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Illuminating the Voices of Black Women Principals: A Phenomenological Qualitative Study

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ILLUMINATING THE VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN PRINCIPALS: A

PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

ILLUMINATING THE VOICES OF BLACK WOMEN PRINCIPALS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL QUALITATIVE STUDY

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School reform efforts, particularly those that are concerned with equity and social justice have led to an evolution of educational leadership theories and practices. Among these, Culturally Responsive School Leadership and Critical Race Theory have emerged as potential frameworks for dismantling the ghost of neo-managerialism and its impact on Black and Brown students' academic success (Barton, 1998; MacRuairc, 2012; Terry, 1998). Relatedly, there is a dearth in the literature regarding the experiences of Black Women Principals; their lives, leadership styles, and accomplishments are not consistently recognized as valued contributions to educational research (Ladson-Billings, 2002). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of Black Woman Principals. The study yielded five major themes related to their 1) journey to leadership, 2) professional development, 3) focus on relationships, 4) responsiveness to students, and 5) how they navigated leadership norms. Racism, lack of opportunity, placement in "clean-up" schools, and feeling as if they had to work much harder than their White colleagues were among the challenges revealed. This study offers insights about how the ghost of neo-managerialism reinforces the deficit discourse concerning Black and Brown students and their abilities (Thrupp, 2005). The dominant neo-managerial paradigm, with its primary focus on social efficiency, stability, predictability and control was never intended to address issues of inequality or social injustice (Kim, 2018). In this way, the women in this study who engaged in disrupting dominant norms often found themselves working as outsiders.

This dissertation is dedicated to my momma. I only hope to make you proud. Grandma Lila, Granny Peach, Aunt Lois, Aunt Maxine, Momma Christine Haskins, my sisters, Caidyn, Charisma, Cayla, Courtney, Casey, and Crystal Lynette have breathed life and encouragement into me.

"I would not be here without the Black women around me. Put us together and we can do anything."

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Dr. Myran has been a god-send. His leadership through this process has given me a sense of liberation, validation, and tenacity to get through this study. Our conversations about life, struggle, faith, and humanity intrigue me, make me question, validate, and spark my scrappiness to keep disrupting. Thank you for being real.

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To my village of family and friends, it is your love and support that encourage me to be the best version of myself. I hope to make you proud always.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School reform efforts have led to an evolution of educational leadership theories and

practices. Among these, Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) and Critical Race

Theory (CRT) have emerged as necessary leadership frameworks to combat the ghost of neo-

managerialism and its impact on Black and Brown students' academic success (Barton, 1998;

MacRuairc, 2012; Terry, 1998). It is crucial to consider the phenomena of these two frameworks

in practice; it is also important to examine the phenomena of Black women's lived experiences

as they contend with neo-managerialism's impact and rewrite the narrative for Black and Brown

students in public education.

Statement of the Problem

Models of educational leadership that embrace cultural and racial realities in the context

of the larger social and political context are scarce (Yarborough et al., 2010). There is a dearth in

the literature regarding the experiences from Black Women Principals, (BWPs), who make up

less than 11% of educational leaders in the United States and must navigate both cultural and

racial realities (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; National Education Association, 2019). Their lives,

leadership styles, and accomplishments are not consistently recognized as valued contributions to

educational research (Ladson-Billings, 2002). The guidance gleaned from these women could

support principals and teachers working with cultures different from their own (Ladson-Billings,

2002; Saifer & Barton, 2007).

There are existing variables within the principalship that are predictive of obstacles for

Black Women Principals (BWP). Black women encounter gender and race issues that are woven

into the fiber of America's social structure as a fundamental organizing principle (Collins, 1989;

Nayak, 2014). Black Woman Leaders are often placed in schools that have high populations of

Black and Brown students, and US schools have not always had the best outcomes for Black and Brown students as these populations do not fit into what Tyack (1975) describes as the "One Best System." The "One Best System" is a universal set of best practices, or recipes for student success and situates leaders and administrators as the causal agent of change (1975). This universal set of practices limits collaboration and the space to embrace the complexities of schools, especially those with diverse settings and with leaders who choose to be culturally responsive and transformational. Consequently, the BWP may be faced with tension personally and professionally. BWPs have to balance the intersectionality of her identity, confront and change the narrative resulting from deficit discourses, and contend with this system whose grip on Whiteness and privilege trump equity (Nickson, 2014).

This "One Best System", closely tied to neo-managerialism is incongruent. Neo-managerialism is a management system birthed out of reform efforts which "focuses on evaluating performance, economic efficiency, and conformity" (Sementelli, 2015, p. 133). The BWP who seeks to lead a school and address its ecological nature must navigate neo-managerialism. Principals who operate in this system forfeit autonomy and are unable to adequately serve underrepresented groups—that is, Black, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, and Indigenous populations; or put simply, Black and Brown populations (Sementelli, 2015; Thompson, 1975). Such a formulaic model of practice often fails to focus on social justice, equality, equity, democracy, social class, gender, race, and ethnicity.

This notion coupled with the complexity of the ecological nature of schools further creates complications and an incongruence between deficit discourses and the need to be a culturally responsive leader (Garcia & Lopez, 2008; Thurman, 1997). The historically rooted neo-managerial norms commonly found in public education are not designed to support or

sustain collegiality and autonomy, as these norms emerged from elite "mostly white, male and middle class" educators (Clegg, 2008, p. 331). Similarly, neo-managerialism is not designed to address the ecological complexity of schools and the diverse populations of students within them as it emphasizes efficiency and uniformity and is unable to celebrate individuality and personalization. Consequently, as Quintana & Mahgoub posit, this results in ethnic or racial differences in achievement that are the consequence of discrimination by educators (2016). This discrimination, whether intentional or not, is among the more obvious and egregious forms of ethnic and racial disparities. Such discrimination may include hostility or patronizing attitudes, expressed in explicit or implicit forms" (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016, p. 11). Ethnic and racial minority groups often experience educational disparities and discrimination which can result in stigma. This stigmatization contributes to implicit deficit discourses in public education, especially regarding Black and Brown students and their abilities (Thrupp, 2005).

The lack of recognition and focus on these key issues limits the responsiveness and subjectivity necessary to maximize learning opportunities for Black and Brown students (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016). Therefore, the ghost of managerialism promotes deficit discourse of Black and Brown students, values compliance, and forfeits the principal's autonomy; in some cases, it also compromises their identity and value system (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016; Sementelli, 2015; Thrupp, 2005; Yosso, 2005).

Theorists have suggested methods of leadership that specifically identify and respond to the social, cultural, and racial challenges students face in public schools (Gay, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2013; Lopez, 2015; Thrupp, 2005). The culturally responsive leadership lens is necessary to address this issue and the critical race lens is necessary to understand these issues that are often ignored or explored only in isolation. A lack of awareness of the precipitating factors of neo-

managerialism, and the need to respond to such prevents principals from countering further perpetuation of marginalization and stagnant academic performance of Black and Brown students.

CRSL and CRT are two theories that together support and guide leaders in their quest to provide equitable, socially just, and culturally responsive environments for their students. While CRSL recognizes the cultural and racial realities and provides a framework that is responsive to these truths, CRT identifies the precipitating factors and consequences of Whiteness and is an important tool for principals to promote academic excellence for Black and Brown students (Yosso, 2005). As BWPs navigate leadership coupled with the variables of their intersectionality and deficit discourses found in the dominant neo-managerial norms, these frameworks can help BWPs identify the deficit discourses, illuminate their voices, and lead these women in being culturally responsive school leaders. An illuminated voice that will add richness to the literature (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this Phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the incongruence between the deficit discourse implicit in the historically rooted neo-managerial norms of educational leadership and the ideal of CRSL through the lived experiences of current BWPs. CRT was the analytic lens used to explore the intersectionality of the lived experiences of BWPs, the dominant neo-managerial paradigm and CRSL. Specifically, CRT provided a means of demystifying the historical and current privileged assumptions as well as the organizational and structural norms, traditions, and practices that reinforce the deficit discourse that perpetuates racism (Yosso, 2005). Principals must examine leadership through the lens of both CRT and

CRSL to be responsive to the growing cultural diversity in the 21st century and meet the needs of Black and Brown students (Gordon & Ronder, 2016).

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question:

1. What are the lived experiences of Black women leaders as they relate to the identified incongruence between the deficit discourse found in the dominant neo-managerial norms and CRSL?

Significance of the Study

This study was designed to explore the lived experiences of BWP. Findings contribute to existing literature regarding CRSL and critical race consciousness. Although there is an abundance of literature regarding CRT and growing research on CRSL, this research sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining the ways in which these frameworks are illuminated in the lived experiences of BWP. Exploring the lived experiences of these women provided insight into their leadership practices and expanded the research on this underrepresented population in educational leadership.

Definition of Terms

The following section provides explanations for terminology used in this study. Terms are defined as they relate to the context of this study.

Critical Race Theory (CRT). A theory derived from the Critical Theory that explains how race and racism are central to White innovation that evolved a normalizing of the social, political, and legal system that avoids Black and Hispanic people and perspectives. Six tenets comprise the foundation for CRT: (a) the permanence of racism, (b) intersectionality, (c) interest

convergence, (d) counter-story, (e) color-blindness, and (f) critique of liberalism (Abrams & Moio, 2009).

Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL). Leadership that develops and supports school staff to promote a climate that provides a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting atmosphere for minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Deficit Discourses. Traditional responses to increasing diversity, for example, often conceptualize cultural differences negatively, in terms of inadequacies or deficits. Inherent is the assumption that there is one mainstream culture/discourse and that languages and literacies other than those of the dominant mainstream represent a deficit or a deficiency on the part of the populations that do not possess them (Lawrence, 2008). Poor students and students of color, because of their culture and the perceived deficiencies within their cultures, inherently contribute to the achievement gap (Salkind, 2008).

Neo-managerialism. This form of management focuses on tasks, governance, and efficiency. Neo-managerialism compromises the leader's focus on values such as fairness, justice, representation, and participation (Terry, 1998).

Black women. In this study, Black were those who self-identified as women who share membership as Black.

Intersectionality. The discussion of power, race, and gender Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that posits that multiple social categories (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status) intersect at the individual level and manifest systems of privilege and oppression at the broader, social-structural level (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism) (Bowleg, 2012; Mahalingam, 2007).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an explanation of neo-managerialism and its contribution to the deficit discourse surround Black and Brown students as well as its tension with Black Women Principals, BWPs, and educational leaders' ability and obligation to be responsive to such issues. To provide context, this explanation is presented with an overview of the following topics: Scientific Management and Neo-managerialism, Race and Achievement, Culturally Responsive Leaders, Socially-Just Leaders, Race and Gender in Leadership, Preparation, BWP Consciousness, Critical Race Theory (CRT) as the Analytic lens and Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) as a guiding framework for exploring the lived experiences of BWP. In this order, there is an overarching frame of the phenomenon being explored.

Scientific Management and Neo-managerialism

It is commonly understood that educational leadership, management, and school governance were born out of the assumptions of scientific management and the efficiency movement (Tyack, 1974; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Watkins, 1986). Much of the field has often conceptualized its work from functionalist and deterministic outlooks that assume that students are the products of well-crafted policy (Cuban, 2013) and efficient bureaucratic structures (Callahan, 1964; Willower, 1970). This can readily be seen in our own time in the authoritarian and prescriptive efforts of the accountability movement (Au, 2011; Ravitch, 2016), market driven school improvement efforts (McInerney, 2003; Lingard & Rizvi, 1994), and what some have called New-Taylorism or Neo-Taylorism (Au, 2011; Gronn, 1982), Managerialism (Gunter, 2016), or Neo-managerialism (Terry, 1998).

Scientific management, and its contemporary manifestation of Neo-managerialism has had a strong presence in our educational systems which have not benefited traditionally

marginalized groups. This is not surprising as early adopters of scientific management (e.g. Bobbitt, 1920) were focused on productivity, efficiency and scientific predetermination (Kliebard, 1979; Tyack, 1974), not meeting the individual and collective needs of diverse peoples (citation). In fact, scientific management was specifically intended to re-produce the socioeconomic and sociocultural norms (Collin & Apple, 2007; Au, 2008). Neo-managerialism exists in different cultural and economic contexts such as moral guidance for businesses and organizations that are modeled after businesses, including hospitals, schools, welfare offices and housing departments (Lynch, 2014). Key features of managerialism include performance and production; the close monitoring of employee performance and the encouragement of self-monitoring through the widespread use of performance indicators. Economic, educational and social problems, and moral dilemmas are minimized; therefore, not adequately addressed (Lynch, 2014).

An example the origin and implications of neo-managerialism can be found in Bearfield and Dubnik's (2007) article, "Sowing and Reaping at the Big Dig: The Legacies of Neo-managerialism," using the story of the Big Dig project. This massive project conceived in the 1970s and in the final stages in 2006, was initiated to transform the physical landscape of Boston, Massachusetts. In addition to changing to look of the city, it sought to build the public's trust of government; it increased privatization and resulted in less trust of public workers and increased focus on managerialism and accountability. The ultimate flaw in the design and execution of the Big Dig was recognized when Milena Del Valle, a Boston resident, was killed by a collapsed concrete tile as she and her husband drove through a tunnel within the recently completed Big Dig project. Critics of the project shared that the attention on performance outweighed efforts to ensure safety. The Big Dig was built quickly and cheaply, and ultimately

this resulted in the death of Milena Del Valle and a system of management that was sensitive to the humanistic considerations that evolved throughout the project (2007).

Neo-managerialism was birthed in the 1970s, and its ghost is still felt in current educational spaces (Bearfield & Dubnick, 2007). Because of school reform, educational leaders are faced with the effects of neo-managerialism in the schools they lead (Apple, 2001). Much like the critique of the management of The Big Dig, the focus on efficiency and top-down control has negative implications (Morley, 2002). This mechanistic approach has stagnated and, in some cases, caused schools to regress in the areas of equity and equality (Ball, 1994, p. 125; Demerath, 2006; Riddell, 2000). Neo-managerialism in education has led to the marginalization of Black and Brown students.

My observations based on my reading and critique of these related literatures is that neo-managerialism in education seeks a product, a goal of high performance and efficiency, but does so at the expense of Black and Brown students. There is a clear incongruence between neo-managerialism and equity. Both neo-managerialism and equity have a value system; however, neo-managerialism's values focus on mechanistic systems that cannot feel and address social constructs (Bearfield & Dubnick, 2007; Salisbury & Riddell, 2000). This inability to feel and address social constructs has contributed to the deficit discourses surrounding Black and Brown students who do not conform and produce within the public educational system. In other words, educational leaders who do not address inequities contribute to the problem for Black and Brown students. Educational reform efforts have led to increased accountability and emphasis on test scores, but have not addressed the social, cultural, and racial inequities that plague the structure of public education.

Educational leaders who are expected to manage within this market must decide. They can conform to the neo-managerial norm and try to increase academic performance for all students, or they can understand and operate on the premise that increased academic performance for all students is hindered without adoption and implementation of social justice values and actions (Morley, 2002; Salisbury & Riddell, 2000). Lastly, principals who navigates neo-managerialism may recognize this dynamic and choose to combat the deficit discourse that situates Black and Brown students as less than because of the institutional bias and systemic racism Educational Inequity

Because schools should be a great equalizer for opportunities, the public educational system has failed some students. School reform efforts designed to "even the playing field" for all students, in many cases, have only deepened inequities. Those who identify as Black, Hispanic, Latino/a, indigenous, Pacific Islander and non-dominant cultures are more likely to be marginalized in America (Perez, 2015). History has proven that these populations are systemically and structurally separated from the mainstream, middle class, and often White or European-descent peers (Akiba et al., 2007; Au, 2008). For example, in a 2018 study, researchers sought to determine barriers to implementing a nutritional/physical policy in schools. Schools that had a majority of Black, Latino, and students with free or reduced-price meals did not implement to the same degree as schools with students from higher socioeconomic status and lower Black and Latino populations. The barriers that impeded implementation were funding, resources, programming support, and administrative support (Schuler et al., 2018). The public education system in America has not answered the need for equity. Identifying the root cause of inequity is imperative for fulfilling the mission of public education.

Race and Achievement

Education is understood to be necessary for freedom and validation of humanity; there is a long tradition of underrepresented groups valuing and battling for quality education (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In 2016, it was determined that the achievement gap discovered over 50 years ago would take 250 years to close (Hanushek, 2016). Ladson-Billings (2006) argued that inequality in student achievement among races has always existed in U.S. schools and that the historical context of marginalized populations and the systemic societal structures continue to impede progress for minorities. Furthermore, she adds that the term "achievement gap" is too simplistic to describe the situation of marginalized populations in an educational context. Metaphorically, this educational debt cannot be paid by focusing solely on teachers or placing this burden on students and their families (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Rather, Ladson-Billings (2006) has suggested educational inequities should be viewed through a sociopolitical, historical, economic, and ethical lens as contributions to the academic achievement of marginalized populations. Until educational leaders view inequities through a cultural lens, schools will fail to offer minorities the freedom and validation of humanity.

Moll (2010) used Mendez v. Westminster (1946) and the landmark Brown v. Board of Education (1954) decision to address contemporary issues in education as related to segregation and its implications. Both cases challenged segregation—Brown v. Board of Education initiated integration, but Mendez v. Westminster did not secure integration for Mexican children in California (Valencia, 2005). Moll (2010) posited that diversity in the United States grows continuously; yet, there is a lack of social, cultural, and linguistic processes. He believed that those are the most important resources to promote positive educational change. Felícita Méndez, the mother who initiated the lawsuit when her children were denied enrollment, stated, "Our

children, all of our children, brown, black, and white, must have the opportunity to be whatever they want to be, and education gives them that opportunity" (Moll, 2010, p. 29). However, the goals of Mendez and Brown are not fully recognized and are definitely not a reality in all U.S. schools (Moll, 2010). Historical and current instances of segregation have negative implications for Mexican children: (a) rejection and harmful feelings of inferiority and (b) isolation delays acculturation and English language learning. Moreover, "Latinos are often "triply segregated— by ethnicity, poverty, and language" (Moll, 2010, p. 17). To make efforts towards equity and academic success for marginalized students, educational leaders must keep the goal of educational equity of Brown v. Board and Mendez v. Westminster at the forefront of their efforts. With this said, schools and school leaders must be responsive to the cultural needs of the children to counter the challenges these students face (Khalifa et al., 2013). Leadership that identifies challenges to student success and addresses issues of inequity can better address students' cultural needs and racism that exists in public education in the US (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015).

