdom-of-Practice model, through which to better understand the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by the Black women middle school principals in this study. This model affords a better understanding of the wisdom of their practice in

creating socially just learning environments. According to Grau (1998), "The circle is a

very common dance formation. It can move either clockwise or counterclockwise. Any

central figures in a circle may have special significance" (p. 147). In light of this

metaphor, the Wisdom-of-Practice model is composed of five interlocking circles that are

constantly in motion. Each of the circles represents a particular theme that emerged from

the vignettes, the literature, and the theoretical lenses. The five themes are (a) strength of

womanhood, (b) skin color and personal appearance, (c) power, (d) importance of home,

and (e) pay it forward. (See Figure 1.)
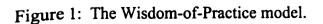
The women in this study used a variety of movements and maneuvers in creating

a socially just learning environment. Although their movements were like dances that

varied in style, technique, tempo, and music, they consisted of the same five circles. As

each of the five circles rotated and spun, and each woman danced to a different beat, their

circles reinforced their shared beliefs and actions about creating social justice. In

addition, the circles constantly overlapped one another, creating a variety of fast and slow

rhythms. At the center of the dance floor was the creation of social justice.

Each woman performed her own dance a little differently from the others,

although the circles and center remained the common components of their choreography.

As each woman danced, she perhaps used certain circles more than others. Despite their

changing tempos and music, the women were all performing dynamic movements toward

social justice.

In review, the overarching question of this study was: What is the nature of

school leadership for social justice as practiced by six Black women middle school

principals? The three subquestions were:

•Disposition
•For the Sake of Appearance
•Giving 110%

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Strength of
Womanhood

•Mentorship
•Family
•Community

•Battle Against Color
•Gender and Class
Stereotypes

5
Pay It
Forward

2
Color/
Appearance

4
Importance of
Home

3
Power

•Blood Ties
•Extended Family
•School, School
Community and
Community Services

•Innovation
•Struggle for Authority to
Create Equity
•Staying at the Grassroots

Leadership for Social Justice

Figure 1: The Wisdom-of-Practice model.

1. How do these Black women middle school principals mediate the professional and personal tensions to create socially just schools?

2. How does each Black woman middle school principal define leadership for social justice? How has each woman practiced social justice in her urban middle school setting?

3. What implications do the study findings have for the preparation of K-12 school leaders? What are the implications of this study for future research on urban K-12 institutions?

These questions can be addressed through a discussion of the five themes that compose the Wisdom-of-Practice model. In discussing each of them, I provide support from the vignettes and the extant literature to capture the essence of the principals' practice of social justice. Following the thematic analysis, I discuss the implications of the research and present my reflections on the study.

Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: Strength of Womanhood

Strength of womanhood, as exemplified in these vignettes, is these Black women's ability to use their leadership position to battle negative stereotypical images of Blacks by epitomizing strength, resilience, and perseverance. The principals' placement in leadership roles had afforded them an opportunity to show strength by enduring obstacles in both their professional and personal lives. Their strength was evidenced in their demeanor, attitudes, willingness to help others, determination, and tireless efforts to mother and nurture their students.

Strength and resilience are fundamental constructs of Black feminist theories.

For instance, Black feminists have argued that Black women have challenged their

negative portrayals as mammies and welfare recipients throughout their personal and

professional lives. Gilkes (1983) suggested, "Black women's assertiveness and their use

of every expression of racism to launch multiple assaults against the fabric of inequality

have been a consistent, multifaceted threat to the status quo. As punishment, Black

women have been assaulted with a variety of negative images" (p. 294). Nevertheless,

despite centuries of oppressive stereotypes, Black women have striven to eradicate the

notion that Black women are passive and fragile. Regardless of the oppressions of race,

gender, and class, many Black women have been determined to end these negative

images through their strength and perseverance. Their personal and professional

experiences have simulated these women, through their philosophies and actions, to

change the way they have been perceived.

hooks (1981) articulated the continued devaluation of Black womanhood by

explaining that, "during the years of Black Reconstruction, 1967-77, black women

struggled to change negative images of black womanhood perpetuated by whites" (p. 55).

She supported her assertion by stating,

> Everywhere black women went, on public streets, in shops, or at their places of
> work, they were accosted and subjected to obscene comments and even physical
> abuse at the hands of white men and women. Those black women suffered most
> whose behavior best exemplified that of a "lady." A black woman dressed tidy
> and clean, carrying herself in a dignified manner, was usually the object of
> mudslinging by white men who ridiculed and mocked her self-improvement
> efforts. They reminded her that in the eyes of the white public she would never
> be seen as worthy of consideration or respect. (p. 55)

Likewise, Collins (2000) observed that:

Black women's work and family experiences create the conditions whereby the contradictions between everyday experiences and the controlling images of Black womanhood become visible. Seeing the contradictions in the ideologies opens them up for demystification. Just as Sojourner Truth deconstructed the term *woman* by using her own lived experiences to challenge it, so in a variety of ways do everyday African-American women do the same thing. (p. 99)

In addition to the devaluation of Black womanhood, these women have had to endure the triple jeopardy of race, gender, and class while exhibiting strength in their professional and personal lives. As King (1988) stated, "A black woman's survival depends on her ability to use all the economic, social, and cultural resources available to her from both the larger society and within her community" (p. 298). She supported this statement by claiming that, "It is black women's well-documented facility to encompass seemingly contradictory role expectations of worker, homemaker, and mother that has contributed to the confusion in understanding black womanhood" (p. 298). King added, "These competing demands are a primary influence on the black woman's definition of her womanhood, and her relationships to the people around her" (p. 298).

The women in this study defined or redefined the meaning of womanhood through three primary constructs: (a) disposition, (b) for the sake of appearance, and (c) giving 110%. Their qualities allowed them to be viewed as strong leaders in their school communities. In addition, they were conscious of people's perceptions of Black women; therefore, some of their actions were for the sake of appearance. Similarly, these Black school leaders worked extremely hard in their positions, nurturing and mothering their school communities.

Construct 1: Disposition. In this study, disposition was viewed as a combination of emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities that distinguished these Black women

principals from other school leaders through their demand for respect. In fact, Black

feminists have asserted that Blacks should demand respect. For instance, feminist

abolitionist Sojourner Truth was a catalyst for demanding respect in her famous but

controversial "Ain't I a Woman" speech. Through her speech, she linked Black feminist

thought, race, and gender in the lives of Black women. She forced people to look at

Black women differently than White women because of their unique experiences.

Similarly, Collins (2000) argued, "The emphasis that Black feminist thinkers

have placed on respect illustrates the significance of self-valuation. In a society in which

no one is obligated to respect African-American women, we have long admonished one

another to have self-respect and to demand the respect of others" (p. 115). She added,

"One of the best-known popular statements of Black women's demand for self-respect

and the respect of others is found in Aretha Franklin's 1967 rendition of the Otis Redding

song 'Respect'" (p. 115).

The participants in this study exhibited confidence and a certain attitude as Black

women school leaders. For instance, two women shared in our conversations that:

> I don't know if there is such a thing as a born leader, but I tend to think that I
> have some characteristics of a good leader. I never took leadership classes. I
> don't remember a lot of what I learned that made me the kind of leader that I am.
> I just think that my being about people and recognizing that all people are
> important has helped to solidify my ability to be who I am. (Ballet)

> I am a Black, almost-60-year-old female, and that has taught me that all things are
> a challenge and that I can jump over any hurdle. After all, I am Black, I am a
> female, I am sitting here in the principal's office, sitting here working with the
> staff, and I am working for my children. (Jazz Tap)

The disposition construct was strongly evidenced in the lives of the principals in

this study. All of these women expressed emotional, intellectual, and moral qualities that

demanded respect. Their compassion for students and the school community was evident as they sought justice. Some of the principals demanded respect by appearing confident and self-assured in their work, whereas others gained respect by being pleasant and personable with their students, parents, and staff.

Further, the Black women middle school principals' dispositions allowed them to present themselves in a professional manner and to maintain respect. In order for these women to move the school and children forward, they had to portray confidence and assertiveness. Although the principals' assertiveness took on different characteristics, they were all successful in their efforts to run their schools.

Construct 2: For the sake of appearance. As school leaders, these Black women had to appear to be in control of every situation. Therefore, they had to look decisive and on top of the complex issues prevalent in their schools. hooks's (1981) examination of Black women in the workforce revealed the stereotypical images of these women: "The stereotypical image of the black woman as strong and powerful so dominates the consciousness of most Americans that even if a black woman is clearly conforming to sexist notions of femininity and passivity she may be characterized as tough, domineering, and strong" (p. 83).

These middle school principals showed their decisiveness by unhesitatingly making decisions. They made quick decisions rather than being considered incompetent in any way. In talking about the importance of appearance and making swift decisions, two women shared:

> I have known a few males, whether Black or White, with gender issues. There are a lot of people with gender issues who just think that a woman doesn't have a right to make a decision that they must follow. When I first started, I used to deal

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with this by crying about it; now it doesn't bother me because I realize it is their ignorance. If they can't accept whatever my thoughts are, I can move ahead, without dwelling on it forever. I have to be able to think about it, research it, decide what I am going to do, and move on with it quickly. (Modern)

When I look at a problem, I look at the issues I face before I decide. Then I'll do some talking and listening to people's perspectives on that so-called apple. I look at the stem, the body, the bite that's missing, and those kinds of things before I actually react. (Religious)

Not only were these Black women middle school principals conscious of their leadership appearance, they also paid careful attention to their physical appearance. All of these school leaders made sure their physical appearance was professional and faultless at all times. They dressed in businesslike attire, and their make-up, hair, and jewelry were appropriate to the school setting. This conscious effort with regard to physical appearance carried over to their social interactions, as well. These principals also maintained a polished appearance when they participated in community activities such as working in community organizations, attending church, and even grocery shopping.

Because of certain decisions these principals had made, colleagues and staff sometimes considered these women "bitches." Not only did these women make decisions for the sake of appearance, but they often were considered "bitches" because they demanded respect as leaders and as Black women. However, these principals had become immune to being called or considered "bitches" and continued to exhibit strong leadership qualities. Two women shared:

> You learn to wear the title of "bitch" well. In fact, I used to come home crying when I first became an administrator. I could not understand; I had such a good rapport with staff when I was their peer, but now all of a sudden I had become such a "bitch." My husband kept telling me it was only because I was a female. I couldn't understand that. It was not like I was discriminating; in fact, I am very

conscious of not doing that. That's just the way it is, he kept telling me. Then I started to accept that. Now, every time I go through it, I have my "Mrs. Bitch" sign to wear. (Jazz Tap)

One thing that I will tell you in terms of things that happen to women in dealing with staff is that, unless you have established yourself as a person of authority, your staff members, male and female, will give you the absolute blues that they would not give a man. We have a "Big Daddy" mentality. We have "Big Daddy" telling us what to do. On the other hand, when you see a woman, you think, "Oh, that's just Momma." We ignore her until she becomes "Big B" [Big Bitch] when she is trying to enforce herself. (Religious)

Although the women addressed diverse issues pertaining to their particular schools, they all appeared to be strong, in control, and powerful. All of them made a conscious effort to think about the different issues they needed to address, how those issues affected their school community, and how they would present their decisions. Whenever they made difficult decisions, some of these women were considered "bitches."

The construct, for the sake of appearance, augments the theme of the strength of womanhood by demonstrating the women's power in the way they made decisions. The women were decisive in their decision making so that they would not be perceived as indecisive or passive. Their intention was to remain in control of every situation, regardless of the issue. The principals wanted the members of their school communities to perceive them as strong Black women who could take charge and make decisions.

Construct 3: Giving 110%. The Black women principals in this study were known for giving of themselves unselfishly through mothering and nurturing. They went beyond the call of duty as administrators. Their role usually was transformed from leader to mother of many children. As a result, community members perceived them as having strength and being powerful. Black feminist Collins (1991) asserted, "Within African-

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American communities, women's innovative and practical approaches to mothering under oppressive conditions often bring power and recognition" (p. 133). Furthermore, she argued,

> Black women's involvement in fostering African-American community development forms the basis for community-based power. This is the type of power many African-Americans have in mind when they describe the "strong Black women" they see around them in traditional African-American communities. (p. 132)

Collins also offered this explanation of "othermothers":

> Black women's experiences as othermothers provide a foundation for Black women's political activism. Nurturing children in Black extended family networks stimulates a more generalized ethic of caring and personal accountability among African-American women who often feel accountable to all the Black community's children. (p. 129)

The Black principals in this study gave a lot of themselves through mothering and nurturing their students. They were protective of their children and wanted them to have everything they needed to grow and develop. Consider the comments of Jazz Tap and Religious:

> My kids at the previous school where I was an assistant principal left that school and followed me to this school. I cried like a baby when they left to go to high school. At their promotional ceremony, I couldn't get up and say anything because they were taking my babies. (Jazz Tap)

> My kids don't deserve anything but the best, so it does not take much for me to say, "You are ill prepared; kids are not in class on time, you are not doing your job. If it doesn't change, you and I will have a problem." When I think about my kids, it becomes an easy thing to do because I think, "How dare you fail them, then blame them for their failure?" (Religious)

Giving 110% was a significant part of these principals' work. All of them mothered and nurtured their students in a variety of ways. For instance, Ballet took the at-risk students under her wing, and they seemed to gravitate to her in school and at

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church. Similarly, Square Dance mothered her Chaldean girls by encouraging parents to keep their daughters in school rather than arranging marriages for them. She acted as the voice for these girls when they did not have one. On the other hand, Jazz Tap showed her nurturing side by hugging students and affectionately calling them her babies. Her babies saw Jazz Tap as a mother figure, and some of them even called her "Mom."

