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"A Song for You" As Tribute to the Daughters of the South: Illuminating the Work of Black Women Principals

Beverly Cox

“A SONG FOR YOU” AS TRIBUTE TO THE DAUGHTERS OF THE SOUTH: ILLUMINATING THE WORK OF BLACK WOMEN PRINCIPALS

by

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(Under the Direction of Sabrina Ross)

ABSTRACT

Curriculum can be understood as a place of both struggle and possibility, where curriculum workers engage in complicated conversations about self, society, and the purposes of education (Pinar, 2004). Although curriculum theorists have contributed much to discussions of how to improve the current state of education, little attention in the field is given to the role that leadership can play in educational transformation (Ylimaki, 2011). This study contributes to the field of curriculum studies by exploring the ethics of care of Black women public school principals in the South.

By exploring the life experiences of Black female principals from the South, this study contributes to an understanding of curriculum as a racialized and gendered text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995) and as a place-specific phenomenon (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). Geographic spaces are linked to economic, social, and political structures; they hold memories and shape lived realities (Hoelscher, 2003; Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). Education in the South occurs in the context of a history of human enslavement, violence, resistance, and often contentious race relations, all of which have impacted the behaviors of teachers and school administrators (Glymph, 2008; Hoelscher, 2003; Pinar; 1991).

To explore new possibilities for educational transformation, this study merges storytelling, autobiographical reflections, and information gained from intensive interviews with Black women principals to illuminate the social, historical, and political contexts within which Black women principals' ethics of care are derived and enacted. By highlighting the knowledge and experiences of Black women public school administrators, this dissertation serves as a symbolic tribute to the Black women of my community who encouraged me on my journey to the principalship.

Four findings emerged from this study with implications for contemporary educational policies and practices. They are: (1) Black women principals' ethics of caring are socially and culturally derived; (2) Black women principals simultaneously engage in interpersonal and institutional forms of caring that are intimately connected to issues of justice; (3) Life in the South was both a Curse and a Blessing for Black women principals; and (4) Black women principals are servant leaders who sacrifice themselves for educational justice.

INDEX WORDS: Black women principals, Black feminist thought, Womanism, Ethics of care, Curricula of Place, Othermothers, Servant Leaders, Rondo Metaphor, Racial Oppression

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DEDICATION

To God for sustaining me through my studies, exploration and writing of my dissertation. To the "Mothers of the South" who realized my potential and encouraged me to "Press On" in spite of adversity.

Mrs. Charlotte Chisolm

Mrs. Lizzie Drayton

Mrs. Esther F. Garrison

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PROLOGUE

Music has played an important role in the lives of African Americans, particularly in the South during slavery and the Civil Rights Movement. For example, Negro spirituals sung during slavery expressed the emotions of the time period when Blacks sought freedom from bondage (Jones, 2004) Song lyrics were used to encourage, motivate, and express the joy, pain, and sufferings of life in the South (Jones, 2004).

Music continues to play a vital role in the lives of African Americans today (Southern, 1997). It marks moments in time and helps us to reflect on the precious and difficult periods in life. As I contemplated the purpose of my research—to explore whether new ways of understanding and addressing contemporary problems in public education can be gained by exploring the experiences of Black women public school administrators—music helped me to make meaning of my inquiry project.

As a former public school principal in the South, I know that my ability to successfully care for and educate students in my school was made possible in large part because of the education and care I received from African American women in my community. These women were the "movers and the shakers," the "bold and the beautiful," "the givers and the keepers," the "sistas and the mamas" to all of the Black children in the village. I remember the sharing of precious secrets about life and living, while growing up in a society where Black women's voices were not deemed significant or important. Despite their marginalization within the broader society, these women helped to bring out the gifts and talents that were hidden inside of us. I remember the unconditional love, friendships, and sometimes the not so kind or gentle conversations

from these sistas, mamas, grandmamas, and friends who provided me with truths about life and the guidance and instructions by which to live.

By highlighting the knowledge and experiences of Black women public school administrators, this dissertation serves as a symbolic tribute to the Black women of my community whose love, courage, and wisdom enabled me to be a successful public school principal. In thinking about the contributions these women made to my life, the rhythm-and-blues song "A Song for You" emerged as the title for this dissertation. This song, which expresses love and gratitude for an unnamed individual who has supported the singer throughout various stages of life, seems a fitting tribute to the daughters of the South—those incredible Black women who served as positive influences, mentors, role models, and "othermothers" (Collins, 1990) and provided me with care and nurturing during the tumultuous years of growing up in southeast Georgia during the 1960s and 1970s.

The lyrics to "A Song for You" represent my life experiences, my work as a school administrator working in the public eye, and the knowledge gained from my "othermothers," who contributed to my success. These lyrics express my sentiments and appreciation to these Black women.