Deficit Discourse

Over time, and as school reform progressed, myriad explanations for the achievement gap have been posited (Bereiter & Engleman, 1966; Cohran-Smith, 2004; Coleman Report, 1966; Deutsch & Deutsch, 1963; Hess & Shipman, 1965; Ladson-Billings, 1994). There are different reasons that explain the disproportional rates of poverty and achievement within minority children as compared to White children. One rationale given for the difference in achievement between different groups of students is the cultural deficit model, which contends that poor students and students of color, because of their culture and perceived deficiencies within their cultures, inherently contribute to the achievement gap (Salkind, 2008). However, the effort to

close the racial achievement gap is a difficult challenge because of the historical nature of race, racism, and discrimination in schools (Wing & Noguera, 2008). In addition, as discussed earlier, the undergirding neo-managerial constructs are not designed to address the learning needs of diverse student population. For example, researchers have showed how whiteness as property, a CRT tenet, in educational settings has manifested as inequitable funding for "diverse" schools and created deficit-oriented and hostile learning environments for students of color (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Consequently, there is a thread of deficit beliefs and behaviors that contribute to the achievement gap.

Nelson and Guerra (2014) reported on the beliefs practicing educators held about diverse students and families. Although participants in their study had a general awareness about culture, practicing educators tended to hold deficit beliefs about diverse students and families. Within these discourses, the term *culture* was used as a substitute for *race* (Nelson & Guerra, 2014). Interestingly, teachers in this study demonstrated more cultural knowledge than the educational leaders. However, participating teachers also expressed more numerous and severe deficit beliefs than leaders. The outcomes of such beliefs suggest that reform efforts have failed to address inequitable outcomes and that culturally responsive teaching, leading, and learning were given little consideration.

Culture

Culture refers to common traits and values that shape members of a particular group into viewing the world in a specific way (Gonzalez, 2010). Research that suggests that a student's culture is responsible for their academic achievement or lack thereof comes highly contested in the literature and that deficit models are inaccurate (Monroe, 2006; Vanneman et al., 2005). Schools are social systems. They are institutions that reflect the values and beliefs of the

dominant culture. In the U.S., White, middle class Americans comprise the dominant culture and the education system reflects their values and beliefs (Diller & Moule, 2005; Fylkesnes, 2018; Vanneman et al. 2005). This system is set up to benefit many students, but not all students. In fact, the system fails far too many students, but heralds itself to be the gatekeeper of the American dream (Diller & Moule, 2005). Students whose home culture is not congruent with the culture of school are frequently the ones left behind by a system based on assumptions that differ from theirs. For example, the American system of education is based on assumptions that are Eurocentric (i.e., based on the beliefs and values of Western European culture). This sense of Whiteness is pervasive within school settings and provides privileges to those students who are White (Diller & Moule, 2005; Fylkesnes, 2018). With this understanding, the achievement gap is not a result of a student's culture. The true factors that contribute to differences in student performance should be at the forefront of a principal's school improvement focus.

Issues of race in education must become a part of the larger discussion of academic achievement for Black and Brown students and those educators who serve them (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Implications of race in education are critical to understanding the structural racism that exists in education that opens the door to inequity in public education (2006). Structural racism describes factors outside the school environment and how those factors affect students of color in and out of the school contexts (Blaisdell, 2016). Blaisdell (2016) found that teachers were unaware that they were complicit in perpetuating structural racism. As a result, schools with leaders that plan and focus more dismantling inequitable systems promote achievement and break-down the barriers of structural racism.

The Impact

Traditionally marginalized communities, families, and students are treated unfavorably and are not always viewed positively by school staff. The more this happens, the greater the potential for students to have increased at-risk factors. These factors include negative student attitudes and motivation toward learning, low teacher expectations, poor standards in the planning of teaching and assessment of learning, and widespread anti-school culture and peer group attitudes (Watson, 2012). For example, the Latino family is blamed for stressing cultural norms that hinder educational progress: family ties, male authoritarianism, and living in the present. These assumptions affect Latino students, the way they view themselves, and the way teachers and school officials treat them (Villenas & Deyhle, 1999). Morris (2005, 2007) concluded that students continually find that teachers and principals employ stereotypical notions of racialized groups and describe Black boys and girls as more threatening, loud, disruptive, and disrespectful than their White peers. This treatment is perpetuated when school leaders "have few skills, little understanding, and tenuous commitment to multiculturalism, diversity, or equity in education" (Rusch, 2004, p. 19).

Culturally Responsive Leaders

It is critical for school leaders to understand the role culture plays in leadership practices. Moreover, it is of the upmost importance that leaders understand the correlation between being culturally responsive and student achievement. Gone are the days when educational administration and leadership scholars perceived their theories and science as neutral, without taking into consideration the contextual nature of leadership (English, 2002). For example, educational leaders embody specific roles and build specific relationships. Educational leaders who actively engage and promote issues and discourses of race, multiculturalism, and power in

schools and other educational settings are considered to be some of the most important influencers of positive change for Black and Brown students. Those who do not actively participate in such dialogues perpetuate marginalization. Khalifa et al. (2013) noted that race, ethnicity, and color apply to space—in this context, a minority space. If a school leader claims not to see color, for example, they do not understand the minimization of a community. Likewise, leaders who are not actively engaging in or with the community they serve do not understand the essence and culture of that community. As a result, it can be argued that ideologically, culturally, and educationally, these spaces are not relevant to the school leader (Khalifa et al., 2018). This distances the leader from the community and results in continuing the system and structures that promote marginalization.

Marzano (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of studies between 1970 and 2004 and found a 0.25 correlation between principals' leadership behavior and student achievement. Principals had a significant effect on student learning, second only to quality curriculum and teachers' instruction (2005). Yet, despite the challenges that marginalized students face, they are more likely to experience less than quality principals (Horng et al., 2009). School leaders must commit to equity anchoring their practice (Green, 2017). However, this requires the principal to be willing to understand the values and interests of the privileged over marginalized populations. School personnel are often unaware of how their actions, or lack thereof, contribute to privileging and promoting marginalization (Blaisdell, 2016). Addressing and being responsive to school culture is critical for student success. The principal must have unique characteristics and practices, which are inclusive of minorities, particularly those marginalized through systemic school structures and school culture (Lumby, 2012). Principal behavior and student achievement often intersect at the will, skill set, and actions of the principal. A principal who has the resolve,

but does not vocalize and act in an effective manner to disrupt systemic racism, risks the success of Black, Latino, and students living in poverty.

Socially-Just Leaders

While we know that principal behavior and student achievement intersect, the conversation regarding the behaviors of socially-just leaders is necessary when examining and addressing inequities. The socially-just leader is not a silent actor (Theoharis, 2007). Over time, school reform efforts have resulted in top-down systems and top-down control that tend to silence principals and weaken democratic social interactions within schools (Vanneman et al, 2009). Relationships and decision-making are critical components in addressing issues of inequality (Adam Cobb, 2016). If the vision of the school contrasts with the beliefs, actions, and behaviors of teachers, the leader must help teachers reconceptualize existing issues to achieve sustainable change (Leithwood et al., 2004). In other words, "school leaders can promote equity and justice for all students by establishing school climates where patterns of discrimination are challenged and negated" (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6). Effective principals will speak up and challenge beliefs, policies, and practices to advocate for those who are marginalized (Slater, 2008).

In an age of increased accountability, excuses for underperformance are no longer viable (Gordon & Ronder, 2016). Principals cannot exercise the same bureaucratic systems that perpetuate the consistent need for reform. Subsequently, proactive and reactive practices in principal leadership can combat traditional models that neglect the active role of the student in the learning process. Leadership that is culturally responsive to schools' diverse populations is considered effective and socially just (Gordon & Ronder, 2016). In addition, principals who take the critical action to examine their practices and beliefs through CRT can explore race and

racism and how it affects their students from marginalized populations; hence, they become better able to influence change and identify stagnating policies and practices (Lynn & Bridges, 2009; Lynn & Parker, 2006).

Some researchers shared that educational inequities, disparities, uneven access, and exclusion have become the focus of educational leadership attention, energy, and fiscal resources California Department of Education, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2007; others believe that intentional efforts to build equitable social relations in schools are missing or scant (Rusch, 2004; Vanneman et al., 2009). Regardless, leaders must contend with challenges that exist in schools with diverse populations. Students deserve for adults within the schools not to treat them as if their differences are deficiencies (Mills & Keddie, 2012). Achievement gaps, disparities, and deficit views plague schools where students are systemically underserved (Mills & Keddie, 2012; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Such mindsets do not help students with diversity and cultural differences and can contribute to the reasons some educational leaders are still struggling to lead. For example, Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that educational leaders often recreate all social systems and relationships in the contexts they serve, including those which perpetuate marginalization. Traditional forms of leadership, the science of management, and methods of efficiency have historically dominated educational leadership literature (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Subsequently, teaching methods, curriculum, and evaluation processes can be in the hands of a hierarchal organizational structure. This top-down approach to leadership perpetuates marginalizing behaviors, neglects schools' complex nature, and removes students' cultural input.

It is important for principals to understand how their leadership can create positive change or reproduce systemic structures that fail to meet the needs of their students. Traditional leadership models that are mechanistic often do not appropriately serve diverse populations.

Schools are ecological spaces; hence, mechanistic leadership often restricts the identity of the student (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Students can become the "product" of being situated in schools where they feel unsafe because of their race, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status. Principals and teachers may be viewed as judgmental and untrustworthy. Subsequently, students feel exploited and threatened (Lind, 2001; Myran & Sutherland, 2019). When school leaders of marginalized students neglect to see, hear, talk about, and act according to racial and cultural needs, transformational leadership efforts are hindered (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). Navigating leadership in this space can be difficult if the leader does not deliberately address the social injustice that can exist because of this complicated dynamic.

Gordon and Ronder (2016) agreed that the principal is the most recognizable candidate to help lead schools away from deficit thinking toward equitable practices. A school leader can be a conduit of academic success by influencing a proactive and reactive environment that encourages and embraces students who are traditionally disadvantaged (Fullan, 2014). Moreover, a school leader must be a catalyst for change, transforming school cultures to be responsive to the needs of the diverse children they serve (Khalifa et al., 2016). Leaders who identify, challenge, and transform schools to increase the success of all students become voices for underrepresented populations.

Researchers have suggested that there should be a codependent relationship between social justice and precipitating factors of academic achievement. One cannot exist without the other (McKenzie et al., 2008). Students in marginalized settings should have leaders who believe in the importance of enacting change in the name of social justice and have certain qualities that convince others to promote achievement (Capper & Young, 2014; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Of all the expressions of leadership, the principal has a significant impact on instruction, serving as

the most knowledgeable about resources, and enacting positive changes on school-level reform (Leithwood & Reihl, 2003).

Whereas some contend the principal must act efficiently and effectively as a catalyst for change, this study explores the effective principal as one who utilizes proactive and reactive approaches to promote student achievement (Leithwood, 1994). Proactive and reactive approaches allow leaders to foresee issues, plan solutions while also addressing challenges that will naturally arise in schools. In contrast, neo-managerialism could be considered a short-term and technical and mechanistic solution when an adaptive model is much more appropriate to enact transformational change in a school. To expound further, Heifetz & Brennan (1998) provided an example of the results of using a technical resolution to an adaptive problem. His example of a short-term technical solution included a patient with a heart condition who asks the cardiologist to heal him or her with medication. Medication may help the patient but medication alone will not heal the patient. If the patient adapted his/her behavior, attitude, habits, and lifestyle to produce the desired health goals, medication may not be necessary and longevity will increase. Medicine in the aforementioned example was a technical solution to an adaptive challenge. Moreover, it is critical that leaders not utilize technical fixes to be responsive to the myriad of issues in schools especially those that surround cultural and social constructs. Exploring the leadership of principals through the lens of CRT is an adaptive solution that could contribute to promoting effective leadership; this mirrors the need of heart patients to adapt their lifestyle to produce a long-term sustainable change. Moreover, Heifetz & Brennan (1998) posited that the medicine requested by the patient was not in vain. Likewise, principals' use of CRSL is a vital support as the adaptive model is applied. Heifetz & Brennan (1998) presented instances of leaders attempting to coach in effort to seek a long-term solution that will advance the good of

the organization. Student learning is ecological in nature and must be addressed in an adaptive

manner. Race and culture are at the epicenter of student identity, and traditional methods of

leadership that are not responsive these complexities continue to perpetuate marginalization.

Hence, adaptive challenges need adaptive solutions to move student achievement forward.

Race and Gender in Leadership

Women make up the majority of the teacher workforce; yet, they are the minority of

school administrators (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). However, some researchers have indicated that

gender inequity is not a significant issue. Coleman (2005) posited, "There is now a general belief

that equity issues for women are no longer a problem" (p. 16). Given the societal perception that

women are less qualified than men, it becomes a struggle for some to envision women in

leadership roles and for women to even see themselves effectively in leadership positions

(Burton & Weiner, 2016). However, it can be argued that it is not women who do not see their

effectiveness in leadership, it is the common stigma of gender bias (Dana & Bourisaw, 2006).

This gender bias is not exempt from school districts and schools where women and women of

color are ignored for leadership positions. As underrepresentation affects norms, values, and

beliefs—both social and organizational—women are an underrepresented minority in

educational leadership; their experiences influence norms, values, and beliefs within their

schools (Marcynski & Gates, 2013).

The considerable body of work on gender and women in educational management and

leadership tends to stand alone, distinct from the mainstream (Coleman, 2005, p. 326). In

particular, research on minority women in leadership is limited. Few researchers have explored

the personal, professional, and sociocultural experiences of Black women as school leaders (Haar

& Robicheau, 2009; Sherman & Wrushen, 2009). Moreover, White men continue to dominate

educational leadership literature, undervaluing the characteristics that women principals bring to their leadership (Reed, 2012). Race and gender are critical to the discussion of educational leadership.

Society's pressures are reflected in schools. Principals must have dedication, knowledge, and stamina to survive and be effective in their role (Helterbran & Reig, 2004). Yet, women must be able to identify, address, and overcome barriers related to their gender to ultimately educate and serve students. Despite the barriers, women principals have a stake in educational leadership and their representation in the research is important to the development of this profession. Adding their voice to the literature will expand the skillset of other principals facing marginalization.

Preparation of Black Women Leaders

Black educational leaders are few, and preparation and support to assist them in school reform efforts are almost nonexistent (Brown, 2005). In 2015, most education administrators (65.7%) were women. However, 13.4% of educational administrators were Black (Department for Professional Employees, 2016). Jacobson and Lomotey (1995) found disproportionately low numbers of Black public education administrators. Lopez (2003) illuminated the need for scholars to analyze the issue of race without hesitation by stating, "as scholars who prepare future educational leaders, we cannot continue to marginalize and trivialize issues of race and racism within the larger discourse of educational leadership and policy" (p. 86). The longer race and racism are omitted from mainstream discourses in educational leadership, the longer traditionally disadvantaged students will remain disadvantaged.

Researchers must describe and understand the differing logics and practices of leadership. Aleman (2009) and Lopez (2003) argued for the centrality of race in discussions of school

leadership studies. This push came at a time when students of color comprised the majority of the US population. Yet, the percentages of principals who are Black, Latino, or Asian American have barely gained ground (Parker & Villalpando, 2007). The mainstream theories used to understand leadership are deficient when applied to diverse cultural groups. Educational leaders should investigate the historical biographies of successful leaders from diverse cultural groups (Murtadha & Watts, 2002). Moreover, the study of Black American women leaders occurs within the larger context of women studies and does not offer a broad lens into the experiences of these women (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Murtadha and Larson (2005) contended that BWPs often lead schools that are under supported, economically depleted, and serve high numbers of Black and Hispanic students. The lack of representation of BWPs' experiences in the literature means that there is an incomplete understanding of their perspectives because of the underrepresentation in the literature. Black women leaders have voices that speak to experiences that could offer perspectives on effective leadership practices for all educational leaders. Including the voices of these women should extend to "the use of cultural knowledge from the historical biographies of successful Black educational leaders" that brings richness to this context (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, p. 606). Student success weighs in the balance of school reform efforts and the influence of the principal. Descriptions of educational leaders, ideologies, and institutions have significant ramifications for educational reform.

It is important to understand the discourses and distributions of power that determine how and why issues are addressed, and by whom, especially related to marginalized communities. Regarding leadership, the combination of race and gender identities offers a better understanding of the perceptions of BWPs in their leadership roles versus a single focus on race (Witherspoon & Mitchell, 2009). Gender and race together offer a complexity and tension to the educational

leadership space. This combination encourages study of BWPs' culture, the cultures of the students they serve, and their biographies to bring context and understanding to their experiences. Additionally, awareness of others, particularly cultural awareness, is necessary to avoid deficit thinking and to address interpersonal conflicts in schools to prevent cultural clashes.

BWP Consciousness

Reed (2012) posited that BWPs have navigated and continue to face blatant challenges related to their race and/or gender. Black feminist consciousness "stems from the understanding that black women are discriminated against based on both their race and gender" (Simien & Clawson, 2004, p. 793). It recognizes that Black women do not always have opportunities to grow professionally because of discrimination based on race and gender. The challenges that accompany BWPs situate them in double jeopardy professionally (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Like many students who must learn despite the cultural deficits assigned to them, these women also practice leadership through intersectional (e.g., race, gender, language, social class) frames of reference (Valencia, 2010; Walls, 2017). Their ability to navigate despite the aforementioned challenges correlates positively to the effectiveness of their schools.