Modern had influenced her students so profoundly that some former pupils still telephoned and visited her. Although she did not have any biological children of her own, she had been a mother figure to her students. Whereas Waltz mothered her children in public, she also nurtured them privately. For instance, when she noticed that some of her underprivileged children were not wearing socks, she would call them into her office and tell them to look under her desk and choose a new pair of socks from Waltz's Boutique. Waltz used her own money to purchase socks, hats, and gloves for her children. Religious tried to speak to all of her students daily and affectionately called them "Baby," "Sweetie," and "Honey." She believed these terms of endearment made the children feel loved.

By looking at school leadership theories and focusing on Black women in school leadership, one recognizes a sense of mothering and nurturing. These school leaders genuinely cared about their children's well being, both academically and emotionally. Ballet nurtured her students by selecting various children to assist her and ensuring that they all were included. For instance, she stated,

> We don't have kids running through the building, saying this school stinks and writing on the walls. It is an effort that you must exercise, to get all of your students feeling a part of the school and that they are not being left out. I do that by using the talents and expertise of the students in whatever way I can. I'm not going to always pick the same students to do what needs to be done. I will have

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some of them work in the office to assist with attendance to boost their egos. I will find something that children can do to keep them busy and make them feel good about themselves.

Although all of the participants in this study were African-Americans, they enjoyed mothering students from various ethnic groups. For example, Square Dance reached out to the Chaldean girls because she believed they needed her. Square Dance explained her plight:

> We have a significant number of children from other countries whom I am trying to motivate to value education. For instance, some of the Chaldean girls do not see education as a key priority because they have arranged marriages. Some of these girls just come to school because they have to. If their families haven't been Americanized and are still adhering to their own cultural practices, the girls are just biding their time until their parents find them a husband. We had a situation where a 13-year-old girl was taken out of school to get married. Although many marriages now are arranged in their own homeland, I have been able to encourage some of the Chaldean families to allow their girls to continue their education.

Religious also shared her experiences of nurturing her students. She not only wanted to "save lives, but . . . to make children whole." She explained:

> I want them academically ready to go into the world of work or a good university, but more than that I want them to be good people, I want them to be smart consumers. I do not want them to be taken advantage of. I want them to see everything out there, and know whether to be a part of it or against it, to know how to make decisions and know what they stand for.
>
> I used to complain about the kids reading below their grade level and worried how to bring them up, and I would go on and on and on. And the Lord came to me and said, "I don't expect you to make geniuses, but I do expect you to save lives." So I said, "Lord, I am so sorry, and I have to keep focused." When I know this, it gives me strength to walk in here and say to a teacher, "You're not teaching my kids, and I have a problem with that."

The construct of giving 110% supports the strength-of-womanhood theme by demonstrating strong women's ability to lead as well as to provide children with love in multiple ways. Often Black women in leadership positions are seen as mothers to their

students. However, these principals struggled to be seen as professional Black women and not the stereotypical mammy. Some of these principals believed they were helping their children by becoming othermothers while the students' own mothers were working. These Black women believed it was their responsibility as principals to be positive role models by connecting with their children.

In summary, taken together, the constructs of disposition, for the sake of appearance, and giving 110% define the theme of strength of womanhood as endurance of leadership. Despite multiple challenges as school leaders, these women had persevered. Although some of the challenges they faced were astronomical or beyond their control, they used their leadership qualities to maintain their position as school leaders and the respect of students, parents, teachers, staff, and colleagues. What this means for the work of social justice is that the principals were able to maintain their dignity and self-respect and brought those qualities to their school communities. This allowed them to be optimistic and to carry out their mission to achieve socially just and equitable schools.

Theme 2: Skin Color and Personal Appearance

All of the women in this study had experienced challenges due to their skin color or personal appearance. According to Tatum (1997), "The concept of identity is a complex one, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts" (p. 18). After asking "Who am I?" Tatum declared, "The answer depends in large part on who the world around me says I am. Who do my parents say I am? Who do my peers say I am? What message is reflected back to me in

the faces and voices of my teachers, my neighbors, store clerks?" (p. 18). Similarly,

Black women have been concerned with maintaining as well as transforming and

recreating their images of color and appearance. Long ago, Cooley pointed out that other

people are the mirror in which we see ourselves.

The Black women school leaders in this study redefined themselves through their

experiences of skin-color, class, and gender stereotypes. Through their own painful

encounters they were able to challenge these prevailing stereotypes as they worked for

social justice. These constructs of (a) the battle against color discrimination and

(b) gender and class stereotypes within and outside the group were aspects shared by

their school community. Therefore, the principals had been able to address their

encounters with these stereotypes and combat them in their school community.

Construct 1: The battle against color discrimination. Tatum (1999) appreciated

that "even mature adults sometimes need to connect with someone who looks like them

and who shares their same experiences." In the book *The Color Complex*, Russell,

Wilson, and Hall (1992) wrote,

> Intraracial color discrimination is an embarrassing and controversial subject for
> African Americans. While many prefer not to discuss it, especially in the
> company of Whites, others contend that skin color bias no longer exists–that it's
> history, water over the dam. Yet beneath a surface appearance of Black solidarity
> lies a matrix of attitudes about skin color and features in which color, not
> character establishes friendships; degree of lightness, not expertise, influences
> hiring; and complexion, not talent, dictates casting for television and film. (p. 1)

Russell et al. invited readers to "delve a little deeper, and you will find a reservoir

of guilt and anger that threatens to overflow, exposing the African-American truth–that

skin color still matters" (p. 1). These authors contended that

Being Black affects the way a person walks and talks, his or her values, culture, and history, how that person relates to others and how they relate to him or her. It is governed by one's early social experience, and history and politics, conscious input and labeling and the genetic accident that dictates external appearance. Skin color appears to affect identity, but in complex and seemingly unpredictable ways. (p. 62)

To better understand the issue of intraracial color discrimination, I sought out an expert in the field. Dr. Ronald Hall, an assistant professor in the David Walker Research Institute at Michigan State University, discussed with me the complexity of this issue. He explained that the color black is considered negative and evil and that skin color may have had different effects on the study participants. Traditionally, he said, darker skinned women have been seen as assertive and as having to walk through the fire to get where they are. Conversely, although lighter skinned women do work hard, they often are perceived as being given more opportunities.

As one appreciates the work of the six Black women middle school principals, one would also admire their attractiveness and shades of skin color. Each woman was beautiful, both physically and spiritually. However, despite their attractiveness, some of the women had to endure intraracial discrimination due to their skin color. For example, Jazz Tap emotionally shared,

I was discriminated against, too, but I never realized the extent of it or how serious it was. I never grew up thinking about how I looked, although I was called a "yellow hammer." Those kinds of experiences shaped me because the racist things that were said and done to me hurt even more because they were done not just by Whites, but also by Blacks. Knowing that we have done that to each other saddens me.

She recalled receiving her first whipping from her father because he heard her tell another girl, "Well, you are Black." Before Jazz Tap could explain that the girl had been taunting her about her skin color, her father had given her a whipping. When Jazz Tap

explained to her father what had transpired, he apologized and told her there had been times when people with lighter complexions were not always nice.

On the other hand, Waltz had negative experiences because of her darker skin tone. She remembered,

> Although the fair-skinned girls teased me, the boys were the worst. They were the ones who called me "blackie" and "ashpuppy" and stuff like that. It didn't bother me, though. What bothered me was the fact that I didn't have enough sense to call them names back; my mother had raised me too well. I could have laid some names on them, but I didn't; I just kept walking and ignored them.

She recalled the emotional pain when a boy scratched her arms so that he could see the ash appear. For a long time Waltz endured the boy's scratching without retaliating. But when they were in high school and he asked her to dance at a school party, she responded, "No, I'm not going to dance with you because I am too Black." Although these women were on opposite ends of the skin-color spectrum, they shared painful experiences to which they might not have been reconciled. These experiences seemed to be especially painful to them because they had been inflicted by other Black people.

The construct of the battle against color discrimination was significant in the lives of these principals. Some of these women had endured painful experiences because of their skin color. As a result of their self-image, they felt compelled to prove themselves to others. Further, their experiences compelled them to help students by instilling pride and self-esteem in them. These women constantly bolstered students in various ways; they complimented their appearance, praised them for academic success, and offered encouragement when they needed it.

This construct offers support to the theme of skin color and personal appearance by showing how these women's past experiences of intraracial discrimination had shaped

their leadership styles. Dealing with these painful experiences had sparked the women's inner drive to see children in special ways. Their interactions with the children enhanced the youngsters' self-esteem. Further, the children were able to connect with their principals because they shared skin-color issues.

Construct 2: Gender and class stereotypes within and outside the group. Collins (2000) expressed her concerns about middle-class Black women as managers in the book *Black Feminist Thought*. She wrote, "Members of the Black middle class, most of whom became middle class through social mobility from working-class origins, may express more ambivalence concerning their function as controllers of working-class employees, especially the working-class Blacks" (p. 64). This Black feminist added, "While some aspire to manage working-class Blacks, others aim to liberate them from racial oppression and poverty, while still others aim to distance themselves from Black working-class concerns" (p. 64).

Some of the principals shared ways they had dealt with gender and class stereotypes. For instance, the women in Square Dance's family had taught her the importance of maintaining her appearance because of the negative stereotypes that Black women are lazy and poor. Her family was adamant about being perceived as middle class, and they dressed and acted accordingly. She noted:

> I learned a lesson from my grandmother, who was a very stately lady. You never saw my grandmother during the day without her makeup and jewelry, and fully dressed. That was something that my sisters and I were taught. We didn't lounge around. My mother was the same way; she was always fully dressed. She always wore a housecoat over her street clothes, and house shoes. Her hair was always combed. As a result, we never went out in public with rollers in our hair, and we were always fully dressed. My mother had been raised like that by her mother, and she raised my sisters and me that way. The morning my mother had her heart

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attack, she had all of her jewelry and clothes laid out that she was going to wear that day. That was the way she operated.

Similarly, Waltz discussed some of the life lessons she had learned as a result of gender and class stereotypes:

> I learned a lot of life lessons from my community, as well. The women in my community taught us that we had to be ladies, number one. I am old fashioned about that, and I raised my girls like that. One thing that I was taught was that, as a lady and being Black, you had to be perfect. My parents told us that we had to be well behaved and perfect since we didn't want folks to think we were stupid because we were Black. We had to act like adults in public.

On the other hand, Jazz Tap found herself constantly battling stereotypical female roles. She stated,

> It is also very easy to talk about the social injustices that females have experienced and we still experience; it is a constant fight. As Black females, we are at the bottom of the pile, often with our own, as well as with the rest of society. So you are always conscious of that. It is very unusual in this society to find someone who sees you as an equal. I have learned from being a female administrator that I have to be the mother, the grandmother, the aunt, the sister. I cannot just be the boss.

These women endured gender and class stereotypes in both their personal and professional lives. As school leaders, they addressed these stereotypes in diverse ways. Their methods of handling these issues ranged from subtle to aggressive. For example, some of the women used a subtle approach by encouraging Black girls to excel in school and to act like ladies. Others took a more aggressive approach by providing activities and programs in which the students could participate.

Class and gender stereotypes were major issues in how these women were perceived; therefore, the principals reacted to these issues in complex ways. They chose their own means of contending with stereotypes through their work as leaders.

Eliminating such stereotypes was a constant battle. However, they understood the significance of that fight because their image as Black women also was under attack.

In summary, the experiences of the principals in this study with skin-color, gender, and class stereotypes had shaped the women's views and actions. Also, their experiences enabled them to understand some of the stereotypes that members of their school community were enduring. In their quest for social justice, they fought to eliminate these barriers of oppression. Through their interactions with staff and students, the Black school leaders could enlighten them and attempt to eliminate their misperceptions.