> *I've been so many places in my life and time*
> *I've sung a lot of songs, I've made some bad RHYMES*
> *I've acted out my life in stages*
> *With ten thousand people watching…*
>
> *You taught me precious secrets of the truth, withholdin' nothin'*
> *You came out in front and I was hiding*
> *But now I'm so much better so if my words don't come together*
> *Listen to the melody cause my love's in there hiding…*
> *This is my song to you.*
>
> —Leon Russell, 1970

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The current state of U.S. public education has been described as a nightmare in which schools act as sites of domination rather than spaces of intellectual creativity and freedom (Pinar, 2004). Within this educational nightmare—characterized by accountability, standardized curricula, and the mis-education of students of color (Apple, 2004; Kohli, 2008)—public school principals have an important role to play in improving education. One important way that school principals contribute to positive educational environments is through caring (Hilliard, 1999). Many studies connect caring and education (e.g., Noddings, 1992) but few have linked caring and school leadership to the field of curriculum studies. Noddings suggest a curriculum design that is organized around themes of care: care for self, intimate others, associates and acquaintances, distant others and nonhuman animals (Noddings, as cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery & Taubman, 2004). As school leaders, we draw on both our professional and personal experiences to develop a caring learning environment for our students.

Curriculum can be understood as a place of both struggle and possibility, where curriculum workers engage in complicated conversations about self, society, and the purposes of education (Pinar, 2004). Although curriculum theorists have contributed much to discussions of how to improve the current state of education, little attention in the field is given to the role that leadership can play in educational transformation (Ylimaki, 2011). This study contributes to the field of curriculum studies by exploring Black women public school principals from the South and the ways in which the caring they enact can contribute to educational transformation.

I connect curriculum studies and school leadership by exploring themes of caring in the educational beliefs and experiences of Black women principals from the South. The knowledge and experiences of these women "curriculum leaders" (Ylimaki, 2011) may produce new insights into how we might care for students in the midst of the current nightmare of education.

By exploring the life experiences of Black women principals from the South, I contribute to an understanding of curriculum as a racialized and gendered text (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2004) and as a place-specific phenomenon (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). Geographic spaces are linked to economic, social, and political structures; they hold memories and shape lived realities (Hoelscher, 2003; Kincheloe &Pinar, 1991). Education in the South occurs in the context of a history of human enslavement, violence, resistance, and often contentious race relations, all of which have impacted the behaviors of teachers and school administrators (Glymph, 2008; Hoelscher, 2003; Kincheloe & Pinar; 1991). Pinar et al. (2004) contends that a curriculum can be understood as a complicated conversation in which the past is remembered and the future analyzed in order to pursue new possibilities in the present. To explore new possibilities for educational transformation, this study merges my personal reflections of being an administrator with information gained from intensive interviews with other Black women principals to illustrate connections between self and society and between past, present, and future, as they relate to the educational beliefs and experiences of Black women administrators from the South. Specifically, I use my own experiences of caring and education as a young woman growing up in the South and later as a school administrator

to contextualize and make comparisons with the experiences of care and education of three Black women principals who are also from the South.

Statement of the Problem

According to the Georgia Association of Educational Leadership (H. Beaver, personal communication, June 5, 2013), the percentage of African American women principals has increased over the last 20 years, which has altered historical school leadership trends in the United States. Research relating to the status of Black women principals indicates that African American women have been assigned to diverse and predominantly White school settings, which presents challenges relating to their leadership capabilities as principals (Beckford-Bennett, 2009). Black women administrators often lack a feeling of acceptance by their faculty, the staff, or district-level leaders. Their discussions pertaining to race cause tension and discomfort among teachers, administrators, and the community, and they are often challenged when they speak against racial injusties that are evident in the school setting (Beckford-Bennett, 2009). In spite of these challenges Black women principals have developed leadership qualities that can support and enhance learning in schools.

During this era of high-stakes testing and accountability, school leaders are focusing on developing basic skills in an effort to achieve goals on standardized tests, thereby limiting time spent on encouraging interpersonal relationships with students and teachers. The principal is one of the key role models in the school setting and is charged with meeting local and state mandates. According to Scherer (2009), effective leadership involves caring for others while simultaneously improving academic performance. Effective leadership is “being able to manage the tension of caring and meeting

prescribed goals and mandates assigned to them but it also requires stepping back and reconnecting with their touchstone values" (Scherer, 2009, p. 7).

The question one might raise is "Why is care so important in today's schools?" Demographics provide one answer. The number of minorities and English language learners in U.S. schools is constantly growing. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the number of school-age children between the ages of 5 and 17 who spoke a language other than English increased from 4.7 to 11.2 million between 1980 and 2009. These demographic changes heavily impact school curricula and the learning environment (2011).

Although much improvement is noted, English language learners, African American and Hispanic students are performing lower than White students on standardized tests. The Nation Center for Education Statistics (2011) provides data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) in regard to reading scale scores of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. The disparity in test scores indicates that there are still serious achievement gaps on standardized assessments between White students and other ethnic groups. "Many poor children, Latinos, African Americans and other students of color in schools throughout the country are subjected to inequality in regards to educational opportunities which limits future options and socioeconomic advancement" (Thompson, 2004, p. 4).