Lomotey (1995) and Byrd-Blake (2004) maintain that Black women have difficulty acquiring positions and negotiating these positions after they have started. To add to these challenges, BWPs continue to struggle with a sense of frustration, incompetence, and despair about their capability to affect positive change in schools (Horsford & Tillman, 2012). This is further complicated by those who feel that they are unable to make positive change (Williams & Sherman, 2009). Murtadha and Watts (2005) explained the efforts of Black women whose educational leadership in the 19th and 20th centuries positively impacted challenging educational settings and positioned them as advocates for social justice. The women described in Murtadha

and Watts's (2005) study faced inequalities and educational injustice; however, they were able to promote social change. Additionally, these researchers argued that studying Black women of the past and present could deconstruct the current understanding of leadership practices and promote an emergence of images and values that mainstream theory and practice are missing. The voices and experiences of these women are valuable; when they are silenced, school improvement efforts are limited because their skillsets go unpublished.

Over the past decade, numerous studies have linked students' school performance—as well as lack of congruence between the students' cultures and the norms, values, and expectations—with the practices of schools. However, there is minimal guidance for school leaders on how they should help teachers work with students from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Saifer & Barton, 2007). Moreover, the basis for current leadership preparation is based upon theoretical frameworks and not experience, and there is no guide for preparing principals to be successful in challenging schools (Slater, 2008). However, there are emergent techniques available to lead schools that are responsive to socio-political realities and benefit more learners (Santamaría, 2014). These techniques suggest leadership practices and behaviors for leaders to reference, utilize, and reflect upon as they face their school's challenges.

Scientific management and neo-managerialism are familial methods of leadership within the public schools that impact Black and Brown students and BWPs that serve within these spaces. Their power and values are aligned with outcomes. In the public school context, a focus on outcomes and performance under these methods has resonating effects on Black and Brown students and the BWPs who combat neo-managerial norms. In this review of literature, race and achievement are explored through the deficit discourses that are a consequence of neo-

managerial norms. These deficit discourses have implications. As the literature review posits, deficit discourses has a direct impact on cultural perceptions of Black and Brown students and the impact of these negative perceptions on Black and Brown students.

Culturally responsive school leaders are equipped with behaviors that promote social justice and equity. These behaviors address deficit discourses and have the potential to dismantle neo-managerial norms. However, the tension of a BWP's race and gender cannot be ignored. Race and gender in leadership that is not appropriately acknowledged and explored may perpetuate the same deficit discourses that surround the Black and Brown students they serve. Preparation and consciousness of their intersectionality and its complexity opens the opportunity to better navigate their leadership and improve student performance.

Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory

Given the above, as a researcher investigating the lived experiences of BWP, I needed a conceptual framework to CRT to illustrate the ways in which BWPs in the mid-Atlantic Region demonstrated their commitment to raising awareness regarding issues of social justice, equity, race, and ethnicity within their schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). "The goal of a conceptual framework is to categorize and describe concepts relevant to the study and map relationships among them" (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009, p. 3) Moreover, the analytic nature of critical race theory questions the practices and policies that close the achievement gap and create equitable educational experiences (Theoharis & Haddix, 2011). During the civil rights legislation of the 1970s, CRT began to gain traction in the field of education (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 2005. It remains a viable theory by which to examine leadership practices because the underachievement of marginalized students could have a direct correlation to "Whiteness" as a socially constructed understanding and, subsequently, academic performance in

public schools (DeCuir, 2006; Marx & Pennington, 2003). This conceptual framework was appropriate because the achievement gap is situated as an equity issue in this study. Additionally, the principal is a critical component of disrupting traditional models of leadership that restrict the identity, voice, and culture of marginalized students. Mechanistic leadership typically has a high degree of formalization, standardizations, rules and procedures. The flow of communication resembles the structure, vertical as opposed to horizontal (Ramosaj, 2014). Schools are ecological spaces; hence, mechanistic leadership often restricts the identity of the student as an active participant in their learning and adopts a static leadership model prohibiting progressive change (Myran & Sutherland, 2019).

W. E. Du Bois' connections to the socially constructed phenomenon, CRT, brings a social element that offers a counter perspective to the scientific rationales of race (Lynn & Dixson, 2013). Du Bois' (1903/1968) contribution to sociological concepts of race with the term double-consciousness brought a fresh and radical perspective. Double consciousness proposes that identity has two parts: self-perception and how one is perceived, with the White perspective as the basis for the perception (Du Bois, 1903/1968). Du Bois suggested that Blacks' historical, political, and social realities were in stark contrast to the perceived realities of the dominant society, described metaphorically as a veil. Traditional leadership practices cannot be deviated from unless the social realties of students are examined and addressed. Lifting the metaphorical veil requires accommodating White privilege and accepting other racialized perspectives. Fundamental within Du Bois' work are the tenets of CRT: (a) counter-story, (b) the permanence of racism, (c) interest convergence, (d) Whiteness as property, and (e) a critique of liberalism. Counter-storytelling is providing an opposing view or narrative instead of accepting the status quo (1903/1968). Likewise, the permanence of racism was evidenced by Bell (1992). The lowest

academic achievement has been identified predictably by race (Bali & Alvarez, 2004; Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Ladson Billings, 2009; Rowley & White, 2011; Schmidt & McKnight, 2012; Singleton, 2013). Interest convergence occurs when White people support racial justice because they understand the results will also benefit White people. Du Bois' findings and the described tenets of CRT provide a conceptual framework which will be utilized to describe the thoughts of BWPs to obtain perspectives of the socially constructed phenomena found in schools with high populations of marginalized students.

Theoretical Framework: Culturally Responsive School Leadership

As a researcher investigating the lived experiences of BWP, I chose CRSL as a theoretical framework for effective school leadership. Khalifa (2016), discussing CRSL, focuses on culturally responsive behaviors and tenets for educational leaders CRSL is leadership that develops and supports school staff to promote a climate that provides a welcoming, inclusive, and accepting atmosphere for minoritized students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive teaching, pedagogy, and curriculum exist in the literature. However, contributions to culturally responsive leadership have been limited. Moreover, few scholars have truly explored, analyzed, and comprehended culturally responsive leadership concerning access, equity, and improvement in academics (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). The dearth of research related to culturally responsive leadership neglects the growth of leaders. As long as educational leaders influence reform, policy, and practice, and are held accountable for teacher development, students can benefit from CRSL (Khalifa, 2016). The school principal has the power to promote positive change but must be equipped to lead the diversity of responsibilities.

CRSL is "derived from the concept of culturally responsive pedagogy. It involves those leadership philosophies, practices, and policies that create inclusive schooling environments for

students and families from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds" (Johnson & Fuller, 2014, p. 1). CRSL has become a widely recognized set of practices that guides leaders to recognize, value, and provide opportunities for students of diverse backgrounds. It encourages leaders to support students in recognizing, expressing, and appreciating their cultural norms. CRSL encourages student achievement and should be an integral part of any school reform efforts. Conversely, the lack of CRSL promotes oppressive structures within the school setting (Khalifa, 2016). There are two paradigms within CRSL: cultural responsiveness to diverse populations and cultural responsiveness to increase academic achievement for marginalized groups (Khalifah, 2016). Banks (2001) believed one challenge facing educational leaders is to help the diverse populations of schools "mediate between their home and community cultures and the school culture" (p. 7). However, educational leaders in the Western countries are becoming responsive and addressing educational disparities that have resulted from academic deficits by exploring transformative models, frameworks, and theories (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2015). Hence, cultural responsiveness should be at the center of school reform. It is critical for improving educational outcomes for all students (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). CRSL is a responsive technique to address the needs of learners and provide a framework for the principal to lead sustainable change.

Khalifa's (2018) approach to CRSL provides a conceptual framework for this study. He suggested that educational leaders should possess four major behaviors or tenets. The behaviors associated with CRSL are: (a) being critically self-reflective; (b) developing and sustaining culturally responsive teachers and curricula; (c) promoting inclusive and anti-oppressive school contexts; and (d) engaging students by understanding their native and/or community contexts (Khalifa, 2018). The first facet, being critically self-reflective, is based on the belief that leaders

need to have an awareness of their beliefs and dispositions related to children of color, who might also be living in poverty. At the basis of a leader's practice is the critical self-reflection, also known as the critical consciousness, of culture and race that precipitate his or her belief systems. Leaders need to know the context they serve and maintain a critical awareness of self. In the absence of critical self-reflection and awareness of self, the leader cannot create an environment for students who are marginalized because of race and class. In the absence of critical self-awareness, the necessary reflection of personal assumptions about race, culture, and the potential of students does not take place; consequently, inequitable practices will persist (Khalifa et al., 2016).

The next behavior of CRSL is developing culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation. Ladson-Billings (2002) suggested that culturally responsive school leaders guide teachers and support the development of students intellectually, socially, and emotionally by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382). This is based on the idea that one should not assume that teacher preparation programs are culturally responsive; therefore, the teacher may not be culturally responsive (Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Sleeter, 2001). It is the responsibility of the leader to ensure that teachers become and remain culturally responsive. As such, the principal must first have a vision of culturally responsive teaching and next establish practices that support such philosophies.

The principals' instructional leadership has an integral part in maintaining the cultural responsiveness of the school. It is the school leader who must encourage, support, and seek culturally responsive curriculum and resources and professional development for culturally responsive teaching; the leader must also mentor and model culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, the principal must recruit and hire culturally responsive teachers or those who

willing to become culturally responsive (Khalifa, 2016). CRSL promotes the importance of having courageous conversations about race and culture and the subsequent impact on instruction and student performance. The instructional leadership demonstrated by the principal who practices CRSL strategies supports and guides teachers in being responsive to student needs.

Promoting culturally responsive and inclusive school environments is the third behavior of CRSL. With attention to inclusivity, the school leader must promote and advocate a culturally responsive environment. Actions that align with promoting a culturally responsive and inclusive environment include interrogating the beliefs and practices that uphold disproportionality in discipline and having courageous conversations with teachers who excessively refer students of color to special education or give them more consequences than their White peers (Skiba et al., 2002; Suri, 2011). For example, the culture of the school must "affirm and protect" the identities of indigenous students (Khalifa, 2016, p. 1282).

The final behavior of CRSL is the principal's ability to engage students, families, and the community. The principal must be able to advocate and address community issues. Increasing diversity in schools calls for new approaches to educational leadership where leaders exhibit culturally responsive organizational practices, behaviors, and competencies (Gay, 2005). The culturally responsive school leader is an advocate, is action-oriented, and is critical to student success.

Analytic Lens

Together, CRSL and CRT are two concepts that together support and guide leaders in their quest to provide equitable, socially just, and culturally responsive environments for their students. CRT identifies the precipitating factors and consequences of Whiteness and is an important tool for principals to promote academic excellence for Black and Brown students, and

CRSL recognizes the cultural and racial realities which promote culturally responsive practices (Yosso, 2005). Neo-managerialism acts in contrast to the ecological nature of schools and the response needed to address culture, systemic racism, and the oppression that exists. Subsequently, while these realities are substantiated in the literature, scholars such as Terry (1998) and Tyack (1974) have not explored is the ways in which minoritized people have to navigate this mechanistic ghost of neo-managerialism in the context of the ecological nature of schools. The literature suggests that these two realities in education create great tension and the Black Women Principal has to face and combat them.

Figure 1

CRSL and CRT
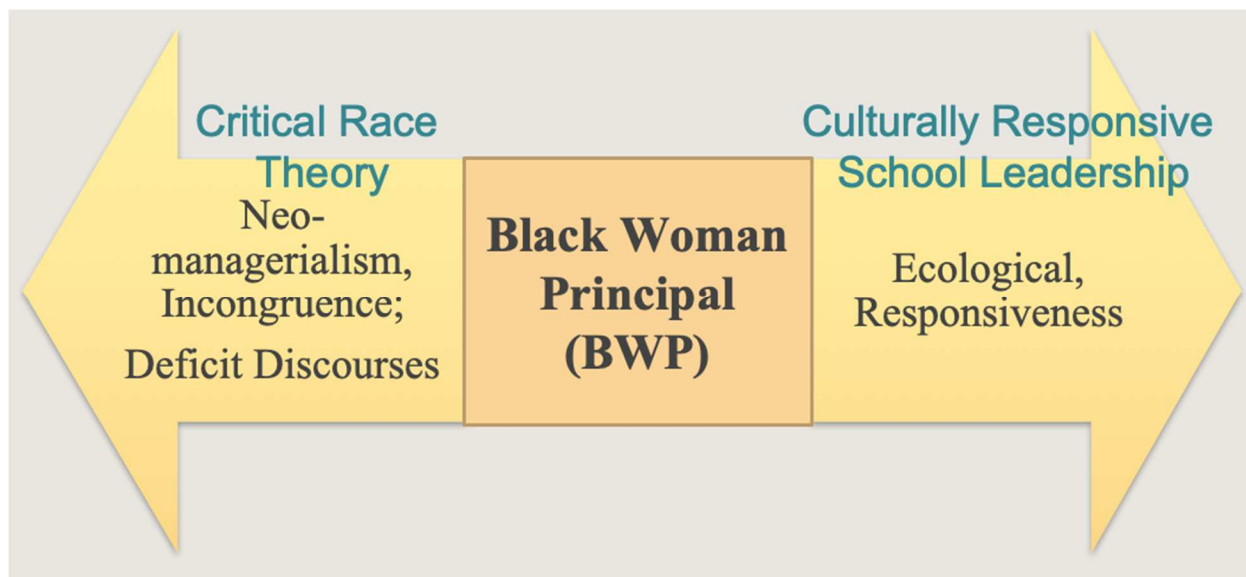
Nuances that embrace cultural and racial realities in the context of the larger social and political environment are lacking in the definitions of educational leadership (Hopson et al., 2010). Gone are the days where educational administration and leadership scholars perceive their theories and science as neutral without taking into consideration the contextual nature of leadership (English, 2002). For instance, there are specific roles and relationships that

educational leaders play when they actively engage and promote issues and discourses of race, multiculturalism, and power in schools and other educational settings. Therefore, there are even more reasons to expand and provide nuanced definitions of educational leadership. Educational leadership is not static; rather, it is a developing interdisciplinary field that should be responsive to a set of issues and realities that confront schools (Hopson et al., 2010). The principal benefits from an understanding of past influences and needs guidance to understand how those influences affect present actions (Slater, 2008).

Researchers should recognize the similarities between culture and race and utilize these understandings to drive policy, shift social inequities, and improve educational outcomes for all students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011). However, reform, neo-managerialism, and western culture drive most research in the U.S. (Durant & Legge, 2006). Insufficient concentration on race and culture prevents educators from accurately addressing the needs of Black and Brown students. When addressing issues of academics, CRT posits a "powerful and unsettling assumption (Demerath, 2006, p. 98). CRT suggests that race is always present. Involuntary minority groups and their inherited circumstances still call for interpretive practices that address the implications of race/ethnicity recognizing how it has and continues to shape their lived experiences (Demerath, 2006). CRT expands this study to the complexities of race and its social construction by the lived experiences of BWPs. Because CRSL responds to "settings where student alienation and hostility characterize the school experience," it is a useful framework to analyze social inequity that is covertly demonstrated through racist practices in schools with the aforementioned contexts (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, p. 55). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) discussed the need to explore culturally responsive pedagogy and CRT as complementing frameworks. They stated,

Yet, the theory and praxis of culturally relevant pedagogy should include a critical analysis of race and racism. [Culturally relevant pedagogy], like critical race theory, recognizes the value of lived experience by marginalized groups in understanding and making meaning of the world…Nonetheless, [culturally relevant pedagogy] does not question or critically examine the structures that feed into the cultural incongruence perspective. This is where [critical race theory] updates the [culturally relevant pedagogy] framework…While [critical race theory] provides a framework, and for some a tool of analysis for examining educational practices and structures that continue to subordinate groups of people, [culturally relevant pedagogy] offers a model of theory to practice and examples of how such instruction can be delivered. When [critical race theory] is related to [culturally relevant pedagogy], the centrality of race to American culture is acknowledged. (pp. 70-71)

In this study, CRT was the conceptual framework used to understand the reactive process of CRSL implementation. Both the theoretical and Conceptual frameworks together make-up the analytic lens. The theoretical lens, Critical Race Theory, is a theory derived from the Critical Theory that explains how race and racism are central to White innovation that has evolved into the normalizing of the social, political, and legal system that avoids Black and Hispanic people and perspectives. In this study, Culturally School Leadership serves as the action-arm and praxis for Critical Race Theory. Both are uniquely appropriate for this study because the primary research question examined lived experiences and subsequent behaviors.