Theme 3: Power

The sense of power is a significant theme in Black feminist theories. Collins (1991) explained that

> Motherhood–whether blood mother, othermother, or community othermother–can be invoked by African-American women as a symbol of power. Much of Black women's status in African-American communities stems not only from actions as mothers in Black family networks but from contributions as community othermothers. (p. 132)

Collins claimed that this power is "transformative in that Black women's relationships with children and other vulnerable community members is not intended to dominate or control. Rather, its purpose is to bring people along to–in the words of the late nineteenth century Black feminists–"uplift the race" (p. 132).

hooks (1984) observed, "In this society, power is commonly equated with domination and control over people or things" (p. 83). She described how women who were active in feminist movements responded to power: "On the one hand, they stressed

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women's powerlessness, condemning male exercise of power as domination, and on the other hand they raised the banner of 'woman power,' demanding access to economic wealth" (p. 83). This feminist believed that some forms of power that have surfaced in feminist organizations have disrupted and corrupted feminist movements. That is,

> Despairing of the possibility that feminist revolution will occur, many women, once committed to working to eliminate sexist oppression, now focus their attention on gaining as much power and privilege as they can within the existing social structure. Feminist activists now know that women are likely to exercise power in the same manner as men when they assume the same positions in social and political arenas. (p. 87)

In her essay "Political Change: Two Perspectives on Power," Hartsock (1990) challenged people to consider power in a different way. She emphasized understandings of power that are creative and life affirming, definitions that equate power with the ability to act, with strength and ability, or with action that brings a sense of accomplishment. This definition of power is most appropriate to the Black women middle school principals in this study. Hartsock's comments are helpful in understanding these principals' use of power. For instance, she stated, "Significantly, these understandings of power do not require the domination of others; energy and accomplishment are understood to be satisfying in themselves" (p. 9).

The theme of power was prevalent in this study. The Black women middle school principals' use of power in their leadership was creative and life affirming, and it was equated with the ability to act, with strength and ability, or with action that brought a sense of accomplishment. From the women's experiences and ideas, the theme of power allowed for particular constructs to be established. For this reason, the constructs

(a) innovation, (b) struggle for authority to create equity, and (c) staying at the grassroots level were significant in this study.

Construct 1: Innovation. In this study, innovation typified the Black women principals' resourceful practices to create social justice. Their innovative practices of mothering as well as of being school leaders allowed them an opportunity to put forth efforts to produce equitable learning environments. According to Collins (1991), "Within African-American communities, women's innovative and practical approaches to mothering under oppressive conditions often bring power and recognition" (p. 133). These Black women middle school principals had to be innovative in creating social justice. Jazz Tap expressed,

> As a principal, I have to get resources for my children. I do know that when I can get people to buy in, I can better implement what I want to do. For instance, I am talking about all the sides that affect my children. I can get coats for my kids. I am always busy trying to get those resources, such as trying to get my children glasses. I can buy shirts and have them laundered. I can even provide some of the love, stability, and consistency and structure these children need, but I cannot provide everything they are missing. God knows, if I could, I would.

Religious's ability to negotiate was the innovative tactic she used to bring about social justice. She said,

> Sometimes I don't mind being on the front line. I consider myself a moderate, not an extremist. I am able to negotiate well, and I'm able to see different sides of a situation; in leadership I do it all the time. I've always been a negotiator. I think that stems from my father's being abusive to my mother. I saw that and found it very scary, so I knew some things could potentially result in violence. Thus, negotiating became my tactic in relationships. I always knew that I did not want to be a fighter, but I knew that I did not have to be a doormat, either. I wanted people to know where I stood through my use of words; I wanted to be seen as a mediator, like when I gave my life to Christ.

The principals' ability to use their power innovatively was a significant construct in this study. The women used their diverse resources and networks as a means of

providing socially just and equitable urban schools. Regardless of whether the principals used their mothering personalities, budgetary juggling, or authoritative leadership, their goals were the same. Each of the principals had mastered using these complex styles of leadership, depending on the situation. For instance, some of the principals used mothering techniques to gain community support, whereas at other times they used authoritative leadership to motivate their staff to make things happen in their schools. Because of the principals' successful use of innovative techniques, some of their colleagues and staff members were amazed at what they had been able to accomplish in their schools.

The innovation construct enhances the theme of power because it broadens the understanding of how these women used their power in the quest for social justice. Innovation was an important part of these women's use of power in their principalships. This construct offers insight into power and how leaders can effectively use power.

Construct 2: Struggle for authority to create equity. Through the lens of critical race theory, one can further examine how these Black women middle school principals addressed racial, ethnic, and gender inequality in education. One of the goals these women shared was to focus on developing ways to eliminate racism and subordination of minorities in education. But before discussing their efforts to eradicate racism in education, one must understand what racism entails. Marable (1992) defined racism as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms, and color" (p. 5).

Solorzano (1997) explained that at least five themes form the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of critical race theory. One of these themes is the commitment to social justice. He explained,

> Critical race theory has an overall commitment to social justice and the elimination of racism. In the critical race theorist's struggle toward social justice, the abolition of racism or racial subordination is part of the broader goal of ending other forms of subordination such as gender, class, and sexual orientation. (p. 7)

Solorzano believed that critical race theory allows the dialogue to begin about the possibility that schools can engage in eliminating racial, ethnic, and gender subordination.

Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1998) said that a critical race analysis in education would necessarily focus on "curriculum, instruction, assessment, school funding, and desegregation as exemplars of the relationship that can exist between [critical race theory] and education" (p. 18). Likewise, Lynn (1999) wrote that "a major concern of a Critical Race analysis of education would be to look analytically at the failure of the educational system in the United States to properly educate the majority of culturally and racially subordinate students" (p. 611). Critical race theory can be applied to the understanding of educational equality, as well. According to Parker (1998), "Critical Race Theory serves to illustrate how, despite the progress of civil rights laws and good intentions to eradicate racism, it is still an endemic part of life in the USA" (p. 45).

The Black women middle school principals in this study gave voice to the inequity of education. In their struggle for authority to create equity, they used their leadership power of voice to make this possible. For instance, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explained that:

The "voice" component of critical race theory provides a way to communicate the experience and realities of the oppressed, a first step on the road to justice. As we attempt to make linkages between critical race theory and education, we contend that the voice of people of color is required for a complete analysis of the educational system. (p. 58)

The Black women middle school principals had used their power in numerous ways to create equity. For instance, some of them had augmented their districts' curricula by incorporating multicultural education for students and staff. In fact, Waltz thought it was necessary to try to change some of the attitudes of teachers by hosting ethnic workshops. She believed that, as a leader, she should bombard them with such workshops to enhance awareness. Waltz stated, "[The teachers] understand that once you come inside the school building you have to leave your differences outside of the school." Although Waltz used her power to create ethnic awareness, she had had to surmount some hurdles in doing so. For example, she commented, "I treat people inside this building differently than I treat them outside. It is like you have to exist differently in here; this is your world of work. I think they understand that, but they revert to the way they were raised." Waltz also brought ethnic awareness to her students and did not allow them to describe other students by their skin color. They had to use other descriptors, rather than stating that the child was Black or White.

These principals also used their power to challenge teachers' instructional strategies. For example, Religious did not hesitate to tell a teacher, "You are ill prepared; kids are not in class on time, you are not doing your job. If it doesn't change, you and I will have a problem." In addition to enforcing a challenging curriculum, she constantly had to battle with certain teachers. Religious also talked to her staff about equity and

equal opportunity and told them "not to do anything to or for these kids that they would not do to or for their own." She shared,

> I had one teacher who told the students to memorize the presidents for their final exam. He thought he would give them a break because they had been working hard all year. I said, "Excuse me! List the presidents?" I asked him, "If your child came home and said, 'Look, Dad, I only have to know the presidents of the United States for my final exam,' what would your reaction be?" The teacher said he would want his son to be challenged. So I told him that his "easy" exam wouldn't happen anymore.

Some of the principals had negative feelings about the state's and districts' use of standardized tests as assessment tools. Ballet disagreed with the numerous student assessment tests that were mandated; she thought students were being tested too much. Hence, she repeatedly addressed the issue that they were testing too frequently, and the school district had "backed off a lot of tests." Waltz also voiced her disapproval of standardized tests. Her goal was to challenge the state's policy of grading the school according to the MEAP results. Jazz Tap, too, had concerns about the standardized tests. She explained,

> My major concern with the district is how we use the test results. Hold me accountable for moving my kids forward. Hold me accountable for one day of instruction, one day of growth. If I get them in the seventh grade and I move them that one day ahead, then I have done wonders.

In addition, these school leaders recognized the inequity in school funding and had used their power to address budgetary concerns. For example, Jazz Tap often drew on her own resources for her children. She said, "As a principal, I have to get resources for my children. I do know that when I can get people to buy in, I can better implement what I want to do." Although she provided love, stability, consistency, and structure for her children, she used outside resources to obtain coats, glasses, and meals for them

because she personally could not provide everything the children needed. Finances were a concern for Modern also. She manipulated her funds to get the training her staff needed in order to better serve the children. She pooled all of her resources to meet the needs of her staff, children, and building.

At times Square Dance also considered the needs of her students and staff and endeavored to meet those needs. She explained, "I think that, basically, whatever the staff and I thought we needed, I have just gone after and gotten it. Our biggest obstacles have been how much something is going to cost and which way we are going to go with the money." Although her school had been the last in the district to get electric typewriters, she was able to get a high-technology room for her students. She did not mind asking for assistance. For instance, when the students in choir did not have robes, she took it upon herself to have choir robes donated until the school could raise enough money to buy them.

These principals practiced equity in a variety of other ways, as well. For instance, Ballet learned at a young age to "recognize the work of people, to be humble, to be helpful and to share." She explained, "I usually can find a way to help others. If nobody else can get it done, I normally can or I know who to go to, to get it done." As an educational leader, she studied school law, realizing that a knowledge of educational law would aid in her pursuit of social justice. Because laws are constantly changing, she kept abreast of all the new legislation that affected her children. Ballet had developed student involvement programs for both White and Black students so that they could become more involved in worthwhile activities instead of harassing one another. She was able to obtain the federal funding to continue that program.

Ballet also wanted the best teachers for her children, regardless of their race or ethnicity. She clarified her view: "You have to know kids to be able to care about them. You have to love what you do. I don't want just any Black teacher who comes along. I hate to say that, but I don't. I'm looking out for the kids." Ballet had struggled to keep her school's best library clerk when the school district attempted to send another person to replace her; the principal had to "leap some hurdles and say, 'No, I am not going to accept this person.'"

Ballet had even voiced her opinion about unnecessary, expensive in-services for administrators. She thought her school district wasted a lot of money, such as paying $10,000 per participant for an in-service. She explained her view and said that $10,000 would help three children. Another of Ballet's goals was to include as many of her students in activities as possible. She made a conscious effort to find ways to address the students' interests outside as well as inside the classroom. Also, she did not always pick the same students to assist her or go on field trips.

Square Dance also practiced social justice in her school by promoting education. She understood that some of her students did not come to school with an enthusiasm for learning or lacked reinforcement at home. Thus, she worked closely with the teaching staff to engender in students a desire to learn. She had had to struggle to keep the Chaldean girls in school. In her words,

> Some of the Chaldean girls do not see education as a key priority because they have arranged marriages. Some of these girls just come to school because they have to. If their families haven't been Americanized and are still adhering to their own cultural practices, the girls are just biding their time until their parents find them a husband.

Square Dance had endeavored to help the Chaldean parents understand the significance of education and had seen improvement as a result of her persistence.

Jazz Tap also strove to achieve social justice through her leadership. She included her stakeholders–parents, staff, and students–in the decision-making process. She articulated, "Because the stakeholders play a large role in the school, we must have a shared vision that moves the children ahead. I have a vision for the school, and it does not differ from the vision that the district and the state have of my students performing to their optimum." Jazz Tap's major difficulty with the district was how they used test results. She stated,

> Hold me accountable for moving my kids forward. Hold me accountable for one day of instruction, one day of growth. If children are deprived at home of the basic necessities, they are going to come to me less ready to learn. Hence, I have to do more to get them ready. Most likely I am going to do that with fewer resources, but I will be able to move those children forward.

Modern created social justice in her school by staying focused on why she was there–for the kids. She believed, "If a child can benefit in some way from what we have done, then I feel like I have done my job." This principal was aware that the district's central office personnel were "so far removed from the schools that they did not understand all the ins and outs of running the school." She preferred that they send her what she needed so that she could work with her children.

