ABSTRACT

BRIDGES, VALERIE HOWARD. African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Position. (Under the direction of Lance Fusarelli.)

The purpose of this study was to examine African American female high school principals in North Carolina, specifically their career paths, their perceptions of their careers, and their perceptions of their position as a high school principal. The following research questions were explored in this study.  1) What barriers and opportunities exist for African American women seeking positions as high school principals? 2) What required relationships or qualifications are most important for African American female high school principals to be successful in their school? 3) What have the African American female high school principals determined about the world of educational administration for minority women?

A qualitative research design was used as well as a phenomenological career development design coupled with in-depth interviews was employed to construct the career development of African American female leaders of high schools in North Carolina. Seven African American female high school principals were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured and contained open-ended questions. All of the data was combined and analyzed using content thematic analysis which emphasis categories and relationships. In addition a story map was used to schematically organize the coding.

The findings of the study indicated several broad categories, specifically pathways, perceptions, pitfalls, and plans. The themes prevalent in every participant’s story were gender and ethnicity. All of the African American female principals had some similar experiences, yet how they reacted to them and interpreted the experiences was different. The participants represented 35% of the African American female high school principals in North Carolina.
African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Position

by
Valerie Howard Bridges

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of North Carolina State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Raleigh, North Carolina

2010

APPROVED BY:

______________________________  _________________________________
Robert Serow      Paul F. Bitting
Committee Member     Committee Member

______________________________  _________________________________
Lance D. Fusarelli     Kenneth H. Brinson, Jr
Chair of the Advisory Committee   Committee Member
DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this study to my family – my mother (Gloria F. Howard), my husband (Ronald C. Bridges), my son (Garrett A. H. Bridges), and my daughter (Kennedy C. H. Bridges). You are my strength and nucleus. You each have played a vital role in my development as a woman and a leader.

Mommy – you bore me and helped me develop into a phenomenal woman. Your gentle critique helped me to reflect and improve. You never accepted less than the best from me and I thank you for your spirit, strength, and spunk.

Ronnie – You are my friend, my partner, my advocate. You continue to “find a way” for whatever our family needs. You give unselfishly of your time, energy, and heart to make is all happy. It’s your turn now!

Garrett – Always remember who you are and who’s you are…You are my first child and you have endured mommy’s late night studying, classes, meetings, career changes and everything else. You are resilient and real. The two most important days in your life are, the day you were born and the day you realize why you were born.

Kennedy – Your love and caring spirit are contagious. You are the type of daughter that any mother would be proud to call her own. I hope that your leadership opportunities are allowed to flourish as a result of this study. Girl Power!
BIOGRAPHY

The researcher of this study, Valerie Howard Bridges, was born in Statesville, North Carolina on September 17, 1968. She moved to Raleigh, North Carolina at the age of 4 and resides there today. She is the youngest child of 3 daughters born to James (late) and Gloria Howard. Valerie grew up in Raleigh, North Carolina and graduated from Saint Mary’s High School in 1986. Saint Mary’s is an all female private school and it was a high school and junior college during her tenure. In Valerie’s graduating class she was one of only two African American students. She graduated from Saint Mary’s high school and a year later received an Associate of Arts Degree. Valerie ventured on to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy. She worked for nearly a decade in the field of taxation and auditing for the state of North Carolina. In 1995 she earned a Masters degree in business administration from Meredith College.

Valerie’s mother was a veteran educator in Wake County Public Schools – her influence and love of learning stirred the embers of interest in education in her daughter. She enrolled in St. Augustine’s College lateral entry program in pursuit of her teaching license. While earning a teaching certification she began a new career in the field of education at East Wake High School in Raleigh, North Carolina. During her teaching years she earned a master’s in school administration. While earning a master’s degree in school administration she transitioned to Fuquay-Varina Middle School as an assistant principal. Valerie served as an assistant principal for several years.
During the summer of 2005 Valerie was given an opportunity to serve in the role of principal at Jesse Wharton Elementary School in Greensboro, North Carolina. She accepted the responsibility the fall of 2005 and is currently serving as a principal in Guilford County Schools. While principal of Jesse Wharton Elementary she has been nominated principal of the year several times. She was selected Principal of the Year by GCAEOP during the 2006-2007 school year. Each year test scores have increased substantially. The school was selected as one of the fifteen most improved schools during the 2006-2007 year, met high growth according to ABC standards during the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 school years, and met AYP standards for the 2008-2009 school year.

Valerie is married to Ronald C. Bridges and they have two children; Garrett (age 19) and Kennedy (age 12). She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and an engaged participant in her church. She lives by the mantra: “Whatever it takes to help children succeed”.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. Lance Fusarelli, committee chairperson, for his direct guidance and understanding, expertise, encouragement, passion, and insight and vision during the writing of my dissertation. His focus, frame of mind, frank, and friendly banter was priceless and purposeful. When I became weak and weary he stepped in and provided support and a level of commitment that is rare for non familial relationships. I also acknowledge the expert support of my committee members: Dr. Kenneth Brinson, Dr. Paul Bitting, and Dr. Robert Serow. Their endless encouragement throughout this endeavor was uplifting and greatly appreciated.

I am grateful to my circle of friends who have supported my efforts, understood my desire, and encouraged my dreams. Listed below is my educational version of “Twenty Pearls” (adapted from my sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.). These are the people that kept me laughing, smiling, and uplifted through the journey…write, re-write, do over, tweak, adjust, change, more, less, even more, and the transitions continued.

1. Jesus H. Christ – My Savior
2. Gloria F. Howard – My Mommy
3. Ronald C. Bridges – My Helpmate
4. Iona P. Fraley – My Angel, My Grandma
5. William I. Parker – My Buddy
6. Joan Miller – My Never Ending Assistant
7. Nichelle Staten – My Soror
8. Ervis Eugene Allen (late) – My Pastor, My Friend, My Daddy

9. Carroll Reed – My Principal

10. Portia Sanders – My Girl

11. Gail Brady – My Butterfly

12. Rhonda Muhammad – My Soul Sister

13. Rev. and Mrs. D. Davis – My “Church” Family


15. Brian Clarida – My PrinciPAL


17. Kimberly Fleming – My Kim Possible

18. Mindy and Crissy Brown – My Other Family

19. Kennedy Bridges – My Ladybug

20. Marci, Bryce, and Eclipse – My Fun Bunch

Each person has added to my life in a rich and abundant way. Thank you for your spirit and your strength. Love you always!
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES............................................................................................................................. xi

CHAPTER I:  INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................. 1

  Introduction to the Study. ................................................................................................. 1
  Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................. 5
  Purpose of the Study .................................................................................................... 6
  Significance of the Study ............................................................................................. 6
  Definitions of Terms ..................................................................................................... 7
  Gender and the Principalship in North Carolina ...................................................... 8

Table 1.1: Large North Carolina Counties, Principal Percentage by Race and Gender ................................................................. 9

Table 1.2: 2003-04 Breakdown of Public Secondary Principals in The U. S. by Race and Gender .................................................................................................................. 12

Table 1.3: 2003-04 North Carolina Public Secondary School Principals ............................................................................................. 13

  Organization of the Study ............................................................................................. 14

CHAPTER II:  LITERATURE REVIEW .................................................................................. 16

  Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 15
  Theoretical Framework ................................................................................................. 28
  Invisible ........................................................................................................................... 29
  African American Women and Euro American Women ........................................... 31
  White Privilege ............................................................................................................. 32
  Cultural Capital ............................................................................................................. 33
African American Women ................................................................. 34
Race and Principalship ................................................................. 36
Career Paths ....................................................................................... 37
Summary ............................................................................................ 38

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY ................................................................. 40
Research Design ................................................................................. 42
Research Questions ............................................................................ 44
Purposeful Sample and Selection of the Participants ..................... 45
Sample Justification ........................................................................... 46
Data Collection .................................................................................. 47
Data Analysis ..................................................................................... 48
Research Reliability and Validity ...................................................... 52
Subjectivity Statement ....................................................................... 53
Summary ............................................................................................ 58
Limitations of the Stud ....................................................................... 58

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS ....................................................................................... 60
Research Question ............................................................................. 62
Table 4.1 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 62
Sasha’s Story ...................................................................................... 63
Summary ............................................................................................ 69
Table 4.2 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 70
Mary’s Story ...................................................................................... 71
Summary ............................................................................................ 76
Table 4.3 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 77
Sabrina’s Story ................................................................................... 78
Summary ............................................................................................ 86
Table 4.4 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 87
Mona’s Story ...................................................................................... 88
Summary ............................................................................................ 93
Table 4.5 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 94
Roberta’s Story .................................................................................. 94
Summary ............................................................................................ 98
Table 4.6 Schematic Organization of the Storymap ......................... 99
Rochelle’s Story .................................................................................100
Summary ...........................................................................................113
Table 4.7 Schematic Organization of the Storymap .........................114
Melissa’s Story ..................................................................................114
Summary ...........................................................................................120
Summary of Emergent Themes .........................................................120

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS ...............125

School Demographics .........................................................................126
Discussion for Research Question One ..............................................128
Discussion for Research Question Two .............................................131
Discussion for Research Question Three ...........................................134
### LIST OF TABLES

| Table 1.1 | Large North Carolina Counties, Principal Percentage by Race and Gender | 9 |
| Table 1.2 | 2003-04 Breakdown of Public Secondary Principals in The U.S. by Race and Gender | 12 |
| Table 1.3 | 2003-04 North Carolina Public Secondary School Principals | 13 |
| Table 4.1 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 62 |
| Table 4.2 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 70 |
| Table 4.3 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 77 |
| Table 4.4 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 87 |
| Table 4.5 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 94 |
| Table 4.6 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 99 |
| Table 4.7 | Schematic Organization of the Storymap | 114 |
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Suppose Truth is a woman, what then?
-Nietzsche

Introduction to the Study

Johnetta B. Cole, the former president of Spelman College in Atlanta and of Bennett College in Greensboro, North Carolina, addresses women’s issues frequently. In 1988, Dr. Cole told the Association of Black Women in Higher Education that studying the conditions of Black women involves looking in gigantic mirrors that reflect all of our lives. To know the conditions of Black women is to know all the intertwined ways in which race, gender, culture, age, sexuality, religion, and politics are played out in our society. She further stated that the status of African-American women must be of interest to us all (Cole & Sheftall-Guy, 2003).

The progress perceived to have been made by the dominant culture is often extrapolated to an entire society. However, the condition of a society can best be judged by that of the marginalized, for it demonstrates the extent to which the dominant culture has made the society better for all. Mary McLeod Bethune, the founder and President of Bethune Cookman College in Florida, believed that the true worth of a race must be measured by the character of its womanhood, who typically have far less power than the men (Cole & Sheftall-Guy, 2003).

In a similar vein, Villani (1999) recalled her term as a principal and of constantly trying to establish herself as a caring and collaborative teacher. She was amazed at how her staff retained their old expectations of a principal. Villani posited that some people associate
“principal” with stereotypes of age, gender, and style (to which I would add race). She found that this shaped their perceptions of everything she did or said. According to Gupton and Slick (1996), the culture of educational administration is dominated by White males and their orientations, and this often colors the perspective that others have of the expectations of leaders in education. This can often lead to non-White, non-male candidates for educational administration being overlooked.

According to Pigford and Tonnsen (1993), women nurture learners and men run schools. Schultz (1982) stated that whether by accident or design, the socialization of males prepares them to be leaders whereas the socialization of females prepares them to be helpers. He further posited that this socialization, and that a leader is defined using what are generally considered “masculine” traits, lead to the roles of woman and leader being perceived as conflicting, which presents a quandary to women seeking positions of leadership. Mahitivanichacha and Rorrer (2006) noted that persons of color have even more difficulty attaining administrative positions. Current data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction indicate that this trend is continuing for African-American women seeking a high-school principalship. Despite the women’s liberation movement and a civil rights movement, minority women are still underrepresented among head administrators of high schools. It appears that becoming a superintendent is most likely for principals at the high-school level, yet very few of these administrative positions are occupied by African-American women. This creates an even larger glass ceiling for these women and limits the number of African-American women who could mentor others.
Blount (1998) stated that in 1920, the percentage of female educators was 86% and men held 14% of all school positions including supervisory and administrative jobs. This indicates that teaching had become a women’s profession supervised by men (Blount, 1998). Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) noted that even though women dominate America’s classrooms, men still occupy the principal’s office. Alston (2000) added that the men occupying the administrative office are predominately White. In 1909, Ella Flagg Young was the first woman appointed superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools. Young predicted that the near future would have more women than men in charge of the educational system. However, there was only one period in the twentieth century when women held a majority of elementary principal positions. In the 1920’s, 55% of elementary principalships were held by women. During that same period, women held less than 8% of secondary school principalships and only 1.6% of district superintendent positions. Brunner and Grogan (2005) reported that between the years 2000-2003 women constituted from 13% to 18% of superintendents nationwide. There remains an underrepresentation of female superintendents throughout the nation based on the large number of women in education. Based on information obtained from Maurice Green, Superintendent of Guilford County Schools, 13.9% of North Carolina’s superintendents are female, among the lowest percentages for U.S. states.

Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) observed that the typical female school principal is likely to be White, be in her mid- to late 40s, have taught for 15 years, hold a master’s degree, and be enrolled in a doctoral program. Whereas the data on women administrators is scant, the data on Black women in school administration is virtually nonexistent. Coursen, Hadderman,
Jeffress, and Mazzarella (1989) stated that the literature on Blacks in educational administration is “strangely silent.” Black women generally assume their first administrative position in their mid-40s to early 50s after having taught for 12 to 20 years. In addition, Black female administrators are usually elementary-school principals assigned to tough, predominantly Black schools, where the expectations for their performance are extremely high in comparison to other administrators. Doughty (1980) posited that the little we know about Black female administrators indicates that they are at the bottom of administrative positions and are likely to have held either staff positions or positions that deal with minority concerns. A staff position allows women to support the decision maker without making the decision.

The pathways and perceptions held by African-American high school principals will give us seminal information regarding African-American female, high school principal leadership. In general, leadership has no universally accepted definition, but most share two assumptions: leadership is a group phenomenon, and leaders exercise intentional influence over followers (Helgesen, 1990).

Definitions of leadership differ in terms of who exercises influence, the reasons why influence is attempted, and the ways in which influence is exercised (Immegart, 1988; Yukl, 1989). According to Birnbaum (1992), leadership is defined not only by what leaders do, but even more importantly by the ways in which potential followers think about leadership, interpret a leader’s behavior, and eventually develop shared explanations for the causes and outcomes of various events. Greenfield and Beam (1980) posited that the effectiveness of
leadership depends not on gender but on the characteristics of the individual leaders and the structure of the organizational settings.

This research examined the perceptions and attitudes of African-American female principals of high schools in North Carolina. The research further examined what these female leaders do, how they perceive what they do, and their beliefs regarding the development of their leadership.

**Statement of the Problem**

In the field of educational administration, leadership has been the central focus of research, with most studies focusing on the experiences of White males (Duke, 1998; Glazer, 1991). Recent research has sought to re-examine the traditional definition of leadership and to examine character traits and qualities associated with effective leadership. However, the mainstream research literature surrounding secondary-school leadership had historically grounded the school principal’s work in technical theories of motivation and management (Hertzberg, 1968; Sergiovanni, 1967), with little emphasis on socio-cultural or feminist theories of leadership. Considering the increase in diversity in schools, the principalship needs to be visualized in more expansive ways, particularly through the voices of female school leaders. Verbalizing personal insight about their character will enable women to think about their inner values, beliefs, and leadership styles (Wesson, 1998). There is a need for research to provide insight into women’s personal and professional characteristics and attributes as leaders, particularly in secondary education. Hence, this study attempts to fill the void by including the voices and experiences through the lived stories of African-American
female administrators who can inform others about important issues of leadership in secondary schools.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina, specifically their career paths, their perceptions of their careers, and their perceptions of their position as a high-school principal. Women sometimes lack the information and experience that would assist with negotiating the workplace bureaucracy. I dialogued and interviewed principals, heard their stories, and learned how they were able to garner these positions. Findings from several research disciplines, particularly the investigations of effective schools and successful school change, highlight the importance of the principal’s leadership (Blackman & Fenwick, 2001; Elmore, 2000; Keller, 1998).

Historically, African-American women in school-leadership positions have demonstrated courage, strength, and perseverance in facing both racism and sexism along their journey to success (Bell & Chase, 1993; Jones & Montenegro, 1983; Lomotey, 1993). Lomotey (1989) identified three qualities African-American principals possessed: (1) a commitment to the education of all students, (2) confidence in the ability of all students to do well, and (3) compassion for all students. These qualities are paramount for current school leadership. Wesson (1998) wrote that the majority of African-American female leaders are hired in troubled urban districts that have inadequate financial resources and whose schools are plagued by social ills.
Significance of the Study

Researchers in female leadership tend not to distinguish women by race or class. A review of the research literature indicated that female leadership was understudied, particularly African-American female leadership. The hiring practices involved and the selection of African-American women for principal positions at the high-school level are also seldom addressed. According to Jacobson (1990), the only thing that researchers seem to know about African-American women in positions of educational leadership in public schools is that there are not many of them. The purpose of this study is to help close this gap and to examine and (re)interpret (Dillard, 1995) the life experiences and leadership practices of African-American female principals in high schools. Through my research on African-American female principals, I have brought a voice to the portion of society that is forgotten and generally underrepresented in leadership roles.

The literature has failed to include the lived stories and experiences of the high-school principalship from the perspective of African-American women. This research added to the knowledge base and contributed to leadership theory and development. The participants’ voices provided an essential model and a better understanding of the construction of the leader persona and of the way one leads secondary students toward successful achievement.

Definitions

These terms are defined to provide a common definition between the researcher and the reader. These terms are used frequently throughout the research paper.
**African-American** – United States citizens who are non-Hispanic and classified as “Black” by the Bureau of the Census. African-Americans include individuals descending from any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Nettles & Perna, 1997).

**Culture** – The ideations, symbols, behaviors, values, and beliefs that are shared by a human group. Culture can also be defined as a group’s program for survival and adaptation to its environment. It is the heritage and traditions of a social group (Banks & Banks, 2003).

**Ethnic Group** – A microcultural group or collectivity that shares common history, culture, values, behaviors, and other characteristics that cause members of the group to have a shared identity. An ethnic group also shares economic and political interests. Cultural characteristics, rather than biological traits, are the essential attributes of an ethnic group (Banks & Banks, 2001).

**Voices** – Framework of detailed expressions of one’s way of knowing. Voices include life experiences (personal and professional experiences), which may be expressions of one’s values, beliefs, needs, and concerns.

**Gender and the Principalship in North Carolina**

There are 115 local educational agencies (school districts) in North Carolina. According to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), during the 2006–2007 school year there were 2,313 school principals in North Carolina. The number of school principals in a given district ranged from 3 to 160. The largest of these districts were Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Wake County, Guilford County, and Winston Salem–Forsythe County. The number of principals in a school district tends to reflect the size of its population. Men accounted for 61% of principals, with White men representing 35%; Black men 8 1/2%; and
American-Indian men, Asian men, and Hispanic men each less than 0.5%. Black women represented 15% of principals; American-Indian women less than 1%; and Asian and Hispanic women each less than 0.5%.

As shown in Table 1.1, Charlotte-Mecklenburg had 160 principals during the 2006–2007 school year; White males represented 20%, Black males represented 12 1/2%, White females represented 33%, Black females represent 31%, and Asian, American Indian, and Hispanic both female and male represented less than one-half of one percent of total principals. In Wake County Schools, there were 147 principals during the 2006-2007 school year; White males represented approximately 35%, Black males represented 6%, White females represented 42%, Black females represented 15%, and all other females represented less than one-half of one percent of principals. In Guilford County Schools, there were 116 principals during the 2006-2007 school year; White males represented approximately 20%, Black males represented 13%, White females represented 36%, Black females represented 29%, and American Indian, Asian, and Hispanic males and females represented less than one-half of one percent of principals.
Table 1.1
Large North Carolina Counties
Principal Percentage by Race and Gender for 2006–2007 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School System</th>
<th>No. principals</th>
<th>White Male</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>White Female</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>Asian Am. Indian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte-Mecklenburg</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* less than 0.5%

For the school years 2001–2002 through 2005–2006, the total number of principals in North Carolina increased annually. The rate of increase ranged from 18 to 38 additional principals during a given year. The number of male principals from 2001-2002 through 2005-2006 decreased from 1,020 to 1,008, representing 12 principal positions. The number of female principals from 2001-2002 through 2005-2006 increased each year. The range of increase was 16 to 43 with the years with the largest increase coinciding with years of decrease in male principalship representation. The total number of White principals increased from 2001-2002 through 2005-2006 respectively from 1,603 to 1,667 representing a difference of 64 positions. The number of Black principals increased from 2001-2002 through 2005-2006 respectively from 483 to 520 representing a difference of 37 positions. Although the number of female principals is increasing, significant gender disparities remain.
This data did not provide information regarding African-American female high school principals. I contacted DPI to request the number of African-American female principals of high schools. They were not able to provide detailed information. The total number of principals for the 2007–2008 school year was 2,348, of whom 1,037 (44.2%) were male, 1,311 (55.8%) female, 553 (23.6%) Black, 1,751 (74.6%) White, and 44 (1.9%) noted as “other.” DPI defined schools as elementary or secondary, which would not give a count specifically of high schools.

After summarizing this information, I emailed every superintendent in North Carolina using the superintendent’s contact information obtained from the North Carolina Association of School Administrators. The email read as follows:

“I am working on my dissertation and attempting to gather information regarding female leadership. Please respond to the following three questions.
1. How many high schools do you have in your school system (district)?
2. How many female high-school principals are in your school system (district)?
3. How many African-American female high-school principals are in your school system (district)?”

Follow-up emails were sent to verify the information received in the initial responses. The response from the superintendents was the most accurate way to begin looking at the entire state regarding African-American female principals of high schools. The information provided by the superintendents helped determine the method and direction of my research. In addition, this information provided the specific data so that I could understand the statistics and provide a clearer picture for the research study. As of October 12, 2009, I
received responses from 115 county superintendents or staff members. According to the responses noted in Appendix A, there are 481 high schools in North Carolina. Of their principals, 172 are female (35.8%), 309 are male (64.2%), and 40 are African-American female (8.3%). These data reinforce the belief that among high-school principals in North Carolina, neither women nor African-American women were adequately represented.

The National Center for Education Statistics statistical profiles from 1987–1988 to 1993–1994 indicate that there were 1,929 public-school principals in North Carolina. Of those principals, 74.9% were male and 17.2% were Black (non-Hispanic). For 1993–1994, 59% of elementary public-school principals were male and 86% of secondary public-school principals were male. For 1999–2000, 48% of elementary public-school principals were male and 78% of secondary public-school principals were male. For 2003–2004, 44% of elementary public-school principals were male and 74% of secondary public-school principals were male. These data indicate that from 1993–1994 to 2003–2004, the percentages of female principals at the elementary and secondary levels in public schools increased, from 41% to 56% and from 14% to 26%, respectively.

The National Center for Education Statistics indicates that for the 2003–2004 school year, there were 19,700 public secondary principals in the United States, of whom 74% were male, 84.8% were White, 9.4% were Black, 4.4% were Hispanic, 0.3% were Asian, 0.1% were Pacific Islander, and 0.5% were American Indian/Alaska Native (Table 1.2).
Table 1.2
2003–2004 Breakdown of Public Secondary Principals in the U.S. by Race and Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender/Racial Group</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14,578</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5,122</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>16,706</td>
<td>84.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1,852</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19,700</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As shown in Table 1.3 below, the National Center for Education Statistics shows the statistical profile for North Carolina public-school principals for 2003–2004. The total number of principals was 1,929; White principals represented 80.7% (1,557), Black 16.8% (324), American Indian/Alaska 1.2% (23), Hispanic 1.0% (19), and multiracial .3% (6).
Table 1.3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Groupings</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>80.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,929</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is a lot of data and statistics related to race and gender of the principal. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 show race and gender for secondary schools in North Carolina and the U.S., but statistics alone cannot provide a clear understanding of the people that represent the data. Cook and Fonow (1986) posited that feminist research is not research about women but research for women to be used in transforming our society. My research has provided a voice to the statistics that can only be captured through interaction and connections with the people that are represented by the data.

**Organization of the Study**

Chapter 2 reviews related literature on female leadership and African-American female leaders in education, specifically African-American high-school principals. Chapter 3 contains a detailed description of the research design and the method used in the study. The
research method employed was qualitative and consisted of interviews with African-American female high-school principals. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature, as well as implications for future research and practice.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

I am an invisible [woman, child] ... I am a man [woman, child] of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids – and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible; understand, simply because people refuse to see me because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of the construction of their inner eyes. -Ellison (1952)

Historically, teaching was viewed as women’s work. However, men have traditionally served as the managers or administrators (Coursen, Hadderman, Jeffress, & Mazzarella, 1989). “Almost anyone who remembers school days has two images of school officials. The favorite teacher, in fact nearly every teacher, was probably a woman. But the feared and revered final authority, the principal, especially in high school, is likely to have been a man” (Coursen, Hadderman, Jeffress, & Mazzarella, 1989, p. 85). Moreover, the principal tended to be White. Women and people of color continue to be underrepresented in educational leadership positions (Banks & Banks, 2003). Women comprise more than half of the teaching workforce in the U.S., but hold fewer than half of all school principalships (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2000). The National Center for Education Statistics’ School and Staffing Survey (SASS) reported that from 1993–1994 to 1999–2000, the percentage of female principals in public schools increased from 35% to 44%, yet still left them in the minority. Furthermore, for 1999–2000, of the 83,790 principals working in public schools across the United States (NCES, 2000), 47,130 (56%) were men.