Students at risk of academic failure often face problems associated with poverty, health, and other social conditions that have made it difficult for them to succeed in school. One of the tasks of principals is to develop strategies for helping at-risk students. When students do not experience school success, it negatively impacts their self-esteem,

which is reflected in teacher and peer relationships, academic performance, and conduct. School failure and high dropout rates have been associated with high-poverty schools and with other socioeconomic factors (Irvine, 1990). Principals can demonstrate care for students by ensuring that all students have educational opportunities and that resources are shared equally and fairly among students. Black women have a long history of engaging in social justice work, both formally and informally (Collins, 1990). Exploring the social justice work that Black women principals engage in as they work with diverse students in public schools is a necessary step toward realizing social justice for all students. The knowledge gained from exploring themes of care in the life experiences of Black women principals can inform policy and curricular decisions and can impact the ways that individual principals engage with students and staff. Through an exploration of my own experiences as a public school administrator and the experiences of other Black women public school administrators from the South, I hope to reveal new possibilities for caring and educating students in socially just ways.

Purpose of the Study

Few studies have examined the work, vision, and accomplishments of African American women principals or how they demonstrate caring: for students. In this study, three African American women principals share their stories about effective practices that support students by providing a positive and nurturing learning environment. I explore the obstacles that these women have encountered and how they used their experiences to improve the educational setting for children.

The voices of African American women principals have been largely excluded from the research and body of literature on school administration. My research highlights

the accomplishments of Black women principals who have lived and practiced in the South and describes the unique set of ideas, values, curriculum activities, and leadership styles they bring to the school setting. I believe that family, culture, and spiritual experiences in childhood and adulthood influenced their ethics of care. By capturing the successful experiences and techniques used by Black women principals, I hope to provide effective leadership practices that can be implemented in other school settings.

This study is set in the South, where, historically, Black women educators have been involved in the care of other Blacks through teaching, mentoring, and and "othermothering." Such women have received little credit for their involvement in leadership roles in school administration (Loder, 2005).

The following research questions are explored in my study:

1. How do Black women public school administrators in this study describe living and working in the South?
2. How do Black women public school administrators from the South express themes of caring in education?
3. What common themes emerge from the life stories of Black women school administrators that reflect their educational beliefs in regards to caring for students, effective practices, and early influences on the decision to become school administrators?
4. How do the experiences of Black women public school administrators from the South relate to the education of different ethnic/ marginalized/ racial groups?
5. Can the life experiences of Black women administrators from the South foster new ways of understanding care and education?

Autobiographical Roots of my Inquiry

Although the percentage of Black women principals is on the rise, few studies have documented such women's experiences. Black women have historically been underrepresented in school administration, thus limiting the amount of research about their leadership skills. Research is needed regarding the effective practices of Black women principals, describing and illuminating the challenges they face as school leaders. I hope to broaden the field of educational leadership by including perspectives, current theories, and practices of Black women principals.

The Black women's perspective provides insight into the values and shared norms of Black women leaders. One of the shared concerns of Black women principals is the fight for equity in terms of distribution of resources in the schools that they lead. This type of sensitivity spills over into how they have come to care for children—because of their experiences in the field, they understand the importance of fairness and justice (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004).

Due to the limited prior research on Black women principals, this study will document their experiences from their perspectives. This research will provide a synthesis of the experiences of leading in schools with a diverse student population. Regardless of the many challenges experienced by Black women principals, caring for students must remain their first priority. This study will inform the field of educational leadership about the challenges that Black women principals face and how leadership programs can support these leaders.

Challenges of the Study

This study examined the lived experiences of three Black women principals in the South. It does not afford national comparisons to the experiences of other Black women principals in other geographic locations in the United States. The study focused on preselected research questions. It does not account for other factors that may affect the perceptions of Black women principals who were reared and lived in the South. The delimitations of this study were determined by my desire to gain a better understanding of the ethics of care derived from the lived experiences of Black women principals in the South and how they demonstrated their ethics of care when working with students and teachers. To determine the impact of their life experiences on their practices, I limited the participant selection to three Black women principals, varying in age, years of experience, and educational backgrounds. I conducted face-to-face interviews with the participants.

All of the participants had at least three years of experience as elementary school principals. This requirement ensured that the participants had enough experience in the field to talk reflectively about their positions. All participants had to agree to participate in a series of interviews so that I could develop a rich description of each participant's life experiences.

Organization of the Dissertation

This research is presented in five chapters. Chapter One discusses the current state of education and introduces this study on the lives of Black female Southern public school administrators in an effort to encourage educational transformation. Chapter one

also establishes connections between the fields of curriculum studies and educational leadership.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework for this study and provides a literature review related to Black women principals and caring in education. My research is guided by four interrelated assumptions: (1) Black women's experiences of racial and gender oppression in the United States results in unique ways of understanding and acting in the world; (2) living in the South creates additional unique experiences for Black women; (3) as a result of their experiences, Black female public school administrators from the South articulate and enact philosophies of caring and education that differ markedly from mainstream conceptualizations of caring; and (4) analysis of the life stories of Black female public school principals from the South will reveal knowledge about caring and education that can promote educational transformation.