Waltz described her active role for equity, stating that, "Now I am going through a political change in my life, where I am taking a more active role in what is going on around me. I am going to start taking a stand against the system because I'm concerned about the 'good old boy' network." She was also networking in different social and political circles. Waltz wanted to see changes occur in the educational system. She also

helped raise money for scholarships. This principal was aware of the "game" she had to play to receive funding from the federal government. Like other principals, she disapproved of standardized tests. Her goal was to challenge the state's practice of grading schools according to the MEAP results.

Religious, too, practiced social justice; her goal was to save lives and make children whole. She shared, "I want [my kids] academically ready to go into the world of work or a good university, but more than that I want them to be good people, I want them to be smart consumers. I do not want them to be taken advantage of." This principal networked with people to get additional resources for her children. One of her bosses who was well aware of her work stated, "It's all about her babies. She's always looking out for her babies."

Religious also had confronted school counselors who did not believe her children could achieve because of their ethnicity. She yearned to have a more diverse staff who would be more representative of the school's student population. This principal took social justice seriously, stating, "In terms of equal opportunity, I talk to my staff about equity and equal opportunity, and I tell them not to do anything to or for these kids that they would not do to or for their own."

The construct, struggle for authority to create equity, further defines how these principals used their power to achieve equity. Through various practices, they used their power to ensure fairness. However, they encountered hurdles along the way. Each of the women confronted these hurdles in unique ways. At times they used their power more aggressively than at other times.

Construct 3: Staying at the grassroots level. All of the women in this study enjoyed their work as principals and were committed to and cared about their students, parents, teachers, and the community. According to Marshall, Patterson, Rogers, and Steele (1996), caring is characterized by "the weight it gives to creating, maintaining and enhancing positive relations or connections" (p. 280). They gave a historical perspective on the ethic of care, which Gilligan first described as

> . . . a morality built upon the recognition of needs, relation, and response. Individuals who are guided by an ethic of care thoughtfully consider the context of each and every situation and refuse to ignore the potential impact of their decision making on others. (Marshall et al., 1996, p. 277)

Noddings (1996) defined caring as "the act of affirming and encouraging the best in others" (p. 25). He believed that the emphasis on caring should be on "living together, on creating, maintaining and enhancing positive relations–not on decision making in moments of high moral conflict" (p. 21). Lomotey (1989) found that the African-American principals in his study evidenced such caring. He wrote,

> Each principal appears to demonstrate a commitment to the education of African-American children, a compassion for and understanding of the students and of the communities in which they work, and a confidence in the ability of all African-American children to learn.

In like manner, Marshall et al. (1996) believed that

> If we also want students to learn how to care for themselves and each other, administrators and teachers must engage in genuine dialogue with them, build continuity and a sense of trust through repeated and consistent interactions, and model caring by living it. (p. 278)

Dillard (1995), too, believed that the principal's caring serves to "create a more student-oriented culture" (p. 557).

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The Black women middle school principals in this study evidenced caring through their work at the grassroots level. For instance, one of the components of these principals' caring was their academic and personal expectations for students. An example is something Jazz Tap said in one of her interviews:

> I would like to think that, if I change anything, it is people's attitudes about themselves. Many of us don't grow up knowing what our potentials are. Some of us automatically know that and others don't. Most very bright people that I have seen don't see themselves as that. I think it is easier to transform these young people to see themselves in a positive light.

Modern, too, had high academic and personal expectations for her students, and many of her colleagues and other constituents believed she had a knack for motivating those students. In fact, Modern's former students often returned to the school to share with her their success in high school and college. Similarly, Religious wanted her students to experience what the world had to offer; she wanted her students to go camping and skiing, attend NASA space camp, and visit Black colleges. She said that adults take these activities for granted, but many of her children had not been exposed to those things. Although some of the activities were expensive, she did not mind doing some less costly things. For instance,

> We talk about taking things for granted. [Normal things people do] should not be a fantasy for our kids, such as being able to go camping. Some of my children would be scared to death to go camping. I want us to go camping out back [of the school] for a weekend so that we can pitch these tents and do the campfire; we would still be close to the school, so at least they wouldn't be terrified of bears.

Another component of this construct is developing personal connections at the grassroots level. Ballet had outstanding rapport and personal connection with students' parents. She described it thus:

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I have an excellent relationship with the staff and with the parents. We had our first parent meeting Monday night, and of course you think you might have only six or seven people at the first meeting. We had a room full of people; we were moving tables, getting set up. I have an excellent relationship with the constituents of this building and within the community, and that has come about because I have been in the system for so long.

Likewise, Square Dance had developed such a close personal connection to her students' parents that they felt comfortable coming to her with their personal problems. She told me,

Just recently a mother called to tell me why her daughter wasn't in school. She wanted to bring me the hospital papers because she had concerns about them. I told the mother to talk to her doctor about it, but she didn't want to. As it turned out, she couldn't read. She wanted me to read the papers for her.

Waltz had a personal connection with her students' parents and looked forward to establishing a parent support group for regular education students. She thought parents needed an administrator who could be an advocate for their concerns. This principal believed her organization would also have a personal connection to the children because the parents could network with administrators and teachers.

This construct provides insight into how the Black women school leaders used their power at the grassroots level. Their evidence of caring through academic and personal expectations for students and developing connections at the grassroots level demonstrated how they used power in a positive manner. Each of these urban principals exemplified caring as a way of providing a positive school atmosphere. Their caring practices allowed the school community to see them use their power at the grassroots level. Furthermore, this ethic of caring was an integral part of each woman's leadership role.

All in all, the constructs of innovation, struggle for authority to create equity, and staying at the grassroots level illustrated the theme of power as the principals' ability to use their authority for the good of the school community. The Black women school leaders were able to use their power in multiple ways in order to accomplish their goals and objectives. That is, their work to create social justice entailed a constant wielding of their power to provide equity for their students.

Theme 4: The Importance of Home

Collins (1991), a Black feminist, explored the journeys toward freedom from oppression that are characteristically female. She believed that Black women's journeys differ from those of Black men. According to Collins,

> Black women's journeys, though at times embracing political and social issues, basically take personal and psychological forms and rarely reflect the freedom of movement of Black men who "hop trains," "hit the road," or in other ways physically travel in order to find the elusive sphere of freedom from racial oppression. (p. 105)

She continued,

> Given the physical limitations on Black women's mobility, the conceptualization of self that is part of Black women's self-definitions is distinctive. Self is not defined as the increased autonomy gained by separating oneself from others. Instead, self is found in the context of family as community. . . . By being accountable to others, African-American women develop more fully human, less objectified selves. (p. 105)

Similarly, Tate (1983) advised, "We must move past always focusing on the 'personal self' because there's a larger self. There's a 'self' of black people" (p. 134).

Within the theme of the importance of home, I developed three constructs. These are: (a) blood ties; (b) extended family; and (c) school, school community, and

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community school services. Each of these constructs, in relation to the Black women principals, is discussed in the following pages.

Construct 1: Blood ties. The Black women middle school principals in this study had a strong sense of commitment and dedication to their biological and school families, which was evidenced in their work. Some would see their dedication and connection as a form of mothering. For instance, Collins (2000) defined a Black woman's standpoint on mothering as follows: "The institution of Black motherhood consists of a series of constantly renegotiated relationships that African-American women experience with one another, with Black children, with the larger African-American community, and with self" (p. 176). These relationships occur in specific locations, such as the individual households that constitute Black extended family networks, as well as in Black community institutions (Martin & Martin, 1978; Sudarkasa, 1981). Collins added,

> In many African-American communities, fluid and changing boundaries often distinguish biological mothers from other women who care for children. Biological mothers, or blood mothers, are expected to care for their children. But African and African-American communities have also recognized that vesting one person with full responsibility for mothering a child may not be wise or possible. As a result, othermothers–women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities–traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood. (p. 178)

These principals' blood ties and connection to home were prevalent components of their vignettes. For instance, Ballet recollected, "We didn't have anything [material], but we had a lot. We were just always very proud as a family. We grew up in church and we grew up as a strong family." Similarly, Square Dance said, "My sisters and I didn't realize we were poor Blacks until we were grown. We had a very stable home: mother, father, two sisters, and grandparents. Family has always been the main thing for

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me, and that is a carry-over today." Jazz Tap shared, "The love in our family was evident because I don't remember there ever being just the five of us in the house. We always had some other family member residing with us–a cousin or somebody." Waltz remembered the high expectations her father had for her. She recalled, "My parents always wanted the best for us. I can remember my dad telling us that one day we would be on stage or in the White House."

Therefore, for the school leaders in this study, their blood ties were significant parts of their past, present, and future. The Black women middle school principals found comfort in their family members and their interactions with them. These experiences were significant in how they perceived their schools. Their ideas of home translated into what they wanted to see happen among their students, parents, teachers, and the rest of the school community.

Construct 2: Extended family. Collins (2000) wrote, "Even when relationships are not between kin or fictive kin, African-American community norms traditionally were such that neighbors cared for one another's children" (p. 179). Similarly, Faulkner and Jackson (1993) noted,

> A wider issue here concerns the variability of family forms within modern society. Less than a third of households in western industrial nations are traditional nuclear families comprising husbands, wives, and dependent children. This has led many writers to caution us against generalisations about the "family" which treat us as a fixed, unchanging entity. (p. 183)

Ballet remembered her extended family being a significant part of her spirituality. She told me, "I had an uncle who was a CME bishop, and he just sort of took all of us under his wing. Our entire family was Methodist. As a matter of fact, there is a Methodist church in Detroit named after my uncle. He was also a very motivational

person, like my father. Also, I had teachers whom I loved and idolized." Because Jazz

Tap lost her parents at an early age, her aunt and mother-in-law played an especially

significant part in her life. She said, "My aunt, who raised me, was influential in my life.

. . . Sometimes you see things in someone that you know you don't want to become, and

that can be influential."

Modern remembered staying with extended family members over night. This was

a way she could assist those elderly relatives. She explained, "I used to live with a great-

aunt and uncle who were part of my extended family. I ate and did everything at my

mom's house, but when it was time to go to bed, I would sleep at the house of my great-

aunt and uncle, who lived in a cabin. They were elderly and needed someone to spend

the night with them." For Waltz, a significant member of her extended family was her

next-door neighbor. She said, "My next-door neighbor was a teacher and she was an

elegant lady and taught me out-of-the-home manners. She taught me how to eat, speak,

and set the table."

On the other hand, Religious remembered community being a strong extended

family force in her life. She commented,

> I remember the sense of community during those years. It used to be so many
> kids running, playing hide and seek; it seemed that nothing bad happened to
> children at that time. Things did happen to children, of course they did, but it
> wasn't as prevalent as it is now. We were all victims of child abuse because our
> parents would whip our butts. But when it came to children, there was a real
> sense of community, a sense of pride. People would talk to you about your
> accomplishments and compliment you, and ask what your future plans were. We
> were not allowed to get into adult business; children were children, and that is
> where they stayed.
>   There were adults in my life who were very supportive, acknowledging
> what my strengths were, giving me praise and also trying to help me grow up.
> Everybody watched you—neighbors, even men. If a male neighbor saw you doing
> something inappropriate, he wouldn't say anything to you directly because you

were a young lady, nor would he tell your mother. But he would tell your father. For instance, if someone thought they saw you talking to a boy too long, or if grown men were casting eyes at you, there was an immediate reaction.

In conclusion, the extended family is a major element in the structure of Black homes. Each member of the extended family plays various roles. The Black school leaders in this study all were influenced and inspired by their extended family members, who played the roles of parents, relatives, church family, and mentors. These individuals provided a sense of home and comfort.

Construct 3: School, school community, and community school services. Lomotey (1993) identified three qualities shared by some Black principals in predominantly Black schools. These qualities were commitment to the education of all students, confidence in the ability of all students to learn, and compassion for and understanding of all students and the communities in which they live. Lomotey (1989) also claimed that principals "are responsible for all functions that take place in and around the school. . . . Principals are the main link between the school and the community" (p. 145).

Ballet had served in the same school district for most of her educational career and thus felt a strong sense of connection with the school and the school community. She said, "I think my contribution has been to help children see that they can move themselves in the right direction and as high as they want to go. I can pick up children who do not have the security and don't know their potential, and I enjoy watching them move." Jazz Tap said that she received the gift of being a parent and an even greater gift in selecting her career. She claimed, "I never intended to be an educator. I can truly say that, from the time I began my career in teaching, there hasn't been a day that I did not

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want to go to work." Jazz Tap added, "I have had opportunities for promotions, but I need the hands-on with children. I need to be able to touch, feel, hug, and protect them. My reward is right there in that building with those kids." Waltz formed her connection by getting into the community. She explained,

> As a principal, I have to know what is needed in my community because kids are coming in from that community. A leader, to me, has to know the make-up of the community and get out into the community. That is one of the reasons I continue to go to church and do my shopping in this community; even though I don't live here any more.