According to Bell and Chase (1990), women comprised almost three-fourths of America’s public school teachers since the mid-1980s, yet they held only 34% of the elementary principalships, 12% of the secondary principalships, and 5% of the superintendencies. Yet, the majority of teachers were women. Coleman (2001) stated that
although women made up at least one-half of secondary teachers, they were in the minority in secondary administrative positions, which led to a dearth of women among secondary principals worldwide. Bell and Chase asked why women were not also leading the school districts and why there were not at least the same or similar numbers of women as men in the superintendency. According to Pigford and Tonnesen (1993), the number of women have increased in some fields, but school administration is not one of them. They further stated that the underrepresentation of women in educational administration has been attributed to their lack of aspiration for administrative positions and to inadequate preparation and qualification of many women for administration along with their lack of natural leadership ability. Pigford and Tonnesen (1993) noted that many of the circumstances that supported these explanations have changed significantly, causing the explanations themselves to change.

The National Center for Education Statistics (1996) reported that 49% of the K–12 school population in urban school districts was comprised of persons of color, but they comprised less than 14% of the teaching force. Tyack and Hansot (1982) and Bell and Chase (1993) observed that women have heavily populated the teaching profession. But the management of schools has not been saturated with female leadership. Restine (1993) found that women accounted for 20.6% of the assistant superintendencies nationwide and 27% of principalships. A national survey conducted by Gupton and Slick (1996) found that of 1,500 randomly selected elementary, middle, and high-school principals, 66% of elementary positions were held by men. Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) contend still more barriers exist which inhibit advancement. Female administrators were afforded neither the status nor the
respect given their male counterparts. Wrushen and Sherman (2008) suggested that increasing the number of women in secondary-school positions, which lead to administrative positions, would create an educational-administrative workforce that reflects the composition of the teacher workforce. According to Gupton and Slick (1994), female administrators tended to be in smaller districts and receive less pay than male administrators.

According to Logan (1998), more female principals were hired at the elementary level than as high-school principals, but elementary-school principals seldom advance to the position of superintendent. Wickham (2007) found that women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendency. According to Sharp and Walter (2004), men transition from high-school principal into the superintendency, whereas women are often at a disadvantage because their principalship experience has been at the elementary level instead of in high school. Wolverton and Macdonald (2001) noted that high-school principalships are dominated by men, and their research indicated that it is the position that most clearly resembles the superintendency in regard to responsibility and exposure.

In K–12 education, women comprise 83% of elementary teachers and 54% of secondary-school teachers. Yet, they constitute only 52% of the principals in elementary schools and only 25% of the high-school principal positions (Broughman, Choy, Geis, & Henke, 1996). According to Witmer (1995), the number of women earning doctorates in education has increased since 1962, yet the number of men has not quite doubled. Women comprise 41% of all principals and predominate at the elementary-school level. This also applies to women of color, who hold 17.4% of principalships in elementary schools, 16.8% in middle schools, and 12.5% in secondary schools (Doud & Keller, 1998). Pollard (1997)
supported these numbers and concluded that Caucasian and African-American women found no problems in obtaining principalships at the elementary-school level. Fiore and Curtin (1997) suggested that principals who were of color or female were more prevalent in large districts in either central cities or urban fringes than they were in small suburban or rural districts.

The percentage of principals of color in public schools increased from 16% in 1993–1994 to 18% in 1999–2000 (NCES, 2000). During 1999–2000, principals of color were better represented at the elementary level than the secondary level. According to Pigford and Tonnesen (1993), that little is known about Black female administrators indicates that they are at the bottom of the administrative pool and are likely to remain there. Walker (1993) suggested that some experiences of Black women in management differ from those of other women. Indvik (2004) suggested that the term “male” or “female,” unless otherwise qualified, is generally taken to mean White, heterosexual, and middle class. This explains the lack of research on leadership with regard to people of color and specifically women of color. Bringing feminist concerns into research entails recognizing the differences between women. Gender similarities may not transcend all social locations. According to Edwards (1990), factors other than gender may play a more prominent role in the experiences of African-American females.

Weinberg (1977) noted that school desegregation was a major factor in the decreased number of African-American principals. Miklos (1988) argued that subsequent school and district practices have meant that principals of color would more likely be placed in schools with a large number of students of similar races or cultural groups and may be appointed
African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans represent 70% of the student population in 20 of the nation’s largest urban public-school systems (Irvine & Armento, 2001). It is necessary for principals to be skilled in incorporating this diversity into building rich and supportive climates for learning. Principals who themselves are members of racial-ethnic minority groups may bring special insights to these tasks, and they may serve as role models for staff and students. Peebles (2000) asserted that creating culturally responsive schools requires strong instructional leadership from principals and leaders. Culturally responsive schools make students feel connected. Principals of color may also serve as important role models in low-minority schools (i.e., schools enrolling fewer than 20% of students of color) by bringing distinctive perspectives that may not have been present otherwise. Ortiz (2000) stated that male superintendents are hired based on sponsorship,
experience in education related to finance and personnel, and matching the district; that the final decision is generally personal rather than professional; and that a woman of color is unlikely to be preferred.

Women and minorities are confronted with a variety of demands and expectations that the White male does not experience (Brown & Valverde, 1988; Marshall, 1991). According to Marshall’s research (1991), women generally ignore or repress issues of their race and gender when they reflect upon their professional roles. Cohn and Sweeney (1992) asserted that this helps them succeed in organizations that have varying expectations and rewards for the atypical.

Women in leadership are confronted daily by barriers related to gender and work. Frequently, women who aspire to administrative careers are convinced that stereotypical thinking about women’s roles and the qualities necessary to perform on the job is the major barrier for them (Marshall, 1992). Lynch (1990) posited that the problems for women are not the formal, tangible barriers such as education or certification, but the intangible, informal ones that require an aspirant to be accepted as “one of us” by those already at the apex of the organization. Society’s attitude toward male and female roles can categorize women as not task-oriented enough, too dependent on the reactions and evaluations of others, and lacking independence. Indvik’s (2004) review of research over 15 years and 160 studies of sex-related differences in leadership style revealed only one difference: women used a more participative or democratic style and a less autocratic or directive style than did men.

There are many barriers to women becoming leaders in organizations, but one deeply-rooted barrier is prejudice. Indvik (2004) speculated that many people tend to value one
category as better than the other, such as male values and leadership style as being better than female. This type of thinking often leads to women never being considered for certain positions. Eagly (2004) found that overall effectiveness did not appear to differ between male and female leaders. Males tended to be hired for leadership positions when the setting was male dominated, when a high percentage of subordinates were male, and when the role was seen as more congenial to men. This partly explains the lack of opportunity for or small numbers of African-American female principals at the high-school level, which has a higher percentage of males in leadership positions than does middle or elementary school.

Regardless of the positive perceptions of principals toward female capabilities, Growe and Montgomery (1999) cited a study in which women received little or no encouragement to seek leadership positions, while men were encouraged to enter administration. This lack of encouragement existed even for women who earned doctorates and were more likely than men to desire an academic career. Bell and Nkomo (2001) noted that having a supportive supervisor who will help with career advancement is key to obtaining a leadership position.

According to Gupton and Slick (1996), most of the barriers that women encountered as they tried to advance within the education profession clustered around three themes: discrimination against women, family responsibilities, and mobility problems. They observed that White males and their orientations dominate the culture of educational administration. They further posited that women and minorities have not had access to networks that help men gain entry into administrative positions. In addition, women and minorities lacked access to on-the-job nurturing and support afforded to many male administrators. Cooper and
Fusarelli (2002) suggested that a major dilemma facing educational leadership in the twenty-first century is the need for modern superintendents to be instructional leaders, and that those most experienced with instruction are women, yet they still remain a small fraction of superintendents. Glickman (1990) asserted that female superintendents are more often found in small districts, that female assistant superintendents are more often in staff-specialist or supervisory positions, and that female principals are most often found at the elementary-school level. The perception that women are not tough enough to handle the political environment or the discipline problems of a high school remains strong. Glickman further asserted that women and minorities tend to be socially isolated and confronted with unique standards.

Logan and Scollay (1999) examined gender-equity issues for educational-administration programs. In this study, department chairs at universities with membership in the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) were asked about their perceptions of barriers to women who apply for high-school principalship and superintendency positions. Their responses included traditional statements such as unwillingness of some boards to consider women for leadership, lack of support for female administrators, positions of power held by “good old boys,” and the reluctance to change traditional hiring patterns. Bell and Chase (1993) found that women of color are adversely affected when an organization’s culture is inhospitable. According to Bell and Chase (1993), they often have to work from a bicultural life in order to respond to the demands of the organization. Bell and Nkomo (2001) showed that African-American women assume that they will never truly assimilate or be accepted.
Cox, Welch, and Nkomo (2001) introduced the term “homophily,” which is the preference to work or interact with people who are similar demographically and attitudinally. A pervasive culture of homophily can lead to significant institutional bias. Indvik (2004) suggested that improvements for women in the workplace and society can occur when we consciously question hiring patterns and beliefs, a belief reinforced by research on female leaders. According to Indvik (2004), most of the research on women of color has been conducted in the past several years. This often leads to a lack of understanding and clarity of barriers for women of color. I posit that women experience many of the same career constraints and barriers, but women of color, specifically African-American women, have additional concerns related to the unique combination of leader, gender, and ethnicity. Alston (2005) acknowledged that the notion of intersectionality helps us to identify the complexity of minority women’s lived experiences and further explains the effect of class, gender, or sexuality on one’s career development. Indvik (2004) assumed, and I agree, that men are not proponents of sex inequality at work, but often lack the information and knowledge to recognize it. Research will provide men and women with valuable clues about preconceived notions, barriers, constraints, and patterns that negatively affect women, men, and the workplace.

Brown and Irby (1993) posited that female leaders often have an abiding concern for children, especially marginal students and those without advocates. Rosener (1990) suggested that a woman’s leadership orientation is marked by a concern for community and culture. She further stated that women generally concern themselves with establishing relationships and maintaining connections with others. In a leadership position, women are
more likely to critically examine the past, ask the difficult questions, promote collective visioning, focus on the development of others, and respond with the good of the community at heart (Irwin, 1995). They tend to practice leadership as a form of inquiry, and they are more apt to foster organizational exploration.

Peebles (2000) asserted that urban school principals must provide the leadership to assist teachers to dislodge deeply held beliefs that perpetuate lower academic expectations for students who are either poor and/or minority. They must guard against the tendency to let their assessments and depressing conditions in the neighborhoods from which their students come serve as the sole determinant of the quality of education that they should be provided. Helgesen (1990) concluded from diary studies of four female leaders that their leadership style was participative, consensus building, and empowering, leading to a web of inclusion rather than a hierarchical model, which is more prevalent in male leadership. However, Grogan (1996) noted that not all women in education are thoughtful, child-oriented administrators and not all male administrators are the opposite.

Gross and Trask (1976) asserted that female principals have greater knowledge of and concern for instructional supervision and that most teachers preferred female principals more than male principals. They also asserted that teachers’ professional performance rated higher under female principals, whose conduct promoted achievement and learning in addition to high morale and commitment by staff. Shakeshaft (1989) described the most significant leader-behaviors of female leaders as making relationships with others being central to all their actions, placing their major focus on teaching and learning, and building community and inclusiveness through democratic, participatory styles. She also noted that women’s
communication and decision-making styles stress cooperation, thereby facilitating the translation of their educational visions into student progress. Nicholson (1999) theorized that research has stressed the importance of having both teachers and administrators of color in professional positions in schools, because they represent the “significant others” for children of color in those schools and communities.

Helgesen (1990) revealed that many women lead differently from men because of their experiences as women. She found that workplaces run by women emphasize practices that are inclusive, not hierarchical. As a result, a sense of appreciation for and importance of working jointly with one another is experienced as both teachers and administrators participate in the decision-making in school. Shakeshaft (1989) agreed that women use power to empower others and believe that power expands as it is shared and is not finite. For women, then, empowering others is non-threatening; unlike the threats sharing has for many men. Female leadership aligns with the fourth habit of highly effective people (Covey, 1989), which is to think “win-win” because there is enough success and good available so that everyone can be successful and happy.

According to Helgesen (1990), women still must compensate for the negative views of female administrators held by peers, parents, and employees of both genders. Gupton and Slick (1996) quoted a female elementary principal as saying, “Even after women have obtained administrative positions, they are not afforded the status or the respect given their male colleagues” (p. 10). Within the school environment, the attitudes teachers have toward female administrators may directly affect how the administrator’s job performance will be evaluated by her supervisor (Hudson, Wesson, & Marcano, 1998). Attitudes can have a direct
effect on the evaluation process for the principal through Teacher Working Conditions Survey. These attitudes may also deter women from seeking administrative positions. Hudson et al. (1998) examined how female and male teachers perceived the effectiveness of female administrators and whether they preferred a female administrator or a male administrator. The study revealed that male and female teachers want the same qualities in their principal regardless of gender. The study further found that female principals are perceived as having to earn their authority rather than simply deriving it from their position.

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) posited that as the percentage of African-American public-school students increases, this should begin to be reflected in the demographics of school leaders. Ladson-Billings (1994) proclaimed that culturally relevant pedagogy is needed to assure that all children are successful, which in turn requires that leadership acknowledges, encourages, and values diversity.

Dillard (2000) argued that African-American women’s stories are legitimate and powerful bodies of knowledge that have been excluded from most social-science research and practice. She stated, “The legacies raised up in life-note narratives—of precious mentors, mothers, comrades, and colleagues—suggest a strong historical ethos of commitment to transformative work through research, teaching, and leadership” (p. 7). Much of the literature reviewed suggests that the documentation of stories of African-American women’s lives is not adequate, and this gap in the research spurred a desire to study this issue in greater detail. According to Brunner and Grogan (2007), the research on women of color is thin and no attention has been paid to creating a profile. Porter (2000) posited that the criteria regarding the decisions surrounding who is named a leader are ambiguous, especially for female
leaders. Women, most especially women of color, have been left out of the dialogue about leadership.

It is vital to research hiring policies and patterns as they affect African-American women because research indicates that staffing policies are as important to the educational process as curriculum. The best policy decisions come from a diverse group of people. Pounder and Merrill (2001) concluded that gender-segregating patterns may be due to the popular perception that the high-school principalship is a masculine role, creating the perception of gender-role incongruence for female applicants. Tallerico and Blount (2004) coined the term *ghettoization* to refer to where the pseudo-integration of an occupation has consigned one gender to less importance, lower pay, or other disparity relative to the other gender. An example of occupational ghettoization is the principalship, where the elementary principalship has lower pay and is generally occupied by women (Shakeshaft, 1999). In contrast, the high-school principalship offers higher pay and is often occupied by men.

Yet, having a diverse staff may help develop a more desirable curriculum (Coursen, Haddersman, Jeffress, & Mazzarella, 1989). Many educators are unaware of how culture, ethnicity, and gender affect learning. A desirable curriculum may bridge the gap between the lack of knowledge regarding culture, ethnicity, and gender by allowing these attributes to become assets for all students. According to Gay (1994), correcting these limitations is the major goal of gender-sensitive and culturally responsive supervision. The perspectives of all women are significant to any organization, but the perspective of under-researched persons is an untapped source. This knowledge is referred to as “new” because research is limited in regard to issues of African-American women in educational leadership roles. Therefore, my
attempt is to build on the scant information that is available and provide an intersecting narrative of race, gender, and leadership through my study of African-American female high-school principals.

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) asserted that focusing on women’s lives in their personal narratives illuminates the course of a life, the relationship between the individual and society, and how women negotiate their gender status. They further stated, “They make possible the examination of the links between the evolution of subjectivity and its shifts and changes and the development of female identity” (p. 146). Identity is based on models of what we have seen—the history of the genders must be discussed, deconstructed, and then reconstructed.

**Theoretical Framework**

*Standpoint Theory*

I approach my study of African-American female high-school principals from the theoretical framework of standpoint theory. This theory is useful in understanding feminist thought. Weston (1988) posited that feminist research is about taking women’s location and standpoint in the world as the basis for research, where research will proceed from a perspective that values women’s experiences, ideas, and needs rather than assuming women should be more like men. Standpoint theory focuses on knowledge that is non-oppressive and non-hierarchical. It uses stories and retelling of events to produce alternative realities as documented by men. Standpoint theory proposes that people gain knowledge through their positions or social location. Yonezawa (2000) defined the term *positional* to capture how people’s positions in the larger social structure (e.g., race, class, gender, and sexuality)
influence their awareness and their interpretations of events. Therefore, the lens through which African-American women view the world is a distinct perspective based on their social positions within the context of the larger social structures of race and gender (Collins, 1991; Guy-Sheftall, 1995; Scott, 1982). Each individual’s personal history—family, education, and cultural, racial, and gender barriers that affect their career path to the principalship—can be told from that principal’s perspective using standpoint theory. I suggest that the standpoints of women of color, notably African-American women, are of significant value because they experience multiple barriers based upon race/ethnicity, gender, and other social constructs.

Buzzanell (2000) stated that the lived experiences of women of color can help researchers respond to criticisms about feminist research and in particular the work on standpoint theory that seems to presume women to be White, middle-class, and heterosexual. According to Rothenberg (2006), women of color traditionally occupy the bottom of the income and employment lists. Giving voice to women of color will help to redress a long-standing exclusion—in theory and in research—of a group of persons who long have embodied a segment of the workplace. Women of color are members of our society that can identify behaviors and attitudes that are difficult for those belonging to the mainstream culture to detect.

My research perspective is feminist. I feel an obligation to acknowledge that women are both alike and different among themselves. Women are different from men, yet these differences do not denote a deficit. Through my research, I desire to incorporate the female perspective into social reality. I employ the qualitative research methods thought to value
subjective, personal meaning and definition, commonalities, and giving voices to the oppressed. This is accomplished by integrating the personal experiences of African-American female high-school principals into my research.

**Race, Gender, and the Principalship**

Women and people of color were almost completely absent from the study of leadership until the late 1970’s (Bass, 1981). The lack of information on those groups perpetuates the stereotype that they are not worthy of mention or expected to be leaders. According to Banks and Banks (2001), the lack of research on women and people of color was viewed as not problematic because race and gender were not considered differences of consequence. The statistics regarding management (leadership) positions in any industry disprove this assumption. According to Redwood (1996), women earn less than men even at the highest educational levels. These statistics describe what is referred to as the *glass ceiling*, the artificial barrier that denies women and minorities the opportunity to advance within their careers.

Research has suggested that the underlying cause for the glass ceiling is the perception of many White men that they as a group are losing—losing competitive advantage, losing control, and losing opportunity as a direct consequence of inclusion of women and minorities. Scott (2001) reported that although women’s overall percentage of Fortune 500 executive positions increased from 8.7% in 1995 to 12.5% in 2000, women of color remained at 1.3% during that period. Moreover, wage rates for women, men, and minorities and the underrepresentation of women and minorities in administration and management refute the argument that White men are losing their competitive edge, control,
or opportunities. Women and minorities are yet to experience an advantage or equal opportunities in most fields. According to Bjork and Keedy (2001), the differences in the representation of all women and of women of color in the teaching and administration of public schools mirror the representation of women in senior management and leadership positions, not in education. The superintendency is the most male-dominated executive position of any profession.

An extensive search of qualitative research on African-American female principals in education produced limited results. Research has been conducted on women in corporate, public, and educational administration (Anzalda, 1990; Marshall, 1989; Murtadha-Watts, 2000). There was evidence that researchers used the male model of leadership and effectiveness to gauge women’s leadership skills, which has been criticized by feminists such as Shakeshaft (1989; 1999).

African-American Women and Euro-American Women

African-American women and Euro-American women have been studied, but the research usually excludes race or class in the framework and analysis, focusing almost exclusively on gender itself. This framework fails to acknowledge that Euro-American women possess “White privilege” while African-American women do not, therefore making the experiences of African-American women in some ways similar to but in other ways significantly different from those of Euro-American women. Most women experience many of the same career constraints and barriers, but women of color have additional concerns related to the unique combination of being leader, female, and African-American. Goldberger (1996) espoused that “knowledge, knowing, class, race, gender, and culture all intersect and
Any society has privileged cultures—the socially-valued ways of knowing for establishing and evaluating truth. When a person’s ways of knowing conflict with the dominant culture, he or she may feel pressure to accept “the right way to know” or to give up ways of knowing that are devalued (pp. 8–9). It is expected that African-Americans and women conform to the dominant culture, gender norms, and values of society. There is a lack of sensitivity toward diverse leadership styles. The myth remains that the ideal leader for most schools is a White man, especially at the secondary level (Brunner & Peyton-Caire, 2000; Murtadha & Larson, 1999; Shakeshaft, 1989). Leadership and access to leadership requires being a member of the dominant culture and gender or conforming, or appearing to conform, to the dominant belief system.

White Privilege

Considerably more research has been conducted on women than on people of color. Although women’s lack of access to power makes them akin to a minority, women are the majority population in the U.S. White women, despite lack of social, political, and economic power, enjoy a privileged status in U.S. society based on their race (hooks, 1990; McIntosh, 1988). This is referred to as “White privilege.” McIntosh (1988) described White privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that a person of privilege can count on cashing in each day, but about which was meant to remain oblivious. These privileges are out of reach for African-Americans and are seldom acknowledged by Euro-Americans. White privilege and its denial, whether subconscious or due to lack of knowledge, exacerbates oppressive attitudes and thinking. To compare African-American women and Euro-American women in
any social context dilutes the reality of White privilege and ignores the struggles that African-Americans have experienced due to race.

**Cultural Capital**

Men are sometimes recipients of privilege based solely on their gender. Men generally respond to social situations in terms of individual positioning in a hierarchical social order, seeking power and accomplishment (status), in which independence is valued. Those who control entry into educational leadership have been socialized by a society that makes cultural assumptions about women and about people of color. Those cultural assumptions grew out of societal norms and values that marginalize these two groups.

Cultural capital as defined by Apple (1995) assumes that the fundamental role of educational institutions is the distribution of knowledge to students. Some students are more able to acquire “cultural gifts” that come naturally from their class, race, or gender position. Cultural capital creates products of socialization that begin in childhood and continue through adulthood. Decisions about who is the focus of research, who is recruited and hired, and who does or does not get promoted are made within a social context in which women and people of color experience an inferior social status and are often objects of negative stereotypes (Groslin, 1969). Therefore, if women and people of color are excluded from the pool of viable candidates for positions of leadership based on sexism and racism, the institution’s ability to change is reduced.

The context of socialization of societal norms and values as it relates to racism and sexism is a difficult problem to overcome. Those who are in leadership roles, that is, White or male, often continue to promote candidates who are White or male. Research indicates that
school districts and schools with high minority populations, critical financial conditions, and educational problems will tend to hire a minority for administrative leadership (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Scott, 1982). These situations often lead to failure, which further constrains career advancement and makes the minority leader appear weak or incompetent.

In a nationwide survey, male and female school administrators believed that gender was a positive factor for men and a negative factor (hindrance) for women. White males did not view affirmative-action programs as being positive or fair (Richardson, 1979). In general, men are not willing to relinquish the advantages that gender affords them, regardless of the barriers that those advantages have created for others.

_African-American Women_

hooks (1990) claimed that White women and Black men “can act as oppressor or be oppressed” (p. 15). hooks (1984) further asserted, “Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women, yet White women may be victimized by men or oppressors of black people” (p. 15). African-American women have to contend with both sisterhood and Blackness, which can sometimes conflict. Mills (1997) acknowledged the dual position that African-American women confront because of the “devastating interaction of the double hegemony” (p. 16). This double dominance exists because of sexist and racist norms that value women for their bodies and their beauty but rarely for their thoughts.

hooks (1990) asserted that Black women face a culture where practically everyone wants them to “stay in our place.” She further stated that it is from the social realm dominated by White men and White women that racist and sexist stereotypes are continually
used as ways of defining Black women’s identity and behavior (hooks, 1990). Women and people of color experience prejudice and discrimination. Although the researcher recognizes that other minorities have similar experiences, the focus of this study is on African-American females. Racism and sexism are unconscious and conscious ideologies embedded in American history.

Researchers who are interested in race have basically disregarded gender, and researchers who have examined issues of gender tend to overlook race. Both are important characteristics related to social context and educational leadership. Race and gender intersect in African-American women. How are they perceived as leaders if the intersections of their being are disregarded? Porter (2000) revealed that in her conversations about diversity, others stated that they do not see her as a Black woman, which ignores a pertinent part of her identity. I agree with Porter’s statement and believe that only another African-American women would identify and acknowledge the importance of all of her characteristics.