These four beliefs are reflected in the conceptual framework of this study, which is based on Black feminist and womanist thought, curriculum study of place, and literature on Black women principals and caring. Although the existing literature is limited, I review papers and studies about Black principals, Black women principals, and ethics of caring.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology for my study by reviewing literature on narrative interviews, storytelling, autobiographical reflections, and analysis. I use storytelling and autobiographical reflections to share my life experiences and those of the other Black female principals. This chapter includes information on the participants, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter Four presents the analysis of my findings. I use the musical term “rondo” as an organizing framework for this analysis. Rondo is a musical form that repeats the main theme over and over again. Rondo can also refer to an alternating idea with digressive themes throughout the arrangement (Berry, 1966). I use the research equivalent of rondo in this study to connect themes of caring through the past and present life experiences of myself and the three Black women administrators who share their stories with me. These back-and-forth movements between analysis of my own life story and those of my participants are intended to illustrate connections between self and society among Black women.

Chapter Five revisits the conceptual framework of this inquiry and uses themes from Black feminist and womanist thought and curriculum studies of Southern space to interpret the findings from this research. Emphasis in this chapter is placed on themes of educational caring expressed by Southern Black women principals and ways that these themes might inform educational transformation.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter introduces scholarship related to Black feminist and Womanist thought and also reviews literature related to Black women principals and their ethics of care. In this chapter, I specifically review the following bodies of literature: Black feminist thought and Womanist theoretical frameworks, curriculum of "Southern Place," research on caring in the school setting, successful practices of African American educators, and historical models of African American principals. I begin my discussion with a section on Black feminist and Womanist thought and continue with a section on the curriculum of "Southern Place" to show how growing up, living, and educating students in the South impacts the leadership styles and sensibilities of Black women administrators. Although my research focuses on the ethics of care in school leadership as it relates to African American women principals, much of how we have become caring school leaders has evolved around our personal and professional experiences, particularly our upbringing in specific regions of the United States.

The next section presents early research on caring in the school setting and explores how the ideologies of the past were centered on student and teacher caring relationships. Historical and theoretical discourses situate and define the African American woman's struggle through the lens of Black feminist thought and womanist theoretical frameworks. These schools of thought are discussed in this section. The two theories give voice to the multiple oppressions experienced by women of color by giving them a means to reflect on and define their stories and lived experiences. The following section examines how African American educators and researchers have developed

professional practices that support and enhance student learning, self-esteem, and school success in a diverse student population. The next section provides a historical account of the struggles and accomplishments of African American principals and how they demonstrated care both before and after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which issued in a new era of education. The final section of this literature review explores exemplary historical models of African American female principals, particularly their leadership styles, struggles, and survival skills. The literature review shares both the theoretical framework and historical account of African American women in school and society and how they have been marginalized along the lines of race, class, and gender. It is important to examine the historical struggles of African American women as a prerequisite for understanding the ideology that has shaped the framework for discriminatory practices in a male-dominated society.

Black Feminist Thought and Womanist Theoretical Frameworks

Feminism evolved from the women's liberation movement, a "contemporary feminist movement in America which called attention to the exploitation and oppression of women globally" (hooks, 1984, p. 33). White women's liberation focused on male domination, thus making the feminist struggle a war between the sexes rather than a struggle to end sexism. Discussion about White women's liberation often compares or seeks to identify parallels between this struggle and the Black woman's movement for total emancipation (Guy-Sheftall, 1995).

One of the goals of feminist literature in the 1970s and 1980s was to express solidarity among women. Black women insisted that there were distinct differences in the history, culture, and economic oppression between them and that of White women

(Smith, 2008). Guy-Sheftall (1995), for example, concludes that Black women's experience with racial and gender oppression are very different from White women's and Black men's experiences. She asserts that Black women experience a special type of oppression linked intrinsically to race, class, and gender. The scope and long history of oppression experienced by Black women has led them to develop a distinct perspective of the world in which they live. "Unlike any other movement, Black feminism provides the theory that clarifies the nature of Black women's experience, makes possible positive support from other Black women, and encourages political action that will change the very system that has put us down" (He, 2003).

Black feminist thought and the ideology of womanism is a collective framework from the works of African American women intellectuals such as Patricia Hill-Collins, bell hooks, Alice Walker, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall. Both theoretical frameworks will be used in this study for analyzing and understanding the ethics of care of Black women principals who were reared, educated and practiced in the South.

Although there are parallels between Black feminist thought and feminist theory in terms of gender and existence within a patriarchal society, race separates the two schools of thought (Collins, 2001). The Black woman's struggle has historically been in resistance to racism, sexism, and classism; other movements do not place these concerns at the forefront, which differentiates feminist perspectives from Black feminist thought.

Black feminist thought consists of ideas or standpoints that stem from experiences shared by Black women that provide a unique perspective or vision of self, community, and society, and theories that interpret these experiences (Collins, 1990). Black feminist thought articulates three key themes that emerge from a Black women's standpoint.