Therefore, the construct of school, school community, and community school services provides a global view of the importance of home. This construct encompasses the educational community and its importance to the students, parents, staff, and school leaders. The school and school community are perceived as a safe environment. This nonthreatening atmosphere and positive influence on the lives of others encouraged these principals to devote their educational careers to their school districts.

Theme 5: Pay It Forward

The women school leaders in this study had all received motivation and encouragement from their nuclear families, extended families, and communities. As a result of receiving encouragement from a large community of people, they had worked diligently to give back to others. In their school communities, they were seen as heroines. According to Barth (2001), "We educators need heroes and role models who are themselves public school educators. Why turn to Welsh of General Electric, Iacocca of Chrysler, or Powell of the military when our profession is populated with genuine folk heroines and heroes?" (p. 125). Barth added, "We believe that any experience deemed

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valuable and essential for students is valuable and essential for aspiring and practicing principals. A great leader, like a great teacher, is a great model" (p. 126).

According to the Black feminist literature, women helping other women encourages sisterhood. For instance, Collins (1990) explained, "Black women's centrality in families, churches, and other community organizations allows us to share our concrete knowledge of what it takes to be self-defined Black women with younger, less experienced sisters" (p. 211). The strength of the family and community support help them become successful, productive women in society. As a result, reciprocity is an expectation within the African-American community. Sudarkasa (1997) explained that reciprocity is the principle that compels African Americans to give back to their families and communities.

The women in this study all reciprocated for what had been given to them. These women paid it forward by mentoring others, and by contributing to the family, extended family, and the community. Each of these constructs was significant in the principals' work to pay it forward. The Black women middle school principals appreciated their success and thus felt compelled to help others as a sign of gratitude. This sense of pay it forward was constantly in motion among their family, colleagues, staff, students, and community.

Construct 1: Mentorship. According to Allen (1995), "A small body of research focuses specifically on African American women in school administration; an even smaller body attends to the role of mentors and sponsors in their careers" (p. 413). In her study of African American women in education, Allen found that "mentors and sponsors both play important roles in the success of African American women school

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administrators" (p. 420). For instance, African American women who were "fortunate enough to have had a mentor during the early stages of their career indicated that they received the kinds of encouragement and moral support that kept their levels of effort and expectations high" (p. 420).

In the same way, Osterman (1994) found that "For eight of these principals [in his study], their beliefs about effective leadership were shaped through their experience with one or more individuals: former principals, district officials, or family members–in one instance a mother, in another a husband" (p. 13). These role models were "not always perfect nor complete, but they did influence them in important ways. . . . For the most part, these [role] models were administrators who cared for kids and were able to work effectively with staff" (p. 13).

The principals in the present study mentored teachers, students and parents in various ways. They saw their responsibility and perhaps their obligation as serving others in the manner in which they themselves had been helped. For instance, Square Dance explained her determination to treat others fairly: "I grew up in a home where my sisters and I were treated equally. As a result of my parents' fair treatment of us, I always wanted to treat others the same way." Jazz Tapp expressed her passion for mentoring in her job: "First of all, I am nearing retirement. Now I have young teachers whom I am mentoring, and some of them are not ready. So I stay because I have another task to complete; there is another commitment, there is more joy there." Modern added her voice in this regard: "As an educational leader, you have to have kids see that you love and care about them, and that you are interested in whatever they do. That's what

motivated me through school and my career, so I think it's time for me to give back what was given to me."

To sum up, through the construct of mentorship, the Black women middle school principals in this study were given an opportunity to give back some of the good experiences their nuclear families, extended family, and community had given them. These positive experiences motivated them to help others in the same manner. This inspiration to help others is a significant part of the Black culture. In an effort to uplift their people, these principals were dedicated to using their success to help others. As a result, these women passed on the values and high expectations bestowed on them.

Construct 2: Family. According to *The African American Encyclopedia* (1993), "The importance of family as a social institution varies considerably. . . . In some societies, the family is more important than its individual members" (p. 555). Further, "Despite the impact of slavery on family life, certain African characteristics endured. These included the importance of kin networks, bloodlines, respect for elders, and reciprocity among family members" (p. 558).

According to Collins (1991),

> Organized, resilient, women-centered networks of bloodmothers and othermothers are key in understanding this centrality. Grandmothers, sisters, aunts, or cousins act as othermothers by taking on child-care responsibilities for one another's children. . . . Despite strong cultural norms encouraging women to become biological mothers, women who choose not to do so often receive recognition and status from othermother relationships that they establish with Black children. (p. 120)

This notion of paying it forward is instilled in these women through their positive experiences.

Ballet shared her experiences and practices with regard to family by saying,

I think the most valuable lesson that I learned growing up was to recognize the work of people, to be humble, to be helpful, and to share. That is me and who I am. The work of people stands out the most in my mind, all people, regardless of situations and circumstances. I usually can find a way to help others. If nobody else can get it done, I normally can or I know who to go to, to get it done.

Jazz also felt this sense of family commitment, especially after her parents died and her aunt raised her and her siblings. She related it this way:

Although my aunt raised us after my parents died, I thought I had to raise my siblings. I remember thinking I would quit school and care for my brothers and sisters, and my aunt said I couldn't do that. She explained that that would not be what my parents would have wanted.

A significant part of the construct of family was the principals' giving back to their own relatives. They had a strong sense of commitment to the family and thought it was their responsibility to help their family members in a variety of ways. The principals appreciated how their families had assisted them in diverse ways and thought that, because they had been successful, they must now look back over their shoulders and continue to help their family and others.

Construct 3: Community. According to *A History of the African American People* (1995),

African Americans developed a complex and creative set of responses to hardships. They strengthened their connections with family, friends and the African American community. . . . Black women cared for each other's children, offered emotional support, and creatively manipulated their family resources. (p. 136)

In this regard, Ballet commented,

I like to see people better themselves; I think that is what I feel good about, that I am able to do that. I don't like it when people don't treat children right. I don't like it when parents don't respect teachers; I can deal with it, but I can also beat the parents down, too, in a professional way, of course.

On the other hand, Modern reflected on her impact on the school community:

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I still have kids [who keep in contact with me] and whose mothers still call me. A young lady by the name of Tiffany continues to keep in touch with me. I met her when I first came to the district. As an educational leader, you have to have kids see that you love and care about them, and that you are interested in whatever they do. That's what motivated me through school and my career, so I think it's time for me to give back what was given to me.

From a different perspective, Religious expressed her concern about the school community:

I am so tired of hearing people blame the children for their lack of success when we, as adults, are in total control of the situation. Kids react to their circumstances; they react to the way they are treated. I know that the kid teachers are talking about is the one from a single-parent home, the kid whose father is not in his life. I was the kid teachers were talking about, and I was always offended by that.

In short, through the construct of community, these women had an opportunity to help others on a grander scale. Each of these principals worked with district, regional, and national organizations for the betterment of society. They believed that they could help others by acting as their voice and positively influencing the community. Their efforts ranged from working in the church to participating in national educational organizations.

In conclusion, the constructs of mentorship, family, and community defined the theme of pay it forward as a means of reciprocity. Despite their success, the Black women middle school principals remembered the influential people, organizations, and institutions that had supported them. These experiences encouraged them to pay the good deeds they had received forward to others. Because people had provided them with everything from love and encouragement to monetary gifts, the principals felt obligated to give to others.

Summary of Thematic Analysis

The themes that emerged from the study of these six Black women middle school principals' leading for social justice were (a) strength of womanhood, (b) skin color and personal appearance, (c) power, (d) the importance of home, and (e) pay it forward. The women defined social justice in multiple ways, including treating all people right; being entitled to the same things as anyone else; everyone working together for fair decisions; equitability of organizations with regard to gender, race, and socioeconomic status; elimination of race and socioeconomic barriers for children; and equity of opportunities for all people.

All six women in this study had experienced triumphs as well as tribulations in their effort to create social justice. Their personal and professional experiences varied as they created equitable learning environments. The women considered these challenges to be obstacles, not barriers. They thought they could overcome those obstacles and were not discouraged but encouraged to persist in their quest for social justice. Their motivation stemmed from their own experiences and encouragement from family and friends.

These principals' dedication to create equity in their communities had been an ongoing feat, and they had used various mechanisms to serve those communities. Despite their dedication, they had endured personal and professional trials such as family, marital, and health challenges as they struggled to achieve social justice. At other times they encountered professional roadblocks with school superintendents, students, parents, and staff who opposed their decisions. Even so, these women principals continued to strive for justice.

So What Does It Mean to Lead for Social Justice?
The Wisdom-of-Practice Model

After taking my private dance lessons with the six Black women middle school principals, I find myself asking, What does leading for social justice look like? As a dancer-in-training, I have had my eyes opened to what social justice looks like. In this section, I will answer my subquestions by using the four components of social justice: (a) the dancers, (b) the dance floor, (c) choreography, and (d) the audience.

The first research subquestion is answered through the following component. Research subquestion 1 is: How do these Black women middle school principals mediate the professional and personal tensions to create socially just schools?

The Dancers (The Six Black Women Middle School Principals)

As I explain the dancers component, I will be answering the question, How do these Black women middle school principals mediate the professional and personal tensions to create socially just schools? The first major component of social justice in this study is the dancers–the Black women middle school principals. To understand what leading for social justice looks like, we must first recognize the dancers involved. Ballet, Square Dance, Jazz Tap, Modern, Waltz, and Religious were all Black women middle school principals whose individual costumes made them unique. Their costumes were constructed of their life histories, professional preparation and experiences, and support from family and extended family members.

To fully understand how these women mediated the professional and personal tensions to create socially just schools, one must refer to the Wisdom-of-Practice model. Each of the women embodied the themes of strength of womanhood, skin color and

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personal appearance, power, the importance of home, and pay it forward. They played out these themes and their commitment in order to create socially just schools. Despite their different professional and personal experiences, they all reflected these themes. For instance, strength of womanhood incorporated their disposition, for the sake of appearance, and giving 110%. They were able to use their strength of resilience and demand for respect, which allowed them to create equity in their schools. These women's role often was transformed from school leader to nurturer and mother of the school children. However, these women constantly were maneuvering around the issue of skin color and personal appearance.

Each of these women had had to battle color, gender, and class stereotypes throughout her life. Many African Americans are perceived according to their skin color and physical appearance. As leaders and as women, these principal dealt with these issues as well as gender and class stereotypes both within and outside of their own racial group.

In addition, the women used their power to be innovative, struggling for authority to create equity, and caring for their students, parents, and community by staying at the grassroots level. These principals were constantly using their power in multiple ways in order to create socially just schools. They used their power in the professional arena in an effort to create equity. Regardless of the obstacles they faced, the women were constantly dancing and moving for social justice. They were able to keep moving because they were aware of their power and how to use it.

The dancers also were aware of the importance of home. The women's personal experiences of home had contributed to their regard for the importance of home. Their

experiences and relationships with nuclear family and extended family members helped solidify the significance of home in their lives. As a result, they remained committed to their families. Also, the women viewed their schools, school community, and community school services as a type of home. The women created an atmosphere of home by mothering, treating the school community as their family, and having a vested interest in the well being of their children.

Moreover, the principals felt a sense of obligation to their students, teachers, staff members, and parents to pay it forward. They believed that it was important to give back to others because of the good things that had been done for them. Through various personal and professional experiences, people had been there to motivate them and encourage them to be successful. Therefore, the women felt compelled to mentor others and encourage them to grow and develop. They also had a strong connection to their families and were always there to help their blood relatives and extended family. In addition, these women served their own communities as well as neighboring communities. In conclusion, these women were complex, and each of these aspects helped create their disposition to work for social justice.

Research subquestions 2 and 3 are answered through the following components. These questions are: How does each Black woman middle school principal define leadership for social justice? How has each woman practiced social justice in her urban middle school setting? What implications do the study findings have for the preparation of K-12 school leaders? What are the implications of this study for future research on urban K-12 institutions?

The Dance Floor (The Urban Middle School)

The women used the urban middle school as the place in which they created socially just and equitable school environments. They needed a setting in which to perform. For these women the best place was at the middle school level. The middle school often is referred to as the step-child. However, to these women, the middle school was the most important place they could be. Their work at the middle school level was significant because they were equal to the challenge and were committed to the overall development of adolescents.

As a result of their commitment, they tended to mother the children during this stage of their lives. Many parents perceive their middle school children as being self-sufficient, so they begin to distance themselves from the school setting. However, the children still need and want their parents to be visible in the school setting. Therefore, the principals assumed the complex role of leader and mother.