Schmuck (1980) argued that our society emphasizes the differences between men’s and women’s work, giving the latter less status, value, and pay. The Department of Labor statistics clearly indicate that the dual status of minority and female results in lower earning power for African-American women than for African-American men, Euro-American women, or Euro-American men. Doughty (1980) concluded that the perception that Black women are at top jobs because they are a minority and women is a myth. The underlining message is that women are treated as beneath men and African Americans rank lower than Euro-Americans; therefore, an African-American woman would have the lowest status in a social and professional context.
Educational administration is highly stratified by race and gender. There are many female teachers and few female administrators. African-American women have a double challenge because of the dual barrier of gender and race. While women and minorities experience barriers to leadership positions, minority women encounter both gender and racial barriers that are often difficult to overcome.

The little research on minority principals has focused on statistics and job categories in which they work. Banks (2001) posited that compared to women and White men, there are few studies on minorities in educational leadership. Rance (1992) examined the career goals of 12 high-school assistant principals. Although administrative preparedness has often been noted as an obstacle, Rance (1992) found that the African-American participants felt better prepared for administrative positions than their White counterparts and therefore believed that racism was a factor in their not being promoted to a high-school principalship. According to Scott (1983), racism impedes people of color from access to power and privilege.

Minorities and African-American women have traditionally had limited career options. African Americans have often sought careers in education. African-American educators, both female and male, were prominent figures in the Black community. Shakeshaft (1989) reported that in the 1920’s, education was one of the most prevalent fields of work for African-American women. Banks (2001) noted that in the 1960’s and 1970’s, integration reduced teaching opportunities for African Americans. African-American students were moved to White schools, but African-American teachers and principals were rarely afforded those same transfers, and many lost their jobs.
Banks (2001) further noted significant differences in the experiences of minority, women, and White-male leaders, the major one being that African-American school administrators tend to have close ties to the community. Building relationships with students and families is a major initiative for most school districts. Moody (1971) referenced a national study that found that 72% of the school districts with African-American superintendents were predominantly populated with African-American school children. Jackson (1999) found that there never have been as many as 50 Black female superintendents in the U.S. at one time. Currently, North Carolina has 16 (13.9%) female superintendents, 12 (10.4%) Black superintendents, and 1 (0.8%) Black, female superintendent. According to Banks (2001), many minorities begin their administrative careers in education through projects related to minority issues.

Rance (1992) found that having a Black role model was critical for participants’ career advancement. After examining the lives of African-American female principals at elementary and middle schools, Nicholson (1999) recommended that further research be conducted on how to increase their numbers. My research attempts to fill this void by examining the life experiences of African-American female principals at high schools and offering recommendations to increase their numbers.

**Career Paths**

Several explanations have been offered in the literature to account for there being few women and minorities in educational administration. One commonly accepted explanation is that women and minorities are not motivated to enter administration (Banks & Banks, 2001). However, research substantiates that women have the same career ambitions as men; they
simply lack comparable opportunities (Ortiz & Marshall, 1988). In fact, the majority of students enrolled in and receiving master’s of school administration degrees and administrative licenses, which are typically required for the principalship, are women, yet significant gender discrepancies remain in hiring practices.

**Summary**

The majority of teachers are female, yet the majority of school leaders are male. African-American female leaders in education are even more rare, most of whom are principals in urban elementary schools. Research has examined barriers to advancement for women and for African-Americans but has neglected those for African-American women.

Hibbert-Smith (2006) noted that in conducting her research on the history of minority female superintendents, she was asked who cared about their experiences. Hibbert-Smith (2006), Lincoln (1993), and this researcher would respond that the silenced must be heard in order to more fully understand the dimensions of this complex issue. Beachum (2005) declared that without research on African-American women, we will not have the inclusion of a different voice, a voice from the margins. Beachum (2005) also stated that ideas and voices of people of color are thrust to the margins of discussions. As a researcher, the voices, paradigms, innuendos, and nuances will be documented, highlighted, and exposed for all to read, digest, question, and ponder, but at the very least be considered and become part of the discussion.

Brunner and Peyton-Caire (2000) attested that a person’s race and gender cannot be separate considerations from his or her personal experiences in a social context. Those attributes influence one’s perspective and interactions with others. According to Enomoto
(2000), White women see gender as prominent in their lives, but Black women first have to contend with the issues of race. Enomoto (2000) posited that being Black and female undermines an individual’s self-esteem as a leader. Kalbus (2000) eloquently stated that if we believe in equity and equality for educating children, then women of color should be a part of the leadership.

The theoretical framework that is most conducive for feminist research is standpoint theory. My research perspective is primarily feminist because the life stories of women are significant and present a view different from those of men. However, insights drawn from standpoint theory are also crucial to this study. Women may encounter different barriers to leadership. Further, White and Black women may have different experiences and resources to overcome those barriers.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study examined the lives of African-American female high-school principals. Previously, the researcher was an assistant principal in a school system that had never had an African-American female high-school principal, even though during my tenure from 1999-2005, three high-school principals were African-American men and six were Euro-American women. The school district was second largest in the state and served a very diverse student population. Its African-American male superintendent had progressed through the school system as teacher, assistant principal, principal, area assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, interim superintendent, and superintendent.

What should one assume about this data? What message does this send to all African-American women? What are the implications? How equitable are the implications implied by these numbers? During this time, one-third of this school system’s high schools had a Euro-American female principal, implying that female leadership was valued and accepted. In 2009–2010, 8 of its 25 high schools had female principals, of whom 2 were African-American women.

This study takes multiple paths to examine the concepts of race and gender in the principalship. The theoretical approach utilized in this study is standpoint theory, which focuses on knowledge that is produced, is non-oppressive and non-hierarchical, and uses stories and retelling of events to produce alternative realities. A standpoint is a perspective on the world that determines one’s focus while constraining what one can perceive. Harding (1987) claimed that the social group to which we belong shapes what we know and how we
communicate. According to Harding (1987), the perspective of the less powerful can provide a more objective view than that of the more powerful.

Woods (1997) offered that marginalized people have more motivation to understand the perspective of the powerful than vice versa and have little reason to defend the status quo. Standpoint theory purports that people gain knowledge through their positions or social location. The term “positionality” was coined by Yonezawa (2000) to capture how people’s positions in the larger social structure influence their awareness of perceptions and events. Collins (1991) claimed that “intersecting oppressions” put Black women in a different marginalized place in society from that experienced by either White women or Black men.

Woods (1997) acknowledged that the concept of women as a single social group is politically useful but argued that it may not reflect reality. This puts into question “group solidarity” and motivates my research to examine African-American female high-school principals as a distinct group. Harding (1987) observed that women are not a monolithic group, because economic conditions, race, and sexuality influence one’s standpoint. Hegel’s (1967) analysis of the master-slave relationship revealed that what people “know” depends upon the group to which they belong and that the powerful in control receive knowledge. This supports the need to study African-American female principals, work to have their voices heard, and disseminate power and knowledge with regard to their pathways, perceptions, and potential. My study will examine the situated knowledge of African-American female high-school principals. Situated knowledge is knowledge specific to a situation and is often embedded in language, culture, or traditions.
Research Design

Clandinin and Connelly (1990) stated that the narrative method of research design is the best way of representing and understanding experiences. They further believed that experiences happen narratively and that the experience is a collaboration between the researcher and participants over time. In order to understand the complexity of race, gender, and power in a social context of employment of principals, an oral history of the pathways to the principalship will be conducted. Oral history is a method of gathering and preserving historical information through recorded interviews with participants regarding past events and ways of life. It is the oldest type of historical inquiry, predating the written word, and one of the most modern, initiated with tape recorders in the 1940’s (Dunaway & Baum, 1996).

A qualitative research design is most appropriate for the study. A phenomenological career development design coupled with in-depth interviews will be employed to construct the career development of African-American female leaders of high schools in North Carolina. The researcher will investigate and narrate the study through techniques such as chronology of major events, followed by detail about a few significant incidents. According to Husserl (1970), phenomenological research seeks to describe rather than explain, and to start from a perspective free from hypotheses or preconceptions. Moustakas (1994) stated that the aim of phenomenological research is to determine what the experience means for the people involved. Harding (2003) claimed that there are important things to learn from the perspective of all marginalized groups, that a perspective that draws only on the insights of privileged groups is inadequate.
According to Patton (2002), a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their experiences of a concept or phenomenon. To allow a phenomenon to fully reveal itself, phenomenology instructs us to examine it from all perspectives, using all of our senses, and even drawing upon thoughts and feelings. Phenomenologists consider phenomena to be apodictic, which means they speak for themselves—which implies that we should be prepared to listen. All experiences have both an objective and a subjective component, and so understanding a phenomenon means understanding both. Marton and Booth (1997) referred to the objective “pole” of a phenomenon as the intended object or noema and the subjective “pole” of a phenomenon as the intending act or noesis. They coined the term bracketing to refer to the setting aside of all of a researcher’s usual or natural assumptions about the phenomenon, so as not to misinterpret it. Moustakas (1994) stated that the researcher is to collect data from those who have experienced the phenomenon and then begin to develop a description of the experience. We must put aside our biases, prejudices, theories, philosophies, religions, and even common sense and accept the phenomenon for what it is. According to Marton and Booth (1997), data collection in phenomenology typically consists of close interviews with a small, purposeful sample, with the researcher working toward an articulation of the interviewee’s reflection on experience that is as complete as possible. Through interviews, the boundaries of the issues may be visible or invisible but will begin to emerge through the life stories, the narrative histories, of these women.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were explored in this study:
1. What barriers and opportunities exist for African-American women seeking positions as high-school principals?

2. What required relationships or qualifications are most important for African-American female high-school principals to be successful in their school?

3. What have the African-American female high-school principals determined about the world of educational administration for minority women?

The research questions provided an opportunity for each participant to explore her personal situations as well as other subsidiary knowledge of other African-American female high-school principals. Question 1 allowed a broad look at the experiences both positive (opportunities) and negative (barriers) of their particular situations. Participants were encouraged to give details of how they had overcome the barriers or how they were still coping with them. Question 2 was pertinent for those who were in the role of principal to share the needed skill set for survival and success. The participants were among the most knowledgeable people about what is needed to be a successful African-American female high-school principal. Question 3 allowed the voices of African-American female high-school principals to be heard. The researcher was seeking discovery, reflection, advice, and guidance that might aid other African-American women planning to become high-school principals. Many of the participants may have never considered these three components within the context of school. This question segued into the interview questions that provided an opportunity for a deeper conversation about the participants’ lives and career development.
Purposeful Sampling and Selection of Participants

The sample selection of participants in this study represented a purposeful rather than random sample. Purposeful sampling attempts to include participants who have experienced the phenomenon under consideration and from those whom the researcher can learn the most (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988). Patton (1990) wrote:

The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research. (p. 169)

Without interaction, purposeful sampling may be impossible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The overall goal of social-science research is to capture and accurately convey reality, be it reality of an event or of an experience or the true experiences of a population. Feminist research differs from traditional research for three reasons. First, it actively seeks to remove the power imbalance between researcher and participant. Second, it is politically motivated and has a major role in changing social inequality; it begins with the standpoints and experiences of women. Third, it recognizes the participants as the authorities whose experiences are taken as the starting point of research.

For this study, I interviewed seven African-American female public-high-school principals in North Carolina. This number was determined by the small population of African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina and by phenomenological researchers’ suggestion that no more than 10 participants be included in a phenomenological study (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

The criteria for the selection of participants were as follows:
• Female African-American administrator;
• Served as an educational leader for at least one full school year;
• Had served or was presently serving in the capacity of high-school principal.

African-American female principals of high schools meeting the criteria were selected from all counties in North Carolina. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) posited that the perspectives or voices of participants ought to be prominent in any qualitative report. Mehra (2001) posited that “those committed to research approaches that challenge the status quo and contribute to a more egalitarian social order are considered to have made an epistemological break from the positivist insistence on researcher neutrality and objectivity” (p. 77). As a feminist, my continuing research commitment is to increase awareness of social injustices and provoke change for marginalized people.

The researcher functioned as an inside interviewer, that is, one who understands the realities of the experience being examined from an insider’s perspective. Building a collaborative and interpersonal relationship with the female principals was the researcher’s intent. The researcher and the participants discussed the social, cultural, and political practices and policies within the administrative world from the standpoint of an African-American woman.

Sample Justification

This study was conducted with African-American female high-school principals from various counties in North Carolina, due to the difficulty of finding multiple principals fitting these criteria within any single county in the state. To protect the privacy of these individuals, I did not make public the county or any distinguishing school-system
characteristics. Because this study concerned the impact of race, gender, and leadership in the educational system, the racial history of each county also needed to be researched.

Each selected principal received an invitation by letter to participate followed by a telephone call and a visit if the telephone call indicated acceptance. There are 116 school districts in North Carolina and 466 high schools, of which 145 have female principals and 40 have African-American female principals. After the 40 African-American female high-school principals were identified, they were asked to participate in the study. Richness of professional background and willingness to participate in a personal in-depth interview were the primary considerations in identifying participants for the study.

The position of high-school principal was selected because it is the most coveted and respected position at the building level in public education and there is an under-representation of African-American female high school principals. High-school principals make monumental decisions for the students of that school. They have the autonomy to rank and classify students and grant diplomas at any time. Men historically have dominated the position of high-school principal.

**Data Collection**

The research questions were addressed during the interviews. These in-depth interviews acquired detail on the career trajectories and experiences of the participants. Each part of the interview focused on a different portion of the woman’s life. The first segment explored from birth through high school, the second segment explored from the college years until the participant’s first full-time professional job in education, and the final segment catalogued the participant’s personal and professional career. Through our dialogue, I hoped
to illuminate each woman’s life history in her voice and from her vantage point. The interviews were semi-structured and contained open-ended questions to allow the principals to do most of the talking. Follow-up questions were guided by the words that the principals used as a point of emphasis during the interview. All interviews were taped and transcribed by the researcher.

**Data Analysis**

All data were combined and analyzed using content thematic analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), whose goal is to “determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that inform the respondents’ view of the world in general and the research topics in particular” (McCraken, 1988, p. 42). This goal was accomplished through coding and schematic organization of the storymap. Coding was used to “expand and tease out the data to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30). In analysis, the researcher worked to find the voices of the participants and hear their stories in a particular time, place, or setting using a storymap as detailed in Table 3.1 below (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Richmond, 1999). This method of analysis helps to organize the recounting of the chronological events within a rubric. The analysis of the interviews was organized and themed.

Grbich (2007) posited that data collection will lead to patterns, relationships, and interconnections. As noted by Grbich, the data analysis process included bracketing my own experiences, conversations with the participants, journal writing and reflections, and drawing themes from the conversations.
Table 3.1
Schematic Organization of the Storymap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The world of</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>• Background</td>
<td>• Roots</td>
<td>• Setting</td>
<td>• Incidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>• Self-Identity</td>
<td>• Personal</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>• Sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intentions</td>
<td>• Roles</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>• Events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Future

Intentions

Source: Richmond, 1999.

Patton (2002) stated that the phenomenological approach assumes that there is an essence or essences to shared experiences. Moustakas (1994) suggested that phenomenological researchers have an “abiding concern” and a “serious interest in the phenomenon.” Phenomenological research brackets, analyzes, and compares the experiences of different people to identify the essences of the phenomenon. Patton (2002) posited that the researcher and others involved must have personal experience and interest in the phenomenon being studied. There are various phenomenological approaches. According to Patton (2002), the commonality among the approaches is a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and how they transform experience into consciousness.

The researcher, being inherently a part of the research, acknowledged her experiences and feelings as an African-American female public-school administrator. Patton (2002)
referred to the phenomenological attitude shift that is accomplished through *epoche*.

According to Patton (2002), *epoche* is the process that the researcher goes through to remove or become aware of his or her viewpoints regarding the phenomenon. Patton (2002) referred to the second step as *phenomenological reduction*, in which the researcher brackets out the world. Once the data are bracketed, they are *horizontalized*, defined by Patton (2002) as treating the data as of equal value. The data are then clustered and organized. The researcher consulted with the principals after the interview tapes were transcribed to assure accuracy and clarity and sought feedback regarding the interpretations of their experiences.

Through this research, change hopefully will take place in African-American female leadership in public education. Wolf (1996) suggested that the mere examination of women’s lives will evoke change. A critical examination of a woman’s life and leadership may help to shatter stereotypes, and in this regard, the research is “truly feminist” because it may evoke change through activism and consciousness-raising (Wolf, 1996, p. 5). When we become aware of women’s situated positions, change occurs through knowledge.

The voices of African-American female leaders heard here may provide a springboard for dialogue on issues of gender, race, and work in education, particularly at the school level. These life histories of African-American leaders offer rich information on diversity in the educational setting, and they may inform efforts at closing the achievement gap between the genders and among different racial groups. These stories may influence other educators who aspire to become leaders beyond the classrooms; these voices may inform other girls, boys, parents, or other men and women who seek careers in educational leadership. Black feminist writers such as bell hooks (1984) and Patricia Hill Collins (1991)
have strongly argued against the biases that exist in White academic feminist writing, such as class exclusion, heterosexism, racism, and ethnocentrism. Feminist research cannot claim to speak for all women, but it can provide new knowledge grounded in the realities of women’s experiences and can effect structural changes in the social world.

hooks (1994) posited that we must share knowledge and resources with those who are in need. She challenged women to end oppression of other women by giving them choices. Furthermore, she encouraged African-American women to “build an agenda” that speaks to the needs of African-American women by helping them to examine their world (hooks, 1990, pp. 59–60). The goal of feminist research is to correct the invisibility and distortion of the female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal social positions (hooks, 1981; Lather, 1991).

This study will bring awareness to other educational leaders of the need to become cognizant of the special problems faced by their female and minority colleagues so that they can offer support to those who have achieved leadership positions or aspire to such positions. Finally, female and minority leaders and those seeking to become leaders need to understand more about the situation outside their own subjective experience. If the path seems blocked, they need to know that there is hope through knowledge and change. If the path seems easy, they need to know that others still face obstacles. We all need to widen the focus of our lens and participate in diversity at every level, and a most appropriate place to start is in education. Encouraging changes in thoughts and ideas about women in leadership will be no simple task.
**Research Reliability and Validity**

Phenomenology emphasizes a focus on people’s subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. The phenomenologist wants to understand how the world appears to others. According to Hammersley (1990), validity and reliability assess the quality and rigor of research. He further stated that validity refers to truth, as in interpreting the extent to which an account accurately represents the phenomenon. Hammersley (1992) posited that reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which observers assign different instances to the same category. To increase the validity of my research, I invited the research participants to edit the transcripts of their interviews. The participants thus had an opportunity to approve or disagree with my interpretations.

According to Hoepfl (1997), qualitative researchers seek illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations. This research will illuminate African-American women and their pathways to the position of high-school principal. Patton (2002) posited that credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher. My purpose and goal of this research was to dialogue with African-American female high-school principals and to hear their voices. Golafshani (2003) claimed that the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality and that the quality of the research will be enhanced when the participants are allowed to review the transcripts. Eisner (1991) stated that a good qualitative study can help clarify a confusing situation. The pathway and perceptions of the career development of African-American female high-school principals may be unknown which may lead to confusion because there are so few in North Carolina. This research will
bring attention to the position of high-school principal, the participants’ pathways to the position, and their personal and professional development.

As alternatives to the traditional quantitative criteria, Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed four criteria for judging qualitative research. They are *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. Credibility refers to establishing that the research is believable from the perspective of the participant in the research. Transferability is the ability to generalize or transfer the research results to other settings. Dependability requires that the researcher account for the changes in settings in which the research could occur. The researcher is responsible for describing the setting and how the changes will affect the research. Confirmability supports confirming and corroborating the research results. The researcher can check and recheck data throughout the study, another researcher can check the work of the original researcher, or a data audit can be performed to examine data collection and analysis procedures.

Another important characteristic of qualitative research is self-reflection, a process in which the researcher analyzes his or her role and participation in the research process. The purpose of self-reflection is to uncover the researcher’s assumptions, perceptions, and role in the research process. Self-reflection acknowledges that the researcher is not an impartial observer detached from the data.

**Subjectivity Statement**

It is important for the researcher to identify his or her location in the social world in order to address any biases it may cause. Matsumoto (1996) posited that the feminist researcher may be either insider or outsider to the environment and topic he or she is
exploring. Matsumoto said that as insider, the researcher has a stronger understanding of the
dynamics and play of social relationships that inform the situation under investigation.
Matsumoto further asserted that the issue of inequality may be overcome through the
researcher’s affiliation with the context, because participants may feel more comfortable
sharing information with someone who is within the situation.

Who am I? Some days I am not sure myself. What is more important is who I have
become: a person that looks at all situations as social settings that we navigate based on our
lens. My lens is that of an African-American, female, heterosexual, Christian, feminist,
mother, sister, daughter, and professional. I have seen the world from a variety of
perspectives. I remember always being in classes in which White students were predominant
and my never being selected to participate in class. I remember the feelings of self-doubt and
discomfort that accompanied the teachers’ questioning eyes, and I remember my classmates’
aloofness towards my heritage through their insensitive comments. I have lived an
educational nightmare without understanding terms such as culturally relevant pedagogy,
culture-centered knowledge, or curriculum transformation. My colleagues continue to
victimize children who do not fit the mold, through labels, tracking, suspensions, and low
expectations instead of seeking viable solutions.

Am I living a lie? Sometimes I think that I am walking on both sides of a landmine
and something is sure to explode. Most casualties are marginal students: those from single-
parent homes, having low income, or with poor attendance, who produce low test scores and
are frequently suspended and labeled as learning-disabled. These students are not expected to
succeed in a traditional school environment. We have made it clear that they are the cause of
the achievement gap and a disruption to a productive school environment. We divide neighborhoods and bus poor children to distant schools to avoid having too many of them at any one school. Such policies are commonplace, but they still seem inappropriate.

Linda Powell, an educator, psychotherapist, and organizational consultant, stated, “We know a great deal about what is effective for Black students, their schools, and families; yet it remains extremely difficult to mobilize the resources and will required to make a systemic difference in their lives” (Powell, 1997, p. 235). This is widespread in public schools. When given the opportunity as an educator, I have made educational decisions that are best for all students, especially the marginal students, to which educators have reacted with public disagreement, noncompliant behavior, lack of participation, and suggestive questioning of my rationale for such decisions. It was tiring to constantly fight unconcerned administrators, uncaring teachers, and insensitive parents over my decisions.

While working toward a doctorate, I became more socially, culturally, and racially aware through readings, class discussions, and reflections. I did not previously have the knowledge or ability to clearly articulate the social issues of race, gender, and leadership that envelop our world. I am disappointed and disillusioned with the lack of desire that the dominant culture has shown to create a better world for all children. The world that we create for our children is the one we will live in tomorrow.

My pursuing a doctorate has also brought about professional and personal transitions. My self-esteem as an adult had always been inflated. When I was not satisfied with various aspects of myself, I worked to improve them, but never at the request or desire of others. As a doctoral student, my self-esteem has been undermined by self-doubt because the task
seemed overwhelming. Recently, instead of looking at my strengths, I have begun examining my weaknesses. I have become vulnerable, and my life is tempestuous. I am not comfortable in a position of deficit within the scholarly arena, but I know that hard work, dedication, and tenacity will cause overcome self-doubt.

My reading has caused me pain, sorrow, happiness, and most of all, enlightenment. In *Gender Talk* (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003), the centuries-long history of physical and sexual exploitation of Black women, which began during the Middle Passage, bears repeating. We continue to be haunted by questions Elsa Barkley Brown raised when she discovered images of Black female lynching victims in her father’s political cartoons: Why don’t people remember the lynching of Black women? Why aren’t Black women’s other experiences of violence—rape, sexual abuse, and other forms of physical abuse in White homes and elsewhere—remembered as vividly as other atrocities experienced by black males when pondering the history of the African-American experience in general?

Historically, what position have women held that has caused the world to ignore our presence and pain? How can we move past being overlooked in every revered facet of society? Through my research of African-American female leadership, I have wanted to address some of the cultural, racial, and social issues related to women and society. After reading *The Dreamkeepers*, I was able to understand some of the connecting points seldom present in teachers hired in school systems that claim to value diversity and cultural awareness. In an earlier study that illustrated this kind of behavior, pre-service teachers were asked to explain the economic, social, and educational disparities between White and African-American children. Presented with data on African-American and White children’s
life chances, the students were asked three questions: How can you explain these disparities? What are some differing ideological explanations for these disparities? What can schools do about these disparities? For the first question, only one pre-service teacher offered racism as an explanation. The belief of the majority of the students—that African Americans’ enslavement several hundred years ago explains today’s disparities—suggests that they could not envision how conditions could be otherwise. Thus, according to this view, the past alone determines the future of people (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Cooper (1999) argued that moral progress depends on the only person able to understand the deep connections of race and gender in America—the black woman. Cooper provided the starting place to dialogue effectively regarding the connectedness of race and gender. Because I am an African-American woman, my understanding of marginalized people is a self-study of the world. Through my research on African-American female principals, I have brought voice to a portion of society that is forgotten and underrepresented in leadership roles.