The first theme is an affirmation of the importance of Black women's self-definition and self-evaluation that is contained in the definition of Black feminist thought. Although the experiences are produced by Black women, they are recorded by others who often provide externally defined and sterotypical images of Black women. Self-evaluation replaces the stereotypical images with authentic images of Black women.

The purpose of Black feminist thought is to empower Black women by giving them voice as they shar occurrences of their daily lives, which helps society to understand their perceived and lived experiences. Through BFT, Black women are able to articulate their experiences and establish new definitions about themselves that clarifies and validates their own standpoints (Collins, 1990). In doing so, the interlocking systems of race, class, and gender are revealed as well as how each one impacts the status of and opportunities for Black women. BFT eliminates negative stereotypes and assumptions about the roles and status of Black women. "The oppression that Black women experience in society makes them invisible to mainstream society and further contributes to the inequalities that exist for Black women" (Collins, 1990, p. 5). Society uses negative images of Black women to make the oppression appear "normal." Black feminist thought rejects these negative stereotypes and assumptions and challenges Black women to replace these negative images with authentic knowledge. It provides an understanding of why and how Black women come to define themselves in ways presented in the literature. The invisibility of Black women diminishes their contributions and accomplishments in all facets of society.

The second theme highlights how Black women's stories and experiences are unique while emphasizing the commonalities in life perceptions and experiences that

exist among Black women. The interlocking nature of race, gender, and class oppression makes the legacy of struggle eminent in the lives of Black women. African American women share the common experience of being Black in a society that denigrates women of color. Two core themes emerge from a Black woman's standpoint based on the commonality of this experience. First, Black women have a legacy of struggle. The history of oppression in our society has ascribed the Black woman's reality as one of struggle for survival against racism and sexism. A second prominent theme in the Black woman's standpoint is the interlocking nature of oppression. The Black woman's perspective of her place in society grew out of the differences that existed among Black and White women in history, culture, experiences of oppression, and political agendas, all of which contributed to the silence or non-existence of Black women's voices. hooks (1984) and other Black feminist writers have argued that the work of Black women deserves scholarly attention and recognition because misconceptions are often presented in regard to the lives of Black women.

Thirdly, Black women have some commonalities of outlook but differences in ethnic and social backgrounds, class, age, region and sexual orientation have resulted in variations of responses to core themes. Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it (Collins, 2000, p. 22). There are major distinctions between feminist perspectives and Black feminist thought. Black women live in a society with multiple and overlapping oppressions—racism, classism, and sexism—that clarify the nature of the Black woman's experience. As a result of these unique experiences, Black women have produced distinct familial, community, and professional relationships, especially in regard to how they care for students in the school

setting. The Black feminist movement has provided Black women a space where they can comfortably express their identity in terms of race and gender.

A humanistic vision is one of the key guiding principles in Black feminist thought. Black women view this struggle as part of a greater struggle for human dignity and empowerment (Collins, 1990, p. 37). The humanistic vision encompasses what Alice Walker describes as "womanist." In her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens,* Walker (1983) describes "womansim" as centered in the unique history of racial and gender oppression of African American women. The terms "womanist" and "Black feminist" are used interchangeably because both terms support a common cause in raising consciousness about the Black woman's role in the struggle against racism and sexism (Collins, 2001). "A womanist is committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people, male and female" (Walker, 1983, p. xi). A womanist is one who reaches out to others regardless of race and gender. The idea is to assist in the development of all people, which is crucial to the survival of mankind. Although the terms are used, BFT is primarily based on systems of oppression faced by African Americans (Collins, 1990), whereas a womanist framework addresses how Black women, despite the oppression, have historically faced, have shown concern not only for their welfare but for the welfare of the entire community (Douglas, 1994). Collins (1990) and Walker (1983) argue that African American women see little difference between the two theories, BFT and womanism, because both support a common agenda of Black women's survival and survival of others, self-image, and self-definition.

In this study, I explore the life experiences of Black women principals from the South through the lens of Black feminist thought. The women in my research have

experienced multiple and overlapping oppressions that have been a part of their reality for many years—during childhood, high school, and college, and throughout their careers as educators. My study focuses on their accomplishments. Through these unique voices, I highlight their contributions in the school setting in which they served as leaders and role models. My study is also grounded in the womanist theoretical framework because it addresses Black women's commitment to their families and the community. Black women have historically participated in various freedom movements such as contemporary women's movements in an effort to achieve equity and liberty (Omolade, 1994). Black women school principals would seek to provide an educational environment that would provide for equity in the provision of resources, support systems and nurturing of all students based on the humanistic vision of committing to the survival and wholeness of entire people.

All of the above theories include Black women's voices, which were previously excluded from the body of literature. Black womanist theology and Black feminist thought provide opportunities for Black women to share their views of the world and how racism, sexism, and classism have impacted their lives. "Black womanist tradition provides the incentive to chip away at oppressive structures, bit by bit" (Cannon,1995, 56). "From a womanist standpoint, oppression is a misuse of power and occurs when there is a disconnection between people-when people fail or refuse to care for each other " (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002, p.84).