These women practiced social justice in their urban middle school settings in multiple ways as they brought the five themes of the Wisdom-of-Practice model to the dance floor. Each of the themes was significant to their middle school setting and could not be separated from the others. For instance, the strength of womanhood enabled these women to lead in the middle school setting. Their disposition and decision making were geared toward the middle school environment. Also, the adolescent children needed the nurturing and mothering these women provided through giving 110%. Similarly, the women conveyed empathy and caring for the middle school children because of their own experiences with racism due to color and appearance. As a result, these women continued to challenge these barriers and stereotypes in the middle school.

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The women also used their power in innovative ways to achieve equity by staying at the grassroots level. These women faced a daily challenge of getting the resources and materials their children needed. Regardless of the difficulties they faced, they were committed to the middle school. Although each of the women had held various leadership and teaching positions at the elementary and high school levels, they believed the middle school was where they were needed.

Each of the women understood the importance of home and felt committed to their nuclear family, extended family, and school community. They had made the middle school their home. As a result, they treated the middle school community as their family members. They established close bonds with the students, teachers, staff, and parents within their urban middle schools. In addition, the women recognized that it was their responsibility to give back to others; therefore, they paid it forward. The sense of paying it forward was exemplified in their work at the middle school level. They mentored the school community and continuously motivated and encouraged the children as well as the adults.

The Choreography (How the Work for Social Justice Is Carried Out at the Middle School)

The middle school principals worked to create socially just and equitable schools through their choreography. Each of the women used her leadership to create an equitable school setting. As all five themes comprising the Wisdom-of-Practice model were constantly in motion, at the core was the principals' leadership for social justice. Their actions played out the equity theory of distributive, procedural, and interactive justice. The women constantly challenged the system to ensure that they received

distributive justice. As school leaders of urban schools, they believed that their children should be treated equally and should receive the same resources and benefits as those in more affluent districts. The women attacked this problem differently. Sometimes they asked their district for the resources, whereas at other times they had to go to the community to get the needed resources. Depending on the situation, the women decided which avenue to take as they attempted to create equity for their schools. All of the women faced a major struggle to obtain the resources they needed.

In addition, the principals found themselves challenged to receive procedural justice. They questioned the fairness of procedures for decision making and resource allocation. The women detected inconsistencies in procedures in their own and other school districts. One of their major concerns was that these inconsistencies made it difficult for their children to get what they needed.

Achieving interactional justice also was a challenge for these women. They were aware of the multiple interactions they had to engage in, to get the equitable outcomes they desired. The women had to interact with the superintendent, school board members, the school community, and the larger community to obtain the necessary resources. Some of the women strategically planned to serve on certain committees in order to interact with key players, just for their children's sake. In summary, the women strategically choreographed their dance moves in order to lead for social justice. Their choreography centered on their leadership for social justice.

<u>The Audience (The Most Important Component–the Children)</u>

The Black women middle school principals danced for social justice for only one reason–to serve the learners in the urban middle schools. These women led for social justice for the children, using their personal and professional experiences to create equity for them. Despite many barriers, they were not discouraged and continued to choreograph their dances in order to create socially just and equitable learning environments. The children were most important to them, and they strove to create equity through their leadership. Their actions were for the children's sake. They used their dispositions to mother and nurture their children. In addition, they wanted to eliminate the skin-color, appearance, gender, and class stereotypes they had experienced. By wielding their power, they were able to work for their children. In addition, they recognized the importance of home, so they created a homelike atmosphere for their children. In so doing, they gave back to the children and the community through their work.

<u>Implications</u>

As a result of the review of literature, the analysis of data, my own personal and professional experiences, and those of the Black women middle school principals, important issues emerged that are of concern to and have implications for Black women middle school principals and urban K-12 institutions. These implications are as follows:

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Preparation of School Leaders

1. Colleges and universities must focus on training the entire school leader by understanding the context of the personal and professional experiences they bring with them.

2. Diversity and multicultural education courses should be provided to sensitize school leaders to the race, class, and gender issues that some leaders face.

3. Courses need to be established to teach the importance of the family to future school leaders.

Further Research on Urban K-12 Institutions

1. Further research needs to be conducted on female and male middle school leaders.

2. More research needs to be conducted on social justice in K-12 institutions.

3. More research needs to be conducted on Black leaders in K-12 institutions.

4. Further research should be conducted on whether the wisdom-of-practice model is indicative of dimensions required for effective leadership at the middle school level.

5. Additional research should be carried out on whether the wisdom-of-practice model is interdependent with conditions or context.

6. Further research should be undertaken to determine the properties of the wisdom-of-practice model and goodness of fit across regions and across educational levels.

7. It appears that the four principals in this study were all *effective* and *affective* leaders. Further research should be conducted on how the wisdom-of-practice model would fit for leaders who are "lower" on these two dimensions.

Encore: Reflections

In completing this dissertation journey, I have learned much about myself as a researcher and writer, as well as about the practice of school leadership. Through my qualitative research, I formed a bond with the six Black women middle school principals who participated in the study. My interactions and bond with these women motivated me to write vignettes that captured their personal and professional experiences and their work for social justice. I had an obligation as a researcher and writer to portray these women and their experiences accurately.

As a writer I learned that my study adds to the literature by providing a look at the complexity of the Black woman middle school principal. Each intricate element of the Black woman is significant and must be studied; her race, class, gender, family, school community, and Black community are significant in her quest to promote equity. "Without authentic voices of people of color [such as teachers, parents, administrators, students, and community members] it is doubtful that we can say we know anything useful about education in their communities" (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 58).

I have also learned that, for the Black women middle school principals in my study, the practice of school leadership was multifaceted. To understand their leadership for social justice, I had to understand the significance of their personal and professional experiences as Black women. They brought these experiences with them as they created

socially just and equitable schools. Thus, to understand these women, one must

understand the significance of race, gender, and class in their role as school leaders.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

APPROVAL LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON
RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS, LETTERS
OF INTRODUCTION, AND CONSENT LETTERS

MICHIGAN STATE
U N I V E R S I T Y

May 18, 2000

TO: Maenette K. BENHAM
        425 Erickson Hall

RE: **IRB# 00-261** CATEGORY:2-F, 2-G

        APPROVAL DATE: May 18, 2000

TITLE: EXPLORING THE WORK OF BLACK WOMEN MIDDLE SCHOOL

The University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects' (UCRIHS) review of this project is complete and I am pleased to advise that the rights and welfare of the human subjects appear to be adequately protected and methods to obtain informed consent are appropriate. Therefore, the **UCRIHS approved this project.**

RENEWALS: UCRIHS approval is valid for one calendar year, beginning with the approval date shown above. Projects continuing beyond one year must be renewed with the green renewal form. A maximum of four such expedited renewals possible. Investigators wishing to continue a project beyond that time need to submit it again for a complete review.

REVISIONS: UCRIHS must review any changes in procedures involving human subjects, prior to initiation of the change. If this is done at the time of renewal, please use the green renewal form. To revise an approved protocol at any other time during the year, send your written request to the UCRIHS Chair, requesting revised approval and referencing the project's IRB# and title. Include in your request a description of the change and any revised instruments, consent forms or advertisements that are applicable.

PROBLEMS/CHANGES: Should either of the following arise during the course of the work, notify UCRIHS promptly: 1) problems (unexpected side effects, complaints, etc.) involving human subjects or 2) changes in the research environment or new information indicating greater risk to the human subjects than existed when the protocol was previously reviewed and approved.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact us at 517 355-2180 or via email: UCRIHS@pilot.msu.edu. Please note that all UCRIHS forms are located on the web: http://www.msu.edu/unit/vprgs/UCRIHS/

Sincerely,

David E. Wright, Ph.D.

DEW: bd

cc: Sabrina Isadora Smith-Campbell

Letter of Introduction (Principal)

Date

Dear

Thank you for agreeing to hear more about my current research interest. My study examines how race/ethnicity, gender, and class affect the practice of Black women middle school leaders to create socially just and equitable urban middle school settings and to understand the challenges that confront these women due to their differences. I will ask you to reflect on your formal (e.g., institutional schooling) and informal (e.g., family, culture and ethnicity, socioeconomic background) educational experiences in an effort to discover how life passages have influenced your work for social justice. You have been selected to participate in this study because you meet the requirements of being an African-American woman middle school leader working to create social justice for your children and community.

The information provided through this process will be used as part of the completion of my Ph.D. in educational administration at Michigan State University. Your cooperation through interviews, observations, life map, and sharing of materials will be confidential; no individual or school system will be identified with your responses.

I am including a consent form that briefly summarizes the intention of this research project, the voluntary participant status, the intention to retain your anonymity and confidentiality of all data, and your time commitment to this project. Please sign and return the form to me in the attached self-addressed envelope.

Educationally yours,

Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell

Date

Dear

You are invited to participate in the research project "Exploring the Work of Black women Middle School Principals" conducted by Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell, Ph.D. candidate, Educational Administration Department, College of Education, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.

You received and read the letter from Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell, which briefly describes the purpose and procedures of the research. The letter includes her name, address, and methods of communication in case you have any questions or concerns about the study. The study examines how race/ethnicity, gender, and class affect the practice of Black women middle school leaders to create socially just and equitable urban middle school settings and to understand the challenges that confront these women due to their differences.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed at least three times, for one to two hours each time, over a brief period of time. You will be asked to reflect on both your formal and informal educational experiences, to think critically about how you think about educational leadership, and how you have addressed pressing issues of racism, gender, class, segregation, and oppression in your practice as an educational leader in the past and the current context. The interviews will be tape-recorded and you have the right not to answer any particular questions and to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. All written or artifactual items that you share will be returned to you. One group dialogue of at least five of your staff members on the subject of leadership and social justice will be conducted and tape-recorded.

All data and tape recordings will be kept confidential, and your identity will not be disclosed in the final report. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowed by law. However, due to the small number of African-American women in educational leadership positions today, your identity might be identifiable, and therefore, only limited confidentiality can be guaranteed. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the information recorded during this group dialogue will be kept in a locked file. You may choose to withdraw and not to participate at any time without penalty. For more information about the research process, feel free to contact Professor Benham or Dr. David Wright at the addresses below:

Prof. Maenette Benham	Dr. David Wright
425 Erickson Hall	246 Administration Bldg.
Department of Educational Administration	Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824	East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 355-6613	Phone (517) 355-2180
Fax: (517) 353-6383	Tax: (517) 353-2976

E-mail: mbenham@msu.edu   E-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu

I have read the consent form and volunteer to participate in this study.

_____

_____
Date

Letter of Introduction (Group Dialogue)

Date

Dear Staff Member,

I am Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell, a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State University in K-12 Educational Administration. I am writing because your principal has agreed to participate in a study I am conducting on "Exploring the Work of Black Women Middle School Principals." My study examines how race/ethnicity, gender, and class affect the practice of Black women middle school leaders to create socially just and equitable urban middle school settings and to understand the challenges that confront these women due to their differences. An important part of this study is contingent on your viewpoints and participation. I would like to invite you and a few other staff members to participated in a focused group interview to talk about the perceptions you have about your principal in her efforts to create an environment of social justice.

The information provided through this process will be recorded and used as part of the completion of my Ph.D. in educational administration at Michigan State University. Our cooperation through the focus group participation and sharing of information will be confidential.

I plan to facilitate the focus group interview in a one-hour-long session. The focus group will be scheduled after school some time during the next month and will be held at your school at a time convenient to you and fellow staff members. I will contact you in the next two weeks to discuss this further and answer any questions you may have. If you wish to speak to me before that time, please do so. I will be happy to respond to any questions. I look forward to talking with you soon.

I am including a consent form that briefly summarizes the intention of this research project, the voluntary participant status, the intention to retain your anonymity and confidentiality of all data, and your time commitment to this project. Please sign and return the form to me at our meeting.

Educationally yours,

Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell

Letter of Consent (Group Dialogue)

Date

Dear Staff Member:

You are invited to participate in the group dialogue that is part of the study on "Exploring the Work of Black women Middle School Principals." You received and read the letter from Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell, which briefly described the purpose and procedure of the research. The letter included her name, address, and methods of communication in case you have any questions or concerns about the study. The study examines the professional/personal lives of Black women middle school leaders at the intersection of institutional and political, cultural and language, economic and social/historical venues as they work to actualize socially just and equitable learning environments.

If you agree to participate in this study, a group dialogue will be conducted, which will last about an hour, and will consist of about four other staff members in your school and Sabrina I. Smith-Campbell.