I have viewed my education as a ministry. Education requires looking at the whole person and helping the individual grow through learning. Helping children to be the best that they can be requires that educators provide the best that they can through preparation, instruction, and management. I look forward to continuing my education after attaining a doctorate and continuing to be an advocate for educational equality.

My goal is to begin to live not just for my own desires, but for the good of others. Through my endeavors and educational attainments, I hope to challenge others so that they see the big picture, change the picture, and paint themselves into the picture. Being a Black
female in pursuit of a doctorate at a predominantly White university has not been easy due to insensitivity and discrimination, but I see the big picture and am poised to paint myself into the portrait.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study was limited to a small sample of African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina. The findings cannot be generalized to other African-American female principals or to female principals in general. The racial context of North Carolina further limited the generalizability of the study. Finally, my positionality as an African-American female principal made it difficult to bracket or suspend my beliefs as I analyzed data drawn from the interviews. Moustakas (1994) spoke of the concept of epoche, which is to bracket or set aside one’s experiences as a researcher. The goal is to have a fresh perspective regarding the phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) stated that true or complete bracketing rarely is ever achieved. Likewise, although I have been able to bracket, I could not completely set aside my experience as a woman, African American, or school administrator. My experiences as a school administrator differed considerably from those of the participants. In accordance with the suggestion by Moustakas (1994) that the researcher reveal his or her own experiences, I have included a personal subjectivity statement. Polkinghorne (1989) believed that reading the research provides a better feeling or understanding of experiencing the phenomenon.

**Summary**

This study examined the lives of seven African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina public schools. A qualitative research design was used to allow
the narrative voice of each woman to be heard. The use of phenomenological research allowed these women’s stories to be described rather than explained. The researcher attempted to convey the reality of the experience through a chronology of their career development. The data were dissected using content thematic analysis, which yields categories and relationships among the information. A storymap was used to organize the information into particular timeframes, locations, and settings.

The researcher continued to self-reflect throughout the study and bracket assumptions and preconceived notions. The researcher is an African-American female elementary school principal, which makes her both an insider and an outsider regarding the participants’ career experiences.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

The findings discussed in this chapter resulted from interviews conducted with seven African-American female high-school principals. I contacted every African-American female principal of a traditional school in North Carolina. Traditional schools are public schools that serve students in 9th through 12th grades, have athletic teams, and hold annual graduation exercises. I excluded middle colleges, academies, alternative schools, specialty schools, high schools located on college campuses in which interviews are part of the admissions process, or any other nontraditional derivative of a public high school. I was originally given data from North Carolina superintendents indicating that the state has 40 African-American female high-school principals, but careful examination determined that there are actually only 20.

I sent an invitation by letter to participate in this study to all 20 African-American female traditional-school principals in North Carolina. Seven accepted, for an acceptance rate of 35%, and were interviewed at a location of the participants' choosing. Each of the participants was assigned a pseudonym to conceal her identity and provide confidentiality. The interviews were conducted face to face and lasted between 60–90 minutes. The interview questions are listed in Appendix D. Participants were asked 13 questions, all of which shed light on the participants’ perceptions of the position and their pathway to the high-school principalship. Several of the interview questions addressed personal and professional concerns specific to African-American principals. The overarching research questions concerned participants’ awareness and correlation of race, gender, and leadership. Moustakas (1994) stated that horizonalization occurs when the data analysis, overarching research
questions, and interview transcripts result in quotes, statements, and enhanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The participants all agreed to allow the use of direct quotes with the understanding that pseudonyms would be used. The participants were excited and eager to be interviewed. Many of them stated that they had never heard of such a study, nor had they heard of any concern expressed for the lack of African-American female leadership. I too was excited to meet with each of them and have an opportunity to listen and learn from these female leaders. I didn’t know what to expect. As I began scheduling the interviews, I mentally dismissed my preconceived assumptions and theories, what Marton and Booth (1997) referred to as bracketing. I was able to set aside my professional history and listen closely and quietly to “their” history, to their phenomena. Some participants responded via email and others telephoned me to schedule an interview time and location. I was impressed with the prompt responses and the cordiality of the original contact. I felt a sense of empowerment during the interviews. These were intelligent, well-educated, passionate educational leaders.

My intent while analyzing the interviews was to look for similarities and discover themes in the data, while acknowledging differences in the women. Each participant was unique in her journey, perception, and pathway. I did not want my quest for tidy, elegant themes to obliterate their stories, so I proceeded with caution and included many direct quotes. All of the interviewees had served or were serving as high-school principals in a traditional public school in North Carolina. Throughout the interviews, I discovered that although many of their experiences as high-school principals were similar, they perceived and reacted to them differently. Through the interview questions and responses, the following
themes resonated: pathways—personal background and history; perceptions—experiences and support; pitfalls—regrets, regards, and relics; and plans—Isolation and lack of knowledge.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were explored in this study:

1. How do the experiences of African American female high school principals reflect the context of gender and race on leadership practice in their schools?
2. What required relationships or qualifications are most important for African American female high school principals to be successful in their school?
3. What have African American female high school principals determined about the world of educational administration for minority women?

The research questions were instrumental in the development of the interview questions and in organizing the findings.

The questions and participants’ responses were analyzed to determine which categories—self, family, community, and school—most informed their responses. Several questions had more than one area that coincided with participants’ responses. Each participant’s story is preceded by a storymap (table) that gives a brief overview of the participant’s perspective on her world. The storymap highlights the different aspects of her life (self, family, community, and schooling) with a time-frame (past, present, and future) to give an overview of what will be shared more thoroughly in the story.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First HS Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>Mother. Educator. Never married. No children. Attended PWI.</td>
<td>Several educators in her family. One brother, both parents in home.</td>
<td>Small AA community in rural NC. Family named after the street she grew up on.</td>
<td>She has been in the same county her entire career. Well connected throughout her years of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>Need to focus on health and fitness. Gained 40 lbs in last 4 years.</td>
<td>Boyfriend and dog. Close relationship with brother.</td>
<td>Lives in a starter home about 30 minutes from school.</td>
<td>20+ years in education, school population: AA +50%, FRL +30%, total population: +1000 students, 1st AA female principal at her school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Participate in fitness-and-nutrition program.</td>
<td>Possible marriage to boyfriend. He has children and she provides guidance and support.</td>
<td>Plans to use starter home as rental property and purchase a larger home.</td>
<td>Enjoys working with students. Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key for acronyms:

AA – African American  
FRL – Free and Reduced Lunch  
H – Hispanic  
HBCU – Historically Black College and University  
PWI – Predominantly White Institution
Sasha's Story

Sasha is a principal in a very large district. She has 20 years of experience. She has moved through the educational ranks from middle-school teacher to high-school teacher, high-school assistant principal, middle-school principal, and high-school principal. Her entire career has been spent in the same county where she attended college. She has been a high-school principal for three years. She taught middle-school and high-school math for 14 years before joining administration. As a high-school teacher, she was encouraged by her principal to accept some administrative duties. For several summers, she was responsible for the summer-school program at her high school as well as at several other high schools. This opportunity helped her gain an understanding of hiring, evaluating, discipline, and creating a school schedule. She credits these experiences with putting her in position to meet some of the female high-school principals in her county. She was hired by one of them as an assistant principal of a high school and later by the other as a middle-school principal. Sasha stated, “Having connections and people knowing your skills has helped me to obtain every administrative position that I have had.” She was a middle-school principal for two and a half years and is in her third year as a high-school principal. Each time, she was hired by someone with whom she previously worked or that knew someone with whom she worked.

Sasha grew up in rural North Carolina. She has one brother and was raised in a household with both parents. Her mother was a teacher, and her father was in law enforcement and eventually became the director of housekeeping at a local university. Her aunts, neighbors, and other relatives were all teachers. According to Sasha, “Well, that's what
all African-American females did, there were so many historically Black teaching colleges, you either went into teaching or nursing.”

After graduating from high school, she attended a predominantly White institution, originally majoring in computer programming so as not to follow in her mother’s footsteps. After six weeks, she changed her major to math. Her first job was as a middle-school math teacher, which she held for four years. Then she became a high-school math teacher and enjoyed coaching and teaching at the same school for 10 years. Sasha worked on her master's degree in school administration at her alma mater and began interviewing for assistant-principal jobs. She wanted a high-school position and was hired as an assistant principal at the high-school level by her professional contact mentioned above. As an assistant principal, she was eager to learn as much as she could because she wanted to become a high-school principal. Her principal was later promoted to an assistant superintendent and was aware of Sasha’s abilities and desire to become a principal. Shortly after her former principal transitioned to the central office, she hired Sasha as a middle-school principal. Sasha became a middle-school principal shortly after completing her certification for administration.

Sasha stated, “I enjoyed the middle-school principalship more than I expected.”

While still a middle-school principal, Sasha had an opportunity to talk about her future goals with the superintendent. She expressed her desire to be the first African-American high-school principal in the county. The superintendent had appointed another African-American woman to serve as high-school principal at an alternative school, but Sasha expressed that she meant a comprehensive high school. The superintendent said that the best way to prepare
for a high school principal position was through her position as a middle-school principal and her former experience as a high-school assistant principal.

When a high-school principal position became available, she decided that she was ready for a change. Once again, she was selected by someone that she had worked with during her tenure as a high-school assistant principal, who happened to be a White male. After hiring her, he acted as a mentor and a support system. Sasha replaced an African-American male principal who had served at the school for three years before being promoted to the central office. Once Sasha was hired, she began transitioning the assistant principals that were at the school so that she could fill the positions with people she knew and trusted. Because of her relationships with people in the central office, she was able to hire assistant principals that were loyal to her rather than the positions being filled according to someone else’s wishes. She hired three assistant principals within the first year of her tenure as a high-school principal. She selected two African-American men who had been her assistant principals at the middle school, and a third African-American man with whom she had taught at the high-school level. During the second year, “I was told by my supervisor that I needed more diversity in my administrative team, so I hired another assistant principal, I selected a White female. She is working out well and learning to work with our kids. But I know that I have to be careful. I have to know who I have on board because African-American females don’t get second chances and aren’t allowed mistakes. We are expected to be better than the other administrators.”

Societal inequities, including those created by schooling practices, inform and shape Sasha’s leadership style and beliefs. “I had worked as a high-school teacher in a school that
was segregated, meaning only certain teachers were allowed to teach advanced classes and basically only certain children were allowed in those classes. I was determined as a principal that I was not going to allow this to be the case at my school. All teachers were asked/offered to teach the advanced courses. They rotated teaching the classes so that all staff members experienced different teaching levels.” She made an effort early in a student’s high-school academic career to prepare him or her for advanced course work through daytime tutoring, double math sessions, and Saturday Academy for core subjects. “We were able to increase the number of students—minority and low socio-economic as well as White.”

During her three years as a high-school principal, she had been able to improve the rate and direction of student achievement and create a climate of inclusion in advanced classes for all racial and economic student groups. “I was met with resistance from parents and teachers when the demographics in the advanced classes began to shift. The teachers would make comments such as, ‘I'm not sure that some of the students are prepared for these advanced classes.’” Sasha would counter, “Then we need to get them prepared.” Some teachers spoke with former parents in an attempt to garner support for maintaining the status quo in their class makeup. Other teachers confided in Sasha that the advanced teachers shared with parents that adding unprepared students to the class would slow down progress for the students that were supposed to be in the class. Sasha said, “Parents scheduled appointments to meet about the advanced-placement classes and asked if their children were going to be challenged and continue to receive a quality education. I assured them that the curriculum had not changed, nor the expectations for the students. Lots of meetings took place but I held to my plan. I received a lot of criticism and skeptical words. I kept my hands
involved in all aspects of the advanced-placement classes and spent an excessive amount of
time thwarting issues, but I kept insisting that all students received support and a welcome
and inviting classroom environment. Many people cautioned me that it was not worth the
trouble, but I believe that all students deserve a quality education and access to opportunities
for advancement, not just select students. My supervisor even questioned me about the
purpose and rationale. I said to him, ‘I thought all educators wanted what was best for all
students.’ My supervisor suggested that I create a summer plan for the non-traditional
students so that they had the prerequisite skills for the advanced-level courses. I took him up
on that idea, and we are working on grants to help with the cost.”

Sasha stated that the city hired a new police chief that expressed his concern about
her leadership. On several occasions, he asked her if she was sure she could handle the
school. Her school resource officer confided in Sasha that the chief had told the other law-
enforcement officers that he would put his child in a private school before he allowed her to
attend that school. The student population is predominantly African-American, a large
percentage of whom receive free or reduced lunch. She has stood her ground with the police
chief and assured him that leading the school is something that she can handle.

Sasha said that frequently when she is at meetings or job fairs with either of her
assistant principals, people just assume that she is not the principal. “People always go to my
assistant principal and assume they are the principal, they look a little funny when they
realize that the little Black woman is the high-school principal. The public still has an image
of the high-school principal being a man.”
The school has had a poor reputation in the community due to violence and gang issues. Before hiring Sasha, the county office talked with the staff and asked what they wanted in a principal. The staff said that the school needs a “strong Black male to handle the students and take control.” Sasha reflected, “I didn't think any students needed to be handled; I always thought students need to know that the adults in the building care about them.” As she has gotten to know the students and work with the staff, parents, and community leaders, she has discovered that the reputation of the school is not accurate. “I recognize that we have room for improvement, but what school doesn't? I wasn't looking for a perfect school; I was looking for a school that needed me to help it to improve.” She serves on several boards and committees in the area to help build and foster positive relationships and garner resources for her students to help them reach their goals. “My daily goal for my students is improvement, we are moving in the right directions, and they have taught me more than any administration class could about leadership. I don't know when I will leave this school, but I do know that I don't have a desire to serve at another school because this school is like home. I would like to eventually work with principals to lead schools and help develop teachers so they can better educate all students.”

**Summary**

Sasha ascended the administrative ladder faster than any of the other interviewees. There are only a few background differences that set Sasha apart from the other participants: she is the only participant that completed undergraduate and graduate school at a PWI, she has never been married, and she has no children. In addition, she is the only participant who became a principal (middle school) while completing her administrative license. She
attributed her rapid ascension to her key connections with leaders in the school system. Early in her career, as a teacher, she was able to accept several leadership roles and meet some prominent female and male principals in her school district. She later was hired by each of these people for every administrative position she has held. Her outgoing personality, longevity in the school district, and key relationships have made her the second African-American female high-school principal in the history of her county, and she is the youngest African-American woman to attain the position.

Sasha's story shows the importance of connections and establishing positive work relations to career advancement. She was the only principal interviewed who had three African-American assistant principals. I believe that her success at school is due in part to her selecting administrators with whom she had previously worked and whom she trusted. This is her first experience as a high-school principal. Sasha is very outgoing and described herself as talkative and friendly. Sasha’s original administrative team (three African-American males) lacked racial diversity and possibly could have resulted in not addressing the perspectives of all students. Sasha has since diversified her administrative team by hiring a White female, though only after this was suggested by her supervisor.
### Table 4.2
**Storymap for Principal Maya**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>Female family members are educators. Second marriage. Two children. Attended HBCU.</td>
<td>Not from NC. Siblings. Both parents in home. Son from previous marriage.</td>
<td>Urban community. Moved because she did not want her son to grow up in that environment.</td>
<td>She was educated K–12 in a very diverse environment. College HBCU. 10+ years in education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>She still continues to be bothered with the issues stemming from her being asked to step down from the principal position. She has a hard time trusting leadership in the county.</td>
<td>Happily married, very supportive husband and family.</td>
<td>They live in a diverse community within the school district where she works.</td>
<td>Currently working in a position to support principals. Was asked to step down as a high-school principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Seeking opportunities in other parts of North Carolina in the field of education.</td>
<td>Family may have to move for her career. She doesn’t want to move too far away.</td>
<td>She recognizes that she will probably have to move to attain her professional goals.</td>
<td>She would like to be a high-school principal again and then move on to state and national levels in education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Maya’s Story**

Maya is 39 years old. She was the principal of a high school for four years before being demoted to a central-office position. She grew up in a southern state in an urban area...
with two brothers and one sister. Her mother and aunts were former teachers, and her father was a probation officer. She was married and had a child before graduating from a local historically Black college. She didn't want to raise her child in her hometown, due to its high crime rate and negative role models. Shortly after her child's second birthday, she moved to North Carolina. She started her teaching career as a substitute teacher while studying for the teaching examination to earn her license in North Carolina. Maya started in middle-school language arts and social studies. She taught for several years and was selected as the grade-level chair and nominated by her peers to be the school-leadership chairperson. After a few years, she transferred to another school and taught eighth-grade language arts and social studies for two years. Her principal, a White male, suggested that she go to graduate school and become a school administrator. Afraid of being rejected for the county's first graduate cohort program, Maya waited until the night of the deadline before applying. She was accepted.

While she was enrolled in her first set of classes for graduate school, her principal accepted a high-school principal position. He asked her to be one of his assistant principals at the new school. Trusting his leadership and wanting to continue working with him, she accepted while continuing her course work for school administration.

“I worked at the high school with my former principal for a year and a half before being offered a high-school principal position. My principal was my mentor and trained me to be an excellent principal. Our superintendent called my principal and asked him, would he recommend me for a high-school principal position. He recommended me for the principal position and continued to act as my mentor until he accepted a superintendent position in
another county. I was offered the principal position and accepted it without reservation. I made several public appearances with the superintendent to assure the public that the new principal of this troubled high school had the support of the school system.”

After arriving at the school midway through the school year, Maya was told that the staff had requested a strong Black man because of the numerous discipline concerns. The student population was mostly African-American and largely economically disadvantaged. “I wasn't worried about the students, I grew up in a very hard area, but I was worried about the teaching staff and their lack of effort and concern for the students. I spent a lot of my time proving myself and fighting the unknown. The demographics of the staff were the polar opposite of the students, so I worked on addressing these issues over the first few years.”

Throughout the years, the school’s test scores improved, but staff morale and support for Maya were low. She had a different philosophy from many of the staff members, and it was evident in how discipline as well as expectations were handled. Maya required teachers to connect with at least two at-risk students during the school year and support them through a school-based program. She developed non-negotiables for students and parents for involvement. Teachers laughed and made negative comments in staff meetings about Maya's efforts, dooming them before even making an attempt.

“I went home many nights and cried myself to sleep. I talked to my former principal, who is a White male; he had left the county by this time and was working as a superintendent. He supported and advised me as best he could from a distance. I would share my requests for support from the central office beforehand, and he always gave me good advice and stopped me when he thought the request would not be supported. I always geared
my request toward students’ academic needs to improve test scores. My requests were never supported or fulfilled. I was close friends with a White female high-school principal, and I would often call on her for support. She was caring and supportive, but her experiences were not like mine. We would share ideas and meet for dinner after the long work hours, but her staff seemed to want to improve and work with her. I often realized that ideas and suggestions that she and I would talk about were supported by the central office at her school but not at mine. We were both honest with each other about the situation, but she never really understood why I never seemed to be able to get what I needed for my students when they were so much needier than hers. A few times she requested more than she really needed and shared with my school. I was very appreciative for her help, but I felt disrespected. They disrespected my leadership and my students’ needs.”

Maya tried harder to create a positive school climate when she sensed that support would not come from her supervisor, because she wanted to prove that she and the school could be successful. She toughened up on the staff about expectations, to which they reacted by reporting to her supervisor that she was “unapproachable.” Her supervisor called her and suggested that she work on building relationships. “I told her, ‘That’s what I do, build relationships. I work with people who don’t want to do what I ask them to do for kids. That’s where the relationship has to start, with the kids.’ I asked her, ‘How do you think the student is going to fare if they don’t get a good education?’ She responded, ‘You better be worried about your job.’” Her supervisor at the time was an African-American woman who had been the principal of a predominantly White high school. “She didn’t seem to understand what I had to do at this school. I backed off of the teachers, and I let some things go that I should
I wish I had done what I needed to do. I was so young (34 years old), so I backed off, but I wish I had stuck to my guns.”

“During my second year, I remember an assistant superintendent coming out to the school and asking how can we help you. I said, ‘Let me reconstitute the school, just start it all over.’ He laughed and said, ‘We can’t do that.’ Two years later with a new principal at the helm of the school, that is exactly what the school system has done, reconstituted the school and started all over.”

“During the summer after my fourth year as a high-school principal, I received a call from central office; it was from a member of the superintendent’s cabinet. She requested that I meet with her, my immediate supervisor, and the superintendent the next day. I wasn’t sure what was going on. I played all the scenarios in my head and still wasn’t sure what the meeting was about. A few weeks earlier, I had received my end-of-year evaluation from my immediate supervisor and there was no indication of a problem; in fact, I had scored at standard and above standard in every area on the administrative evaluation instrument. I prayed about the purpose for tomorrow’s meeting and went to bed.”

The next day, Maya arrived at the meeting with her evaluation, school improvement plan, next year's schedule, and results from the closing year’s EOC scores, which showed improvement and academic growth. She waited to be called back to the meeting area. The superintendent opened the meeting and welcomed everybody. He had been hired just a few weeks earlier, and this was her first time meeting with him and having an opportunity to be introduced. His cabinet member stated that they were meeting today to make some personnel changes. Maya’s heart dropped. “I held my breath. My immediate supervisor said, ‘Well, you
know we’ve talked this year about the concerns at your school, and we haven’t seen enough improvement.’ I said, ‘We have talked about the teachers and their continued lack of compliance, but our test scores have improved.’ The cabinet member cut in and said, ‘Maya, we have not provided you the support that you needed at that school.’ She went on to say that she thought it was time for a change for the school and for me. I was still under the impression that I was going to be a high-school principal, just not at the same school. The cabinet member said, ‘We are offering you a central-office position or you can become an assistant principal.’ I thought that I would die. I said, ‘I appreciate you acknowledging that you did not give me the support that I needed, but I want to continue being a high-school principal.’ The superintendent chimed in that he knows how strenuous it is to be a high-school principal even though he has never been a high-school principal. He suggested that maybe I needed a break from the duties and the stress. I looked at my supervisor, and she looked away. They all looked guilty and requested that I not share this meeting with other people. I accepted the central-office position. I was told to make a statement to the staff, PTA, and community that I was accepting a central-office position and not to share any other information because this was a personnel issue. Everybody thought that I was receiving a promotion and that the new position was my choice. I was able to maintain my current salary for the remaining two years on my contract, but my self-esteem and ego were shattered.”

“I often look back on my four years as a high-school principal, and I truly believe that after that experience, I can do anything. It was a trying time in my life. I enjoyed the responsibilities and I grew as a person. The lack of support and encouragement from my superiors cost me my dream. I have gotten past all the -isms that I experienced, the racism,
sexism, and ageism. My age, my race, and my gender caused people to think that they didn’t have to do what I asked, and they believed that it was okay to disrespect me, and in the final analysis they were right. I’m no longer a high-school principal, but I am still involved in the education of students. My future goal is to return to the school building as an educational leader and eventually to become a superintendent. I plan to move to another school district and start fresh, and this time I will lead with my experiences and stick to my guns.”

Summary

Maya's interview was melancholy. It was evident that the demotion from principal harmed her ego. She attested that her husband and church family helped her through the trying time. She didn't like giving people the impression that she asked to leave the high-school-principal position. Although it precluded her having to explain, it did not allow her the opportunity to mourn properly. She was a very young principal; her age along with her gender and race made for a difficult leadership situation in addition to being placed in a high-poverty, low-performing school. Her passion and concern for students will lead her to another principal position, and she has vowed to use these experiences to help her and the students be successful. Maya had been promoted to high-school principal after having served as an assistant principal for only one and a half years. She was a young principal with little experience, assigned to a high school with several critical challenges. There were numerous factors to which her demotion could be attributed, but the combination of age, less than two years of experience, and a challenging school setting increased the probability greatly.
### Table 4.3
**Storymap for Principal Sabrina**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Past Experiences</strong></td>
<td>Female family members are educators. Not from NC.</td>
<td>Parents not educated. Multiple siblings. Raised by both parents.</td>
<td>Urban AA community, low income.</td>
<td>Neighborhood school. HBCU. Predominately White institution for masters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Situation</strong></td>
<td>Moved to NC four years ago. Divorced, with adult child.</td>
<td>Boyfriend in a neighboring county, teacher.</td>
<td>Lives in an exclusive community, predominately White.</td>
<td>Has earned a doctoral degree. 20+ yrs in education. Her school is 1100+ population, 40%+ AA, 40%+ FRL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Future Plans</strong></td>
<td>Enjoys NC. Plans to retire from North Carolina.</td>
<td>No plans for marriage.</td>
<td>Enjoys her community and plans to stay. Very happy.</td>
<td>Would like to be an assistant superintendent but not superintendent—too much politics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sabrina’s Story**

Sabrina is principal at a high school in a large urban school district in North Carolina.

She was recruited to North Carolina from another state for this, her first principal position.

She has spent all of her school-building experience in a high-school setting. She was a business-education teacher, served as a high-school assistant principal, and worked in central office. She is in her fourth year as a high-school principal.