Black feminist thought and an ethics of care and justice represent humanistic viewpoints in terms of how we should interact with children. Black feminist thought is an

outgrowth of the Civil Rights and Women's Movements. Black feminism emerged from the racial oppression Black women experienced based on race, sex, class, and gender.

Collins (1990) describes how Black women experience the world differently from women from other ethnic backgrounds. Black women's experiences differ based on their unique history of oppression in the United States, which has produced distinct family, community, and work relationships.

The Black feminist movement provided Black women a space where they could comfortably express their identities in terms of race and gender. King (1988) describes this as "multiple jeopardy," explaining how race, class, and sex intersect. The oppression that Black women experience in society makes them invisible to mainstream society and further contributes to the inequalities they endure (Collins, 1990, p. 5). Despite this invisibility, Black women have been consistently engaged in the intellectual and political discourses in their communities in ways that encourage resistance and survival.

The term *Black feminism* has been used in different ways by different individuals, making the term difficult to define. Bell hooks, a modern Black feminist, describes the problem in defining Black feminism. She says that early feminist theories and practices were limited in scope and demonstrated a narrowness of perspective because of the absence of the voices of Black, poor, and uneducated women (hooks, 1984). hooks further explains that the struggle for social equality and the role of women as "autonomous beings" are simply not adequate in terms of eliminating sexism or male domination in our society.

Although White women have been the most prominent faces in the feminist movement, this does not indicate a disinterest on the part of Black women. The absence

of the Black woman's viewpoint was due to the politics of discrimination that have long plagued the lives of Black women. Black women were left out of scholarly discourses that would have provided them an opportunity to share lived experiences.

Curriculum of Southern Place

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) introduce the concept of place as one organizing idea for political, autobiographical, racial, and gender issues in curricula, and link it to Southern curriculum theory. While acknowledging the contributions of Kincheloe and Pinar, my research is most heavily influenced by the work of Black women authors such as bell hooks, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, whose writings about the lived experiences of Black women in the South resonate with me and reflect my own lived experiences in the South. hooks (2009) describes how, in spite of discrimination and racial violence that occurred in cities throughout the South, they were surrounded by individuals, both Black and White, who fought for peace and justice. African Americans in my community worked tiredlessly by engaging in the fight to establish a beloved community where all races would come together to combat racism and racial segregation.

My research is situated in the South and includes both an autobiography and personal narratives of other Black women principals with similar experiences of growing up in the South during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The impact of growing up in an area with social forces such as racism, sexism, and classism helped to shape my ethics of care. Living in the South creates a reality to this particular place and time. Walker (1983) describes how the Civil Rights Movement gave us each other as we bonded in order to survive during this difficult time period. It provided tangible elements such as better jobs, communities in which to live, and comfort. Most importantly, the

Civil Rights Movement gave us racial pride and an appreciation for our history, and established role models for our children to emulate (Walker, 1983, p.129).

Growing up in the South during the 1950s and 1960s was not easy for many African Americans. The South is the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement, a major event in the South that gave voice to African American leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Medgar Evers, Rosa Parks, and many others who participated in the struggle for equal opportunities for all citizens. Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, all aspects of life in the South were segregated: schools, churches, restaurants, the workplace, neighborhoods, and public transportation. The oppressive conditions in the South, particularly in rural areas, were due to poor working conditions, as many Blacks worked on farms and plantations. Black men living in the cities held jobs in factories and worked for the railroads, and the women were domestic workers (Collins, 1990).

Prior to the 1830s, Southern states implemented laws that prohibited the education of slaves and free Blacks for the fear of slave revolts (Guy-Sheftall,1995). After the Civil War, Black women's roles changed as they began to participate in the education of Black children throughout the South (Guy-Sheftall, 1995). One of Black women's missions in life was to receive a college education, with the ultimate goal of "racial uplift." The term *racial uplift* refers to the feeling among Black women that their own advancements in both education and professional careers would uplift the entire race (Ruffins, 1994). Many Black women such as Anna Julia Cooper, Lucy Laney, Fanny Jackson Coppin, and Mary McCleod Bethune were educated in the North but moved South to educate the newly emancipated Blacks.

Cooper (1988) confronted racism and sexism in her book *A Voice from the South.* She spoke in favor of Black women being given the opportunity to receive higher education. Black men were often accepted into institutions of higher learning and most often served in political offices, while Black women were not encouraged to seek intellectual growth.

Because of the challenges that Blacks faced, Black women taught a different curriculum than White teachers, one that catered to the unique needs of Black students. Black teachers often took on the role of "othermothering" to students, which refers to the ability of African American grandmothers and other women to assume a parental role for children with whom they do not live (Fry-Brown, as cited in Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). Writings about Black Southern women often describe them as nurturers and guardians. Black women have a history of demonstrating care for young people by inspiring confidence and helping students to see that they are capable of the highest intellectual endeavors and achievements (Siddle Walker, 1996).