Figure 2

CRT and CRSL as Analytic Lens
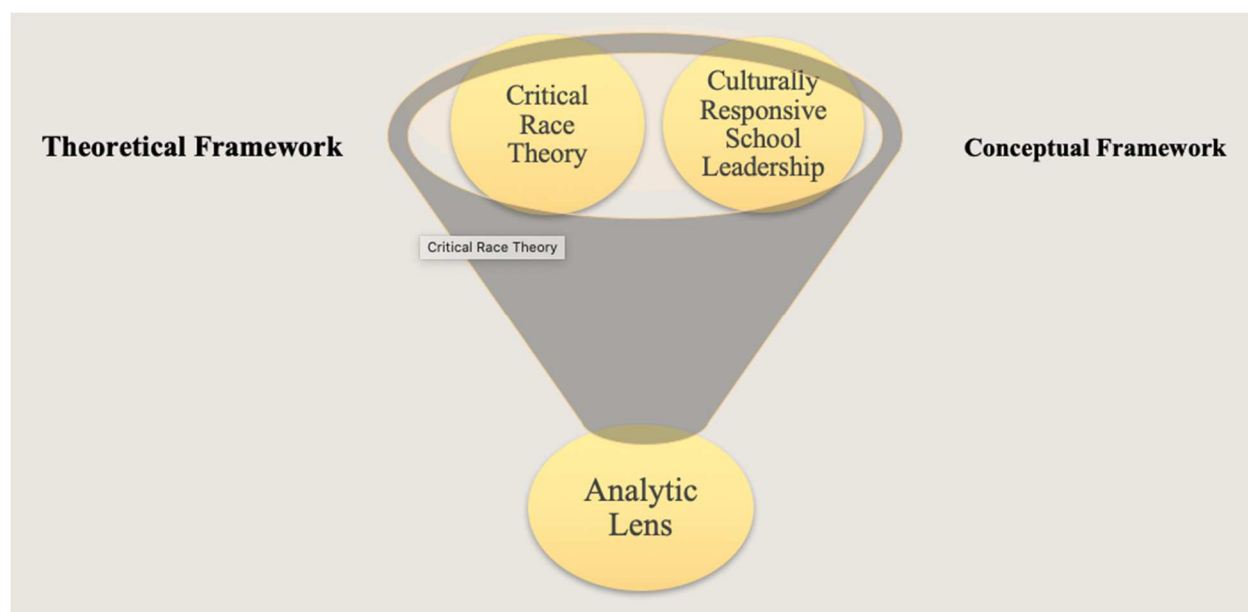
The purpose of this study was to expand the literature using CRT as an adaptive approach and CRSL as a theoretical framework to examine the experiences and behaviors of BWPs. This research sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining the ways in which these frameworks are illuminated in the lived experiences of BWP. BWP's experiences add to the body of literature and enhance the discipline, applying a critical race and culturally responsive perspective to a population of Black and women leaders, and addressing the existing gap in literature that is both gender and color deficient. I used these lenses to better understand the leaders, their experiences, skill sets, and beliefs that help them meet the academic needs of their diverse populations. This framework allowed me to analyze data collected through interviews with leaders from schools in the Mid-Atlantic Region. In the remaining chapters, I will share emergent themes from these interviews and provide a summary of findings, limitations, followed by a discussion.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this Phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the incongruence between the deficit discourse implicit in the historically rooted neo-managerial norms of educational leadership and the ideal of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) through the lived experiences of current Black women principles (BWPs). Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as an analytic lens to explore the intersectionality of the lived experiences of BWPs, the dominant neo-managerial paradigm, and CRSL. Specifically, CRT is a powerful tool that demystifies the historical and current privileged assumptions, organizational and structural norms, traditions, and practices that reinforce the deficit discourse that perpetuates racism (Yosso, 2005).

According to Marshal and Rossman (2014), qualitative research empowers individuals to reflect on their experiences, illuminate their narratives, and understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue. Offering further methodological guidance for this study is the phenomenological research tradition which is concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of the people involved in the phenomenon being investigated. Its intent is to discover the essential meaning and essence of human experience (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). Guided by these research traditions I sought to construct meaning from the lived experiences of the participants in this study. I generated data to illuminate the voices of current BWPs as they shared their lived experiences. The research design focused on answering the following question:

1. What are the lived experiences of BWPs as it relates to the identified incongruence between the deficit discourse found in the dominant neo-managerial norms and culturally responsive leadership?

Historically schools have sought to identify and utilize "The One Best System" (Tyack, 1974), a universal set of best practices, or recipes for student success, that conceptualizes leadership and administration "as a causal agent of change in organizations" (Heck & Hallinger, 2005, p. 227). The problem is that school organizations are complex and dynamic systems that involve reciprocal interactions between the varied social-ecological components of the school setting (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). I take the position that CRSL, and other forms of social justice advocacy that seek to disrupt structural racism, are antithetical to the linear, cause-and-effect outlooks dominant in the scientific management and neo-managerial norms of the field. Furthermore, the orthodoxy of educational leadership scholarship has been "captured by the managerialist project" (Wright, 2003, p.139) and its emphasis on efficiency, uniformity, predictability and universality (Tyack, 1974; Myran & Sutherland, 2019. In this respect, the very organizing structures that undergird some aspects of education leadership scholarship is fundamentally antithetical to alternative ways of knowing which can disrupt structural racism.

It is precisely for this reason that scholars interested in social justice advocacy and disrupting structural racism need robust methods to understand educational and social contexts that is infinitely more complex and dynamic than the orthodoxy of scientific management and the contemporary neo-managerial traditions can cope with. If social justice advocates hope to dismantle structural racism, we need to move beyond what Bowers (1997) described as pre-ecological thinking and deepen our exploration of the complex and dynamic intersectionality of race, gender, power, and privilege to engage in the praxis of social justice. Without a means of exploring the associated assumptions, norms, metaphors, stories, language, and structures, our efforts to bring about lasting and meaningful racial equality run the risk of reinforcing the very assumptions that currently undergird structural racism. In this way, the current study draws from

a research methodology with a 100+ year tradition that is well suited for the exploration of this particular phenomenon.

Research Design

In order to explore BWPs' experiences, this study used a Phenomenological qualitative research design. Concerns relevant to this method of qualitative research inquiry include the role of the researcher, purposeful sampling, data collection, and data analysis, which are all examined as part of the framework in which I will be researching currently practicing BWPs located in the Mid-Atlantic region of Virginia. This qualitative study drew from phenomenologically informed principles which are particularly well suited for a study that utilizes CRT as an analytic lens. Specifically, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the conveying the human experience as it is lived (Laverty, 2003), which is useful from a CRT perspective because it provides a mean for overcoming the "objectivity" of dominant assumptions. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenological research as focusing on the appearance of things absent of everyday routines and biases, being concerned with wholeness and with examining entities from many sides until a unified vision of the essences of a phenomenon or experience is achieved. The essence of the experience is captured after the meaning of the experience has evolved (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Phenomenology is concerned with capturing the texture of the experience's description. It is imperative that the nature of the description is not interrupted by further analyses.

A qualitative approach is favorable when little is known about an issue, phenomenon, or population (Mills & Gay, 2016). The aim of this study was to gain a greater understanding of the experiences and to illuminate the voices of BWPs. This approach was deemed an appropriate design given the (a) exploratory nature of this study, and (b) need to capture a rich and detailed

understanding of lived experiences (Moustakas, 1994). More specifically, such a design focuses on participants' perspectives (Aagaard, 2017) and provides them with opportunities to articulate their thoughts and be reflective of issues to gain an understanding and acquire new knowledge (Glaser, 2002). Further, it requires the researcher to ask appropriate questions to be able to accurately describe participants' experiences. From this approach, the concrete and detailed descriptions from BWPs' perspectives were derived, which added to the body of research highlighting the lived experiences of Black women leaders (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011).

About the Researcher

As the researcher, I recognize that the question asked in this investigation gave direction and focus to develop meaning. Subsequently, the data of experience, intuiting, reflecting, and judging are regarded as the primary evidences of scientific investigation. Finally, the research question that guides an investigation must be carefully constructed, every word deliberately chosen and ordered in such a way that the primary words appear immediately, capture readers' attention, and guide and direct me in the phenomenological process of seeing, reflecting, and knowing (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59).

I have been a principal for 3 years; previously, I spent 4 years as an assistant principal. As a BWP, I have experiences in this position and sought to hear and learn of the experiences of other BWPs. As I conducted research, I kept a journal to reflect and capture thoughts during the interview process to keep my reflections and thoughts separate from those interviewees shared. Researcher reflexivity is a critical aspect of effective qualitative research; reflexive journaling minimized the effect of any biases on the research topic. I am a 38-year-old BWP enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, with more than 9 years of experience as a teacher and 7 years as an administrator. I have a strong passion for equipping

teachers, students, and families of traditionally marginalized students with the strategies and tools they need to optimize students' social, emotional, and academic experiences in school. My background provides a frame of reference for this research. According to Van Manen (1990), the only way one can truly question a phenomenon is "to interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being" (p. 43). My education, experience, and passion also require bracketing, or "setting aside prejudgments and opening the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 180). Through the continual use of a reflexive journal, I will record my own understanding, judgments, and feelings regarding the schools, research process, participants, and anything else that surfaces during data generation.

Participant Selection

The phenomenological tradition calls for the selection of research participants based on their experience within the phenomenon being researched, are willing to speak openly about those experiences, and to be audio recorded during interviews (Eddles-Hirsch, 2013). The goal is to obtain a selection of information rich research participants (Groenewald, 2004). I used purposeful sampling to select the school district and participants for the study (Patton, 2002). The study consisted of BWPs in the Mid-Atlantic region of Virginia. Prospective participants were contacted based on recommendations and networking experiences. I chose women who I felt would candidly share their experiences. My impressions were recorded. Principals received an email that included the abstract, purpose of the study, expectations for time commitments, and qualifying questions for self-selection. Principals agreed to participate through email communication. All of the principals selected identified themselves as a BWP. If potential participants were interested, matched the criteria, and were willing to commit to the time requirements, they received an invitation to participate in this study. In total, 11 principals were

identified and agreed to participate in the study. This is an appropriate sample size for the nature of this study as Boyd (2001) regards two to 10 participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998, pp. 65 & 113) recommends "long interviews with up to 10 people", while other recommend that a sample of between three and fifteen participants is sufficient to research saturation for a phenomenological study (Patton, 2002). However, the final number is determined by data saturation (Groenewald, 2004) which is discussed in the next chapter.

Data Collection

I used a Phenomenological data collection protocol. The participants were contacted by email about the study and invited to participate. In order to protect their privacy, each participant was assigned a pseudonym. These pseudonyms were used in transcriptions and in writing about the interviews. When participants contacted me, their interviews were scheduled as quickly as possible at an agreed upon location. All participants received a research agreement to sign in before data collection and were advised verbally and in writing that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Individual interviews were recorded and transcribed, and internal validity was protected. There were subsequent conversations with participants to clarify ideas, discuss aspects of interviews. In some cases, I initiated follow-up communication with participants. At other times, the interviewee initiated follow-up communication. The principals were interviewed, as the phenomena of leadership is a reality only to the individual experiencing it. The next sections provide further explanations of the interview process.

Interviews

Phenomenological research relies on multiple individual semi-structured, or guided in-depth (Patton, 2002) interviews as a key data collection tool (Hays & Singh, 2012). Single short

interviews are not adequate. The goal was to obtain information rich data that helps the researcher discover the patterns, themes and relationships that will offer an explanation of the "analytical and descriptive experience of phenomena by individuals in their everyday world" (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 251), that is the lifeworld (Creswell, 2013) of those involved in the phenomenon under investigation. Semi-structured interviews were used to provide the interviewees the opportunity to present attitudes, opinions, and possibly raise new issues or insights that they considered important (Gill et al., 2008). Moreover, the flexible interview approach helped to elicit in-depth, detailed descriptions of private and personal experiences (2008). Interview questions were open-ended to elicit participants' stories related to experiences of being a BWP. As such the design of his study was intended to engage the participant and prompt a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2005), "a conscious attempt by the researcher to find out more information about the setting of the person" (Bailey, 1996, p. 72), with the researchers and research participant engaged in a reciprocal dialogue (Groenewald, 2004). Through the interview process and collection of data, the phenomenological approach allowed for the BWPs' perspectives to be expressed and for me to glean and articulate the "complex nexus of [their] convergences and divergences" (Smith, 2018, p. 3). After each interview, I reviewed transcripts to determine follow-up question.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed guided by Moustakas' (1994) heuristic process and Hycner's (1999) five steps of explication (data analysis). First it broadly takes a heuristic approach that considers the following:

1. Immersion: knowledge and involvement within the phenomenon being studied

2. Incubation: creating space for discovery, developing deeper awareness, understanding, intuitive or tacit insights

3. Illumination: actively engage in developing, expanding and clarifying the above insights

4. Explication: Reflectivity

5. Creative synthesis: Bringing the above together to show the patterns and relationships.

6. Horizontalization: Understanding phenomenon as a whole

In the broadest sense, the process includes, but is not limited to identifying overlapping or redundant statements from interviews. General coding was the first stage in data organization. Often, it is referred to as the first level of coding (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), however, phenomenological researchers call this phenomenological reduction (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). The next step began with transcribing the interviews. To fully understand the experience of the participant, it is necessary to listen to recordings of interviews as needed. This initial transcription served as the first time I identified themes within the data (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). After transcription, the responses were coded, building textual and structural descriptions of the emerging themes. The phenomenological tradition refers to this as delineating units of meaning. Giorgi (2009) advocated for four steps of protocol analysis. Wertz (2011) summarized these steps as: "(a) reading for a sense of the whole; (b) differentiating the description into meaning units; (c) reflecting on the psychological significance of each meaning unit; and (d) clarifying the psychological structure(s) of the phenomenon" (p. 131). Imaginative variation was used to make connections between what was known from the data collected and what was being studied. Finally, from these textual and structural descriptions, I developed meanings from the multiple participants, differentiating what was known and what was understood (Phillips-Pula et al.,

2011). More specifically, I followed the five steps of data explicitation suggested by Hycner (1999). Each step is outlined below.

Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenological reduction "is a conscious, effortful, opening of ourselves to the phenomenon as a phenomenon…We want not to see this event as an example of this or that theory that we have, we want to see it as a phenomenon in its own right, with its own meaning and structure. It is to have 'bracketed' our response to separate parts of the conversation and to have let the event emerge as a meaningful whole (Keen (1975, p. 38). Bracketing is not merely suspending one's judgement, but fully listening and considering all points of view, that "no position is taken either for or against" (Lauer, 1958, p. 49), but the research serves to synthesize and amplify the voices and experiences of the research subjects.

Delineating units of meaning

Next I sought to extract and defining those statements that illuminate the phenomenon being explored (Hycner, 1999), while seeking appropriate use of bracketing to avoid imposing my own presuppositions and avoiding defining units of meaning based on my own subjectivity. These units of meaning were carefully examined, and refined, and redundant units of meaning were collapsed or eliminated (Moustakas, 1994) as the study unfolded.

Clustering units of meaning into themes

Next, I "interrogated" (Hycner, 1999, p. 153) the units of meaning, carefully to allow the voices and lived experiences of the participants to be fully heard and to avoid any presuppositions, seeking the essence of meaning within the larger ecological context (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994).

Summarizing each interview

Summarizing each interview is an important step in the phenomenological analysis process, one that the recognizes that each research participant experiences the phenomenon in their own way, but that each of these unique experiences can be understood with reference to the other participants. In this way, there is a healthy tension between the unique individual and their interactions with others within the identified ecological context. This step forms a type of validity check as the researchers moves from the developed themes back to the individual interviews to assess if those themes hold up at the individual level. Modifications and refinements were throughout this step in the process.

Composite summary

The final step in this process seeks find balance between the unique voices of the individual BWL and the features of the larger ecological context that give shape to their individual experiences. In this way I sought to give equal weight in the analytic process to the different perspective that allowed me to value these important counterbalancing perspectives. Here I looked for "the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variations" (Hycner, 1999, p. 154). Themes that don't resonate across participants were noted and framed as important counterpoints for these unique voices.

From a CRT perspective, research participants' voices were used in "naming your reality" (Ladson-Billings, 2010), thought counter storytelling. As Delgado (1989) emphasized, naming your reality is important because reality is socially constructed; participants' stories provide a means of self-preservation and the exchange of these stories can overcome ethnocentrism. More importantly, CRT provides a tool for counter deficit storytelling (Solzano, Yosso, 2002) that can help to unearth the lived experience of historically marginalized peoples

This lens is free of the confines of the constraining features of the dominant paradigm (2002). The five tenets of CRT were the primary analytic lens for coding and interpreting interview recordings and transcripts:

1. Whiteness as Property. Racism is embedded in the complex ecological fabric of our institutions and culture. In short, racism is a normal and embedded part of American society.

2. Permanence of Racism needs to be understood in social and historic context. To date, few scholars have explored the undergirding ways that the neo-managerial norms in educational leadership and administration may be antithetical to social justice and anti-racist advocacy.

3. Counter-storytelling by rejecting the normativity and "objectivity" of White dominant organizational theories and structures. Specifically, rejecting the deficit discourse and epistemic injustice that comes with framing historically marginalized peoples as "at-risk."

4. Understanding Interest Convergence and the notion that ideas supported by Whiteness may serve them and when there is some benefit for their own privilege.

5. Critique of Liberalism. Praxis— "It is not enough to simply produce knowledge, but to dedicate this work to the struggle for social justice" (Zamudio et al., 2010, p. 6).

Finally, the concept of saturation is used as a criterion for evaluating when to discontinue data collection and analysis (Sauders et al., 2018). As Bowen (2008) emphasizes, saturation is integral to qualitative research and involves identifying new participants until the dataset is complete as indicated by data replication or redundancy—that is, when further data collection does not produce new or clarifying information. Through concurrent data collection and data

analysis, coding structures and themes can be identified, refined and confirmed. As new data is collected and analyzed such that it fits readily into the emergent categories, the researcher can build an argument that data collection and analysis has reached saturation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) noted that when the data has research saturation for a given category, nothing remains but move on to the next; when all categories have reached saturation, data collection is complete (Morse, 1995).

Some notes on the Challenges, Complexities and Limitations of Bracketing

While some phenomenology traditions seek to make observations from the point of view of a detached observer, or "setting aside" prior understandings or encapsulating one's preconceptions, theoretical commitments and experiences (Le Vasseur, 2003), other traditions emphasized that attempting to eliminate or reduce researcher subjectivity in pursuit of rigor is neither possible nor desirable (e.g. Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Gregory, 2019). These scholars argue that phenomenological findings are co-created by both researchers and participants, rigor and trustworthiness are dependent the researchers making their preconceptions and their contribution to the process clear (Lowes & Prowse, 2001). Others have suggested that bracketing can obscure preconceptions held about a population or a topic (Oakley, 2010), thus potentially amplifying them in the analytic process. Thus, "bracketing one's lived experiences—whether theoretical, experiential, or mediated through popular culture—cannot be quartered off for the purpose of studying a population" (Gregory, 2019, p. 8). While the notion of the detached observer might seem an inviting means of assuring that researcher bias doesn't shape the nature, direction and findings of the research, social science investigations are too complex and detaching oneself entirely is simply not possible.