She grew up in a predominantly Black community in a low-income area. Sabrina said that education was not valued in her community. “We grew up hard and tough. I walked to
school my entire life and attended the neighborhood schools that had almost all Black kids. I went to school with my neighbors, friends, and family. I didn’t really know other kids except the ones that were Black and poor too. We had a community elementary school, and if you got in trouble at school everyone in the community knew and you were like the ward of the community. Ms. Rosa and Ms. Vivian would get you on your way home, and then your parents would get you when you got home.”

Sabrina attended a historically Black college for her undergraduate studies and a predominantly White institution for both her master’s degree in school administration and her doctorate in educational leadership.

First Principalship

“Prior to my arrival, the school was predominantly White in a rural setting. The school system rezoned the school, which resulted in having more African-American students, so I think the district was looking for an African-American principal. Most of the Black kids are bused in from the inner city, and their families have a hard time getting to the school and participating in school activities; this adds to the lack of community involvement. When I arrived, you could feel the tension everywhere in the building, in the hallways and in the classrooms. The teachers were afraid of the situation, of the change, how the community might react, and what might happen as a result of adding African-American students to the school.”

“I wasn't afraid, but I was very careful and apprehensive because I had not experienced that degree of racism before. There were parents that casually used the ‘n’ word in their vocabulary. We had an African-American female assistant principal at the time, and
she had a student in her office for a discipline issue. The assistant principal called for the school resource officer as a witness because she suspected that the student had an illegal substance. The student yelled out, ‘That n— better not put her hands on me.’ He told the school resource officer, ‘You can search me, but that n— better not put her hands on me.’ The school resource officer searched him and found a controlled substance. The student's mother was called. The mother arrived, and the student pointed out the assistant principal and told his mom that she (referring to the African-American assistant principal) almost put her hands on me. The mother started yelling and cursing and shouted, ‘N—, you better not ever put your hands on my son.’ The mother had to be banned from the school because of her behavior.” This type of behavior happened several times throughout the first few years. “It was difficult to witness children use racial slurs,” and it shook her sense of hope to know that the adults in their lives instilled the seeds of prejudice.

“We had a situation throughout the school year in which White students would harass African-American students; they would single them out and pick on them when they were alone. Once, my school resource officer was able to identify the students, and they were brought to the office to be disciplined. Parents were called to the school. The student admitted to the behavior and according to the school-board policy, the student was to be suspended for a few days. The student's father did not want him to be suspended; he didn't think he deserved to be suspended. He said that he doesn't have to come to this school, he can quit school and come and work on the farm. The father withdrew him from the school and he went and worked on the farm.”
There have been several changes since Sabrina first walked into the school building. The atmosphere and culture of the school are changing. “It's not perfect and everybody is not in love, but it’s different from when I started.” The student population is about 52% African-American. “When I started, there were only a few Black teachers; now, there are about 40% African-American teachers only because I have been very deliberate in my hiring. I believe that your faculty should mirror your student population.”

“Once the parents and the community started to realize I wasn't the Black principal or the White principal, it wasn't about that for me. I was about making certain that kids got what they deserved in school. I was in it for everybody. I think some of the White parents feared that I came so that the Black kids would get a better shake and they didn't want that. Just a few months ago, I had a parent tell my White male assistant principal that things would be better if they just sent the n—s back where they came from. He shared her statement with me and chastised her for the comment; we still have lots of issues.”

Sabrina believes that her leadership is affected not only by race, but gender; it seems particularly important to other stakeholders. “I don't think that a male would have gotten as hard a time as me. An African-American female has more concerns than any other race or gender. My coaches and athletic director avoided coming to me about sports issues until they realized that I am knowledgeable about sports and that I supported athletics.”

In terms of her career progression, Sabrina stated, “Being a high-school principal was never in my plans. I knew I wanted to be an administrator and I was very happy as an assistant principal, but the students wanted and needed me to help them do things. I had bright kids who wanted things to be different. I couldn't do it as an assistant principal for
them; I had to become a principal to make things happen for kids. The kids forced me to become a principal or helped me to decide that's what I wanted to do. I taught for nine years and I really didn't plan to become an administrator so early in my career, but again, the kids had needs. They wanted me to talk to their other teachers and the principal about things that they didn't think were fair. I told the kids I can't go to another teacher and tell her what to do.”

Race and gender have also played a role in Sabrina's leadership of her staff. “There is a part of me that always does what I'm told to do. I don't ask a lot of questions. If my principal said to do it, then I just did. One of the things I have experienced is that I have teachers who didn't want to do what I said; they were just very defiant. They didn't want to do the right thing; they almost didn't want to do what you told them to do. I don't think they would act that way toward a White male, but it took me a while to fix the defiance, and now they realized I was not in there to play. I am not sure if this has to do with being a Black principal, a female principal, a Black female principal, or something unrelated, but there is a faction of people in my building that I am weaning that just didn't want to do what I told them to do; most of these people are White males. I don't take that stuff personally because I've been taught that's not my problem. It's not my problem; it's their problem because they don't know how to deal with me. Some days, I feel like I am winning, and I thank God that I have won a lot of people over. Sometimes there are games you have to play. I became a very good game player. I knew who my folks were in the building, those who were well respected, and I began building relationships with them. I got them on my side and things gradually improved.”
Sabrina says her support system is a small group of high-school principals. “I am the only African-American female principal of a comprehensive high school in my district.” They vent, talk, and trust each other completely, and she doesn’t have to worry about anything said going any further. “Last year, there was another African-American female high-school principal in my district, but she was demoted and the reason they gave her was test scores, but her scores were about the same as mine. I think that she was moved out of that school and demoted for political reasons. They wanted a different face to lead the school. It really didn't have anything to do with her abilities or lack of effort on her part. She increased EOC and reduced suspension rates. African-American females are compromised; it could happen to other races and genders, but it happens to us more frequently and without cause.” Sabrina doesn’t think that the other African-American principal had a good relationship with her supervisor. “I have a very good relationship with my immediate supervisor, he is a White male. I think the fact that we are both outsiders to the district—that it helped us bond and trust each other. He served as principal of my school for a few months before I took over, so he knew firsthand what I was up against and I think that helped me.”

“My worst experience happened my first full year. I had the son of a White female middle-school principal from my same district. Her son was bright and athletic, but he often refused to follow the school rules. He really started acting up, and I had to discipline him. Her son and some other White students did some mean things to some Black student from another school at a basketball game. I had to talk to their parents and they didn't think that it warranted suspension. They harassed them, followed them on to their activity bus, threw things at them, and called them racial slurs. Luckily, a police officer was outside and noticed
what was going on. He had to remove the White students from the activity bus before things escalated. They were able to identify the kids. My colleague didn't think it was her kid, but the police officer happened to know him personally."

"Another time, her son was in possession of stolen property and had to be punished. I guess the final straw for her was when her son and another White student got into a fight after school and one of my coaches had to break the fight up. The other student came to my office upon the coach’s request and let me know what had happened. I thanked him, but told him I would be calling both of their parents and there would be a suspension. He wasn't happy but he knew the school rules. My colleague’s child did not report to my office; he just went home. I called his parents, my colleague, and shared with them what happened. She denied that there was a fight. I explained to her that one of my coaches broke the fight up. She said, ‘Well he can't have any more charges, so we will have to see what we can do.’ She requested and was given mediation from the county level, which is not in our guidelines; mediation is only to happen when the suspension is greater than 10 days or there is no witness to the occurrence, which neither was the case. The mediation was granted, and the colleague arrived with her husband and another set of parents. The mediation person from the county allowed her to attack me verbally and accuse me of things that she could not prove and that were not true. The mediation person is supposed to be in charge of the meeting and assure that all sides are respectful, that they have equal time to speak for each party and follow the meeting agenda. None of this was done. I was persecuted and felt belittled. After not receiving a change in the suspension, she demanded that I read a letter she had written and respond to it on the spot. I told her that I would read the letter and I would respond to it
the next day. She stated, ‘Are you refusing to take the letter?’ I reminded her that I had taken the letter; it was in my possession, but I do not respond to things instantly. I promised her that I would comment to the letter within 24 hours. She stated that this is unacceptable and went on to say how I was unfair to White students and referred to me as prejudiced as she knocked a small figurine off my desk, looked at it on the floor, and then left the room without picking it up. After everyone had left, the county office person only noted that things didn’t go the way he had planned. He didn't say one word during the meeting. He allowed them to gang together and tell me I was wrong in how I handled the situation, that I was unfair, and he said nothing. That was one of the most confrontational situations. I went home that evening and began thinking, Sabrina, what have you gotten yourself into?”

“My colleague’s son was in the second semester of his senior year, and shortly after the meeting the mother withdrew him from the school and enrolled him in another school. I was told that she shared with some other principals in the district that my school used to be a decent place for White students, but I was turning it into a school for Black students. I often see her, and she turns her head and won't look me in the face.”

Question nine in the interview asked participants, If you had an invisible knapsack, what is one thing that you would like to have inside, and why? Sabrina said, “If I had an invisible knapsack, I would want a shield. Even though I say I don't take some things personally, I wish I could shield myself from the pain. I take a lot of things to heart, especially when our teachers are not as receptive when working with poor children or African-American students as they should be, and some have outright done things to get them out of their classrooms. African Americans are very passionate towards all students,
others may be as well, and they just may express it in a different way. I'm not saying that they are not passionate.”

Sabrina doesn't know many African-American female high-school principals. When she was a teacher, she knew one who served previously as a middle-school principal. She was a strong manager and well liked. She retired a few years ago, but Sabrina really never had an opportunity to learn from her except from a distance. “In my current district, it was me and one other African-American female high-school principal. The other African-American principal was demoted last year. The reason given was test scores, but that couldn't be true because our test scores increased and challenges were about the same. I'm not sure why she was demoted, but it makes me even more careful of my actions and efforts.”

Sabrina’s administrative team is made up of three White males. One assistant principal is entrenched in the community, and that “serves us well, we need to have a person that has the pulse of the community to help gauge our decisions.” Another assistant principal is not from this county or state; he has extensive experience working with poor kids in rural settings and Black students. The third assistant principal was a former elementary-curriculum person in the county. He works with the teaching staff and drives best teaching practices home. He has made a significant difference in the academic standards. They have had this team in place for the last two years and have won several awards for academic improvement and growth. “I can't imagine a better group of people to work with; I enjoy the camaraderie with my administrative team daily. I always feel like they are there to help me with the students, staff, and community. Our charge is mammoth, but we do whatever works for kids, every day.”
“I enjoy my job as a principal and the responsibilities that come with it. I have so much to learn, and I look forward to continuing to change and improve my school for the better. When I get tired of being a principal, I would like another leadership role in education, maybe an assistant superintendent, but I don't think I want to be a superintendent. I don't want to spend my day tied up in red tape. My political acumen would have to be enhanced for me to be a successful superintendent. I don't do politics; I want to do what's right for kids. I don't care how it looks politically—I need to do what's right.”

Summary

Based on her level of expertise, smooth transition, and tenacity, it is hard to believe that this is Sabrina's first principal position. She has encountered several very difficult situations. Sabrina is a self-proclaimed tough person, but the one thing she wants is a shield because sometimes she is hurt by people’s choices and unjust behavior. It was interesting and significant that she did not want to be the superintendent of a school district because she lacked the desire to play politics, yet she admitted to using them as a high-school principal. The difficult situations that were shared in Sabrina’s story were the most foreign of the participants to me as an African-American female school administrator. I have never experienced or heard of any principal having experienced such blatant racism.
Table 4.4
Storymap for Principal Mona

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First HS Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>Roles: teacher, counselor, AP, Principal, Assistant Superintendent, and Regional Superintendent.</td>
<td>Mother, educator, eldest child of three. Raised by both parents.</td>
<td>Grew up in an urban area, segregated, AA community.</td>
<td>Attended segregated schools. HBCU undergraduate, PWI for graduate school. She has 25+ yrs of experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>Well connected in the school system. Spent her entire career in one county. Homegrown; well known in the community.</td>
<td>Married. One child. Adult child married. She lives in another state.</td>
<td>Lives in a predominantly White community, does not know her neighbors.</td>
<td>Before promotion she was principal of her HS alma mater. Population 1700+, AA 95+, FRL 60+. Currently serves as a regional superintendent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Would like the next challenge of being a superintendent of a school system.</td>
<td>Looks forward to becoming a grandmother.</td>
<td>Willing to move or commute for career advancement.</td>
<td>She would like to be a superintendent of a school system, she is willing to travel or move.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mona’s Story

Mona was born, educated, and has worked in the same county her entire life. She graduated from the high school where she would later become principal. Mona graduated from a historically Black university and earned her advanced degrees from a predominantly White institution. She has been a middle-school teacher, counselor, and principal; an elementary counselor and principal; and a high-school principal. Every school of which she
has been the principal has had a high minority population and a high percentage of free- and reduced-lunch students.

Mona is the eldest of three children. She is the daughter of a former teacher and industrial-arts manager. Her mother graduated from college and worked as a teacher at the high school Mona later led. Her father did not finish college but graduated from the same high school. Mona described her childhood. “We were poor but we didn't know it, because all of our neighbors and friends had the same economic conditions. We visited each other’s houses and ate from everybody's table in the neighborhood. Our neighbors disciplined us if we needed it and our parents didn't mind.” Mona is married and has one adult daughter that lives in a different state. Her husband has been extremely supportive throughout her career, and she didn't begin her administrative career until her daughter graduated from high school.

Being a leader is her life. “I have always had leadership roles, whether it was at school, church, or my community growing up. If my mother told the pastor I was going to read something or participate in something at church, you didn't say no; you did it and you did it well, or you would catch it from your parents and your church family.”

“Leadership does not mean you are always out front. Leaders delegate, build trust, empower individual’s responsibilities, resources, and capitalize on the abilities of all in the organization. Sometimes you can be the leader in the building and be a follower. That is a balancing act in any organization, especially for new leaders.”

“As an assistant principal, I really liked high-school students. You can talk through the situations and problems and process. I enjoyed the interaction with high-school students, but high-school principalship was not my desire. I wanted to be a middle-school principal.
Most of my experience had been in middle school, so I thought that's where I would stay. However, I was given an opportunity to lead my alma mater as their principal. I was so excited, the passion and concern that I have for my school made the decision a no-brainer for me. My school had been struggling for the past few years, and I was grateful to have a chance to give back and all of the good support I had and the good bridges that had been built for me over the years. I shared the news with my family and friends, and everybody thought the opportunity was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to be in a position to provide our school with some great leadership.”

Mona spent a fair amount of time during the interview commenting on the demands of being a high-school principal. “I spent a great deal of my time being a high-school principal; it is your life. There are other things that I wanted to be involved in, but I just couldn't balance test scores, athletics, the community piece as well as act as the principal, and have much personal time. The time requirement is a big negative and knowing that if something went wrong everybody looked to you. For example, if the band performed at the football game and the majorettes did a little too much shaking, then you got a phone call from someone in the community saying, ‘I can't believe you let that happen. Why did you do this or that?’ You can police things, but you have to entrust people to do the good things.”

One positive thing that Mona nonetheless advises being cautious about is that people listen to what you say as a high-school principal. You need to really make sure that you are communicating values, expectations, and goals that are beneficial for the whole school community. “A high-school principal in my opinion actually runs a little city. You really run a city, you meet a lot of people, and everybody wants some of your time.”
As a leader, one of the successes is having an outlet of your own. “I have a couple of friends that are in administration in other cities. From time to time, we get together and pick a city and go shopping. Sometimes we just interact and talk and I can really let my hair down and say, I did this or that I did something really stupid or whatever, with no judgment from them. Having a mentoring base is really important because in leadership, there are some things that go on that if you don't have someone to talk to, it's easy to let your plate get tilted. When you are changing roles, you've got to have some sort of calibration or have someone to talk some things out. Even though I may share some things with my husband, he is not in education so sometimes he doesn't understand.” She purposely picked people that she has known for a while and felt comfortable with. “I had known these ladies for years. I could say things, and I didn't have to worry about it getting back to anybody. These were people that are not from my county, so they don't know particular situations or the people involved, and that made my comfort level increase.”

Mona also feels her race and gender impact her leadership. “As an African-American female in administration, I have to prove myself in terms of my knowledge base. A lot of times, you don't find out about things, so you had to take some initiative because no one was coming to you and saying, ‘Oh, by the way, you need to do this or that.’ So I always made sure that I always conduct myself in a professional manner, project my skills, and do my best for the students I am serving. In terms of ability, the lines were pretty much even among me and my colleagues, but the expectations were such that I crossed every ‘t’ and dotted every ‘i.’ I couldn't come to a meeting and not be prepared. I felt that if I didn't come prepared, my
supervisor would have said, ‘Let me see you after the meeting.’ I felt like more was expected of me than my White or male colleagues.”

“As a female in a high school, the male coaches would let me know that they were going to cover the hallway for me, you know they were helping me out. I used that to my advantage because they should have been covering the hallway anyway because it was part of their duties. So I would say, thank you, and ask them to stay a few more minutes.”

Mona suggested to anyone thinking of entering a principalship, especially high school, that he or she have a clear understanding of key stakeholders in the building and community leaders. “In any organization, there are people who other folks look up to. When you go into a new setting, you need to take the time to determine who those people are, because they can serve as roadblocks or they can be bridges. Take time to find out who people are listening to in the building and community, and be sure to communicate with them and develop a relationship because they exist everywhere and they can be the difference between your success or failure.”

Mona would like to be a superintendent of a school district. She moved from a high-school principal position to an assistant superintendent position in which she was supporting and supervising high-school principals. She was in this role for a year; the county restructured and she was selected to be a superintendent over a region of the school system. “In my current role, I work with a region of schools in the county, and I act as the superintendent over that area, the schools, principals, and all support staff that work with the area. This position gives me a glimmer of what a superintendent does on a daily basis.” She plans to get some experience in this role and then put herself in position to be a part of the
interview pool for superintendent positions. She is willing to move but would prefer to commute. If the right opportunity came, she says she would live in another city during the week and commute home for the weekend or “whenever I was able. I'm very flexible, and I am actively seeking superintendent positions.”

“There is only one African-American female principal in my district, and she does a tremendous job of working with community people and leading her school. She had a tough job coming in, but she has made monumental gains and garnered support for her school. A lot of people didn't think that she would make it at that particular school because they had significant race issues. Not only has she made it, she has done an excellent job and the school has received county- and state-level awards for academic improvement during her tenure.”

When asked about why she thought there were so few African-American female high-school principals, Mona stated, “Maybe it’s because they haven't been given a chance. You have to really be grounded because those strong winds will blow, and if you are not strong and sure of yourself you may be blown away. The lack of African-American female high-school principals could be due to the nature of the position or the time requirements. I really don't know, it's puzzling to me. Males often don’t have the same responsibilities at home as women. The only way to increase the numbers is to provide mentoring programs and networking. These types of partnerships can dispel a lot of the myths or beliefs that people have about the role. Being a high-school principal is a wonderful experience: it’s hard work, the rewards are great, and I really enjoyed the role.”

Summary
Mona has strong ties and roots in the community. She considered it an honor and awesome responsibility to lead the school that she and her father graduated from, at which her mother taught, and to which countless neighbors and friends have a connection and a rich history. Because of her connections, she had instant acceptance, but she didn't take her responsibilities for granted. Her connections and acceptance in the community have provided her with a security that none of the other participants experienced or had observed. Mona had the broadest work experiences of all the participants, having served as a principal at every level: elementary, middle, and high school. She also was a counselor at the elementary and middle-school level. Every principal position she has held has been in a school with predominantly African-American students, with a high percentage of free and reduced lunch. Mona has two master's degrees and a doctorate in educational leadership. She is desirous of a superintendent position.
Table 4.5

Storymap for Principal Roberta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>Very happy as a novice principal. Wants to continue to learn and grow. Pleased with the direction of her career.</td>
<td>Not married. One child. Child is middle-school student.</td>
<td>Lives in a rural community, very little diversity, not too far from the school.</td>
<td>Principal of a high school, population 800, 85% White, 30% FRL. First AA principal in the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Would like to help develop teachers and principals at a central-office level.</td>
<td>May get married one day. No date set.</td>
<td>Willing to move in the future for career advancement or may desire a change of environment.</td>
<td>Enjoys being a high-school principal. Would be willing to relocate for career advancement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Roberta’s Story

At 33 years old, Roberta was the youngest principal interviewed. This is her first principalship; she was a high-school business teacher and a high-school assistant principal. She earned her undergraduate degree from a historically Black university and her master's degree in school administration from a predominantly White institution. She is a North Carolina teaching fellow and has been in education for 12 years.
Roberta was raised by her mother, a single parent in a rural area of North Carolina. She is also a single parent of a middle-school student. She comes from a long line of educators, teachers, school counselors, and administrators. Roberta grew up in a rural area where farming was a big part of the economy. In her community, there are various economic levels. Her community is predominantly White, with smaller numbers of Blacks and Hispanics as well.

She is the first female principal at her school and the first African-American principal ever hired in the school system. “I have issues to deal with, and sometimes it's hard to tell why those issues have occurred. I don't spend a lot of time wondering if it's my race, gender, or age; more than likely it’s one of them that cause people to not be comfortable with me.”

During her first year as principal, the school board hired her with the understanding that the retired principal would remain in the building until December of that school year because they were worried how the community would respond to an African-American female principal, of which she remains the only one in the county. She constantly felt as though the retired principal was looking over her shoulder, questioning her decisions and doubting her abilities. Roberta recognized that garnering the retired principal’s support was germane to her success as a high-school principal in that school district. Cohn and Sweeney (1992) posited that women’s repressing issues related to their race and gender helps them succeed in organizations that are not culturally responsive. Roberta stated that she was successful her first year but she continues to have challenges, “as any African-American female high-school principal would.”
Roberta stated that she experienced more issues at her school when she first started than she does now. “In the beginning, I had to deal with a group of students who wore Confederate-flag shirts during the first week of school. I think their parents probably encouraged the behavior, given their reactions when I informed them of the students’ violating the dress code. Many of them tried to debate the issue. They complained to the superintendent. This was not a new dress code expectation. I believe it was just the way that they chose to communicate their dislike for me as the new principal. I reached out to those students in particular to get to know them, and I haven’t had a problem since. They are very respectful now that they know me better.”

Roberta said that most of the teachers are easy to work with, but she has one teacher that is extremely difficult. “I have encountered some staff that I think find it difficult working for a woman. There is one teacher that I had to write a letter to him indicating several incidents where he was disrespectful or insubordinate. In the letter, I informed him that any future acts of insubordination would result in a below standard on his summative evaluation, which would lead to an action plan. It is a surprise that he behaves the way that he does, because he is a very good classroom teacher. The most recent issue was that he wore denim jeans to work on a Wednesday, when I have communicated to the entire staff that jeans can only be worn on Friday. He previously advocated for the ability to wear jeans any day. I knew he was aware that it was against the staff dress code to wear jeans any other day than Friday. In my conversation with him while giving him the letter, he let me know that he did it purposely. I don’t think that I would have had to deal with the issue had I not been a woman.”
“I also have one clerical employee that others have noticed is less helpful than she used to be with the previous principal. I notice that many female clerical workers cater to the male principal. But, some do not for a female principal. I have received fewer parent complaints in recent months. I think that it helped that our test scores increased by 20% this fall. I think that as long as we perform well, people will be supportive. Yet the former principal was ineffective and he did not have to deal with the vocal parents the way that I have. I can definitely say that the expectations are higher for me than I think it would be for a man. I have encountered a few students who hesitate to respond to what I ask, and I have to show them that I mean business. I believe that a male would have fewer incidents such as this. I will say that most of the students, staff, and parents that I encounter are positive and supportive. There will always be those few that attempt to make it difficult for me.”

“I have to work harder to build a relationship with my students and parents, so that race does not create a problem when I have to discipline students or handle other student issues. This is more of an issue because the majority of my student population is White. I have to spend more time thinking through every decision, so that I have covered every potential problem that could occur. I don't think that my race, gender, or age can be avoided, but if I build relationships and it is clear that I care about each student’s success, then I don't think that people will focus as much on what I am but will focus more on what kind of leader I am.”

Most of Roberta's time is spent in meetings and public-relations events. She has very few discipline issues, but considerable restructuring of academic programs and staff
development was needed at the school. “Several days a week, I have after-school activities that cause me to not return home until after 10 pm.”

As a principal, Roberta’s demographic characteristics make her unique in the school district. “I don't know any other African-American high-school female administrators. If I have concerns or issues and I need guidance, I usually call on a friend that used to be an assistant principal with me at the high-school level—she currently works for the Department of Public Instruction. She understands education, the position that I have as a school leader at the high-school level. We can talk about anything, and she has a statewide perspective of school success. I think that high-school administration in general has been seen as a male role. It may be the athletic aspect that tends to cause females to be less interested in the position or seem less suited. High-school administration requires a lot of time outside of school hours, and if you are a mother it can be demanding. So I would think there are probably fewer women interested in the position because of the demands.” Roberta is not sure that we should try and increase the number of African-American female principals. “If African-American females are interested in the position, then they will seek them; and if not, then let it be.”