All information will be held in the strictest confidence, and your identity will not be disclosed in any form during the preparations or completion of the study. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowed by law. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and the information recorded during this group dialogue will be kept in a locked file. The interviews will be tape-recorded and you have the right not to answer any particular questions and to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time. You may withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty. For more information about the research process, feel free to contact Professor Benham or Dr. David Wright at the addresses below:

Prof. Maenette Benham   Dr. David Wright
425 Erickson Hall   246 Administration Bldg.
Department of Educational Administration   Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824   East Lansing, MI 48824
Phone: (517) 355-6613   Phone (517) 355-2180
Fax: (517) 353-6383   Tax: (517) 353-2976
E-mail: mbenham@msu.edu   E-mail: ucrihs@msu.edu

I have read the consent form and volunteer to participate in this study.

_____

Signature   Date

_____

Print name

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APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS AND GROUP DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Three one- to two-hour interviews were conducted with each participant. The purpose of the interviews was to establish the participants' life history, experience, and learnings as educators and leaders, and the meaning of the connections between that work and life.

I used the interview protocols developed by Benham (1995), Colflesh (1995), Phendla (1999), and Sanders-Lawson (1999) to interview African American women. A variety of probes were used to expand each participant's responses to the questions in the interview protocol: probing to better understand what the participant was saying; probing for definitions and clarification of the meaning of her response; probing to elicit concrete examples and stories that illuminated her original responses; probing to explore the impact of previous lived experiences on what she was saying about educational leadership, especially her own leadership, which enabled her to fight oppression and segregation to create socially just environments; probing to understand how she defined social justice; probing to extract how the characteristics most commonly associated with women leaders appear in their talk about educational leadership; and probing to make linkages between and among the interviews.

Participants were asked to provide and explain three artifacts that depicted their own leadership. Last, they responded to six open-ended statements using metaphorical comparisons to their lives, transformative leadership practice, how they had learned to create strategies and established a network of support, fight oppression, repression, segregation and isolation, and their research experience.

First Interview: Focused Life History

Purpose of the Interview: To put each participant's experience in context by asking her to tell as much as possible about herself and her life up until the present.

Role: To pose open-ended questions and to issue invitations for each participant to share her life experiences and educational experiences; to follow up, seek clarification, ask for concrete details, and request stories to illuminate her life events and lessons; to move the interview forward by building on what the participant has begun to share.

Introduction for the Participant: Because I am interested in the biographies of African American women educational leaders creating social justice for their children and youth, we will begin with your life story. During the conversation, we will build on the biographical questionnaire and the critical life moments identified by the initial lifeline sketch that you completed. You will also be asked to expand on your life and educational experiences before becoming a leader. The focus of my study is on the relationship of women's lived experiences and tensions created by the interlocking of race, gender, ethnicity, language, and class; and their thinking and practice as educational leaders which create social justice in their organization. So your life experiences will serve as a starting point for our continued exploration during the rest of the interviews.

Questions

Biographical Background

1. What is your full name?

2. Date of birth and place of birth.

3. Type of community in which you spent most of your growing-up years (urban, rural, or suburban).

4. Place of parents' birth. Highest level of education attained by parents.

5. Father's occupation; mother's occupation.

6. Did you attend public, private, or religious schools? Provide a brief description of your formal school experiences.

7. Information about educational attainment (or attach resume/vita).

8. Do you have any special talents outside the area of education? (e.g., musical, arts, crafts, etc.)

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9.   Spiritual orientation/religious preference (past and current).

10.   Marital partner/status. Children (male, female, adopted or biological, ages).

Cultural Background

1.   Tell me about your immediate and your extended family.

2.   How did you experience (learn) cultural/societal values and beliefs in your family? In your extended family? In your community?

3.   What formal cultural education were you introduced to (i.e., language classes) in school?

4.   What informal cultural education were you introduced to?

5.   What are the key cultural norms, values, or beliefs (i.e., duty, family roles) that you perceive to be important to you as a person, as a professional, and as an educational leader?

6.   What are some of the ways that you incorporate these key cultural norms, values, and beliefs into your life today?

7.   How have you been affected by social forces (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, class) and political forces?

8.   How did some of the political movements influence your growing-up years (Brown v. Board of Education, Civil Rights Movement, etc.)?

Formal School Experience

1.   Tell me about your institutional experiences, i.e., elementary, middle/junior high school, secondary school, and postsecondary school years. (Talk about ethnicity, gender, class, peer groups, talents/skills, extracurricular programs, political struggles, etc.).

2.   Who were the adults who had the most impact on your education? How did they affect you?

3.   What valuable lessons did you learn about who you were, about your relationship to learning, about your relationship to the educational profession?

4.   Were there any aspects of your educational experiences that might have conflicted with the cultural norms you ere growing up with?

5.   How did those conflicts work out, and what impact do you think they might have had on how you frame your educational practices today?

Growing Up and Coming of Age

1.   How did you feel about your self-identity at different stages of your life (i.e., preteen, teenager, young adult, etc.)?

2.   What political movements (Brown v. Board of Education, Civil Rights Movement, school boycotts, teachers' union movements, etc.) affected your life? How so? What personal meaning did it hold for you?

3.   What were your perceptions of the roles of African-American men and women? How did these rituals affect you? What myths and stereotypes affected you? What myths and stereotypes did you hold? How are you resolving these conflicts, if any at all? Discuss these.

Professional Practice

1.   What factors played a part in your entering the education profession?

2.   What did you learn about yourself during your first years in the profession?

3.   How is it that you became an educational leader? Did you have a mentor?

4.   How is it that you came to your current position?

5.   Were there any stories of individuals who moved you toward seeking a leadership role? What were they, and how did they affect you?

6.   How do you define leadership? Do you see yourself as a transformative leader? What role does the school governing body play in your school? Tell me how your decisions are made. Tell me more about who makes which decisions and why.

7.   What role do the other stakeholders play in your school? How successfully, or not, were you able to develop partnerships with stakeholders (local businesses, community organizations, political organizations, etc.)? How did you do that?

8.   What do you understand by the term "social justice"? What does the concept mean to you?

9.   What is involved in accomplishing social justice, and how do you go about mobilizing others to action?

10. How has the political landscape shaped your family background/growing up? How has it affected your formal education?

11. Share with me your reflections on these issues: traditional norms and beliefs about women.

12. How did they affect you personally (e.g., marriage, relations with your own children)?

13. How did they affect you professionally (e.g., professional development; interrelations with colleagues, teachers, parents, students; career growth/promotions; salary scare; benefit structures; maternity leaves; etc.)? What role do they play in your professional practices as a leader?

14. How have your race, gender, class, and ethnicity influenced your educational experiences (formal and informal) and professional practices?

15. What is your understanding of the term "power"? Tell me about the meaning you derive from your understanding of the term. Who has it, who does not, how is power attained, maintained?

16. How has power or the lack thereof played out in your experiences and professional practices?

Lifeline Probes

1. Continue to discuss those moments not touched on by the above themes.

2. Are there any moments that impeded your progress in your efforts toward creating a socially just and equitable school environment? What were they, and how did they become obstacles? What did you do? What lessons have you learned that you can clearly say have affected how you think and how you behave as an educational leader? Are there specific lessons learned as a result of your being a woman? A Black woman?

3. What does learning mean to you? What makes it important?

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Second Interview: Life History Continued

Purpose of the Interview: To concentrate on the concrete details of each participant's experience as an educational leader, with special emphasis on a selected group of gender-related, culture-related, and social justice characteristics from the literature.

My Role: Similar to my role in the first interview: to encourage each participant to relate incidents, tell stories, and provide concrete details of her experience as an educational leader and to further explore what the participant is saying. To ask the participant to reconstruct those situations and experiences. To peel away the layers of oppression, discrimination, deeper values, beliefs, and approaches to leadership of justice.

Introduction of Participant: I am interested in exploring your experiences as an educational leader who is creating an environment of social justice, and learning more about you as an African American woman educational leader.

Questions

1. Talk more about any of the stories/situations that you mentioned in Interview 1 that you feel are important.

2. Are there any other stories about your growing up and coming of age that you feel are important to understanding who you are, particularly as a leader?

3. What personal and professional experiences helped shape you in becoming a transformative leader?

4. How did you learn to be an educational leader?

5. Can you give me an example of an experience e(i.e., in professional development) that has had a visible effect on how you see and carry out your role as an educational leader?

6. What made that experience stand out above the rest?

7. What opportunities for learning to lead, in your life and work, enhanced your learning as an educational leader?

8. What opportunities for learning to lead hindered your learning as an educational leader?

9. Tell me more about your relationship with your teachers, with your parent body, and with your governing structure.

10.   I want to hear more about your role in the community at large, your failures and successes, your frustrations and joys in your endeavor to create a socially just and equitable environment.

Current Work Context

1.   Ask the leader to provide contextual information, demographic information, ethnic constructs, and a description of the political and financial environments of her current work place. How are resources distributed, and what criteria are used?

2.   Ask the leader to reflect critically in issues of concern that she is currently addressing and how she makes sense of these problems. Ask the leader how these issues are different than in the past and how these issues may or may not be addressed by current policies and activities.

3.   Encourage the leader to explore, discuss, and analyze her unique role in advancing education and to define her role.

4.   From your understanding of the term "social justice," how have you created a socially just organization? Give examples to demonstrate this.

5.   What are some of the factors that have enhanced this process? Talk more about these factors.

6.   What are some of the factors that have hindered/impeded the process? Elaborate more on these factors.

7.   Please describe a current initiative that involves you creating a socially just and equitable environment (for your school and/or your community).

Last Interview: Reflection on the Meaning

Purpose of the Interview: To encourage each participant to reflect on the meaning of her experience as an educational leader creating social justice and equitable schools and community for children and youths.

My Role: To continue to pose open-ended questions and to issue invitations for each participant to make connections between her work and her life. To explore meaning, details, and clarification; encourage further explanation, interpretation, and sense making; and to follow up when additional information is needed. To keep the participant focused on making meaning from her experience and learning. To accept silence.

Introduction for Participant: During this last formal interview, we will explore the meaning that you have made of your work as an educational leader, learning to create strategies and establishing a network of support, and fighting oppression, repression, segregation, isolation, and injustices through silence and passive resistance while working to uplift and support your school and community. We will continue to link characteristics related to worm leaders and life experiences with your current work, with emphasis on how it makes sense for you. In addition, we will use some of the time to "tie up loose ends" from the previous interviews.

Questions

Schooling and Education

1. What do you believe the purposes of schooling and of education are?

2. How did achieving a higher education affect your leadership development? How has achieving a higher education affected you as a Black person, as a woman, and as a Black woman?

3. How had achieving a higher education affected your ethnic identity and traditional norms? Talk more about these in relation to your personal and professional experiences.

Educational Leadership

1. How did you learn to be an educational leader?

2. What does educational leadership mean to you?

3. What factors in your life (personal and professional) have enhanced and hindered your work as an educational leader?

4. How do you see yourself as a leader? How do you think your professional colleagues see you? How would you like to be seen?

5. What are some of the factors that have hindered/impeded the process of making effective linkages with your school, parents, and the community at large? Elaborate more on these factors.

6. What is your understanding of democratic school governance? Whose voice is heard and why? Who makes decisions and how?

7. How would you define social justice?

8. Give examples of how you have dealt with issues of social justice.

9. What does a socially just organization look like? In your understanding, what are the elements/components of a socially just system?

10. What skills and strategies have you found to be most effective in your efforts to create social justice?

11. Define the culture of your school community. What implications does this have on how you view leadership?

12. What lessons have you learned about educational leadership that are worthwhile to share?

Reflections

1. Given what you have said about your life and your work, how have you come to understand leadership?

2. Given what you have said about your life and your work, how have you come to understand transformative leadership?

3. Comment on the characteristics of leadership most commonly associated with women in general and, more specifically, with Black African women and their cultural values.

4. What are the challenges that you and African American women educational leaders face? Talk a bit about these demands and satisfactions. What do you do to deal with these challenges?

5. What unique contribution to the education of children and youths do you think you have made? Would like to make?

6.   As you look back, what have you liked the most about your work and what have you liked the least? What is an area of your leadership practice that is strong, and what is not strong?

7.   As you look forward, how might you want to train the next generation of Black women leaders?

8.   What would you share with an aspiring woman interested in educational leadership? Would these be different for a Black woman? How?

Open-Ended Statements for Final Reflections

Purpose of Final Reflections: To use metaphors to describe the leaders' life experiences, leadership practice, and the meaning that they have made of their life and work, as well as their experience in this study.

My Role: To provide open-ended statements so which the participants can respond.

Introduction for Participant: Using metaphors, please respond to the following open-ended statements. We will explore these responses during our final meeting or in a follow-up call after the interview transcripts are reviewed.

Invitations: Using Metaphorical Comparisons to My Life...

- As I look back, my life has been. . . .

- My practice as a transformative educational leader has been. . . .

- Making sense of my life and work as an African American woman has been. . . .

- My experience as a participant in this study has been. . . .

- Additional comments/reactions. . . .