As such I argue that researchers bias should not be "bracketed" or ignored, but explored and made transparent (Hammersley, 2000). An oversimplified notion of bracketing one's bias risks undermining the very thing it seeks address, that is objectivity, rigor and trustworthiness. In fact, some have argued that all cognition, including quantitative research activities, relies on one or more conceptual frameworks, which shapes how we interpret the world (Salsberry, 1998; Tufford & Newman, 2010). As such, acknowledging one's theoretical positions, power, privileges, life experiences and potential biases, that is interrogating one's role in the research in open and reflective ways prepares the researcher to address the seen and unseen obstacles as the study unfolds (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gregory, 2019).

Trustworthiness

In keeping with the phenomenological methodology, I endeavored to establish the trustworthiness of the research through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (e.g., Erlandson et al., 1993; Hays and Singh; Patton, 2002). First, credibility is the "compatibility of the constructed realities that exist in the minds of the inquiry's respondents with those that are attributed to them" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 30). Transferability is the act of describing a phenomenon, the context it takes place in and the participants with enough detail that readers can assess the transferability of the findings to similar populations or context (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Thick descriptions and direct quotes were utilized to describe BWPs and their experiences (Patton, 2002). Moreover, I triangulated data sources through purposeful stratified and convenience sampling. Dependability refers to the consistency of findings and the ability to replicate them (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was accounted for in both the execution of the research design and consistent findings amongst the research team through time. Dependability was achieved through triangulation, an audit trail, writing

memos and use of an auditor as described in previous sections (Patton 2002). Lastly, confirmability is the "degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 34). Lincoln & Guba posit that confirmability refers to the themes and findings of the study being derived from the participant voices and supported by the data collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability establishes the data faithfully represents participants' intent (Hays & Singh, 2012). Furthermore, confirmability is achieved when participant voices are expressed with researcher bias managed well. To achieve confirmability, I utilized member checking and memos to address and manage biases, triangulation to assure participant voices are evident, and thick description using member quotes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this Phenomenological qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of current Black women principals (BWPs). The intent of this chapter is to introduce the data for this study, the characteristics and the participants, how the data were generated, organized, and analyzed. Focusing on the data collected from these BWPs, I engaged in a Phenomenological method for interpreting the lived experiences of these women.

Participants

This study involved 11 BWPs, all from the United States, who were administrators in urban and suburban K-12 Public Schools that served various socioeconomic communities in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Interviews took place either in person or virtually on Zoom. As an interviewer, I tried to facilitate openness and attentiveness by reviewing the research question and purpose of my research with each participant. I also asked each participant to tell the story of her experience as a BWP. I acquainted each person with the purpose of my research, the utilization of the data, confidentiality statement, and time and place of the interview. The 11 participants were identified through purposeful sampling; each participant: (a) was Black or African American; (b) self-identified as female (c) was a current administrator in a K-12 public educational setting. These criteria provided BWPs who have had lived-experiences of the phenomenon based on their social and professional identities. The women interviewed were either recommended to me by colleagues or known to me personally before the study. Non-Black and or male disqualify a participant from being one who has lived the phenomenon.

Semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions were employed to understand the lived experience of BWPs as they lead in their current and past schools. The research topic aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' lived experiences related to the

incongruence between the deficit discourse found in the dominant neo-managerial norms and culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL). These data were based on each participant's first-person account of how an event or situation was experienced and cannot compare to another person's experience.

The semi-structured, face-to-face and virtual interviews were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. Each interview lasted 45–100 minutes. Abdalla et al. (2018) states that 60–90-minute interviews optimize deep engagement and are sufficient for achieving saturation needed to enhance validity. Fusch and Ness (2015) posit that the data saturation method does not always abide by common methods. There was the use of epoche/bracketing to purposefully set aside any preconceived knowledge or everyday beliefs he or she believes might be used to explain the phenomena being investigated. This allowed the researcher to listen and record the participant's description of an experience in an open and naïve manner.

Overview of the Analysis

The purpose of phenomenological study is to understand and explore the lived experiences of the phenomenon being studied from the perspective of the participants. The following research question provided the foundation for this study: What are the lived experiences of Black women leaders as they relate to the identified incongruence between the deficit discourse found in the dominant neo-managerial norms and culturally responsive leadership? The interview questions (see Appendix A) were aligned to address the research question. Follow-up questions were included to probe the participants' lived experiences. Following the interviews, conversations were transcribed verbatim and sent to each participant for review. This member checking step was necessary to ensure accuracy of information by allowing participants to expand or clarify their responses, if necessary.

I engaged in the iterative analytic process as outlined in Chapter 3 (Hycner, 1999) that involved phenomenological reduction, delineating and clustering units of meaning, summarizing each interview and individual research participants and creating a composite summary of the analysis (Each of the transcripts and audio recordings were reviewed in order to generate a detailed account of experiences. Interviews were analyzed separately to allow emergent themes to be identified. This allowed the lived experience of the participants to be expressed in its own terms, rather than predefining a category system (Smith et al., 2009).

Phenomenological Reduction, Delineating and Clustering Units of Meaning

Informed by the process of phenomenological reduction, I sought to understand the phenomenon's meaning and structure and to allow the overall meaning to emerge from my analysis. A key part of my focus was to synthesize and amplify the voices and experiences of my research subjects. Next, I summarized each research participant's interviews to amplify each of their unique voices and to offer a frame of reference for the composite analysis that identified the dominant themes that were found across the research participants lived experiences.

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subthemes
Journey to Leadership	Necessary Mentorship, The Right Opportunity, and Purpose
Focus on Relationships	Love, Race and Racism, Protection
Responsiveness to Students	Communication, Love, and Clean-up
Professional Development	Racism, Low Expectations, and Instructional Deficits
Navigating Leadership	Racism, Calling, Work Consciousness, and Giving Back

Table 2

Participants' Context

Participant	School Level	Urban, Suburban, Rural	Demographic
Mrs. Lee	Elementary	Urban	Majority Black
Mrs. Bassett	Middle	Urban	Majority Black
Mrs. Johnson	Elementary	Rural	Majority White
Mrs. Little	Elementary	Rural	Majority White
Dr. Book	Middle	Urban	Majority Black
Ms. Faulk	Middle	Suburban	Majority Black
Mrs. Vallone	High	Suburban	Majority Black
Mrs. Patrick	Middle	Suburban	Majority Black
Dr. Georges	Middle	Urban	Majority Black
Dr. Hounshell	High	Urban	Majority Black
Dr. August	Middle	Suburban	Majority Black

Summaries of Each Black Woman Principal

Principal 1: Mrs. Lee

The first BWP, Mrs. Lee, is a seasoned principal in a school with a high population of Black and Hispanic students. Before becoming a principal, she served as an educational leader in schools that needed "a lot of support" and were in need of "strong leadership." Her role as assistant principal in these schools proved her ability to lead teachers instructionally. She shared the pressure and necessary work needed to change cultures of low expectations and lack of vision. The results of her efforts proved that students can learn with structure and quality instruction. She framed her relationships with students, parents, and teachers as positive stating, "My school is now a community, a family. We have grown together and our work centers around students."

Principal 2: Mrs. Bassett

Mrs. Bassett works in a predominantly Black populated district with a predominantly Black administrative staff. Mrs. Bassett shared that her movement to her current role was preceded by "clean-up" roles. She was tasked to take over schools that were not accredited. With each school she led, accreditation soon followed. Her philosophy for success is her supportive administration, working hard, and teaching teachers to identify and instruct for learning. Mrs. Bassett talked about her relationships with students and parents with joy. She shared that her biggest challenge is making teachers believe in students and their abilities.

Principal 3: Mrs. Johnson

Mrs. Johnson leads an elementary school in a rural community. Her population is majority Black. She described her relationships with parents, teachers, and students as awesome. She shared that community engagement has increased over the years; however, there is a sector of parents who do not like her because she is Black. Her reputation for "standing up for Black students" is well-known in that community. Much of her work has centered around building opportunities for Black students and building relationships with teachers to increase quality experiences for all her students, especially her Black students and their parents who have faced discrimination in the past.

Principal 4: Mrs. Little

Mrs. Little loves her rural elementary school and the relationships she has built. She chuckled when she talked about getting her position because she was Black and the majority of her students were Black. Her Black students performed higher in math than their White peers at the majority-White elementary school in the same district. Mrs. Little talked passionately about her ability to lead her majority White staff into not just believing Black students can achieve but

showing them how to teach with a culturally responsive lens. She reported that her faculty and staff often talked about race and cultural responsiveness. She felt it was necessary to have these conversations and professional development in these areas because the staff was majority White and racism was prevalent in the community.

Principal 5: Dr. Book

Dr. Book said it took her longer than expected to become an administrator. Her administrators often told her she needed to lead a school that is the "right fit." She thrives off the relationships with her students and sees their ability when it seems no one else can. When she was placed at the "country club" school, she felt out of place and felt it was harder to make connections with students, parents, and teachers. Her leadership style is based on relationships and giving students what they need instructionally and relationally. Teachers in her school must have high expectations for students, and she feels it is her job to prove to the adults what wonderful capabilities the children have.

Principal 6: Ms. Faulk

Ms. Faulk knows that her role as a principal is a "calling." She feels that she was "called by God" to lead and be a voice for underserved populations. Ms. Faulk still is surprised by the racist remarks that some parents in her community have shared with her. She does not believe that some of them realize she identifies as Black. Her role as principal has mostly been with populations that other leaders have deemed as "challenging," "hood," and "poor." Her love for students has not diminished, and it is the relationships she has built over the years that makes her confident that she has great "purpose" in her position. After serving as principal, she wants to lead principals. She believes that principals deserve a leader who will encourage and mentor them so they, in return, can give every student the best education possible.

Principal 7: Mrs. Vallone

Mrs. Vallone wants her students to know that they are loved and valued. She leads with a "soft heart but an iron fist." Her movement between schools within the district has been the result of schools needing "strong leadership." When she got to each school, she realized that teachers had very low expectations of students; test scores were important but providing quality instruction was not at the forefront of priorities. Through her experiences, she has learned that the problem with education is not the students—the problem is that too many teachers and greater society do not believe our students are capable. Mrs. Vallone shared that she knows the importance of teachers and staff "filling their buckets." She shared that the concept of "filling buckets" is a strategy she uses to show faculty and staff appreciation. This is done by recognizing faculty and staff publicly and giving tokens of appreciation. She shared that working in schools can be very difficult, and she believes it is her responsibility to find ways to fill the buckets of faculty and staff that work under her leadership.

Principal 8: Ms. Patrick

Ms. Patrick moved from an inner city school that was culturally responsive and always focused on improving opportunities for Black students to a school in another district that rarely talked about performance of students by race. She was shocked that culturally relevant practices were non-existent in her new district. Ms. Patrick thinks it is because racial and socioeconomic inequities are not "comfortable topics." Ms. Patrick believes that it was a spiritual calling that brought her to this place to embark on such difficult work. This work is grounded in ensuring equity by first teaching her administrative team, and then working with teachers to identify inequities and address them through education, relationships, instruction.

Principal 9: Dr. Georges

Dr. Georges works in an urban high school and believes in building the capacity of teachers. She often finds herself advocating for students and works hard to help her teachers develop relationship building skills. Culture and climate are important to her, and she works tirelessly to ensure that teachers feel valued and have the support they need to be present for students. Dr. Georges said that she knows that her position as a BWP requires her to work harder than others in order to prove that she is worthy of her position. She shared that she has had to have difficult conversations about why her school does not receive the same resources and attention as other schools. Dr. Georges shared that without pointing out that she serves majority Black students and that her school often gets ignored by Central Office staff, inequities would not have improved.

Principal 10: Dr. Hounshell

Dr. Hounshell shared that she prefers working with Black and Brown students. Her middle school has undergone significant changes due to rezoning and she has significantly fewer students than in the past. Dr. Hounshell's priority is hiring more teachers of color because her students have commented on feeling validated because she is Black and looks like them. There are very few faculty members of color outside of support staff. Dr. Hounshell believes that when students have a voice and feel that the adults around them care, the sky is the limit to what they can achieve. Her experience as a principal has been positive, but she feels that she has to work harder than her counterparts. She does not mind working hard and feels it necessary for the job, yet realizes that she has to navigate leadership differently because she is Black.

Principal 11: Dr. August

Dr. August is a principal in a suburban community. She is thankful that she is a BWP in her district, because she is the only one. Her students have shared with her that they have more confidence in themselves because she is their model. She has felt her biggest challenge has been to get Black and Brown teachers in her building. When she got to her school, the only Black or Brown employees were support staff. Dr. August has tried to curb discipline issues by teaching teachers how to build relationships with parents and students. She shared that there have been many times that teachers write referrals for students without ever engaging the parents.

<center>**Identification of Composite Themes**</center>

The final step in my analytic process was to find and appropriate balance between the unique voices of the individual BWL and the features of the larger ecological context that gave shape to their individual experiences; to identify themes that tell the story of this phenomenon (Hycner, 1999).

Theme 1: Journey to Leadership

Each principal interviewed shared experiences that led to their current leadership roles. The BWP is a minority in educational leadership and the intersection of their race and gender played a role in their ascent to the principalship role. Journeys were characterized by those who helped situate them in leadership positions, the degree of opportunity, and the rationale necessary to pursue leadership positions. Three subthemes that emerged from their journeys: Mentorship, Opportunity, and Rationale.

Necessary Mentorship

Each of the participants attributed her leadership opportunities to specific individuals who helped propel them into leadership positions. The degree and type of support these

individuals offered the principals differed. For example, Ms. Patrick talked about the people she chooses to learn from,

> I think what I've been able to do is surround myself with good educators, whether they're in my sorority or in my church, or you know, just my friends. I've been able to surround myself with good leaders known not necessarily all of them are educators.

Similarly, Mrs. Little shared that without her network, her challenging position would have been even more challenging,

> I don't have anybody and it's like it is it is so frustrating because I don't feel like I know it all and then I would never know it all but I don't feel like I know enough. I hate it, but [my mentors] were part that I loved and one of the parts was that camaraderie, that feeling of having those mentors on [my] side… [education] is predominantly White space. It's even more important for people like us to maintain strong connections, but I don't like being worn down and being lonely. But I've learned that you have to network and you have to have these types of conversations. We have to tweet and group chat with each other. So even if you're not physically right there, I know I can reach out to you if I need you for anything and it helps me just to help [other leaders].

The Right Opportunity

Opportunities to pursue leadership were different for each woman. The "Right Opportunity" was characterized by the opportunities seized that placed these women in the principalship. Whereas some of the women shared that leaving the district where they taught was necessary to find the right opportunity, others shared that the assistant principalship within their districts situated them for the next level of leadership. Dr. Georges reflected on the White male principal who got her into leadership. She shared that before this man promoted her, she was

offered positions but none as a principal. Her principal shared that he "saw something in me and pushed me out…he wanted to make sure my face was being put out there to go into administration." She admits that if it had not been for this person advocating for her, she is not sure when she would have been given a chance.

Similar to a majority of the BWPs in this study, Dr. Georges was confident in her abilities but recognized that her skill-set alone was not enough to get her promoted. There had to be a person, specific need, or demographic that helped grant them the position. However, she is grateful for the colleague who she feels is responsible for her placement as principal. Similarly, Mrs. Lee shared that the mentor who advocated for her to be a principal continues to break glass ceilings and set the bar for her leadership:

> I was under the primary person who shaped my thinking about leadership and what is was necessary to be able to move things forward and that's Ms. Chesterfield. She is still my boss now. She is no nonsense. Yes, she really showed me how it's done and I had to run to keep up with her… it was definitely another level. I was getting into the data. I was getting into the classrooms and ensuring that you're giving good feedback to teachers; feedback that makes a difference in the classroom and holding people accountable.

Purpose

The final subtheme in the Journey to Leadership was the rationale of each principal that defined the reason they pursued leadership. All BWPs shared a belief that their roles as principals went beyond it being a profession. The role of principal was something they felt they were "called" to do and strengthen their purpose or reason for doing the job. Mrs. Lee described her experiences with teachers, the nights she worked instead of being with her family, and the difference her work has made in the lives of her students. Those experiences were something that

she firmly believes she has to do because she "was chosen to do it and I have purpose here."

Without this sense of purpose, Mrs. Lee was not as confident that she would survive in the role

with the challenges she consistently faces.

Ms. Patrick saw vast differences in the two districts where she has served. She knew she

had "purpose" in both settings. However, Ms. Patrick understands that in her current role, the

lack of cultural relevancy and cultural responsiveness makes her purpose more intense and

urgent. She understands that there is much work to do in her current district whereas her last

district had already embraced making Black and Brown students a priority.

Theme 2: Focus on Relationships

Anchoring this theme, Mrs. Little shared, "It's about building those relationships and

that's the thing. Building the relationships with those students with the parents with the staff. I

love it. I have some great relationships that [I have taken] along with me throughout the years."

Mrs. Little was not the only principal who highlighted relationships as a major component of the

principalship. Throughout each interview there was a resounding emphasis on relationships.

Relationships seem to be at the core of the women's leadership style. However, the nature of

relationships and the experience of each principal varied and three subthemes emerged within

relationships: love, protection, and racism.

Love

Love emerged as a subtheme of relationships. Love was a motivating factor as principals

navigated challenges in being responsive to students and navigating the challenges they face.

Love was also a tool for effectiveness; if students love you, they will do anything for you and

respond to the educator who shows that love. For example, Mrs. Faulk shared her experiences

working in Texas. She felt that there were many students who were experiencing hardships at

home and did not have positive relationships with teachers. She shared that this positioned her to make a positive difference in their lives. She wanted to be an administrator that they could depend on to help them with whatever they needed:

> I would go next door across the street to wake up one of my kids. because I knew his mom worked at night, and you have the drug deal going on right there in the streets like this. So that's what, that is what I love. Like I, I wanted to stay in those schools. I don't know if it's because you feel like you make a bigger difference or you relate to the kids better, but I love that school.

She went on to share,

> But [students] want the love and the authenticity too. They can smell when you're afraid of them and unfortunately, [teachers and society] are probably afraid of them because of their skin color, what they look like. They can smell when you are belittling them. You know, they can smell when you are looking at the other variables, besides their brains, their hearts, and you can hug and love. They will love and hug you. They will love you.