**Summary**

Roberta is the youngest principal interviewed; she is also the only principal that is leading a high school that is predominantly White. Her school has 800 students, 85% White, 10% Black, 5% Asian, and 30% free and reduced lunch. This is almost in polar opposition to the other principals in the study, yet she had some of the same concerns with others’ questioning her abilities and talents. It is hard to determine the root of the problems, but they
all seem to stem around race and gender. The school board selected her as the first African-American principal in the district, but it also advised her that the community may not be ready for the diversity. To reduce some of the uneasiness, it allowed a retired administrator to remain at the school as an assistant principal until December of her first year. She realized that she needed to garner the retired administrator's support because it would filtrate through the community and the school board.

Roberta is the only participant that did not suggest working toward increasing the number of African-American female principals in North Carolina, stating instead that if African-American women are interested in that position, then they will seek it.

Roberta’s story was shorter than the other participants’ in order to ensure anonymity. Several incidents were omitted. She was very uncomfortable with my sharing any more.
### Table 4.6
**Storymap for Principal Rochelle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First HS Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>Spent 8 yrs as a teacher, 16 years as an AP. Moved to another county for an opportunity to become a principal.</td>
<td>Only child. Mother an educator. Both parents in the home.</td>
<td>Grew up in a rural farming community in NC.</td>
<td>Educated in a segregated community K–12. College HBCU. Masters PWI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>She has been a middle-school principal and is currently a high-school principal. Happy with her progress as a leader.</td>
<td>Divorced. One adult son. He lives in the same town. He is unmarried and has no children.</td>
<td>She is comfortable in her area, not too far or too close to school community.</td>
<td>Currently leads a school of +2000, 60%+ AA, 25%+ FRL. First AA female principal in her district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Enjoys being a high-school principal. Would consider another level at central office if it were the right fit.</td>
<td>Enjoying her single status for now. Would love to have a daughter-in-law and grandchildren.</td>
<td>Moved to a very nice neighborhood in the last few years.</td>
<td>Enjoys working in this school and would like to continue for a few more years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Rochelle’s Story

Rochelle grew up in a small rural county. Her mother was an elementary teacher her entire career. “And because my mother was a first-grade teacher, I went through high school and college with the mindset that I didn't want to be a teacher. I lived on a farm with extended family and a variety of socio-economics: all income levels. My mother had a
master’s degree, and my father had an eighth-grade education. In my childhood community, we all played together regardless of socio-economics. No one was better than the other.”

She completed her undergraduate work at a historically Black university, where she majored in math and minored in chemistry. “I had in mind that I would do research at some big company, but my mom insisted that I take education classes as well, just in case the research thing didn't work out. I really wanted to go to interior-design school in Florida when I finished high school, but my mom was from the generation that traditionally had Black women as teachers or nurses. She wanted me to have a job that was a guarantee. She point-blank said, ‘You are not going to any interior-design school, where do you think you're going to get a job doing that.’ She kept after me to take the education courses, and I took them just to satisfy her. I needed to take some courses to fill in my elective hours. I finished college in December of my senior year. I told her I was coming home. She said, ‘No you're not; you're going to go back and do your student teaching.’ I completed my student teaching at a high school in the county that I currently work.”

After her student teaching, Rochelle obtained a graduate-assistant position at a predominantly White institution in another state while pursuing a master's degree in mathematics. She didn't know anything about the area, but it gave her an opportunity to get a master's degree on a scholarship. “I had a terrible time, it was very cold and the school was a very prejudiced place. Me and a Black guy from Florida were the first two Black students to enter the graduate school for math. They made it known that they did not want us there, but that was a time that you had to increase your minority enrollment to get all this federal money. I would literally sit beside White students and would be making the same grades, but
at the end of the semester my grade would be lower. I spoke with my graduate adviser and
told him, ‘I can get in Harvard if I want to; I don't have to stay here.’” Her mother knew she
was unhappy, so she called to let her know that the local high school needed a math teacher.

The next week, Rochelle caught a ride on an 18-wheeler with her cousin who was
coming through the area and making a delivery near her hometown. She interviewed for the
math position at the high school, and was hired on the same day. “I realized during the
graduate-assistant position that I liked teaching. I taught at the high school for eight years,
teaching every level of math.” Rochelle married after her first year of teaching and moved to
a nearby city. After only two years of teaching, she became the math-department chair.

Rochelle said the seeds of administration were sewn early during her career. “My principal at
the time asked had I considered administration, and since you are recording me I won't put all
the choice words I said to him before the ‘no.’ He was a White male, and he saw something
in me that I had not noticed. He left the school, and the assistant principal, also a White male,
became the new principal. I started helping with administrative tasks during the summer,
such as scheduling, but also teaching classes.” The next year, she was offered an
administrative position. She accepted the position to be a half-time assistant principal and a
half-time math teacher. Within a year, she was moved into a full-time assistant-principal
position at the same school. She completed her administrative degree and her supervision-in-
math license.

After she had spent eight years as a high-school math teacher and eight years as a
high-school assistant principal, Rochelle was not quite satisfied with the administration and
what was going on at her school. “I am one who believes that if I can't support my principal,
then it’s time for me to leave. So I asked my superintendent to move me to another school. He said that he was thinking about moving me anyway because he thought I would make a good middle-school principal, but I needed some experience at the middle-school level.” She was transferred to a middle school as an assistant principal. Shortly after, her former principal at the high school was moved out. An elementary-principal position opened and she applied, but didn't get an interview. “I called the superintendent and asked, ‘Why didn't I get an interview?’ and he responded that I didn't have elementary experience. It all seemed like manipulation to me. He moved my former principal out and moved a new principal in, he moved me to get me out of the way and moved another person in to take the elementary school, and I was offered nothing although he knew I was interested in a principal position.”

Many of the new principals were brought in from another county. “I met with the superintendent again and I said to him, ‘I have concluded that I will never get a position as a high-school principal in this county because I am Black and female.’ He said, ‘Oh no, Rochelle, it's because there are only two high schools.’ He was making an excuse because it's a small county and not a lot of opportunity. I said to him, ‘I can only run one high school.’ At that point I started looking for positions outside of the county.”

Rochelle obtained an assistant-principal position at a high school in a large urban school system. “I always had the philosophy that it was difficult for women to get high-school-principal positions because of the athletics and the belief that those in power felt women didn't know much about athletics regardless of the fact that in most counties, you have an athletic director.” She thought about applying for a school principalship after the first
year in the new county, but decided that she needed to keep her eyes on her son, so she waited for several years before applying for a principal position.

After 8 years of teaching and 16 years of being an assistant principal, Rochelle decided to apply for principal positions. She applied for high-school positions in her new county but was not selected for any of them. “I got pretty discouraged with the lack of success with getting a principalship, so I decided to apply in nearby counties. I met with the superintendent of another county, who was a White female. She praised me for being an excellent candidate but she said she selected another candidate who was an experienced high-school principal. The superintendent did mention that she was a bit concerned because I had so many years’ experience as an assistant principal but had not been promoted to the level of principal, and it gave the impression that I was not a good administrator.”

“Fortunately, my current principal was supportive of me becoming a high-school principal and spoke to the superintendent on my behalf. He led the superintendent to believe that the nearby county was interested in me and that if my county didn't want me to leave, then they needed to offer me something. It worked: I was offered a middle-school position a few weeks later. I debated about the middle-school position because I really wanted a high-school position, but I quickly decided I had better take this position and continue working toward a high-school principalship.”

After a few years as a middle-school principal, and under the supervision of a new superintendent, Rochelle was offered a high-school-principal position. “The superintendent called me down to central office about a position. I had applied for several high-school openings, but I had not applied for the school that he offered me. He told me what school he
wanted me to take over. I didn't say much because I knew the many issues that were associated with the school. The former principal was asked to step down and suddenly left the county. He said, ‘At least tell me that you are intrigued with the offer.’ I politely smiled and told him that I really wasn't sure. He told me I had three days to let him know. I thought about the long road that I had taken to get to this point in my career, and on the third day I called him and accepted the position.”

“**I had applied for two high schools; they were both affluent but still needed strong leadership. I was not offered or interviewed for either of those schools. I was offered a high school that had low test scores, high free- and reduced-lunch numbers, multiple discipline issues, notorious teacher issues, a majority of the population is African American, and a strong-willed community. I had my work cut out for me.** I promised the superintendent that I would commit to three years at the school, and I only agreed to the terms because I knew after three years that I could retire. If I would not have been able to retire, I don't know if I would have taken this particular school.”

She has been at the school for more than the three years she promised the superintendent, and she loves it. Rochelle likes the high-school atmosphere. She likes the culture and traditions of high school, and she appreciates the independence of the teachers. “**The teachers create a bigger challenge, but I like that because you have more teacher leadership at a high school rather than total reliance on the principal for every decision. High-school teachers challenge you because they are independent and have a mind of their own. I like the interaction with the kids; you can have mature conversations with them about their future, their classes, and their opinions about politics or their world. They will challenge you;**
my kids, for example, are getting ready to present to the school board a request to change our policy regarding electronics. You don't get that type of interaction, challenge, and involvement from elementary- or middle-school students.”

Rochelle described leadership as knowing what decisions to make, when to make them, whom to involve, and empowering other people. “I believe in modeling expectations. Modeling what you want to do in work ethics. If you don't do it, then why would you expect your staff to do it? Modeling behavior and building team players. Demonstrating a vision for what you want to see. What you're doing is consistent and aligned to the district and state expectations, involving parents and students in the vision and expectations. The leader before me did not always align the staff with the district policy. I'm a rule follower. It doesn't mean I don't ever break a rule, but if I do it’s for the benefit of kids for me to break this rule and it’s still not too far outside of guidelines of keeping me out of trouble.”

Like some of the other study participants, Rochelle commented on the extensive time demands placed on a high-school principal. “I spend at least 80% of my time at school. I spent morning, noon, and night at school even when my son was in high school. I spent a lot of my time at school. He used to fuss at me because I was always at the school. My school community is predominantly African American. A high percentage of my magnet kids are African American. I have African-American kids traveling 20–35 minutes to come to this school. They want to be here because their parents want their kids in this culture and environment, where they get leadership opportunities that they would not get elsewhere. We have a history of having a high success rate and graduation rate with African-American males; it’s due to the atmosphere and support.”
“Sometimes you work really hard, and you are not sure whether the hard work is noticed or appreciated. Every once in a while, you get to be appreciated and praised in public with your peers present; that feeling is priceless.” In a district-wide improvement meeting, Rochelle stated that her school had not made AYP. The facilitator of the meeting stopped her and said, “But look at the data and what you are doing with African-American males.” She went on to say, “I don't care about AYP; I know why you didn't make AYP, but look what you're doing with African-American males. I have an African-American male, and that's why I want my kid at your school.”

Rochelle commented at length on the demands placed on high-school principals and the sacrifices that must be made. “Time is a huge issue for high-school principals. I literally don't put enough time into taking care of myself and my personal life. My son is grown and out of the house and I'm single, so now I can sit at the school till 7 p.m. and go out there on Saturday and Sunday because I don't have to fix dinner for anybody. That's a negative because I don't care for myself and do my personal things. The school day is consumed with taking care of everybody else. I have an open-door policy, and I rarely close my door. I usually get 100 emails a day, 40 or more calls, and several parent or community visits. At the end of the school day, I have several things that I need to take care of before I can leave for the day. My normal day without games, concerts, meetings, or county office obligations is 7 a.m. – 6 p.m. On game night, I usually finish around 11 p.m. I have to force myself not to come in at 6 a.m. Even when I leave, I take work home with me. I have four assistant principals; I divide the evening activities equally because I believe in modeling expectations.”
Like the other participants in this study, Rochelle has had to deal with issues of race and gender but not age in leadership. She spent a long time, 16 years, as an assistant principal and often had to explain this long tenure when applying for principal positions. “Another big negative that I have experienced is parents and staff not having the confidence and the level of comfort that I can take care of critical things. When we have things that would cause us to go into lock down, like a gun on the campus or those types of things, my staff would send emails and ask what's going on. I've had to say to my staff, ‘If there is a gun on our campus, do you want me to spend my time looking for the gun or do you want me to spend my time emailing you to tell you I'm looking for a gun?’ They don't have the level of comfort that you as a female can take care of those big things.”

“The lack of confidence and comfort for me has come from women and men. You do run into chauvinist people, men, but I try to keep a balance with my assistant principals as far as male, female, White, and Black. I haven't had a situation where a male assistant principal didn't trust or didn't have confidence in me, even with male school-resource officers. I haven't had a problem, but I know female principals who have. A few months ago, I was having a conference with my assistant principals and we were joking around, but this really probably does contribute to them having confidence in my ability and being able to work with me. The three of them have wives that are in charge at home. I said I'm so glad I have three assistant principals whose wives are in charge at home. I've never had a male assistant principal that I had to fight with or who expressed that they did not have the ultimate level of confidence in me and my abilities.”
One positive for Rochelle is the personal accomplishment of having attained a high-school-principal position, knowing that it’s an area that women don't normally enter easily. “Knowing that there are people that don't view me from the perspective of being a female but view me from the perspective of being a leader, I have to be the instructional leader as well as the manager of the school. Working with staff and kids, and I feel like I really develop a teacher into being the best teacher he/she can be. The things that I have done in terms of support, observation, making suggestions for improvement helped that person be a good teacher. Numerous examples of students know that I cared, supported them, and jumped in when there was a problem with their teacher or at home and I was able to help them graduate from high school. I know I made a difference in their lives.”

Rochelle replaced an African-American male principal; he opened the school and served at the school for a decade. Because their leadership styles were so different, the superintendent braced her for resistance from some of the staff. “I was the bad guy that first year because I couldn't go along with some things that had been previously allowed that were against board policy. There were articles in the local newspaper, and the only response I could give was that the requests I denied were not consistent with school-board policy. The other principal was charismatic and often bent or broke the rules for his staff. I knew the day that I was born that I was not charismatic. I'm a get-it-done, cut-and-dry, tell-it-like-it-is person. I think a lot of the staff has adjusted to my style and a lot of them have changed schools.”

A staff member told the community that gangs were about to take over the school and that the school was in trouble. “Some Black male community members made a plan to save
the school and then called me to let me know. They were going to put Black males in the school—walking the halls, checking the bathrooms, so that we can get the gangs out of the school. They were going to take back our schools, and their approach angered me.” An African-American female school-board member for the area and the assistant superintendent came to see Rochelle. The school board member stated that this is not their (community leaders) school; it is the county's school. What angered Rochelle the most was that nobody called to ask if this was accurate; nobody called to ask, How can we help? What can we do? “They walked in with a plan for what we are going to do, and that was a lack of respect for my leadership. This was all about me being a female. Had the previous principal still been in place, they would have never walked in this school with a plan. Those kinds of things are challenging.” Rochelle met with three ministers, the sheriff, a school board member, and an assistant superintendent. “We all sat around a conference room table. I said to them, ‘First of all your information is not accurate. We don't need men walking the halls; we need community involvement in the school. However, it needs to come in the form of mentors. I need you in here volunteering, mentoring kids that need a Black male role model, not walking the halls, because you can't walk the halls and interact with the students without their parents’ permission because they are not your kids and you're not a school system employee.’”

She has also had some challenges with community members’ questioning her hiring decisions. “They've said things such as, ‘Why don't you hire this person for that position?’ or they ask, ‘What is your process for hiring?’ I'm not the type of person to allow someone to twist my arm or be intimidated, so I usually respond by saying, ‘I'm going to make the best
decisions for the school and for my kids. When I hire, I hire people whose vision is consistent with the school's vision, who I feel can do the job and who are a good match for our school because not everybody is a good match for every school.”

When she needs advice or to vent, she will call a few colleagues and long-time friends. Either she and they had worked together as assistant principals or they were her assistant principals and later advanced to principal positions. “In fact, one of my closest colleagues is a White male high-school principal, because we developed a friendship through the years. He used to be my assistant principal when I was principal of the middle school. I would probably tell him more, vent, and get advice from him more than anybody else because we have a very strong relationship. He calls me for advice as well.” She will call a few African-American middle-school principals to vent to each other as well as talk about school-system issues, but not much for advice because they don't have the high-school experience. “I also have a best friend that I grew up with, and I vent to her. She is not in education, so she provides me with a community view of school. When I need a teacher’s perspective, I have a friend in another county and she provides me advice and suggestions from a teacher’s view. We role-play situations, and that helps me to be more understanding of teachers.”

In terms of her treatment by central office, Rochelle stated, “I don't think that I have experienced unfair treatment as a high-school principal due to being an African-American female, but I often have to voice my opinion or call central office and vent because they often treat the school unfairly. I often tell them that they treat our school like a step-child. I often feel like they forget about our needs, and after 15 years of being in existence they should
remember things such as our school schedule, to avoid scheduling conflicts for county-wide staff development and training.”

With respect to her career goals, Rochelle stated, “I have accomplished my career goals. I never had a goal beyond a high-school principal. I sometimes think about being an assistant superintendent, but I'm not sure if I would be happy because I like being with kids. I may pursue a central-office position, but for now I am quite happy as a high-school principal, being in the school building.”

However, like other participants in this study, Rochelle is in many ways the exception rather than the rule. “I only know one other African-American female high-school principal; she is in my district. I don't know any others. On a day-to-day basis, I don't talk to her or see her except in the county-level principal meetings. We occasionally bounce off of each other. She is not one of those people that I call; I am closer to the middle-school principals. I do know some middle-school African-American female principals, and I support and mentor them.”

“I think there are so few African-American female high-school principals because of the high salary. When I applied for my first high-school-principal position in the county, I went into someone’s office in human resources that I knew quite well and asked her, did she think I was going to get that school. She said, ‘No.’ She said it just that quickly. I said, Why? She stated that they didn't want to pay me that kind of money. She went on to say that they didn’t feel like a woman deserves to have that type of salary; a similar statement was made to me years ago in my hometown. I'm not sure whether it's real or not, but I've heard it too many times to just dismiss it. If you do a little research in the state, obviously there are more
White males than Black males, so when you look at the salary, that could apply to Black men as well. Usually you find Black males at alternative high schools because they can handle the discipline.”

She further commented, “The only way to increase the low numbers is to mentor, support, and encourage African-American female middle- and high-school assistant principals and middle-school principals who are already in the profession and want to move up. If an African-American female has not had quite a bit of experience as a teacher or assistant principal at a high school already, the people who are making hiring decisions are not likely to give them the opportunity to lead a high school.”

Rochelle rarely tells people that she is a high-school principal. “I get a different response when people find out that I'm the principal of a high school than when I was a middle-school principal. They give me ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs.’ I get comments so often that when I am out socially and people don't know what I do for a living, I tell them that I work at a high school. I never say I'm a principal unless they ask me specifically, because I don't want to have to contend with the comments because people just don't expect it and then they want to get into making me feel like I'm different. People begin to characterize me because I am a high-school principal; they develop this picture of me being tough, hardcore, mean, or unapproachable person, none of which are true.”

**Summary**

Rochelle entered the principalship, the latest in her career in comparison to all the participants. She had 24 years of experience in the classroom and as an assistant principal. Her skills and ability to support her school and students through the community are strong.
She successfully defused a community attempt to take over the school. Rochelle met with the school-level stakeholders first to determine a plan, and then they all met with the community to provide insight and clarity for all stakeholders. Rochelle's middle-school principal assignment was at an affluent school, and her high-school assignment is at a magnet school that has high poverty. She has been successful at both schools, as measured by her test data, parent involvement, and graduation rates for all subgroups. I respect her efforts to assure staff members during critical incidents but also her savvy in asking the staff, “Do you want me looking for the gun or emailing you telling you that I’m going to look for the gun?”

Rochelle’s experience and knowledge have been instrumental in her tenure as a high-school principal. She replaced an African-American man that was well liked and charismatic. Rochelle admits that she is not charismatic, yet she continues to improve the school, garner community support, and enjoy her position.
### Table 4.7
Storymap for Principal Melissa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First Principalship</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Schooling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past Experiences</td>
<td>Was a social worker in the community before going back to school for teaching license and administrative degree. School counselor, AP, and Principal</td>
<td>Only child. NC resident all her life. Mother an educator in the community.</td>
<td>She grew up in the community. Things are better than when she was growing up. Blacks and Whites did not mix.</td>
<td>Grew up in a segregated school setting. Undergraduate HBCU, graduate school PWI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Situation</td>
<td>She enjoys her job as a high-school principal. She is always involved in things with students.</td>
<td>She has spent 20 yrs in education in her community. She has one child; he is an adult.</td>
<td>She lives near the school community. She works to change the segregation issues in her school.</td>
<td>Serves a high-school population of 800, 30% AA, 40% W, 30% H, 50% FRL. First AA principal in her district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans</td>
<td>Would like to continue serving students in some capacity, her preference being high-school ages.</td>
<td>She enjoys being close to her family and providing support. She has several older relatives that she checks on throughout the week.</td>
<td>Willing to relocate for a career change. The community she works in is very segregated.</td>
<td>Would like to continue to work with students, become Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Melissa’s Story

Melissa grew up in the county that she works in and attended the school where she is now the principal. She stated that the population of the school has changed. “When I was a
student at the high school, there were Black and White students and we were separated in our community. We went to school together in the same building, but everybody knew that we were to stay separate. It was just how things were when I grew up.” There were only two Latino students at the school when she was a student, but today 39% of the student body is Latino. Still, the relationship between racial groups remains an issue in the community.

Melissa has spent her entire educational career in the same school. “I was a student here, then I became a high-school counselor, assistant principal, and then I became the principal.” She is the first and still only African-American high-school principal in the county. Before entering education, she was a social worker in the community but decided to change careers after seeing the many unmet needs of young people. Melissa credits her former principal with her transition from the assistant-principal position into the principalship. “He is a White male, and we have an awesome relationship. He would start a sentence, and I could finish it. There were times when we would work late and talk about the strains in the community and how we were going to develop the school, staff, and students to be the generation that would overcome the separation that we experienced growing up. We put a lot of good programs in place when he was principal and I was assistant principal, that are still going strong today.”

Like other participants, her leadership has been perceived in the context of race and gender. “One thing that is difficult for me to deal with is the fact that the staff continue to go to the former principal with concerns. They may ask me about something, a resource or a situation, and I let them know that I am working on it, and simultaneously they will ask him for assistance.” He tells Melissa about the staff member and always tells the staff member
that he or she must go through her. “I think the staff believes that he can get it done, but he can't get it done any quicker than I can and sometimes it can't be done. Sometimes there's a tendency for them to overlook me, sometimes getting the information from someone else. It's like they feel a need to double check and make sure that I know what I'm doing. I do think that this is a result of my race and gender, because I have been in the county longer than the former principal and I know everyone in the central office. So if it can be done, I know who to go to and get it done. I try not to look at it as a racial and gender issue, but it looks that way. I have tried to give people the benefit of the doubt, but a lot of time it’s there. You get tired of doing that, trying to make excuses for people.”

She has two assistant principals: a White male and a Hispanic male. The White male is older and struggles with Melissa’s being his supervisor. “He doesn't like when I make final decisions and they are not what he had in mind.” The Hispanic assistant principal has been with her for only a year but has made clear that he wants to be the principal of this high school. “He often goes on investigations involving students that border on unprofessional. I have warned him on a few occasions, and he cleans it up for a while.” He and the school resource office were involved in a student investigation and neither bothered to tell Melissa what was going on. A parent called, and Melissa astutely listened without indicating ignorance and shock at not knowing anything about the situation. She politely told the parent that she would find out where “we” were in the investigation and get back with the person. “I happened to walk in on the assistant principal and school resource officer discussing the case, which earlier they somewhat denied details. I called my assistant principal in and told him about the parent phone call. I told him that if anything goes on at this school or involving our
students, I was to be kept informed about it because ultimately I'm responsible. ‘You don't have the right to just keep that information.’ I also told him that we have had small issues such as this happening in the past and in lieu of this latest discovery that I was now seeing this as a pattern of his behavior. ‘I hope this doesn't happen again, because if it does, the way I deal with it will not just be face to face, it will result in a write-up and a recommendation for your removal from this school.’ I hate to have to watch my back, but I have had to as a principal.”

Melissa did not have a career goal to become a high-school principal, but it seemed like a natural progression to become the principal of the high school. “I love working with teenagers; they can be trying at times, but I like working with that age group. I enjoy watching them grow and change into young adults. I have good relationships with the other high-school principals. I have an excellent secondary director, and my mentor is now an assistant superintendent, and all of this adds to my success and comfort level as a high-school principal. My staff can be a little stubborn with accepting new ideas and programs, but what school staff isn't hard to work with sometimes?”

Staff at Melissa’s school has had issues with Hispanic gangs, test scores, and student discipline. Over the last few years, they have faced these problems. They have worked with the local police and sheriff’s department for mentors for the students and on preventive methods with gangs rather than being reactive after issues have exploded. “It really bothers me when people look at the school in a negative light, because we have a very diverse population. We have a high free-and-reduced-lunch population, high Latino population, and our African-American students are not performing well on some of the tests. People don't
look at the school and see what we are doing and where we are going to get when you leave school for the real world, because it’s not black and White. This past week, the school was listed in *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the best high schools in the state; teachers told her that finally someone recognized the population we serve, but the people in the county look at us like we are not doing a good job, without thinking about the population they serve.”