Research on Caring in the School Setting

Student and Teacher Relationships

Students and teachers were constructing caring relationships long before a body of literature on caring was developed. The one-room schoolhouse throughout America was a place where teachers became engaged in not only teaching the three R's (reading, writing, and arithmetic), but also the concepts of sharing, getting along with others, and developing survival skills. Literature on care highlights the importance of interactions and relationships in the development of young people. The positive effects of student–teacher relationships have often been ignored in public debates about school reform and

improvement (Chaskin & Rauner, 1995). Adults in the school setting become role models for care. A realistic view of schooling in the present political climate makes it clear that caring behaviors will be less obvious in the current school setting.

Noddings (1995) proposes one set of perspectives on the ethics of care. As educators, we are first and foremost "one caring." We receive students as not only subjects to be cared for but we become engrossed in the cared-for (students) by receiving and demonstrating a respect and regard for the projects of the other (Noddings, 1995). Martin Buber (1958) expands this discussion by referring to the "cared for as 'Thou,' a subject and not as 'It.'" This statement expresses the highest regard for the "cared for" by describing them as "Thou," one who "fills the firmament" (p. 8). The "cared for"—in this case the students—are considered more important than the subject matter.

Noddings (1995) explains that this type of care should be incorporated into the school curriculum. For schools to become true centers of learning, care must be present in all forms. Schools must go beyond academics and focus care on continuity of place, people, purpose, and curriculum. Noddings outlines several advantages of caring in schools. First, students will not achieve academically if they do not feel cared for, nor will they learn to care for others. Second, including themes of care in the curriculum increases cultural literacy, and students develop empathy towards the cultural other. Finally, teaching themes of care and justice may inspire students to become more active participants in the democratic process. While Noddings' work was integral to understandings of caring in schools, it did not address the cultural context of caring. Other Black women scholars (e.g., Roseboro & Ross, 2009; Ross, 2012) have addressed

the necessity of taking cultural context into consideration in discussions of Black women's caring and education.

Carol Gilligan (1982) is credited for bringing the ethics of care into prominence. She builds on Kohlberg's theory of justice and care, defining care as "the ideals of human relationship, the vision that the self and the other will be treated as of equal worth, that despite differences in power, things will be fair, the vision that everyone will be responded to and included, that no one will be left alone or hurt" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 63). This definition of care has been criticized because it has not been operational in our society, especially as it relates to African Americans and other minorities.

Thompson (1998) critiques the literature on caring, stating that the explanations are colorblind and focus primarily on White, middle-class perspectives and fail to include the life experiences of African American women. Thompson suggests a more inclusive definition with a Black feminist perspective.

Much of the research on caring describes the teacher–student relationships. What does caring in the school setting look like in terms of student–teacher interactions? Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden (1995) studied two elementary classroom teachers with different experience levels but who were considered leaders in their respective grade levels. The setting for the study was an inner city elementary school (K-5) with 307 students, 22 teachers, and eight teacher assistants. The student body make-up was 65% percent African American students from low-income families and 35% of the students from White middle- to upper-class families. Two teachers were the focus of the study: Pam and Martha who had 25 and 15 years of experience, respectively. Pam is an African American teacher who"organized her instruction around a series of collective rituals, in a

style once common in segregated African American schools" (p. 681). Martha, a White teacher, was more discovery-oriented in her teaching methods. Her classroom arrangement consisted of learning centers and focused on individualized learning. Although both teachers had different teaching styles, they were considered the best teachers in the school. They found that an ethics of care was essential to the education of elementary school students. It is the glue that binds teachers and students together and makes life in classrooms meaningful" (Noblit et al., 1995, p. 681). Based on interviews with teachers and students and on the researchers' field notes, the authors determined that "responsive and caring relationships between teachers and students played a large role in students' academic and social development" (p. 681). Students' perceptions of caring teachers are those who helped them with their assignments. They provided assistance without demeaning them for requesting assistance. Secondly, students identified caring teachers as those who talked to their students. Through conversations, students shared different aspects of their lives, and teachers provided support and nuturing based on students' needs. Finally, touching was a sign of relationship for students. Although touching has been a controversial topic, many students equate touching with an act of caring on the part of the teacher.

The authors present a strong argument on behalf of caring for students. Caring encourages positive student/teacher connections and possibilities for learning that may not occur under other circumstances. Findings indicate that in order for caring to be fostered in classrooms, it must be a part of daily rituals and interpersonal relationships that occur between teachers and students. The two teachers constructed a caring environment for students in spite of the technical rationality of today's schools. While

teachers wait for a caring-centered reform in schools, the authors encourage teachers to begin to explore ways to develop a more caring culture in classrooms and in schools.

A narrative presented by Tolliver (1993) reflects caring teacher behaviors and how care has enhanced classroom performance. Tolliver taught for 25 years in New York City School District Four and is credited for developing math programs that connect math to other content areas as well as to real life experiences. She believes that caring is the foundation of good teaching. She fostered many forms of caring in her classroom. The first form of caring is the giving of time. She made herself available to students both before and after school. This action not only provides technical support to students, but it also strengthens the student–teacher relationship. A second form of caring is being a willing listener. Tolliver views listening as a means of developing dialogue between the student and the teacher. Conversations with her students were free and open, enabling the children to feel comfortable in sharing school-related issues as well as personal problems. Tolliver views caring as the basis upon which a class can be built (p. 36): If students view the teacher's role as a supporter who will assist them with difficult issues, they will perform better in the classroom.