Group Dialogue: Reflections of the School Leader

Purpose of the Interview: To encourage participants to define leadership and do reflections about their school leader.

My Role: To continue to pose open-ended questions and to issue invitations for each participant to make connections between her reflections of the school leader and her work of social justice. To explore details and clarifications; encourage further explanation, interpretation, and sense making; and to follow up when additional information is needed.

Introduction for Participant: During this group dialogue, we will explore the perceptions that you have formed of the work of your school leader. We will continue to link characteristics related to women leaders and characteristics of socially just schools and environments.

Questions

Leadership

1.   How do you define leadership? In what ways do you see your school principal as a transformative leader?

2.   In what ways has your school leader displayed passion for equity and social justice (within the school setting and community at large)? Illustrate with examples or stories.

3.   What are some of the dilemmas you perceive she has had to face?

4.   How has she been successful, or not?

5.   What activities are you currently involved in that reveal a schoolwide effort for social justice?

Critical Life Map

Purpose of Critical Life Map: To allow each participant to look at seven significant events/moments in her life that have gotten her to that current leadership position.

My Role: To provide each participant an opportunity to reflect, relate stories, and explain her experiences as an educational leader.

Introduction for Participant: At this time we will take a close look at your life through diagramming a critical life map. We will reflect on seven critical experiences in your life as you have taken your educational leadership journey.

Questions

1. As you look back over your life, what are the seven most critical events in your life that are representative of these stepping stones?

2. Could you explain these events and how they are critical in your life?

3. When did these critical events occur in your life?

4. How did they affect you as a Black woman? As a school leader?

5. How did you react during these critical life experiences?

6. What are the lessons you have learned from these experiences?

APPENDIX C

EXAMPLE OF A CRITICAL LIFE MAP AND A
SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTAL MAP
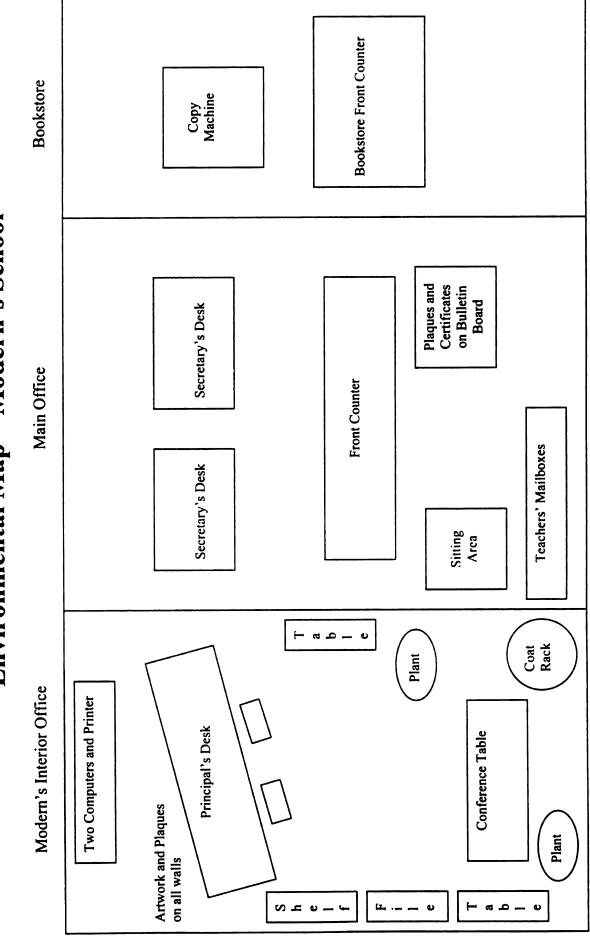
Seven Things that got me to this Point...

1. Determination

2. My Mother/Extended Family/Community)

3. Traveling (being exposed to numerous different experiences in life).

4. Education

5. Mentors

6. Opportunity

7. Partnership with MSU/Alternative Education

Environmental Map – Modern's School

Bookstore   Main Office   Modern's Interior Office

Bookstore

Copy Machine

Bookstore Front Counter

Main Office

Secretary's Desk

Secretary's Desk

Front Counter

Plaques and Certificates on Bulletin Board

Sitting Area

Teachers' Mailboxes

Modern's Interior Office

Two Computers and Printer

Artwork and Plaques on all walls

Principal's Desk

Table

Plant

Coat Rack

Conference Table

Plant

Shelf

File

Table

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APPENDIX D

MATRIX: GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR STUDY WITH RELATED
ANALYTICAL LENSES, DATA SOURCES AND METHODS

What is the nature of school leadership for social justice as practiced by six Black women middle school principals?

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What is your full name?	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Date of birth and place of birth	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Type of community in which you spent most of your growing-up years.	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Place of parents' birth. Highest level of education attained by parents.	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Father's and mother's occupation	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of family photos.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

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Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
Did you attend public, private, or religious schools?	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Information about educational attainment (or attach resume/vita)	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; critical life map and artifacts of resume/vita.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Do you have any special talents outside the area of education?	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of awards.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Spiritual orientation/religious preference (past and present)	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Marital/partner status	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of family photos.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

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Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
Children (male, female, adopted or biological, ages)	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and artifacts of family photos.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Tell me about your immediate and your extended family	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and artifacts of family photos.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did you experience culture-societal values and beliefs-in your family? Extended/community?	Black feminist theory.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What formal cultural education were you introduced to?	Background information.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are the key cultural norms, values, or beliefs that you perceive to be important to you as a person, as a professional, and as an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice—meaning	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What are some of the ways that you incorporate these key cultural norms, values, and beliefs into your life today?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How have you been affected by social forces and political forces?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How have some of the major political movements influenced your growing-up years?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of photos, newspapers, and diaries.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Tell me about your institutional experience, i.e., elementary, middle secondary, and postsecondary years?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of photos, newspapers, and diaries.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Who were the adults who had the most effect on your education? How did they influence you?	Black feminist theory	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and artifacts of photos and diaries.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What valuable lessons did you learn about who you were, about your relationship to learning, and about your relationship to the educational profession?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Were there any aspects of your educational experiences that might have conflicted with the cultural norms you were growing up with?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did those conflicts work out, and what effect do you think they might have had on how you frame your educational practices today?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did you feel about your self-identity at different stages of your life (preteen teenager, young adult, etc.)?	Black feminist theory	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What political movements affected your life? What personal meaning did they hold for you?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory - practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of photos, newspapers, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What were your perceptions of the roles of African-American men and women? How did these rituals affect you?	Black feminist theory	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What factors played a part in your entering the education profession?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of photos, newspapers, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What did you learn about yourself during your first years in the profession?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How is it that you became an educational leader? Did you have a mentor?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How is it that you came to your current position?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
Were there any stories of other individuals who moved you toward seeking a leadership role? What were they and how did they affect you?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of photos, newspapers, awards, and group dialogue; and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How do you define leadership? Do you see yourself as a transformative leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; group dialogue and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life map, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What role does the school governing body play in your school? Talk about how decisions are made.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of notes, letters, newspapers, and daily logs; and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life map, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What role do the other stakeholders play in your school? How successful, or not, were you in developing a partnership with stakeholders?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of notes, letters, newspapers, and daily logs; and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What do you understand by the term "social justice"? What does the concept mean to you?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life map, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What is involved in accomplishing social justice, and how do you go about mobilizing others to action?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How has the political landscape shaped your family background/ growing up? How has it affected your formal education?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Share with me your reflections on these issues: traditional norms and beliefs about women.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did they affect you personally?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life map, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did they effect you professionally? What role do they play in your professional and practices as a school leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
How have your race, gender, class and ethnicity affected your educational experiences and professional practices?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What is your understanding of the term "power"? Tell me more about the meaning you derive from your understanding of the term.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How has power or the lack thereof played out in your experiences and professional practices?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, group dialogue, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Continue to discuss those moments not touched upon by the above themes.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Are there any moments that impeded your progress in your efforts toward creating a socially just and equitable school environment?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of diaries, notes, letters, and daily logs; group dialogue; observations and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What were they and how did they become obstacles?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of diaries, notes, letters, and daily logs; group dialogue; observations and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What lessons have you learned that you can clearly say have affected how you think and how you behave as an educational leader? Are there specific lessons learned as a result of your being a woman?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What does learning mean to you? What makes it important?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Talk more about any of the stories/ situations that you mentioned in Interview 1 that you feel are important.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Are there any other stories about your growing up and coming of age that you feel are important to understanding who you are, particularly as a leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What personal and professional experiences helped shaped you in becoming a transformative leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did you learn to be an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Can you give me an example of an experience that has had a visible effect on how you see and carry out your role as an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What made that experience stand out above the rest?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What opportunities for learning to lead, in your life and work, enhanced your learning as an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
Tell me more about your relationship with your teachers, your parent body, and your governing structures.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
I want to hear more about your role in the community at large, your failures and successes, your frustrations and joys in your endeavor to create a socially just and equitable environment.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, artifacts of diaries, group dialogue, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Ask leader for contextual information, demographic information, language and ethnic constructs, and a description of the political and financial environment of her current work place.	Background information Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of photos, notes, and letters; observations; and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How are resources distributed, and what criteria are used?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of photos, notes, and letters; observations.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Ask the leader to reflect critically on issues of concern that she is currently addressing and how she makes sense of these problems	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory— practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

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Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
Encourage the leader to explore, discuss, and analyze her unique role in advancing education and to define her role.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
From your understanding of the term "social justice," how have you created a socially just organization?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are some of the factors that have enhanced this process?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are some of the factors that have hindered/impeded the process?	Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Please describe a current initiative that involves your creating a socially just and equitable environment for your school and your community	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals; artifacts of diaries, notes, letters, and daily logs; group dialogue; observations and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What do you believe the purpose of schooling and the purpose of education is?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did achieving a higher education affect your leadership development?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How has achieving higher education affected you as a Black person, as a woman, and as a Black woman?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How has achieving higher education affected your ethnic identity and class?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did you learn to be an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

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Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What does educational leadership mean to you?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What factors in your life have enhanced and hindered your work as an educational leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How do you see yourself as a leader? How do you think your professional colleagues see you? How would you like to be seen?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are some of the factors that have hindered/impeded the process of making effective linkages with your school, parents, and the community at large?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What is your understanding of democratic school governance? Whose voice is heard and why?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
How would you define social justice?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—defined	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Give examples of how you have dealt with issues of social justice.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, group dialogue, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What does a socially just organization look like? In your understanding, what are the elements/components of a socially just system?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What skills and strategies have you found to be most effective in your efforts to create social justice?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Define the culture of your school and community. What implications does this have for how you view leadership and how you practice leadership?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What lessons have you learned about educational leadership that are worthwhile to share?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Given what you have said about your life and your work, how have you come to understand leadership?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Given what you have said about your life and your work, how have you come to understand transformative leadership?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Comment on these characteristics of leadership most commonly associated with women in general and, more specifically, with African-American women and their cultural values.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are the challenges that you and African-American women educational leaders face? Talk a bit about these demands and satisfactions.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What unique contribution to the education of children and youths do you think you have made? Would like to make?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, group dialogue, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
As you look back, what have you liked the most about your work, and what have you liked the least?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What is an area of your leadership practice that is strong, and what is not strong?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
As you look forward, how might you want to train the next generation of Black women leaders?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researchers journal of emotions and actions.
What would you share with an aspiring woman interested in educational leadership? Would these be different for a Black woman?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researchers journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
As I look back, my life has been...	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researchers journal of emotions and actions.
My practice as a transformative educational leader has been...	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Making sense of my life and work as a African-American woman has been..	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
My experience as a participant in this study has been...	Reflection.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Additional comments/reactions...	Reflection.	Interview with African-American women middle school principals.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, observations, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
How do you define leadership? In what ways do you see your school principal as a transformative leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
In what ways has your school leader displayed passion for equity and social justice? Illustrate with examples or stories.	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are some of the dilemmas you perceive she has had to face?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How has she been successful, or not?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What activities are you currently involved in that reveal a schoolwide effort for social justice?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Group dialogue.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, group dialogue, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

Guiding Questions	Analytical Lenses	Data Sources	Analytical Strategies
What are the seven most critical events in your life that are representative of these stepping stones?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
Could you explain these events and how they are critical in your life? When did these critical events occur in your life?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did they affect you as a Black woman? As a school leader?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
How did you react during these critical life experiences?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.
What are the lessons you have learned from these experiences?	Black feminist theory Leadership theory Social justice theory—practice, barriers, navigate, and outcomes	Interview with African-American women middle school principals, and critical life map.	Narrative-type analysis; content analysis of artifacts and documents; coding/generating categories, themes, and patterns to synthesize data from interviews, critical life maps, and researcher's journal of emotions and actions.

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