Despite this success, Melissa has had to deal with questions about her leadership effectiveness. “I have had a hard time with trust; it's one of those things that I kind of reserve especially after an incident last year.” Melissa described being called by the superintendent near the end of the school year. “During our supposedly casual conversation, he mentioned that he was thinking about moving me to another school. I was completely surprised because nobody in central office had expressed any concerns. I asked why he was considering moving me, and he couldn't really explain what I had done or not done. He mentioned that a few board members wanted to change the face of the school, but he was hesitant to tell me any more. I was told not to talk with anybody about this conversation. I knew there were concerns in the community regarding the gangs, but we had put several programs in place that were working well.”

“Another comment was made that White students were leaving my school and enrolling at another school in the county. I explained that this had been happening for years and this was not a Melissa problem, this was a county-level problem and that I was constantly working to improve the image of the school. Although I was told not to talk to anyone, I called NCAE, my mentor, and the NAACP because I thought I was being
mistreated. I wasn't sure if it was due to race, gender, or both, because I have a White male colleague who has dealt with something similar in our county.” The superintendent suggested moving Melissa to the alternative school. Her former principal, a White man, encouraged her and spoke on her behalf to the superintendent, and as a result she was not moved to the alternative school. Through this experience, she became more skeptical of the leadership at central office and has sometimes doubted her abilities as a principal.

Melissa stated that she does not think that she would get her current position if she had to apply for it today. When asked why, she referred to politics, lack of support, and that on one occasion she did not initially go along with an academic program that central office wanted in all schools. The schools were given a demonstration, but the vendors did not address the high-school components. Melissa indicated that she did not agree with spending money to support this program. There was grumbling about her decision, but she justified her rationale. Another demonstration was done with the high-school components added, and then she changed her mind and agreed to purchase the program. She believes that her unwillingness to join the bandwagon jeopardized some relationships at the central-office level and may have resulted in labeling her as aggressive and as hard to deal with. She further believes that if a male principal had insisted on additional information to assure that he was getting a program that was beneficial to his school, he would have been supported and seen as assertive and intelligent. Her intent was to provide sound instructional materials to teachers and to act as a good steward of school funds.

Commenting on the lack of similar peers, Melissa stated, “I don't know any other African-American female high-school principals. I'm sure I have seen some, but I don't know
them personally.’’ Melissa thought that there may be so few African-American female high-school principals because they are perceived as good nurturers of younger children and or as unable to handle the pressures of the high-school job.

**Summary**

Melissa’s background is in social work and counseling. She transitioned into administration under the guidance and direction of her former principal. Her entire educational career has been spent in the same school building. Her statement that if she had to apply for her job today she wouldn’t get it, is profound. Last school year, she experienced extreme stress related to the security of her job and she continues to feel uncomfortable. Melissa feels like a target. Recently, her school received a national award. Teachers and principals appreciate and need the acknowledgment, confirmation, and validation that what they are doing matters and that they are effective. Despite this success, her job security has led to self-doubts about her leadership.

**Summary of Emergent Themes**

Several broad categories resonated through the interview process—specifically: pathways, perceptions, pitfalls, and plans. The themes prevalent in every participant’s story are gender and ethnicity, with age a less prominent theme. All of the principals had some similar experiences, yet how they reacted to them and interpreted the experiences were different. Every participant’s mother or a very close female relative was an educator. Every participant’s passion, concern, and commitment to all students, particularly marginalized students, was evident in her leadership style and reason for becoming a high-school principal. The majority of the participants (6 out of 7) mentioned that a White male colleague was
instrumental in their attainment of a high-school principalship. An African-American woman leading a traditional high school is rarer than is acknowledged by the Department of Public Instruction, superintendents, or county records. It was originally noted from North Carolina superintendents that 40 (8.3%) of high-school positions were held by African-American women, whereas the actual number leading traditional high schools was 20 (4.2%).

Most of the women (5 out of 7) had mothers that were teachers, and all of the participants had several close relatives that were educators. Many of the participants fought the expectations of their mothers or close relatives to be educators by majoring in other fields, but they ultimately became educators. Many of the participants commented that a lot of their personal time was used to complete school tasks, at the expense of their personal lives, including family and friends.

Most of these women followed a traditional path to becoming a high-school principal. They were high-school teachers or counselors, high-school assistant principals, middle-school principals, and then high-school principals. Some were former coaches at the high-school level; others were counselors in high school. All felt prompted to fill a void on behalf of students.

Most of the participants grew up in small, predominantly African-American communities in which they knew their neighbors personally. Their neighbors supported each other and helped in raising the children. Their foundational settings are quite different from the communities they have chosen to live in as adults. Most live in predominantly White neighborhoods and generally speak to their neighbors only in passing. The sense of community support, engagement, and involvement is not present.
Most of these principals described the schools they lead as though it were their family and define the students as “my children.” They were very mothering and passionate about their schools and students. Many felt a need and overwhelming responsibility to clean up the image of the school, avoid negative press, and increase learning for all students.

Most participants had a variety of resources for support. They ranged from colleagues to their church family. They lacked a support base of other high-school principals of the same race or gender. The most surprising similarity for many of the participants was that the most influential colleague was a White man, often in a supervisory role as an advocate for the principal, supporting her career advancement. Most did not know or interact with other African-American female high-school principals.

The most prevalent concerns were their schools’ receiving fewer resources in comparison to other schools; the leadership in the county having lower expectations for their schools and students; stakeholders initially lacking faith in their leadership abilities; and heightened negative attention to students and school.

Another common theme was that participants’ leadership and authority were questioned or overlooked. The principals exercised extreme care in all situations because they believed that others would be quick to label and categorize them unfairly. One of the seven principals has since been demoted. Another was asked to take a less prestigious job at an alternative school. Each participant has served as principal in only one high school. Although most of these women were very satisfied with their positions, many felt isolated. Few African-American female high-school principals know each other. They do not mentor, receive mentoring, or work closely together. This often leads to feelings of isolation.
All of the participants were surprised at there being so few African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina. The question of how to increase the number of African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina evoked varying responses. Sasha thought that the change would have to begin with African-American women. She said, “We generally apply for jobs that we think we will get.” Sasha believed that African-American women have to take a chance and not be overly concerned with rejection. Maya emphasized the importance of bringing awareness to those selecting high school principals of the underrepresentation of African-American female high-school principals and of them encouraging and mentoring African-American women, which may improve both their representation and education for all students. Sabrina said, “We have to be deliberate in our efforts. We have to design a plan. African-American females are role models for many children. The majority of African-American male students are being raised by African-American females; therefore, we need to do whatever works for kids.” Mona thought that we needed mentor programs, networking with others, and “to dismiss the myths that African-American females can’t be successful high-school principals.” Roberta was not sure that we should try to increase the number of African-American female principals. She said, “If African-American females are interested in the position, then they will seek them; and if not, then let it be.” Rochelle thought that we needed mentoring and support groups to encourage women to pursue high-school principalships. She stated, “Experience and development is needed to be successful as a high-school principal because it is a very delicate and specialized job.”
Each participant shared her background, career path, educational philosophy, leadership style, and both negative and positive experiences. Each reflected about her lack of involvement with other African-American female high-school principals and recognized how this might help account for their limited numbers in North Carolina. The participants represent 35% of the African-American high-school principals in North Carolina, yet they could not provide an explanation for the lack of African-American women. When so little power is wielded by African-American women, what does this say about educational leadership in North Carolina? In chapter 5, I expound on this question and offer recommendations for African-American female leaders, practice, further study, and a list of actions for African-American principals and aspirants to the principalship.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The various categories of thoughts that resonated in the research questions and participant interviews were pathways, perceptions, pitfalls, and plans. The themes that developed from the research questions and interviews were age, race, and gender. Every question, response, situation, and interaction involved at least one of these themes. Using the common categories, cross-cutting themes, and advice and suggestions from the participants, I developed recommendations to improve the statistics of African-American female leadership in high schools, recommendations for practitioners to improve conditions for African-American women currently in the field, and a list of tasks for African-American women aspiring to be high-school principals. I will also share findings and discuss each research question from the perspective and pathway of the participants.

The purpose of this study was to examine African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina. The study examined their career paths, their experiences, and their perceptions of the position as a high-school principal. Invitations were sent to all African-American female principals of traditional high schools in North Carolina, a universe of 20 leaders. Interviews were conducted with 7 of the principals, representing 35% of that universe.

The interviews were conducted by the researcher in various locations, and each interview was intimate and heartfelt. There were times during each interview that I could feel the women transform; they let down their guard that I recognized as their professional demeanor, and we talked. I felt relieved and transformed as well. The interviews were truly a phenomenological experience. Phenomenological research is about listening and determining
what an “experience” is from the person who has had the experience. We talked about family and upbringing, some were similar to each other, but others were different. The common experiences among participants were a strong background in education, the high expectations from the family regardless of its economic history, and having a powerful and influential supporter for their career advancement. These women were leaders in their families and communities, in their schools, and in their homes. Their actions showed their concern for children to outweigh any of the challenges and disappointments that they had experienced along the pathway.

The participants' ages ranged from 33 to 60. Two participants were 33–36, three were 40–45, and two were 50–60. Only two were currently married. The women had either no children or one child, which is attributable to the long hours, often 10-12 hours daily, that they spend at work and having to prepare for the career of a high-school principal.

School Demographics

Most of the participants (6 out of 7) had similar school demographics: very high population of minority students, generally African American. They also had a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students as determined by the free- and reduced-lunch percentages, which often exceeded 50%. These data confirmed Wesson’s (1998) finding that most African-American women are hired in predominantly minority districts with severe financial and student concerns. They must show improvement quickly or risk being fired.

The three research questions guided the study, directed the interview questions, and helped me to organize participants’ responses. Research Question One allowed the story of
the African-American female high-school principal to be told in the context of gender, race, and leadership, which many participants had avoided because those characteristics so often evoke a negative connotation. Each participant noted a purposeful action on her part to not allow race or gender to be the center of attention as it relates to their leadership, although none of the principals could escape the racial or gender dynamics of school leadership.

Research Question Two asked about the skills needed to be successful as an African-American female principal. The participants had difficulty isolating specific skills. Many skills are used in combination, and they developed into skill sets. I needed participants to unpack the skill set and talk one-dimensionally in an effort to provide direct information upon which others could build upon and improve.

Research Question Three was a culmination of context attributes, development, and acknowledgment of the needed skills and how to define them for others. This question required that the participants search their school, personal, professional, community, and school-system environments to determine the deep meaningful thoughts and beliefs of the participants. How have they interacted in each of the aforementioned environments? What have those environments taught them? How have they overcome or changed those environments? These are just a few of the underlying questions that helped the participants formulate meaning for the three overarching questions. These questions also helped the interviewer formulate related questions in an effort to discover authentic and “new” knowledge.
Discussion for Research Question One

Research Question One: How do the experiences of African-American female high-school principals reflect the context of gender and race on leadership practice in their schools?

When asked about leadership and what it means in their lives, many of the women gave very clear and passionate answers. They seemed to recognize and even accept that leadership for them might not be what a man experiences. They gave responses such as, ”It doesn’t mean that you have to be out front.” Marshall (1991) noted that women often ignore or repress issues regarding their race and gender in their roles as professionals. They had to earn respect for their schools and had to constantly work, set goals, and gain the respect of their colleagues. This response led to probing, and all of the participants disclosed feeling not truly accepted as the school leader, some as a result of having received blunt statements to that effect. One participant experienced this when the school board hired her but wanted the former principal, a White man, to be her assistant principal until December of her first term because they felt that the community might not accept an African-American female principal. The conditions were far from ideal, but she accepted the job, accepted the school board’s appointee, and embraced the community as much as they allowed. She had many sleepless nights, especially when she had to take a stand that was unpopular or contrary to the previous administration, yet in the best interest of students.

Another participant was questioned by community members about her school-related decisions, which she doubted would have occurred had she been male. The principal had to remain steadfast and at the same time assure the community leaders that their concerns were
under control. She called a meeting and invited the community leaders, a central-office staff member, and the school-board representative for her school. The principal explained what the school needed and did not need from the community; she explained why and explained that the school was not in turmoil or danger of being taken over by unruly students.

One participant recalled that during her first year as a high-school principal, a student and his parent referred to one of her assistant principals using the “n-word.” Over her three-year tenure, she had reprimanded several students and parents for using the “n-word” in her presence or in the presence of other school officials. Degradations such as this have long-term negative effects for the school’s and community’s image as well as the principal’s sense of leadership both personally and professionally. Regardless of these challenges, these women continued to make gains with their students and schools.

Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) contended that women experience barriers even after attaining educational leadership positions. The participants’ stories indicated that they were not given the same respect as male principals. Gupton and Slick (1996) determined that female elementary principals felt as though they did not get the same respect as their male counterparts. The participants concurred with this statement and believed that race exacerbated the disregard and disrespect. Many of the participants were silent during the start of the interview, but after I shared my background in education and my research purpose, they began to explain and acknowledge the experiences that alienated them.

Throughout the interviews, the participants gave examples of various stakeholders giving the perception and often clearly expressing that they did not think a woman could handle the discipline problems or other elements to successfully lead a high school. This
research supported Gupton and Slick’s (1994) finding that female principals tend to be located in smaller districts and receive less pay than their male counterparts. African-American female principals at comprehensive high schools in North Carolina tend to be in large school districts and at schools that are predominantly African American, are high poverty, and have multiple site-based problems. This supports Miklos’s (1988) finding that principals of color, women in particular, tend to lead schools that have large numbers of students with similar ethnic or cultural groups as their own. Only 1 of 7 principals in this research study led a school with a predominantly White student population. This study confirmed the findings of Scott (1982) and Hill and Ragland (1995) that African Americans are often selected as principals in schools with high minority populations or in impoverished areas with students that have severe academic problems. These leaders find that the schools are difficult to improve; when joined with the lack of legitimate power and respect it makes the possibility of change and improvement, even success, less likely.

White privilege can manifest itself in many forms. Several of the participants were well aware of colleagues that were not subjected to the negative experiences they did. Some of the experiences were due in part to their school composite and their county office’s failure to provide a predominantly minority school with the same resources as the more affluent, heavily populated White schools. Many of their White colleagues provided support to the African-American female principals when they recognized that they did not have access or power to get the needed resources.

Dillard (2000) suggested that African-American women’s stories are legitimate and powerful bodies of knowledge that have been excluded from most research and practice. The
participants in this research indicated that they had never heard of research about African-American female leaders in education, which aligns with Brunner and Grogan’s (2007) statement that the research on women of color is thin. Consistent with Dillard (2000), the life stories of these female leaders offered legacies of women leaders; the path to their current positions was laden with experiences both good and bad.

**Discussion for Research Question Two**

Research Question Two: What required relationships or qualifications are most important for African-American female high-school principals to be successful in their school?

Every participant cited a White male educator as having been instrumental in the participant obtaining a high-school principalship. For many participants, the person was a confidante throughout the principalship. Four of the seven participants did not know of another African-American female high-school principal; the others were only casual acquaintances of someone else in that capacity. The participants realized early in their careers that White men are the traditional gatekeepers to a male-dominated position such as high-school principal or superintendent. African-American women account for 4.2% (20) of principals of traditional high schools in North Carolina and 0.9% (1) of the state’s superintendents. The participants may not feel a necessity or benefit of interacting with other African-American female high-school principals or superintendents because they do not possess the power to place them in leadership roles such as a high-school principal or perhaps they haven’t had the opportunity to meet them. These women are savvy, but they are somehow adding to the isolation, burnout, and loneliness that often accompany this position.
After a period of time, the low numbers and isolation reinforce each other. Several participants commented on the many needed resources at their schools and the need to have school-system connections that come from networking, being an integral part of the community, or having a lengthy career in the school system. Participants indicated having used one or more of these means to garner additional resources, assist with timely maintenance requests, or solve critical personnel issues.

The participants were well informed about the need to be a part of the community and gain its support early in their tenure as a high-school principal. The school staff as well as the community should rally behind a proficient principal to get the best results from students and support their academic needs. All of the principals understood the importance of obtaining the community’s support early in the principalship.

Logan (1998) found that women are more likely to be hired as elementary-school principals than as secondary-school principals and secondary-school principals usually fill superintendent positions. My research further supports Logan's position that fewer female principals are at the high-school level and even less African-American female high-school principals are in North Carolina. My and Logan’s research indicated that the lack of female high-school principals contributes to the dearth of female superintendents. North Carolina data indicated that only 1 of the state’s 115 superintendents is an African-American woman. This information shocked and disturbed many of the participants.

The African-American female participants were eager to provide suggestions to their White colleagues to help with cultural awareness and concerns. They also spoke of serving as
role models or mentors for less experienced principals or those lacking experience working with minority or economically challenged populations.

Women in general and African-American women in particular need to seek the support and advocacy of those in leadership positions. These people will often be White males. The participants all stated that they had a close relationship with a White man in a leadership role, whom they said was instrumental in helping them to obtain a high-school principalship. Bell and Nkomo (2001) suggested that having a supportive supervisor is pertinent for career advancement. Our participants suggested the same and stated that they attributed much of their success to a supervisor who was helpful and caring throughout their career.

Much of the research suggested that women are perceived as not being tough enough to handle the high-school principalship (Glickman, 1990). Participants in this study experienced the same low expectations. They each provided advice to those seeking high-school principalships, which included working hard; proactively and calmly addressing negative comments about their abilities; and providing the students, staff, and community with a clear plan for academic success for all students.

Indvik (2004) stated that men are not proponents of sex inequality but that they seldom have experience with detecting these concerns. The participants said that when they sought support from male counterparts, most were respectful and sensitive once the issue of gender inequality was brought to their attention.

Gupton and Slick (1996) acknowledged that women are not always given the same level of respect or support as are men and that teachers' feelings towards female principals
have a direct effect on their evaluation. Female principals need to have a clear understanding of their students and staff and provide a venue for concerns as well as ascribe to shared leadership, so that the staff feels respected, appreciated, and supported. Maya alluded to White privilege when she spoke about a White female high-school principal that always received the resources requested for her school. Although this principal offered some of the resources to Maya, who accepted them to benefit her students, this thoughtful act did not eliminate the privilege.

**Discussion for Research Question Three**

Research Question Three: What have African-American female high-school principals determined about the world of educational administration for minority women?

Many of these women do not know other female high-school principals to network with, share ideas with, and receive support from. They know other women in leadership positions but admit that they do not have time to interact with them. Some had difficulty scheduling the interview. I traveled several hours to conduct the interviews on short notice. The participants were polite, but it was clear that their available time was limited. I met with them in coffeehouses, their personal residences, their offices long after the close of business, and other non-traditional interview settings. They were excited and encouraged by the research topic, but they had many things to attend to—sometimes during the interview. I tried to draw useful inferences from their interactions with office staff, family members, or other colleagues. All were reserved at the onset of the interview, but each of them relaxed as we moved through the interview questions. They often added insights to an answer given much earlier.
As an African-American female elementary-school principal, I found their knowledge base, their realistic nature, and their professionalism to be uplifting. Each had a strong presence, was eloquent, and was dynamic in delivery. All of the participants were top administrators based on school awards and annual improvements in test scores. All of the participants were well read and we had extensive dialogue about educational readings and research. All of the participants shared negative experiences of race and gender related to their leadership.

Research has shown that we still have not fully relinquished our early image of a high-school principal being male and White, which my research reinforced. Banks (2003) found that women and people of color are underrepresented in educational leadership positions. My research again supports that the combination of female and African-American leads to a difficult career ascension in the field of education in comparison to White females and Black or White males.

Historical explanations for women's underrepresentation in school administration, including lack of aspiration, lack of preparation, and lack of natural leadership abilities, have been discounted through my research and that of Pigford and Tonneson (1993). Many of them thought that most school systems avoid seeking female leaders for high school because it is assumed that women cannot handle the discipline concerns. They countered that most African-American women raise their children, including males, in a single-family household.

Gupton and Slick (1994) noted that many female principals are located in smaller districts and receive less pay than do males. Based on my research, most female principals are at elementary schools, where they earn significantly less pay than a high-school principal.
Through my research, I have discovered that African-American female high school principals were generally located in large urban school districts in North Carolina. It was also noted that they were assigned to schools in which the population was predominately African-American, with high poverty rates, many academic concerns, and trouble due to a history of crime and violent activities occurring in the surrounding neighborhoods. These principal positions are extremely difficult to manage and often lead to dismissal because very few efforts are made by the school system to make changes on behalf of the school or the students. African-American women who remain at elementary schools are seldom promoted to superintendent irrespective of race.

Indvik (2004) suggested that improvements in hiring practices will begin to occur only when we question the patterns and the underrepresentation of women. My study is grounded in feminist research, one of whose goals is to conduct research for women. My research provided the participants with a platform to question, share their experiences, and provide suggestions and advice. They are African-American female high-school principals, and we need to hear their voices and respect their stories.

Nicholson (1999) focused on the importance of having teachers and administrators of color in schools. Nicholson justified this position by saying that minority educators represent the “significant others” for children of color in their schools and communities. My research indicated that African-American female principals represented two layers of minority: African-American and female.

Six out of seven participants stated that increasing the number of African-American high-school principals is prudent and necessary for the school systems in North Carolina.
This view is consistent with research by Coursen, Haddereman, Jeffress, and Mazzarella (1989) who assert that the best decisions result from a diverse group of people. Their research further supported the notion that marginalized people, specifically women and non-Whites, have a heightened sensitivity to sexism and racism.

Scott (1982) and Hill and Ragland (1995) discovered that minority principals are hired in schools with high minority populations, critical financial conditions, and educational problems. These difficult conditions can lead to school failure, which gives the perception of poor leadership and often results in dismissal or demotion of the principal or barriers to career advancement based on a dismal track record. Many of the participants that were interviewed have been hired in schools posing similar challenges. Participants with support from the central office have been successful, and those without support are often dismissed from the high-school principalship.

**Recommendations for Practice**

*Recommendations for African-American Female Leaders Aspiring to the High-School Principalship*

Based on the interviews and discussions with African-American female high-school principals and on existing research, the following recommendations were developed for African-American women aspiring toward a high-school principalship or other upper-level school-system position.

- Seek support for balancing family and job demands. This seems to be a significant concern for African-American women, as they struggle to maintain family obligations and their career as a high-school principal.
• Begin or enhance networking efforts among African-American women, other women, and men. Networking will increase the possibility of being part of the application pool for high-school principal, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent, or superintendent vacancies.

• Build relationships with others in leadership roles that make hiring decisions who will allow African-American women an opportunity to be visible, recognized, and considered when high-school-principal positions become available. According to Wickham (2007), the high-school-principal position often leads to consideration for a superintendency, implying that networking and acquiring this position provide more opportunities to reach higher-level executive positions.

• Be flexible and willing to relocate to other cities, counties, and states that are more accepting and progressive regarding African-American female leadership. Being place-bound could significantly limit opportunities to attain a high-school principalship or a superintendent position.

• Continue to develop a positive self-image and self-concept. Data indicate that the inability to obtain a high-school principalship or superintendency is a systemic problem and does not necessarily reflect on the applicant. Enomoto et al. (2000) underscored that the double jeopardy of being a woman of color has the potential to weaken one’s self-esteem as a leader.

• When applying for these positions, try to project as a strong, capable leader. Once obtaining one of these positions, success requires strength, knowledge, and resiliency.
• Develop an outstanding vita, including a well-prepared presentation highlighting your plans for eliminating or overcoming the challenges relevant to the particular county or school of interest. Highlight your strengths, unique skills, broad range of abilities, achievements, and professional challenges that you successfully faced.

• Do your homework, be well-prepared, dress for success, and be confident and knowledgeable about those conducting the interview and the specific successes and tribulations of the area (county/school) to which you are applying.

• Develop a 100-day plan as well as a strategic plan for 1–5 years to assure the hiring committee that you have a well-thought-out plan for success. A strategic plan also indicates your level of commitment and expected tenure in the position.

• Earn a terminal degree, write and publish educational articles, present at educational conferences, join boards and committees that are community and educationally-based, and volunteer in your county to participate in leadership opportunities. These opportunities can have exponential gains such as career advancement, visibility, notoriety, consulting offers, or teaching assignments at the college or university level.

An Action List for African-American Female Aspirants to a High-School Principalship or Current High-School Principals

• Obtain the needed qualifications: an undergraduate education degree and a master’s of school administration.
• Gain the needed experience as an educational leader, preferably at the secondary/high-school level.

• Develop positive relationships with your principal and other school and school-system leaders.

• Seek and accept a variety of leadership opportunities that will enhance your experiences and expand your knowledge in education in various settings.

• Develop key relationships with people in leadership roles, which will significantly improve opportunities for career advancement and support along the pathway.

• When confronted with racial and/or gender discrimination, remain calm and do not accuse people. Speak from facts and not from emotions. You can be right about a situation and still lose if you aren’t scrupulously professional.

• Longevity in a progressive school system can prove to be a positive for African-American women; again, making significant connections can make a huge difference in your career trajectory.

• Be purposeful in school selection—many African Americans are placed at schools that are predominantly African American, are insufficiently funded, and have significant academic concerns. If you are assigned to schools with these attributes, make an effort to connect with the community leaders and work extremely hard to provide multiple layers of social and academic support for your students.