Race and Racism

The subthemes race and racism emerged because it was a precipitating factor for the need to build relationships, raise achievement, and protect students from the deficit beliefs about them. BWPs expressed that racism directed towards their schools and the students in them but also directed towards them. BWPs shared their experience with racism from a bus, driver, teachers, and parents, and division-level administration. Exemplifying this, Mrs. Faulk stated,

> You will not believe [the] number of times that before school even starts, before their child even gets put in the class, they [white parents demonstrating racism] want to change the teacher. And I promise you, the only reason is because the teacher is Black and they

want, they want a different teacher…and I would never, I would be like, "No, no, we're not changing." And so they called downtown and, luckily…I've built up a reputation where I can handle [this]…they just send it right back.

In another example, Mrs. Little talked about relationships as the foundation for teaching equity and cultural responsiveness. She discussed the process and complexity of building relationships,

How do you build relationships? They're loaded, and I don't think that some people know the nuances. One lady told me, she said, "I don't know how to be equitable because I don't know anybody except for my kids. I don't know any Black people. So you're teaching me how to interact with people's kids and I know pedagogy, but I don't know how to be equitable." That is what she told me, so bless God, because we need to be honest before we can be effective. So then the next step was I did a survey and in-service with staff over the summer. I just said if you want to come and be a part of it, we're going to unpack some of the civil unrest. We're going to talk about why we have, like, this cry for social justice…we're going to unpack some of the stuff. I had a lot of my staff come and it was a great conversation, but that's not something that people just know how to do.

In a similar light, Dr. Book expressed her perspective being a BWP,

I think they say the first challenge is to not being taken seriously—being underestimated. Because when someone comes and…they look at me, you know, I know I've had White men to sit in this office and treat me in a particular way because I am a Black…

Dr. Book shared that the discrimination that she experienced because of her Blackness produced tenacity and persistence. She also denotes that her experience is unique as it is not shared by those who are not Black.

I called my [School Resource Officer in] on it and just flat-out call them on it…We're

going to face opposition because of the lack of belief in you. Lack of credibility the

assumption that you're less or can do less or inferior, or when you speak it's not as

important. So those things do make you as a Black person more tenacious or persistent

because you have to be...the experience doesn't match my counterparts.

Protection

The BWP shared common words and phrases that illuminated a responsibility to protect

students. The BWPs, through their sentiments, stood in a position to shield students from

different actors. For example, Ms. Patrick felt it was necessary to protect her students from

oppression. She felt that it was not enough to protect, she also had to empower her Black and

Brown students. She explained that when students understand the value in being themselves and

understanding their culture, it creates a shield of protection:

With [the] whole Black Lives Matter movement, I do see that we have to show our

students that they matter—our Black students especially. You know, if we don't teach

them truly what took place in history…but it is my responsibility as a Black educator…to

show them that they truly can stand on the shoulders of their ancestors and do great

things. I think as [an] education system, as a society we've been so focused on test scores

that we've lost ourselves in that in that way.

Teacher observations were extremely important for Dr. August. They serve as a medium to

assess teacher-student interactions, particularly the interactions of teachers and Black students.

I'm always cognizant of how they're interacting with students of color. [I observe] how

they call them. [I observe] if they treat them the same. Do they demonstrate that they

have the same expectation of them as they do of all the white kids that are in their

classroom?

Mrs. Little spoke about the need to protect Black children, but also shared the stress that comes

with that responsibility.

I feel like we all as black Educators have a responsibility to be protective of our children

because most are not doing what's in the best interest for our kids. They're just not and if

we don't do it who is going to do it. There are people that we can wait around and hope

will do it but I can't. [I] get tired of being Rosa Parks all the time. [I am] tired of being

Sister Soldier all the time and it's overwhelming, but I don't think I could do anything

else.

Theme 3: Professional Development

Professional development was identified as necessary for BWPs in their positions. The

experiences of the BWPs were layered. These women had different contexts and experiences

personally and professionally that have all led to who they are as leaders. However, one

commonality among them was the importance of professional development. Dr. George posited

that as a BWP, there is not a handbook for how to grow professionally. Mrs. Little expressed the

critical need to develop teachers in order to support student achievement. Both women's

comments were shared by other BWPs. Subsequently, professional development was a theme

that materialized from the interviews. Three subthemes that frame this theme are racism, low

expectations and instructional deficits.

Racism

BWPs shared that they had to build themselves up with "thick skin" to be effective and

lead their schools in the manner they felt was best for students. Racism and racist interactions

with stakeholders were a reality for most of them. Dr. Book in a predominantly Black school district felt racism was ever-present but shared that support she received from district-level leadership was a big help. She felt that her race and gender only became variables when she was compared to men in leadership roles; paradoxically, most of her mentors were men.

BWPs in this study felt it imperative that other leaders facing these challenges recognize the role racism plays in leadership and ways to deal with it. Dr. August shared the tension she experienced with a White parent:

I had a parent who was upset basically because I was a black woman and his son was suspended out of school. It was a little boy who used to wear like a lot of Confederate t-shirts and all kinds of stuff. The father refused to shake my hand he refused and so what was I supposed to do? It's their ignorance and those kinds of things do come up.

Dr. Vallone gave a similar example of an interaction with a White parent.

I could be helping somebody at the counter and white parents will come in. They wouldn't look at me or talk to me. I was invisible, and they would talk to the secretary…she would say the assistant principal is not here but you can talk to the principal…and they would reply that they didn't want to talk to me. [The secretary] would be like so shocked because these are people she went to church with…she was shocked at how they acted…but I grew up in an all-white environment and this is how white people treated me. I just know that's this is a part [of the job]. I knew they felt that I was invisible. They want their kids to be the authority

Low Expectations

Dr. August also shared that she has to intentionally give Black children more opportunities because some of the teachers in her school do not believe in them.

I know that they had the ability to do it. They were dealing with some behaviors, and we were working through some things. I'm going to give the kids the opportunity…I'm going to open up the door for the student particularly our black kids because I know that a lot of people are not willing to do that, you know, a lot of [teachers] are only going to say either [they] do not qualify. [They] are really not interested. [They] are not going to make it. There's no personal investment or personal interest in who [Black students] are going to become.

Dr. Book spoke about her students and the growth in performance she witnessed during her time as principal. One of her biggest challenges, and one that was shared by other BWPs in this study, was the consistent belief and instructional practices that reflected low expectations of students. Dr. Book explained that there were some teachers who, "look at our kids as being troublemakers and changing that, you know, that mindset is very difficult. However, we're having those courageous conversations." BWPs found that teachers were not raising the bar for achievement for Black and Brown students. The BWPs mentioned parents having low expectations for schools because Black students attended.

Instructional Deficits

Leading schools with general low performance and achievement gaps between Black and Brown students compared to White students was a common narrative among the BWPs in this study. To address these concerns, instruction had to be addressed directly. For example, Dr. Bassett explained that her success in increasing student achievement was a direct result of focusing on instruction. Her dissertation focused on instruction because she knew that instruction makes a difference in student engagement and learning. "The more I gave them that feedback and let them know what I expect when I came to that classroom again in two weeks. That's the

only thing that changed instruction. I make sure kids are learning." She also expressed the urgency needed in addressing student learning,

> If I don't feel like your heart is in the right place or your mindset is not right and you're not there for kids, I tell them [teachers]. I view myself as like a doctor and want to save a lot of people who have Stage 4 cancer. This is how I feel about my students. I'm looking to help them live.

Mrs. Lee responds to instructional deficits as a coach responds to the needs of their athletes.

> Then of course the next biggest challenge of bringing people along instructionally. You [have to] refine their skills because. Teachers in my school have to have better skills than [other] teachers. I have to address instructional deficits because academic deficits are greater. My teachers have to work harder so they can't play. They have to review the data. …It's bringing people along in terms of their skill and their ability as instructional leaders in their classroom and in the building…I have to bring them along instructionally…I'm their coach…Everyone needs a coach. Michael Phelps, Simone Biles, Michael Jordan… They all needed coaches because coaches see the talents they don't see. As the coach, I see the deficits, so I'm going to tell you, and I'm going to give you feedback.

Theme 4: Responsiveness to Students

Responsiveness to students materialized as a major theme from the experiences of BWPs. This theme centered around participants' perceived responsibility to respond to the needs of their students. These needs were not viewed as deficits, but rather the BWPs expressed a responsibility to ensure students are given opportunity and access. Ms. Patrick shared she is responsive to students by empowering them:

Showing these kids that they could be themselves. They don't have to conform to the

norms. They don't have to conform to society's norms for them. Even in the midst of all

of this, you know, racial tensions. They can be what they want to be. They can be great.

They could you know go forward—if they want to get an education, they can; if they

want to get a doctorate, they can.

Similar to Ms. Patrick, as other BWPs responded to their students, they opened the door to

communication, love, and achievement. Communication, Love, and Achievement are described

as three subthemes of this major theme.

Communication

Communication was a valuable aspect of the participants' leadership style. Mrs. Little,

Mrs. Lee, Mrs. Bassett, Dr. August and Dr. Hounshell shared that they communicated with their

teachers as they would their own family members. The principals felt this type of communication

established a sense of community and trust that enabled dialogue and difficult conversations

about race, bias, and racism to take place more effectively. Without communication with

teachers about such issues, their Black students would be subject to status quo practices.

Communication with certain parents and staff members also presented indicators of racism.

Communication that demonstrated racist behaviors and beliefs were signs of the types of

responsiveness required to meet the needs of their respective schools and the students they

served.

For example, Mrs. Johnson shared that the family atmosphere with her staff was a part of

her strategy to better serve students:

We always call ourselves a family…I am very transparent with my staff, and they are

very transparent with me. I think some administrators may feel some kind of way

because…my teacher feels a certain way. [Teachers] share their feelings at district-wide meetings; they're vocal. [District-level administrators] say, "Oh Lord, it is those… teachers." I mean that's what they're used to…I say family because we will go back and forth and will go at it…But just like brothers and sisters do, the next day they wake up and say, "Listen, I shouldn't have said it that way," or "I apologize if I offended you." And that's what we do—we hug and then we move on. I think that is what keeps us together. We do have that family-oriented culture in our building. We're trying to build that with the staff first and then with the students.

Ms. Johnson's transparency and communication benefit her students, faculty and staff. The togetherness she spoke about makes professional learning and growing easier.

Love

Every participant talked about love. Their discussion about the relationships with their parents and students illustrated ways that these leaders demonstrated love and supported their responsiveness to students. Love of the profession and love for positive outcomes were discussed, but love as a response to students were prominent. Love for students was a major reason they adopted other characteristics such as being protective and conscious of their personal and teachers' interactions, tone, and decisions.

In addition, love from students and parents was reciprocated and a motivation for BWPs. Dr. Bassett explained how relationships she had with the parents of her students made a huge impact on her ability to make positive change:

They loved me to death. Like they'll stand in front of a moving bus. They knew that I would ensure their child was learning. Teachers could never come to me and say I don't care about kids. I love my kids and they love me.

Mrs. Lee gave the example of the love her staff expresses towards her. She feels that this relationship with her staff yields great dividends for her students.

They're fanatics. They know I love them, but they are fanatics [of mine]. I had one of my close out meetings this year. I met with the lead. [My teachers] are planning on taking over the school. They don't want to go anywhere else. This is one of the highest needs school in the division. This school has the crappiest building in the division. Yes. This is the crappiest building in the division with the highest needs, and I've got a masses of teachers who don't want to go anywhere. They don't want me to go anywhere.

Clean up

Although student performance was not the main topic of any of the interviews, it was the reasoning that supported certain types of responsiveness. There was a common experience in which BWPs were moved to schools to "clean up." Cleaning up meant that these BWPs were tasked with improving achievement, disproportionality in discipline, and other aspects of the school that were contributing to lack of student performance. Most of the BWPs shared that their directed tasks in these schools initially seemed as though they were student-centered issues. In addition, the context of the clean-up depended upon factors like the setting of the school (rural, suburban, or urban) and who led the school before the current BWP entered. There was one situation in which a White female was one of the BWPs predecessors. During the predecessor's tenure, academic performance was low, discipline issues were prevalent; however, the BWP felt her placement was meant to clean up weak leadership from her predecessor, even though that was not the terminology the district level administration used.

In other cases, BWPs were told explicitly by district level administration that they needed to clean up a school and in one case the administrator told the BWP, "do something with that

place." Some mentioned the race and gender of their predecessors as factors and others did not.

Mrs. Vallone shared her experience being tasked with cleaning up a school, stating,

> I know that experience. So, I think that may have been part of the reason why I was
> moved to this school. Another reason I was moved to this school, the superintendent he
> told me point blank. He needed clean up, that's [my] number one job, clean
> up…so…that's going to be my big change. You know how you go into a new building
> and you don't want to make a whole lot of changes? We'll try to keep it the same as I can
> this first year, but I have to make these changes to this. Just from these conversations I've
> had, it blows my mind. What's been going on in this school blows my mind. Like. "He is
> just wrong. He is always in the office." Like, you know, teachers will send them out. It
> definitely appeared to be a teacher issue, a student issue…the discipline numbers are off
> the chart at this school that I'm at now.

Mrs. Vallone was describing the relationship between discipline and cleaning up a
school. Her task at a new school involved keeping students "under control" and making sure that
that students are complying. Mrs. Vallone's did not believe that students were creating the
conditions that needed cleaning up. Her belief that she needed to equip teachers to be responsive
to students to prevent discipline problems was consistent with other BWPs.

Theme 5: Navigating Leadership

The leadership experience for the BWPs was described with words such as journey,
calling, and a responsibility. With each interview, BWPs spoke about their leadership
experiences and each woman shared ways in which they overcame challenges, addressed
concerns, celebrated successes. Although they talked about aspects of leadership that have
already been experienced, they all acknowledged the need to continue to lead and face the

remainder of their careers. As a result, "Navigating Leadership" was an emergent theme. Leading and God, Work Consciousness, and Giving Back were subthemes that framed the theme.

Dr. Patrick, who worked at a predominantly White school and then a predominantly Black school, spoke candidly about how she had to use her Assistant Principal as an ally in dealing with parents who judged her because of her skin color:

I could be working at the front counter of the school and White parents will come in. They wouldn't look at me or talk to me. I was invisible to them and they would talk to the secretary. Now I'm the building administrator. I'm in charge and [the parents] would say, "Where is [the] assistant principal?" [And if the secretary said], "You can talk to her" the parent responded, "Oh, when will he be back? I don't want to talk to her." I knew they felt that I was invisible.

Dr. Patrick shared that she had to maintain her professionalism and values despite the treatment she received. Professionalism and values were critical characteristic in helping her navigate leadership.

Leading and God

Spirituality was discussed numerous times over the course of interviews. All but one of the BWPs mentioned God as they talked about challenges, hope, and longevity in educational leadership.

For example, Dr. August stated, I am in the position that I'm in totally on purpose. It's not by happenstance. I feel like God has placed me here for the purpose of breaking down barriers and building bridges between people. I mean, I feel that wholeheartedly. I've been watching God do it ever since I started, and ever since, I've been in a roll.

Participants used their faith and belief that they their circumstances are a "calling" to help them confront the challenges they experienced. Ms. Patrick shared one situation in which a White male was promoted to principal instead of her. She became the man's assistant principal:

I asked to meet with him, and I think he thought I was going to come in with my dukes up. We both knew that I clearly had the experience, but he had the title. I told him, "You're a Christian." I'm a Christian, but I felt that it was from the Lord for me to be [the one to meet and talk about our working relationship]. I'm going to do everything I can to make this his best first year. He is going to be proud to have me as Assistant Principal. I feel like my job as Assistant Principal was to support the principal, and I said, "We're going to make this the best first year ever…[because] I would want someone working for me like that."

In another example of this sub-theme, Mrs. Book recalled the moment she realized her job and the challenges were a part of a bigger calling from God,

Yes, like my family, there are these people here who know me and who loved me and I was just almost infamous. I mean, I would come home, I would eat, it would be late…I might take a nap or not, and I will start working all over again throughout the night. It was around the clock work that was needed…it was the year where I went to school one morning and I backed out [of the parking spot]. I would get there early. I backed out of my parking spot and left and drove away. I didn't even want to go in, and I had a major conversation, you know God speaking to me. Basically, what he revealed to me is that this is a mission, a calling. This is the mission, and for you to think that conditions should be good on a mission? You are mistaken and you're fooling yourself. This is a mission. I turned around, wiped my tears, and got back to school and got back in it.

This example along with parts of interviews highlight a perspective that situates these women as able to handle issues that arise because of their connection to God. This connection resulted in a sense of responsibility and or directive from God to lead and stay in certain schools despite the hardships.

Work Consciousness

There was a consistent reminder in each interview that as a BWP, the work is harder and the expectations are higher than that of their colleagues. For some of the BWPs, this consciousness was a motivator and necessity to be successful in their positions. Moreover, being conscious of the amount of work required in this position and as a BWP did not seem to be a deterrent. Their perspectives were discussed as a reality that they had come to terms with and in some instances, they spoke about work consciousness as a benefit.

> [As a BWP], we always have to do over and beyond. We always have to do more. But I will say that [the hard work] has worked for me. When I go to a school, I do a phenomenal job. I win. I win over teachers who may have been skeptical. I breakthrough stereotypes.

Similarly, Dr. Georges discusses how others around her view and respond to her. In her explanation, her work consciousness is noticed and respected by her colleagues. In addition, she also points out that Black women must be cognizant of their emotions, so they are not viewed as the "angry Black woman" and how her work ethic contrasts to non-Black colleagues,

> …We've just got to work hard. We've got…to prove ourselves…and…not to take a whole lot personally, but we've got to have thick skin also at some point. We're going to be seen or we're going to be viewed on equal ground in some instances. We are…I am

respected because people know what I stand for. People know my walk equals my talk because I'm not going to say it and not do it and we've got to make sure that is equal. I'm not one that's going to stir up a whole bunch of stuff. But I'm going to address something with you. If it's not right, I'm not going to let it go and there's a way in which you handle stuff. So [that] people can respect you and whatever you do, you've got to remain professional. Because you know, we get that title of an angry Black woman. I hate to say that, but it's true but there are things that Black leaders will do in terms of bending over backwards, taking children home at 9 p.m..... that you know other people don't even know exist. You know, if you're in a school that's predominantly White…where you have communities and families that don't have a great need, [and] they don't have, you know, a lot of…challenges… you aren't called to take bags of food to a hotel in the summer…or take a Chromebook to a student in the evening, or, you know, take a packet of work to a student living in a hotel because his mom has COVID-19 and he's staying with his grandma…We do things like that and they don't know about that because that hasn't been [non-Black principals'] experience. But as a Black leader in the Black community, you have experience that other leaders don't have and they don't understand them.

Giving Back

The BWPs who were closer to the end of their careers all shared that they want to "give back" to other women who are trying to navigate the principalship. Dr. Vallone shared the importance of giving back in the form of mentorship and helping other leaders "fill their buckets" so they can do this work. Dr. Hounshell felt it was necessary to start sharing her perspectives and guide younger principals who feel isolated. She said, "we are all in this together

and need each other." Dr. Hounshell capitalized on the influence of her mentors and described how in leadership, being around others who have had similar experiences is important. Navigating leadership, in this respect, includes sharing experiences and lessons learned to those who are currently and those who will someday have to journey through leadership.

Summary

Chapter 4 provided a summary of the lived experiences of 11 BWPs. From the study participant interviews, 5 major themes emerged including: (a) Journey to Leadership, (b) The Perfect Opportunity, (c) Necessary Mentorship, (d) Responsiveness to Students, and (e) Navigating Leadership. Study participants had a number of challenging yet rewarding experiences being a BWP. Racism, lack of opportunity, placement in "clean-up" schools, and feeling as if they had to work much harder than their White colleagues were among those mentioned. The challenges did not seem to define their ability and totality of their lived experiences but played a role in how they responded to their students, colleagues, and profession. Their journeys to leadership included mentoring and advocacy from colleagues, most of them older and established in the profession. Relationships with students, parents, and their faculty and staff were centrally important to their roles. Spirituality was a significant factor in the longevity of their roles, discussed in terms of their jobs being a "calling." Several participants shared that because of their "purpose" in these positions, they were able to defy the odds and obstacles that BWPs are most likely to experience. Finally, participants expressed a desire to empower and encourage BWPs and other principals in their roles. Through their experiences, they understood the value and benefits of having someone who has experienced being a principal to lead principals.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The lived experience of the BWPs explored in this study offer insights about how the ghost of neo-managerialism reinforces the deficit discourse concerning Black and Brown students and their abilities (Thrupp, 2005). The dominant neo-managerial paradigm, with its primary focus on social efficiency, stability, predictability and control, was never intended to address issues of inequality or social injustice (Kim, 2018). In this way, the BWPs in this study who engaged in disrupting dominant norms found themselves working outside the field's dominant paradigm. Hence, principals who operate in this system forfeit autonomy and are unable to serve Black and Brown populations adequately (Sementelli, 2015; Thompson, 1975). This formulaic model of practice often fails to focus on social justice, equality, equity, democracy, social class, gender, race, and ethnicity. The lack of recognition and focus on these key issues limits the responsiveness and subjectivity that is necessary to maximize learning opportunities for Black and Brown students (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

Moreover, Black women encounter challenges related to their gender and race that are woven into the fiber of America's social structure as a fundamental organizing principle (Collins, 1989). They navigate leadership dealing with the implications of their intersectionality along with the historically rooted deficit discourses of the neo-managerial norms. This notion, coupled with the complexity of the ecological nature of schools (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 1994; Myran & Sutherland 2019), creates further complications. The ecological nature of schools requires leaders to be responsive to discourses, and subsequent needs and issues as they arise. Neo-managerialism and its mechanistic nature do not respond to complexity as it evolves and the BWP may experience having to balance the intersectionality of her own race and gender,

responding to varying student cultures and values, and working to disrupt this linear and conformist system.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the incongruence between the deficit discourse implicit in the historically rooted neo-managerial norms of educational leadership and the ideal of CRSL through the lived experiences of current BWPs. This study yielded five major themes related to the lived experiences of 11 BWPs. Open-ended interviews provided information about how study participants perceived their leadership experiences. Each woman presented experiences related to her journey to leadership, professional development, focus on relationships, responsiveness to students, and navigating leadership. Participants worked in rural, suburban, and urban settings and were leaders of elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

Through the Lens of CRT and CRSL

In this chapter, I share conclusions based on this study's findings and interpret and discuss the findings as they related to the intersectionality of their lived experiences, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and Culturally Responsive School Leadership (CRSL) in the context of neo-managerial norms. I also discuss CRT as a lens to understand CRSL practices as they relate to the incongruent and deficit narrative of neo-managerialism from the unique perspective of BWPs. CRT was used as an analytic lens to explore the intersectionality of the lived experiences of BWPs, the dominant neo-managerial paradigm and CRSL. Specifically, CRT provided a means of demystifying historical and current privileged assumptions as well as the organizational and structural norms, traditions, and practices that reinforce the deficit discourse that perpetuates racism (Yosso, 2005). Taken together, the theories of CRSL and CRT support and guide leaders in their quest to provide equitable, socially just, and culturally responsive environments for their

students. There is a dearth of literature regarding the experiences of Black women leaders and researchers support the need to focus on educational leadership practices (Davis & Maldonado, 2015).

Five major themes emerged from the data collected: Journey to Leadership, Focus on Relationships, Responsiveness to Students, Professional Development, and Navigating Leadership. These themes align with aspects of the literature review regarding CRT and CRSL. I will first focus on CRT as it illuminated the lived experiences of the BWPs in this study and the components of CRSL that participants referenced. In some cases, elements of CRT and CRSL complemented each other; in others, elements of CRT or CRSL were identified or used in isolation. CRT is founded on six tenets: (a) the permanence of racism, (b) Whiteness as property, (c) interest convergence, (d) counter-story, (e) color-blindness, and (f) critique of liberalism (Abrams & Moio, 2009). CRT in education recognizes the entrenched nature of White Supremacy and assesses and promotes research built upon that fundamental understanding (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Moreover, CRT posits that "oppression and racism are not unidirectional, but rather that oppression and racism can be experienced within and across divergent intersectional planes, such as classism, sexism, ableism, and so on" (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015, p. 207). The behaviors associated with CRSL are: (a) identifying and fostering a culturally affirming school environment; (b) understanding/ engages their native and/or community contexts (c) developing and sustaining teachers and curricula; and (d) critical consciousness (Khalifa, 2018). Table 5 outlines these intersections, which are then discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

Table 3

Intersection of CRT and CRSL

CRSL	CRT				
	Whiteness as Property	**Permanence of Racism**	**Counter-storytelling**	**Interest Convergence**	**Color-blindness**
Identifying and fostering a culturally affirming school environment	Instruction, resources, Parents	Professional Development	Professional Development Instructional Deficits	School Placement	Instruction
Understanding/ Engages their native and/or community contexts		Professional Development	Professional Development		
Developing and Sustaining teachers and Curricula	Hiring Practices	Professional Development	Professional Development		Hiring Practices
Critical Consciousness	Working harder Relationships	Working harder		"Clean-up"	Journey to Leadership and Navigating Leadership

Note. CRSL = culturally responsive school leadership; CRT = critical race theory

Critical Race Theory

The first discussion will focus on CRTs idea of Whiteness as property and its correlation to BWPs examples of promoting inclusive, anti-oppressive school contexts as a CRSL strategy. In public education, Whiteness as property has become a signifier of who reaped the benefits of education through the value of property owned. Subsequently, schools that are supported by communities with more valuable property can afford more resources, access to intellectual

property through high-quality curriculum delivering more academic benefits, and wielded power over public education impacting policy and law (Buras 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate 1995). Whiteness as property is the notion that White people are the holders of positions of power and control rights of possession, use and enjoyment, disposition, and exclusion (DeCuir & Dixson; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Historically, one of the greatest assets of Whiteness as property was the ability to exclude others from the benefits of Whiteness, maintaining inequitable distribution of resources (Donnor, 2013). Whites simply do not have to consider equitable distribution of property and the privileges associated with that property (Bell 1980). The following sections will give detailed descriptions of the intersections between tenets of CRT and CRSL.

Whiteness as Property

Dr. Georges shared an illustration of Whiteness as property in play as resources were distributed from a district-level. Her actions also illustrated a CRSL practice because she tried leverage resources to identify and foster a culturally affirming school environment (see Ainscow, 2005; Riehl, 2000).

> I would notice that my school was overlooked for things that other schools always had access to. I had to speak up finally and say, "My school needs that, too. Why wasn't it offered to my school. We have the most needs but are looked over as an afterthought." They [district-level administration] started giving me what I asked for. The principals beside me never had to ask the questions I did. They didn't have to fight those fights.

Stories like this illustrate how BWPs in this study wanted their schools to be a place where Black students found their voices and a place where their identity was affirmed. Dr. Georges understood that resources were not equally or equitably allocated for her students. Subsequently,

she had to work intentionally to ensure her students had what was needed academically. Also, she understood that her students should not have to feel the effects of her school system's way of enforcing CRT's Whiteness as property tenet. Similarly, Dr. Patrick shared her perspective that explained how Whiteness as property intersected with CRSL's behavior, understanding/engaging native and/or community contexts. She shared that her school was comprised of majority Black students and led by Black administrators. She considered this demographic a benefit for her professionally because she felt that had more leverage and was able to be more creative.

> It's like when we go into a place that's majority Black and is run by majority Black [administrators]. We have the creativity. We are allowed to have the creativity. We are allowed to have the innovation [that we need] in schools. The district may not be majority, but when we are in schools where they are majority Black kids…it's like we have the leverage to do what we need to do.

Dr. Patrick explained that her school was considered the "Black school." Dr. Patrick shared that working in an environment that was majority Black and led by majority Black leaders made things "easier" for her. When she worked in schools that were majority White, she did not have the same leverage to lead. She felt as if she did not belong and were not allowed to be as successful with schools that had majority white students.

BWPs in this study talked about the racism they faced from certain White parents, which also illustrated the CRT tenet of Whiteness as property. Participants described feelings of otherness—not belonging or being welcomed in their own schools and a lack of respect and recognition for their authority. One BWP shared a story about White parents who did not accept or acknowledge her as principal. They would only acknowledge the authority of her White colleagues and assistant principal. Another BWP described having to work harder than her White

colleagues and to be careful not to seem too aggressive or passionate in fear of being labeled

angry. There was an instance in which a school was located in an area that had a high property

value. It was in the middle of a country club. The BWP shared that certain parents complained to

district-level administration because the school had more students from "the other side of town."

Their neighborhood was the only area with high property values who had students attending that

school. This same principal shared that parents often would not accept discipline from her.

Instead, they would call the district-level administrators to overturn her decisions, but she was

always supported by the district-level administration. This principal and others developed and

sustained culturally responsive teachers as a way to combat the influences of Whiteness as

property. They did so by implementing book studies about equity and cultural responsiveness in

the classroom, holding courageous conversations about race, and building a community and

climate that challenged status quo in a safe environment. In addition, Dr. Patrick and Mrs.

Johnson spoke candidly about their experiences with White parents and staff who refused to

acknowledge them as the principal of their schools. They talked about their experiences as

another obstacle they experienced, but even though it was an obstacle, they did not express that

these experiences kept them from serving their students. Dr. Patrick shared,

> And White parents will come in. They wouldn't look at me or talk to me. I was invisible
>
> and they would talk to the secretary. Now, I'm the building administrator. I'm in charge
>
> and she would say, "Well, this is principal. You can talk to her. [The White parent would
>
> respond] "Oh, when will he be back? I don't want to talk to her." [My secretary] would be
>
> so shocked because these are people she went to church with; she lives out there in the
>
> country. She was shocked at how they acted. I was amazed that she was shocked. I grew
>
> up in an all-White environment and this is how White people treated me.

Dr. Patrick shared that this experience actually strengthened the relationship she shared with her staff. However, it was a memory that she thinks of often.

Color-blindness

Colorblindness is referred to as "a set of understandings—buttressed by law and the courts, and reinforcing racial patterns of white dominance—that define how people comprehend, rationalize, and act on race" (Lopez, 2006, p. 62). The discourse of colorblindness allows adults to disregard racial identities by solely viewing people as individuals who are not connected to or affected by the social, economic, and cultural factors that shape their past and present experiences by denying the "historical and current contexts of white domination" (Urrieta, 2006, p. 456). Dr. Patterson supervised a White teacher who was concerned about the lack of relevancy for Black students in her lessons. She was trying to counteract the bias she knew existed in the texts used in class.

> She's a White lady and she was saying…"I tried so hard to, you know, paint a balanced picture in my class. I want my students of color to be able to see not just Martin Luther King or you know, just the ones that are African Americans that are most notable," she says, "but I try to really paint a balanced picture." [The teacher] said with everything that's been going on that she is not even sure if she should leave out parts of the Civil War. [I] said, "you can't leave it out. You know, you got to tell the story, the whole story." But the problem for so long is that we haven't been telling a complete story. I want the truth to be taught and the bias in our textbooks…The picture that is painted is not an accurate picture, so we feed students something that's not even true. We have to do a better job with that and I told her, you know, perhaps that means that you don't use the

textbook as often or that it shouldn't be your main resource. [Try to use] some other things to incorporate within your class. [This] was good conversation.

BWPs also shared hiring practices that were racially charged and prevented diversity within their districts; however, when district-level administrators were confronted about these practices, race was disregarded. In some instances, the BWP did not confront or challenge the practice. Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Little spoke about the challenges of hiring Black and Brown teachers. Their school systems prevented viable applicants from being interviewed. Mrs. Little explained,

> That's a big equity issue that I have a problem with…I have specifically asked for minority applications…Let's just say from February to June…you're telling me that between February and June there's only two minority people that have applied for a teaching job in Juniper County schools. That doesn't make sense. [Minorities] apply to the school division. Then Human Resources looks at all of the application and [I] don't get to see that big pool. I don't get to see the pool because [Human Resources] looks at all the applications and then selects which ones that he/she feels are qualified and prints them out. She scans them and she sends them [to the school she wants to send them]. For example, I had a parent who emailed me in December. [The parent explained] that their daughter went to my school. [My school] was close to their home. [The parent told me] if you have any positions, please let me know. I really want to be closer to home and I would really love to work at your building. Sure, if I have something comes up, I'll let you know something came up. I emailed her and found out she put in her application, and I'm waiting to get [the parent's] application. Human Resources sent me like 10 or 12 applications. [When I did not receive the application from the parent,] I was told, "Oh,

well, I didn't send that one to you." When I asked why I did not receive the application,

Human Resources to me that they thought she was not the best fit for my school. Only

after I told them to give me the application and explained that I had been in contact with

this person for months did they allow me to interview this person. There is one person in

Human Resources that holds all the power.

Mrs. Johnson's experience was very similar to Mrs. Little described the amount of power

that Human Resources had prevented them diversifying their staff. They explained their efforts

to get Black applicants as a constant fight and battle. Their goal was to develop and sustain

teachers who were culturally responsive and felt that students needed to see faculty and staff who

were not just White. When the teachers and Human Resources did not see how identifying the

impact of race, instruction and diversity within the organization suffered.

Permanence of Racism

Racism in the U.S. is omnipresent and deeply rooted in the policies, practices,

procedures, and systems within education (Bobo & Kluegel, 1993; Milner, 2008). Mrs. Little

shared how confederate flags were displayed in many of the yards as she drove to work. Just as

Bell (1980) and Billings and Tate (1995) argued that racism was permanent in society, Mrs.

Little shared that these confederate flags represented a systemic issue that she was determined to

counter. Building a school that relied on culturally responsive and relevant teaching was a

method she used to combat racial issues.

We closed the achievement gap racially. In math, Black students actually did

1…percentage point better than our White students. We had a 93 to 92 percent pass rate

[for] math [in Grades] 6 through 8, and Black students scored 93% and White students

92%. Culturally relevant teaching and coaching responsive teaching helped out

teachers…I did a lot of work around classroom culture and have a classroom culture
planning document. I really had a focus on what is the culture and climate of your
classroom…We want to make sure our teachers are thinking ahead about what our
students need.

Mrs. Little shared that professional development in the areas of cultural relevance and cultural
responsiveness ensued and was consistent. Teachers needed to grow in this area and understand
the culture of the students they taught.

Counter-storytelling

The ghost of neo-managerialism is evident in the cultural aspects of schools that maintain
subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom. One tool BWPs in this
study used for combating this issue was counter-storytelling. They countered the deficit
discourses surrounding the intelligence and behavior of Black children. BWPs used counter-
storytelling as a way of offering perspectives that some of their teachers were unaware of or were
never challenged to think about. Subsequently, BWPs articulated the need and desire to develop
culturally responsive faculty and staffs. In addition, it was important for BWPs in this study to
make sure students knew their value and help cultivate confidence in themselves. They were able
to express how they made decisions about what students needed by being conscious of how their
power and role could open doors for students. BWPs talked about how Black students were not
consistently celebrated or given opportunities from their White teachers, and these women
intentionally affirmed their students. Dr. Hounshell shared

I feel like I need to make sure that [Black students] are okay. I know that there are some
teachers on my staff that have biases that they haven't worked through yet. I see certain
things…and I make sure that I step in to make sure kids are getting the right

opportunities. So there's this part of me that feels like, "What if I am not the principal? What if someone who doesn't have the same values as I [do] comes into that position? What if I move on?" I concern myself with, "how is that going to impact the African-American population of kids at school?" For example, from a scheduling standpoint, when I do the master schedule, I'm looking at the kids, and I consider what I know about the kids. I consider the whole picture when I'm determining what opportunity I can open up for the student. Some people are not going to give these children a chance.