• Strive to demonstrate academic growth under your leadership as well as your ability to lead a variety of schools, whether diverse in student population or in level of students.
Gupton and Slick (1996) attested that barriers women encounter professionally are discrimination, balancing family responsibilities, and lack of mobility. The recommendations listed above are intended to mitigate some of these concerns and provide bridges to success.

Additional Recommendations for Practice

- University and college programs have a majority of female students in the Masters of School Administration Program (MSA). It is important for educational programs to better address racial and gender issues in administration. Administrative programs can prepare African-American women by developing a stronger awareness of barriers and how to overcome them, which will allow them to be better prepared and overcome obstacles.

- Superintendents, associate superintendents, assistant superintendents, and other cabinet-level personnel instrumental in principal selection can utilize this research to become better educated and more aware of their role in creating or maintaining racial and gender disparities. Awareness and acknowledgment may spur decision makers to change their unperceived/subconscious discriminatory practices.

- Professional educational organizations can use this research to better prepare and encourage African-American women who are about to enter leadership roles. These organizations can help bring attention to the low number of African-American female high-school principals and educate superintendents on the underutilization of African-American women.

Preliminary findings from this research were shared during a presentation at an international conference in Hawaii. I shared the purpose, goal, and significance of the research and then
began introducing the findings from the participants’ interviews. After the presentation of some of the direct quotes from the participants regarding their negative experiences, one of the educators in the audience, a White man who was a retired school administrator, commented that he didn’t understand why these women did not file a lawsuit. He also said that he couldn’t imagine anyone allowing this type of treatment. When I attempted to explain why these women were not in litigation, several audience members became angry at the man for asking what they thought were useless questions. The majority of the angry attendees were women, many of them African American. Their anger, although misdirected at this man, reflected understandable outrage at the inability of many African-American female high-school principals to express their anger due to fear of backlash, of being labeled a troublemaker, or of being dismissed.

I told the audience that the man likely has not experienced these situations; he does not know, he asked the question, he is apparently appalled by the treatment, and sharing the type of information in my response is one of the goals of feminist research—of my research. I added that if we persecute men, African American or Caucasian, for not knowing, then we are not being fair, reasonable, or prudent in our efforts. I then finished my explanation for the man, who after the presentation exchanged business cards with me. After he had left, several African-American women told me they were still disgusted with the man’s lack of knowledge. I continued my original response: he can’t be blamed for something he doesn’t know, but now he knows and might well share his new knowledge with someone else in an effort to make things better for others.
Recommendations for Further Study

Findings from this study raise several important questions that merit further exploration. The following are recommendations for future research.

- This study should be replicated in other states throughout the country to determine whether the shortage of African-American female high-school principals is statewide, regional, or nationwide.

- The diversity of the superintendent position throughout the country should be investigated, specifically examining African-American women and their pathways to the superintendency. Jackson (1999) found that there have never been more than 50 African-American female superintendents in the country at any one time, out of approximately 15,000 superintendents. If this still holds, then research needs to be directed toward school boards and the selection committees that hire superintendents.

- Research is needed to better understand White male colleagues’ positive role in the hiring, advancement, and support of African-American female high-school principals. This research could reveal how these men select the women they help, the specific type of support they provide, and any resistance they have experienced as a result.

- A study of White women and a study of African-American males needs to be conducted to determine how they overcome barriers to becoming high-school principals. Understanding these minorities’ success could help African-American female aspirants.
• A comparative study of the high-school assignments, salaries, and duties offered African-American women versus those offered White women, Black men, and White men should be conducted. This will assist in determining whether there is a difference in expectations, assignment, salary, and other factors.

• A study of African-American female high-school assistant principals’ career paths and goals may help us to understand pipeline issues as well as the barriers to and conditions of career advancement.

• A study of college and university preparation programs needs to be conducted to assess how female and minority concerns are being addressed. These institutions educate virtually all educational leaders, including those who can reduce the disparities between the number of African-American female leaders and the numbers of leaders from other demographic groups.

**Conclusion**

There is a large disparity between the number of African-American female high-school principals leading traditional schools and the numbers of African-American men, White men, and White women leading such schools. This study examined these women’s perspectives, pathways, and perceptions of the position. When educational leaders are having dialogue about diversity, gender, and race, who is reminding them of the stark numbers regarding African American female leaders? The reminder is not coming from African American females because they are not part of the leadership or part of the conversation. This study helped fill the void in the research literature regarding the stories and experiences of African-American female high-school principals.
The interviews revealed the participants’ similarities in both family and career pathways. Many participants had experiences indicating that their leadership was not valued or perceived as valid; they continue to work hard to prove others wrong. Most participants noted that a White man was an advocate for their career. These women learned quickly that the school and community need to be among their supporters. After I shared the statistics on African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina, the participants began to acknowledge and vowed to lessen their isolation from other African-American women in similar career paths.

Brunner and Grogan (2007) documented that women are generally better educated than men and that African-American women have to navigate more issues than others. This research revealed the same patterns. Therefore, African-American women need to prepare themselves for career challenges and barriers.

Lincoln (1993), Beachum (2005), and I have been asked the relevance of research about African-American female leadership. Lincoln (1993) responded that we must hear from the silenced. Beachum (2005) echoed that if we don’t hear from African-American women, we will not hear from a different voice. As noted from my research, the phenomenon begins with the margin, those who have little to lose because they have the least. I believe that the voices of African-American women are important and they seldom have had the opportunity to participate in formal leadership as a high school principal. True leadership is about empowering others and I trust that my research, findings, and recommendations will give others the courage to lead, empower, and advocate for all of “our” mothers.
Lessons Learned

Female leadership is an under-researched topic, and African-American female leadership is referred to as “strangely silent.” My research began as a study of African-American female high-school principals, focused on North Carolina because it is my home state. After several years of research revealed the dearth of African-American female high-school principals in North Carolina, the term “strangely absent” may be a better descriptor. Research regarding high-school principals led to additional inquiry regarding African-American female superintendents in North Carolina, and they were strangely absent as well.

Some educators, who apparently assumed that women would have the same experiences regardless of race, questioned the relevance of the African-American woman’s story. They did not grasp that gender discrimination and racial discrimination could cause under-representation of African-American women in school leadership.

The stories from the seven African-American female high-school principals were enlightening. Several interviews became very emotional as we discussed incidents they had repressed. They often started the interview without clear recall of a racial or gender-sparked issue, suggesting that the incident was a trifle. But as the interview continued, the participants became more candid.

I don’t know whether they had shared their stories with spouses, family members, or friends, but for many of the participants, the interview was as though they were experiencing the incident again. They revealed hurt feelings, questioned their self-esteem, and expressed an overwhelming mistrust for their colleagues and school community based on their experiences as a high-school principal. Many of the participants expressed that Black women
are accustomed to the mistreatment but are not accepting of it. Black women persevere. The obvious covert methods of mistreatment caused distress, but the blatant, overt acts of racism laced with sexism revealed and addressed in my research may provide a springboard to help education develop empowerment, leadership, and change. Only through research can a system that is unaware of what needs to be developed be changed.

Qualitative research is research using a narrative method to tell the story of those being researched. I used qualitative research because my research required rich dialogue and open-ended discussion to ensure that each participant’s story was told. I was able to authentically capture their feelings using many long quotes and details. The qualitative process is extensive, but the opportunity to have open and honest dialogue with participants is invaluable. The conversations that resulted from the interviews revealed participants’ insights and perceptions of their phenomena that could not surface from a survey or from data collection alone.

I was asked by an educator whether the participants might choose not to discuss race or gender issues with me. I had not considered this possibility, but I responded that I would continue the dialogue in an effort to get more discussion and feedback from the participants. I have revealed in my research as well as to the participants and dissertation committee that I am an African-American female elementary principal. I am a former high-school teacher and worked with the assistant principal at the high school to begin my administrative career. I was very fortunate and grateful that each participant felt comfortable and safe enough to share her experiences, life path, and career path with me. I do not think that the same story would have developed from anyone except another African-American female school
administrator. The participants felt safe with me because I was a colleague. I pressed them when they made statements such as “you know what I mean” or “you understand,” although I usually did know what they meant. I wanted and needed to remain an outsider to assure that I wasn’t telling my story through them, but was indeed telling their story, pathway, and perceptions as an African-American female high-school principal.

Another educator asked me if I wanted to be a high-school principal. This was before I had conducted any of the interviews. I responded that I was not sure, but I would let him know after I interviewed some African-American female high-school principals. Having reflected on the interviews, I would like to become a principal at a different level, middle school or high school, because I believe that I could be successful and create a school environment that is conducive to learning, growing, and improving. My ultimate goal is to be president of a Historically Black College or University (HBCU). Along that pathway, I would like to obtain a position in the central office working with principals, become superintendent of a school system, and then begin a career in higher education.
REFERENCES


161


Weston, M. (1988). Can academic research be truly feminist? In Dawn Currie (Ed.), *From the margins to the centre: Selected essays in women’s studies research* (pp. 142–150). Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada: The Women’s Studies Research Unit, University of Saskatchewan.


# Appendix A
## African-American High School Principals in North Carolina
### 2009-2010 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Number of High School</th>
<th>Number of Female H.S. Principals</th>
<th>African-Amer. Female H. S. Principals</th>
<th>Type of school or other information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamance-Burlington</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleghany</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anson</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheboro</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheville</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Alternative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buncombe</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabarrus</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carteret</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caswell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catawba</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Hill-Carrboro</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte-Mecklenburg</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Large county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craven</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Learn and Earn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currituck</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dare</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplin</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edenton-Chowan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgecombe</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth City/Pasquotank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaston</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Large county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnett</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haywood</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertford</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickory</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoke</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyde</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iredell-Statesville</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannapolis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenoir</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexington</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macon</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDowell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mooresville</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Airy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash-Rocky Mt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hanover</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton-Conover</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onslow</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamlico</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pender</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perquimans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roanoke Rapids</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan-Salisbury</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherford</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanly</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stokes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomasville</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transylvania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrrell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watauga</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Large county values are indicated separately.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>173</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weldon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteville</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston Salem-Forsythe</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadkin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yancy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B
North Carolina Schools
Breakdown by Position, Gender, and Ethnicity
2007-2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1037/44.2%</td>
<td>19/24.4%</td>
<td>1152/40.8%</td>
<td>5,148/10.2%</td>
<td>10,197/35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1311/55.8%</td>
<td>59/75.6%</td>
<td>1674/59.2%</td>
<td>45,512/89.8%</td>
<td>18,368/64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>553/23.6%</td>
<td>23/29.5%</td>
<td>866/30.6%</td>
<td>6,420/12.7%</td>
<td>4,581/16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1751/74.6%</td>
<td>53/67.9%</td>
<td>1903/67.3%</td>
<td>42,758/84.4%</td>
<td>23,002/80.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44/1.9%</td>
<td>2/2.6%</td>
<td>57/2.0%</td>
<td>1482/2.9%</td>
<td>962/3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2348</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2826</td>
<td>50,660</td>
<td>28,565</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C
North Carolina Superintendents
Breakdown by Race and Gender
2009-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Region/ Population by Student</th>
<th>Superintendent’s Race</th>
<th>Superintendent’s Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alamance-Burlington</td>
<td>22372</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander</td>
<td>5587</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleghany</td>
<td>1514</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anson</td>
<td>3972</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashe</td>
<td>3234</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheboro</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asheville</td>
<td>3700</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery</td>
<td>2253</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaufort</td>
<td>7198</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertie</td>
<td>2923</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladen</td>
<td>5139</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>11791</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buncombe</td>
<td>29448</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burke</td>
<td>13941</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabarrus</td>
<td>31600</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caldwell</td>
<td>13014</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carteret</td>
<td>8254</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caswell</td>
<td>3170</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catawba</td>
<td>24952</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapel Hill-Carrboro</td>
<td>11000</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte-Mecklenburg</td>
<td>132751</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chatham</td>
<td>7711</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherokee</td>
<td>3571</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>1392</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>16496</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinton</td>
<td>3091</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>9304</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craven</td>
<td>14603</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland</td>
<td>52439</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currituck</td>
<td>4001</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dare</td>
<td>4797</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson</td>
<td>26237</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davie</td>
<td>6642</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duplin</td>
<td>8853</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Durham</td>
<td>31772</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edenton-Chowan</td>
<td>2388</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgecombe</td>
<td>9749</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth City/Pasquotank</td>
<td>6073</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elkin</td>
<td>1255</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>8411</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaston</td>
<td>32226</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>1155</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville</td>
<td>8817</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>3320</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilford</td>
<td>70794</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halifax (interim)</td>
<td>8193</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harnett</td>
<td>18726</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haywood</td>
<td>7880</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson</td>
<td>13282</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hertford</td>
<td>3173</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hickory</td>
<td>4535</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoke</td>
<td>7509</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyde</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iredell-Statesville</td>
<td>26638</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson</td>
<td>3690</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnston</td>
<td>31109</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>1188</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kannapolis</td>
<td>5050</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>9603</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lenoir</td>
<td>9321</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexington</td>
<td>3083</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lincoln</td>
<td>12095</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macon</td>
<td>4405</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madison</td>
<td>2624</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>3867</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McDowell</td>
<td>6581</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitchell</td>
<td>2149</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montgomery</td>
<td>4385</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>12198</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mooresville</td>
<td>5377</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mount Airy</td>
<td>1663</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nash-Rocky Mount</td>
<td>15090</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hanover</td>
<td>24000</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newton-Conover</td>
<td>2832</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>2539</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onslow</td>
<td>23659</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>18580</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamlico</td>
<td>1430</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pender</td>
<td>8116</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perquimans</td>
<td>1732</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person</td>
<td>5300</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitt</td>
<td>23025</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>2490</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randolph</td>
<td>23367</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>7765</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roanoke Rapids</td>
<td>2940</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robeson</td>
<td>23562</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockingham</td>
<td>14077</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rowan-Salisbury</td>
<td>21988</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutherford</td>
<td>9391</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampson</td>
<td>11535</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>6615</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanly</td>
<td>9380</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stokes</td>
<td>7177</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surry</td>
<td>11529</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swain</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomasville</td>
<td>2589</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transylvania</td>
<td>3759</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrrell</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>37878</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vance</td>
<td>7436</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake</td>
<td>136099</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>2606</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>1957</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watauga</td>
<td>4440</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>19188</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weldon</td>
<td>1004</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whiteville</td>
<td>2548</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkes</td>
<td>10050</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>12548</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winston Salem-Forsyth</td>
<td>51487</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadkin</td>
<td>6004</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yancy</td>
<td>2465</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Maurice O. Green, Superintendent Guilford County Schools
Appendix D
Interview Questions

Tell me a little about you. (family background, K-12 education, college, career path leading to administration).

What is your definition of leadership? What does a leader do?

Why did you become a high school principal? How or what path did you take to become a high school principal?

Tell me about the community in which you grew up. Tell me about the community in which you currently live.

Share some of your experiences both negative and positive regarding being a high school principal.

What is your support base? Who do you vent with/to? Who do you trust with your concerns?

Have you experienced complications or unfair treatment based on your race or gender as it relates to your role as a high school principal? Please share some of the experiences.

What pitfalls have you experienced related to your position as an African American high school principal? What can be done to avoid those pitfalls?

If you had an invisible knapsack what is one “thing” that you would like to have inside. Why?

What are your career goals? How do you plan to achieve them?

Tell me about another African American female high school principal that you know.

Why do you think there are very few African American female high school principals in North Carolina?

How can we increase the number of African American high school principals in North Carolina?
GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date Submitted: December 2009
1a. Revised Date: 
2. Title of Project: African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Position
3. Principal Investigator: Valerie Howard Bridges
5. Campus Box Number: 7801
6. Email: bridgev@gcsnc.com
7. Phone Number: 336-669-0772
8. Fax Number: 336-545-3703
9. Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission: Lance Fusarelli lance_fusarelli@ncsu.edu
10. Source of Funding? (required information): none
11. Is this research receiving federal funding?: no
12. If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number: N/A no funding

13. RANK:
   □ Faculty
   □ Student: □ Undergraduate; □ Masters; or □ PhD
   □ Other (specify): Ed.D.

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.
Principal Investigator:

Valerie H. Bridges  ____________________________________________ *
(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.

Faculty Sponsor:

Lance Fusarelli  ____________________________________________ *
(typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

*Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: joe_rabiega@ncsu.edu or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.

For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

☐ Exempt  ☐ Approved  ☐ Approved pending modifications  ☐ Table

Expedited Review Category:  ☐ 1  ☐ 2  ☐ 3  ☐ 4  ☐ 5  ☐ 6  ☐ 7  ☐ 8a  ☐ 8b  ☐ 8c  ☐ 9

Reviewer Name  Signature  Date
In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION
1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.
   
   The purpose of this study is to examine the career paths and perceptions of African American female high school principals in North Carolina. There is a need for research to provide insight into women’s personal and professional characteristics and attributes as female leaders of color particularly in secondary education.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.
   
   The research is in partial fulfillment for a doctorate degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at North Carolina State University.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION
1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?
   
   The researcher will attempt to interview five to eight female African American principals of high schools in North Carolina.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.
   
   The researcher will interview African American female high school principals in North Carolina public schools. All of the subjects for the study will be chosen purposefully because of their unique characteristics. All of the high school principals are African American females. This research should provide some insight into the pathways and perception of African American female high school principals.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.
   
   The criteria for the selection of participants is female administrator, served in an educational leadership role for at least one full school academic year, have been or presently serving in the capacity of principal, and currently serving or have served as an educational administrator in a North Carolina high school within a public school system that mentor African Americans.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.
   
   The study is limited to African American female high school principals.
5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.
   
   No relationship exists between the researcher and subjects.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:
   
   - minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
   - fetuses
   - pregnant women
   - persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
   - persons with physical disabilities
   - economically or educationally disadvantaged
   - prisoners
   - elderly
   - students from a class taught by principal investigator
   - other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.
   
   No vulnerable populations will be included in the study.

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.
   
   Each principal will be interviewed. The interviews will take 60-90 minutes in an effort to gain rich information from each of the participants; a highly structured interview style will be implemented. The researcher will use the same open ended questions for each participant. The responses from the questions should provide information and generalization regarding the life of an African American female high school principal in North Carolina. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?
Each interview will last approximately 60 – 90 minutes.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS
1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

No potential risks perceived.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

No request of personal information will be required of the subjects.

   a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

      N/A

   b. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

      No.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the researcher and stored in a secure, locked cabinet. Data will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

   a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

      Each subject will be assigned a pseudonym to avoid recognition of the participants.

   b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

      Reports will be written in aggregate and individual responses and quotes will be used as determined pertinent by the researcher.

4. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

The researcher will have complete control of the tapes and will destroy them at the conclusion of the research project.
5. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No deception of human subjects is involved.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

The study will add to the dearth amount of research that is available on African American female leadership. There is a need for research to provide insight into women’s personal and professional characteristics and attributes as female leaders, particularly in education. This study will attempt to fill the void by including the voices, lived stories, and experiences of African American women administrators who can inform others about important issues of leadership in secondary schools.

F. COMPENSATION

Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

1. Explain compensation provisions if the subject withdraws prior to completion of the study.

No compensation.

2. If class credit will be given, list the amount and alternative ways to earn the same amount of credit.

No class credit.

G. COLLABORATORS

1. If you anticipate that additional investigators (other than those named on Cover Page) may be involved in this research, list them here indicating their institution, department and phone number.

No additional investigators will be involved.

2. Will anyone besides the PI or the research team have access to the data (including completed surveys) from the moment they are collected until they are destroyed.

Only the researcher will have access to the interview notes and tapes.

H. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. Do you have a significant financial interest or other conflict of interest in the sponsor of this project? No
2. Does your current conflicts of interest management plan include this relationship and is it being properly followed? No

I. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
1. If a questionnaire, survey or interview instrument is to be used, attach a copy to this proposal.
   Interview questions will be used for each subject.
2. Attach a copy of the informed consent form to this proposal.

3. Please provide any additional materials that may aid the IRB in making its decision.

J. HUMAN SUBJECT ETHICS TRAINING
*Please consider taking the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI), a free, comprehensive ethics training program for researchers conducting research with human subjects. Just click on the underlined link.
Appendix F
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
PROTOCOL RENEWAL FORM

Date: December 2009

Current IRB protocol #:

Project Title: African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Position

Principal Investigator: Valerie H. Bridges

Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

E-mail: bridgev@gcsnc.com

Phone: 336-669-0772 Fax: 336-545-3703

Mailing Address: 709 Cattail Circle Raleigh, NC 27610

Additional Investigators: None

Type of original approval: ☐ Expedited ☐ Full Board

Source of Funding:

Please provide the IRB with the following:

- A copy of the current consent form
  If the project obtains verbal consent, please provide a script used for obtaining consent.

If your project has a waiver of some or all of the requirements for consent, please check here: ☐

- A Study Progress Report (attached below)

- Any materials that have changed since the last IRB review

__________________________________________________________________________  ____________
Principal Investigator        Date

__________________________________________________________________________  ____________
Faculty Sponsor (if applicable) Date
Please complete and email to: joe_rabiega@ncsu.edu. You can also mail your submission to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III).

**************************************************************************

For IRB office use only

Review Received: □ Expedited □ Full Board

Review Decision: □ Approve □ Approve with Modifications □ Table
□ Disapprove

Reviewer ______________ Signature ____________________________ Date _____________
REPORT ON STUDY PROGRESS

1. Total number of subjects enrolled: 6

1a. Total number of subjects originally approved by the IRB: 6-8

1b. Please provide an explanation if you have enrolled more subjects than originally approved by the IRB: n/a

2. Total number of subjects who withdrew from the research: none

   Please provide an explanation for each subject that withdrew:

3. Were there any adverse events or unanticipated problems involving risks to the subjects or others? none

   If yes, please attach a detailed statement.

4. Were there any complaints regarding the research? no

   If so, please attach any copies of written complaints and/or descriptions of all complaints about the research.

5. Is there any new information since the last IRB review that might impact the risks vs. benefits of the research? no

   If so, please submit a summary of any recent literature, findings, or other relevant information, especially information about risks associated with the research.

6. Has the project been modified since the last IRB Review? no

   If yes, have all modifications since the last IRB Review been submitted to the IRB for approval? If not, explain:

7. List approval date of each modification and briefly summarize the change(s): n/a

8. Are you still enrolling subjects or collecting data? Collecting data

9. Are your remaining activities confined to data analysis? yes

10. Projected end of project (data analysis complete): December 2009

   When your project is complete, please provide the IRB office with a study closing report.
11. Please provide the IRB with any information regarding any funding changes for the study. (i.e. a different source of funding, or a new relationship between investigator and sponsor)

No funding is provided.
Appendix F
North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
PROTOCOL RENEWAL FORM

Date: December 2009

Current IRB protocol #:

Project Title: African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Position

Principal Investigator: Valerie H. Bridges    Department: Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

E-mail: bridgev@gcsnc.com

Phone: 336-669-0772    Fax: 336-545-3703    Mailing Address: 709 Cattail Circle Raleigh, NC 27610

Additional Investigators: None

Type of original approval:    ☐ Expedited    ☐ Full Board

Source of Funding:

Please provide the IRB with the following:

➢ A copy of the current consent form
   If the project obtains verbal consent, please provide a script used for obtaining consent.
   
   If your project has a waiver of some or all of the requirements for consent, please check here: ☐

➢ A Study Progress Report (attached below)

➢ Any materials that have changed since the last IRB review

__________________________  __________________________
Principal Investigator        Date
Faculty Sponsor (if applicable)  

Date

Please complete and email to: joe_rabiega@ncsu.edu. You can also mail you submission to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III).

**************************************************************************

For IRB office use only

Review Received:  □ Expedited  □ Full Board

Review Decision:  □ Approve  □ Approve with Modifications  □ Table
                  □ Disapprove

Reviewer  Signature  Date
Title of Study: African American Female High School Principals: Their Pathways and Perceptions of the Positions
Principal Investigator: Valerie H. Bridges
Faculty Sponsor (if applicable) Lance Fusarelli

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in this study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine African American female high school principals in North Carolina. The researcher will dialogue and interview the African American female principals of high schools in North Carolina. There is a need for research to provide insight into women’s personal and professional characteristics and attributes as female leaders particularly in secondary education.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

You will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher, Valerie Bridges. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. The interview will occur at the participant’s school or another agreed upon location.

Risks

No risks are associated with this research project.

Benefits

The study will add to the dearth amount of research that is available on African American female leadership. There is a need for research to provide insight into women’s personal and professional characteristics and attributes as female leaders, particularly in education. This study will attempt to fill the void by including voices, lived stories, and experiences of African American women administrators who can inform others about important issues of leadership in secondary schools.

Confidentiality
The information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be stored securely in locked filing cabinet. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

**Compensation**

You will not receive compensation for participating in this research project.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Valerie H. Bridges 709 Cattail Circle Raleigh, NC 27610  336-669-0772.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**  
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

**Consent To Participate**

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature __________________________________________ Date ______________
Investigator's signature ______________________________________ Date ______________