Deficit discourses and other challenges within leadership, were met with an awareness of values, beliefs, and/or dispositions when it came to serving their students, especially their students of color and those from impoverished homes. Ultimately, these behaviors demonstrated critical consciousness, which aligns with CRSL practices (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Gooden, 2005; McKenzie et al., 2008). The principals' critical consciousness of culture and race serves as a foundation to establish beliefs that undergird their practices.

Interest Convergence

Interest convergence is the belief that racial equality for Blacks is only achieved when it converges with the interests of Whites (Bell, 1980). An example of this includes 8 of the 11 principals who shared that they were placed in principal positions to "clean up" or remove the barriers that are contributing to the lack of success at a school. Interest convergence was visible in that BWPs felt that they were sent to schools fix the issues and make the district look good. Several participants shared that it was for this reason that they advanced into the principalship. A number of participants recognized that many of their White colleagues are not sent to the "tough" schools or stated that when a school is not successful, they are sent to other schools with fewer "issues." If they were not successful in fixing the issues, they did not believe they would

have received the same grace as the colleagues who were also unsuccessful but were moved to "country club" schools or central office positions.

Culturally Responsive School Leadership

This section includes examples of how BWPs demonstrated behaviors of CRSL. Critical consciousness was a prominent behavior of the BWPs.

Critical Consciousness

I explored the dynamics of power, race, and gender in this study. BWPs who participated understood how race, gender, and power impacted their roles as leaders. BWPs shared more insight regarding being Black and a woman than being a woman and not identifying race as an indicator in the power play. This discussion of power, race, and gender—defined as intersectionality—was described in their experiences themed "Journey to Leadership" and "Navigating Leadership." BWPs expressed how intersectionality situated them in the power matrix of educational leadership (Mahalingam, 2007).

CRSL also provides an example of critical consciousness in action, as evidenced in reflections from Mrs. Lee and Mrs. Little. Both women placed great emphasis on their mothers and mentors. These two BWPs, along with others, shared how their values and beliefs about students, service, and leadership were molded by specific people who were exemplars. Another example of critical consciousness is the notion that their positions and the obstacles they encounter are guided and secure because of God. These BWPs referred to specific conversations with God that have validated their purpose as BWPs and gave them the strength to continue. Their belief system was spiritually grounded and played an integral role in how they operated in their positions.

In my analysis, I surfaced a connection between critical consciousness and the BWPs' ability to implement the CRSL behaviors that engage students and parents by understanding their native and/or community contexts. Relationships was a major theme that emerged from the data and through these relationships, BWPs felt that they were successful in building relationships that made students and parents feel protected and valued. Mrs. Bassett talked about her parents' "trust" in her. She said of the parents at her school—with an emphasis on Black parents "They know I have their back. I am going to listen to them." These were actions that her predecessor did not demonstrate. Dr. Hounshell shared that she moved from one school to another and a majority of the families also had children at her new school. She shared, "My parents know me. They know my work. They trust me." Mrs. Little shared that her parents are "like family. They call me to check on me. They know I am going to do right by their child."

Dr. Vallone gave illustrations of the ways in which she establishes and sustains relationships with those she serves.

Nobody can say that [I'm] not there for the kids…I have this large staff, and I go to funerals of spouses' children, and if they have guardians or someone that raised them, I go to the funeral. I go to a lot of funerals. But again, I lost both my parents. My mother passed away 14 years ago, my dad passed away 3 years ago, and I still have a card from everybody. I know who sent it to me and how much that meant…so I send cards. I send birthday cards out with leave passes to leave early. I send sympathy cards out the staff members…I do things to build relationships. But I also check on staff. It's a large staff, but [I try to have this relationship] with my new staff… [for each teacher], I do a sheet about them. [I want to know]: What is their favorite sweet snack and their salty snack? Throughout the year, I collect these things, so I try to do a bag when they come back with

something very special at least once a year. I did this for a Staff Appreciation Week. I

had everybody's sweet and salty snack waiting for them…it's those things that's engaging

them and making them feel valued. Yes, it is very personal.

CRT and CRSL worked in tandem in each woman's lived experience. Each BWP's

experience was unique and layered, with nuances that set each woman apart. There were clear

instances in which elements of CRT and CRSL were present in aspects of their lives and further

observed in their leadership. As such, the two frameworks were not isolated but active

components.

These women had experiences that spoke to the complexity and richness of their lives.

Although the interviews focused on their professional experiences in leadership, their answers

were tied to personal experiences. Race and gender were ever-present. However, through the

expressed connection with their spirituality, the complexity of their lives was given purpose and

sparked persistence to meet the needs of their students.

Limitations

This phenomenological study focused on the live experiences of 11 BWPs. Only BWPs

were included, thus addressing gaps in the literature. Additionally, the geographical location of

the study was in the southeastern United States and did not include other regions of the country.

Contributions to the Literature

There are three major contributions of this study to the literature. First, this study marries

CRT and CRSL in an attempt to illuminate the lived-experiences of BWPs in their various

contexts. The interconnectivity of CRT and CRSL are mutually supported and serve as a dual

lens to provide a foundation and a medium not only to illustrate the leadership practices of

BWPs, but also to create context for the phenomena of BWPs in principal leadership. Second,

this study can serve as an evolving CRT lens. CRT is widely recognized as a framework which articulates and explains the precipitating factors of systemic racism; however, prior to this study, I was unable to identify CRT as a lens to assess and approach student learning and practices that support leaders in promoting student learning. Lastly, although the different sub-specialties within the leadership, administration, and social justice literature collectively offer a robust critique of the limitations of the dominant neo-managerial paradigm and its ill-fit for supporting the goals of social justice and equity, this observation/critique is not explicitly stated. Based on a thorough search of the literature, I was unable to identify any extant research that draws these individual observations together. In this way, this study provides among the first specific examinations of the incongruences between the dominant norms that continue to shape our field, and the work of social justice leaders seeking to redress the challenges faced by Black, Brown, and other historically marginalized students.

Implications for Further Research

There were major themes and nuances within each BWP's experiences. Some of their experiences mirrored each other to some extent, but others were represented in a different context. As I explored the incongruence between the deficit discourse implicit in the historically rooted neo-managerial norms of educational leadership and the ideal of CRSL through the lived experiences of current BWPs, findings implied a number of unexplored incongruences.

The first incongruence implied is between the challenges BWPs in this study faced and their spirituality. BWPs shared that their positions were a calling. Their perspectives about some challenges were positive and optimistic. Those participants who considered their positions as a "calling," or who felt they were serving a "purpose" or completing a "mission," viewed

challenges as a part of something they were predesigned to do with God's help. Future studies could focus on the correlation between spirituality and effective leadership.

None of the BWPs in this study saw their students as lacking in ability. However, they did confirm that teachers, parents, and community members had either directly stated or implied the validity of deficit discourses about Black and Brown students. Future studies should examine where and when BWPs gain the ability to identify and disrupt such discourses. Findings in this study spoke to the incongruence between how principals responded to students, parents and teachers as well as the deficit discourses represented by racism.

Conclusion

The field of educational leadership should adequately represent the perspectives of BWPs. Their experiences add to the body of literature and enhance the discipline, applying a critical race and culturally responsive perspective to a population of Black and women leaders, and addressing the existing gap in literature that is both gender and color deficient. Findings in this study emphasize the importance of recognizing neo-managerialism's continued presence in educational leadership and encourage discourse that empowers and protects Black and Brown children in public schools and disrupts deficit discourses related to these children and the BWPs who serve them.

These women's stories represent their experiences, ideas, and hopes. Their voices resonate and bring life to other BWPs who have journeyed to leadership positions and are currently navigating leadership positions. "There's power in allowing yourself to be known and heard, in owning your unique story, in using your authentic voice," Michelle Obama.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. Why did you get into leadership?

    a. Discuss your professional experience.

3. Tell me about your school.

    a. Academic performance, socioeconomics, demographics

    b. In what ways would you consider your school culturally responsive?

4. What experiences have you had with culturally responsive school leadership practices outside of your current position?

    a. What experiences have you had with culturally responsive leadership practices in your current role?

    b. In what ways have these CRSL practices contributed to the effectiveness of your school?

5. Describe how you developed culturally responsive leadership practices.

6. In what ways does being a Black female present challenges to the implementation of CRSL practices?

    a. What would you consider is the biggest challenge? Why?

    b. Why do you believe these challenges are present?

7. In what ways does being a Black female benefit the implementation of CRSL practices?

8. How has the intersection of being female, Black, and influenced CRSL practices?

APPENDIX B

Principal Interview Request

Hello,

I hope this email finds you well. As a student in the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies PhD program at Old Dominion University, I am conducting research to conclude my dissertation process. You are invited to participate in an interview that will help me learn about the experiences of Black Women Principals. Participants in this study must identify as Black and as a female. This interview and your experience will be utilized to investigate the collective experiences of Black women principals in the Mid-Atlantic region of Virginia. The interview will be guided by the following research question:

What are the lived experiences of Black women leaders?

The interview will take one hour, and I may request a follow-up interview for clarification and follow-up purposes. I am available at any time and will work around your schedule. I am requesting an interview within the next two weeks, if at all possible. If interested, please send me two times that you are available for an one-hour interview. I will send a Zoom and outlook invite to solidify our interview time a virtual location.

Confidentiality statement: If you agree to participate in this research, I want to assure you that your name and contact information will be held in the strictest confidence. During data analysis, your name will not be associated with your responses.

Thank you,

Crystal L. Haskins

Crystal L. Haskins

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Williamsburg Va. 757-570-0747
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EDUCATION	***Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA*** Doctorate Cohort, Expected Graduation Date, December 2020

SURN Principal's Academy (School-University Research Network), 2017 – Present
School of Education at The College of William and Mary

George Washington University, Washington, DC
Educational Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, May 2010 – August 2011

Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA
Master of Education Degree in Teaching, August 2006 – May 2008

Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA
Bachelor of Arts in English with a Concentration in Literature, August 1999 – May 2003

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Principal, Williamsburg James City County Public Schools, Va., July 2019 - 2020
- Focused on quality instruction, student engagement, and positive relationships as a framework to enhance school climate and promote student success.
- Established a culturally responsive lens to identify and propel equitable practices.
- Collaborated with stakeholders to increase family engagement, community partnerships all in effort to meet the diverse needs of the James Blair student population.
- Created a Principal's Advisory Committee that discussed student concerns and suggestions, led new student school tours, and community-based volunteer efforts.
- Served on Williamsburg James City County's Equity Team developed to address disproportionately and culturally responsive practices that encourage equitable practices and community engagement.
- Facilitated School Improvement Plan and process through collaborative goal creation, data talks and monitoring framework that provides a structure for continuous monitoring and improvement.

Principal, Newport News Public Schools, Va., July 2017 - 2019
- Instructional leader over 1150 students and 83 teachers where students of diverse backgrounds met full accreditation status for the 2017-2019 school year.
- Collaborative leader who strategically developed administrator and teacher capacity through personalized, relevant, and continuous professional development.
- Established a framework to positively impact and sustain culture, climate, and promote continuous student performance.
- Created and monitored School Improvement Plan and process through collaborative goal creation, monitoring system, and making necessary adjustments to ensure alignment.
- Facilitated Tier 2 Support Team Reviews to include data analysis with teachers and administrators; to include the evaluation of quarterly benchmark assessments, SOL tests, discipline, and climate data to promote continual progress and improvement.
- Provide strategic direction, assess teaching methods, monitor student achievement, encourage parent involvement, revise policies and procedures, administer the budget, hire and evaluate staff and oversee facilities.
- Liaison between school and central office staff.
- Implementation of PAC, our student Principal's Advisory Committee: Dragons Rising
- Created and used quarterly survey data to monitor faculty and staff's feedback on various aspects of operational, instructional, and relational variables.
- Served on Newport News Public Schools' Discipline Task Force developed to address disproportionately and culturally responsive practices that encourage equitable practices and community engagement.
- Served on Newport News Public Schools' Literacy Committee tasked with auditing and developing comprehensive literacy framework for Newport News Public Schools.
- Created and used quarterly climate data to assess priorities, effectiveness, and operational items.

Region 2 Leadership for Equity Cohort, November 2019 - Present
- Participating in monthly sessions to explore a deeper understanding of Excellence through Equity and sustain intentionality in equitable practices.

Assistant Principal, Williamsburg James City County Public Schools, VA, August 2013 - Present
- Initiated the development of our Empathy and Equity Committee at Jamestown. The group of teachers, administrators, and students, leads critical efforts to foster equality for all.
- Developed the Master Schedule after collaboration with teachers, guidance, administrative team and other appropriate stakeholders
- High School Innovation planning with principal in order to roll out new initiatives as a result of our award of one of the 2016-2017 High School Innovation Grants from the VDOE.
- Member of the 2017 Regional Equity Summit Committee
- Member of the 2016-2017 Division Equity Committee
- Completion of Adaptive Schools Training through Old Dominion University
- Adhered to and enforced board policy, school guidelines, and district expectations
- Established and maintained rapport with staff, students, and parents to promote a positive school climate
- Co-Led the development of and facilitation of meaningful professional development for teachers.
- Observed and evaluated teachers providing timely formal and informal feedback to improve teacher performance.
- Chaired 504 and Special Education eligibility, planning, and review meetings;
- Utilized Professional Learning Communities and data trends to monitor instruction and implement instructional programs to meet School Improvement Plan goals
- Utilized Effective School-Wide Discipline methods when providing teachers with classroom management guidance and administering discipline
- Lead professional development on high yield instructional strategies and John Hattie's Visible Learning research
- Initiated strategies for credit recovery
- Planned and communicated remediation plans for students needing verified credits.
- Collaboration with William and Mary on Project Based Learning professional development for teachers.

High School Summer School Principal, Williamsburg James City County Public Schools, VA, Summer 2013
- Supervised Summer School facilitators, tutors, summer school staff
- Worked collaboratively with all stakeholders in providing successful credit recovery and remediation programs
- Reported and certifies to proper authorities the progress achieved by summer school student

Student Advancement Coach, Toano Middle School, Toano, VA, Fall 2012 – Summer 2013
- Created structures in which aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, interests, and levels of progress of each learner is well known via a Student Success Plan
- Collaborated with parents, counselors, social workers, and psychologists on behalf of selected learners
- Engaged parents, families, and community members in opportunities for involvement in the learner's education
- Tracked cases and monitors follow-up recommendations of student behavior issues related to transition from grade five to six and eight to nine

Assistant Principal Intern, York County Public Schools Elementary Summer Academy, Tabb Elementary School June – July 2011
- Assisted with developing the Master Schedule and Teacher Handbook
- Evaluated classroom instruction, student engagement, and behavior management through observations and providing timely constructive feedback.
- Promoted school safety by implementing safety drills for fire and monitor, maintain, and coordinate facility maintenance
- Assisted in the promotion of positive school climate and staff morale through recognition and community building initiatives
- Assisted in supervision of pupil services, including discipline, attendance, transportation

Summer School Data Coordinator, Toano Middle School, Toano, VA, Summer 2012
- Responsible for the collection and maintenance of all summer school records
- Communicated and work cooperatively with the summer school secretary
- Analyzed student achievement data to report back to administrative teams
- Point of contact for students and parents for education-related purposes

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	***Seventh Grade Teacher, Toano Middle School, Toano, VA, 2006-2012***

- Utilized research-based instructional strategies and delivery methods in five English 7 classes
- Presented units of SOL requirements in the areas of writing, reading, and oral language
- Analyzed data and instructional practices to optimize student achievement

Multicultural Summer Enrichment Teacher, Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools, 2009 and 2010

- Developed a multicultural curriculum for 2nd-5th grades
- Taught and evaluated SOL correlated units in Language Arts

Seventh & Eighth Grade Teacher, Brunswick County Public Schools, Lawrenceville, VA, 2004-2006

- Successfully led students to an 85% pass rate for Standards of Learning Assessment – a 35% increase from previous year's scores
- Assisted in revamping curriculum to reflect SOL aligned lessons that encompass relevant literature, engaging activities, and quality assessments
- Prepared instruction materials, supervised classrooms, taught, and evaluated students
- Regularly conferred with parents and teaching staff about students' academic and social progress

HONORS

- Recipient of the 2011 Williamsburg James City County Office of Multicultural Affairs' Outstanding Community Outreach Award
- Recipient of the 2008 National Council of Teachers of English Leadership Development Award
- Recipient of National Association of the Negro Business & Professional Women's Club Inc. of Williamsburg & Vicinity Club's Woman of Distinction Award- June 2008

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

- Committee Member for WJCC Multi-Tiered Structural Support Task Team, 2013-2014
- Secretary of Virginia Association of Teachers of English, February 2008- April 2011
- Committee Member for School Safety and Climate Committee, Toano Middle School, 2006-2008
- English Department Secretary and Reporter, Toano Middle School, 2006-2007
  Head Coach for Field Hockey Team, Toano Middle School, Fall 2006
- Head Coach for Track and Field, J. S. Russell Middle School, Fall and Spring, 2005

PROFESSIONAL RESENTATIONS

- Presenter, International Visible Learning Conference, July 2015
- Presenter, James Madison Content Academy- June, 2010
  "Engaging Students with Strategies that Work!"
- Director of the Rites of Passage Program which was the focus of the published work- May 2010*,
  The effect of an African-American Rites of Passage prevention program on adolescent ethnic identity, drug attitudes, behavior in the classroom and academic performance
  Author, Dr. Jamie Rodriquez (Dissertation)*
- Co-Presenter, WJCC's Office of Multicultural Affairs- April, 2009
  "Preventing the Silent Epidemic in Williamsburg-James City County"
- Co-Presenter*,* WJCC's Office of Multicultural Affairs' Spring Workshop, 2009
  "The Profile of Academic Achievement"
- Co-Presenter, WJCC's Office of Multicultural Affairs- April, 2009
  "Adaptation of Marcia L. Tate's Shouting Won't Grow Dendrites"
- Presenter, Virginia Association of Teachers of English Annual Fall Conference- October, 2006
  "Incorporating Writing in a Reading Curriculum"

REFERENCES

Mr. Rashard Wright, Chief of Staff
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