The literature presented by Noblit et al. (1995) and Tolliver (1993) provide insights into how caring environments provide opportunities for positive relationships between students and teachers. According to Noblit et al. (1995), a caring environment has the potential to increase student achievement. The behaviors that most exemplied care in these studies were being good listeners and creating a classroom atmosphere where all students are valued members and demonstrating high expectations for all learners.

Bosworth (1995) spent one year in two middle schools exploring the indicators of caring among young adolescent students. The schools in the study had the following demographics: One school served a population of 800 students and was located in the industrial area of a large Midwestern city. The second school had a population of 1,200 students and was located about 10 miles from that urban area. The students in the study represented a range of early adolescents from rural, suburban, and urban areas from low-income and middle-class families. One third of the student population in the study was non-White, primarily African American. The student population in the study comprised 100 students from both schools in grades six through eighth . The researchers observed about 300 classrooms over a 4-month period.

Teachers were asked to identify their five most caring students and five of their most uncaring students. The participants in the study were students who represented a range of caring and uncaring behaviors. Students were asked to respond to the question: "What does it mean to care?" All except for four of the students could clearly articulate a definition of caring and provide specific examples. Most of the definitions described single acts such as "helping" or "loving" others. Bosworth (1995) indicated that young adolescents viewed caring as grounded in relationships. They found it difficult to care for people who were outside of their immediate circle of friends and family. Educators can assist adolescents in demonstrating care for those outside of their circle of relationships by 1) creating caring communities and promoting activities that help develop caring relationships 2) providing multiple opportunities for students to practice care or to be recognized for caring acts. 3) expanding the pool of people who can help with task such as classwork or homework, etc. and 4) facilitating teacher care by developing time within

the daily schedule to interact with students on a personal level (getting to know them better), participating in extracurricular activities and interacting with families.

This study indicates that care is an important attribute in the school setting with adolescents. In order for students to feel cared for and to demonstrate care for others, there must be deliberate actions on the part of educators to model caring behaviors, develop caring communities in schools, and provide opportunities for positive student and teacher interactions. Wentzel (1997) shares student perceptions of caring teachers in a middle-school setting. In the study, teachers who demonstrated "pedagogical care" used democratic communication styles and modeling, nurtured students, and set rules and expectations for behavior. The researcher wanted to determine if there were correlations between teacher behavior and student achievement. The study comprised 325 sixth through eighth-grade students from a suburban middle school in a mid-Atlantic state. The researcher followed a subset of 248 students (125 boys and 123 girls) for three years beginning at the end of their sixth grade year. Ninety-two percent of the students who participated in the student were White. Wentzel examined the association between caring teachers and adolescents' motivation to achieve academically.

The findings from this study revealed that student perceptions of caring teachers were positively related to their academics, their social reponsibility goals, and their prosocial behaviors. Secondly, students' descriptions of caring teachers were related to effective parenting skills. The descriptions included teachers who demonstrated democratic leadership styles, displayed high behavioral expectations regardless of the classroom diversity, and provided constructive feedback to students. The findings indicate that students who experience positive and supportive exchanges with teachers

are more likely to feel care and approval from the teacher, which results in student achievement.

As these studies have shown, we must continue to explore and refine operational definitions of caring and develop and implement mechanisms to build caring into the school environment and activities in and through which young people develop. We need to develop ways to organize our institutions and behaviors that will foster and support caring behaviors. School administrators need to investigate caring behaviors that might affect various student outcomes.

Caring for Diverse Student Populations

Several educational theories reflect elements of an ethics of care: cultural synchronization, culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and cultural congruence (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The theory most widely used in schools with a culturally diverse population is culturally responsive pedagogy, which encourages teachers to be responsive to the needs of their students by incorporating elements of the students' cultures in their teaching methods. Teachers who practice this form of teaching are sensitive to the needs, interests, learning preferences, and abilities of students. Many African American scholars have expanded the research on culturally responsive pedagogy and how it can be linked to an ethics of care. This section explores the works of three such women: Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Geneva Gay. They share examples of how educators have operationalized the ethics of care in their work with students, and they show how these theories have become good teaching practices and can contribute to student success.

School failure is high among African American, Hispanic, and Native American students. The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) presents the status dropout rates of students for 16 to 24 year olds from 1990 to 2010. Although the percentage of dropouts for all of the ethnic groups has decreased, the dropout rates are highest for Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indian/Alaska Natives. In 2009, the average National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics and reading scores of White 4th, 8th, and 12th grade students were higher than those of Black and Hispanic students.

Irvine (1990) advocates implementing a culturally responsive pedagogy to address some of the academic disparities that exist among culturally diverse students. She describes a culturally responsive teacher as one who uses a variety of teaching or instructional methods in an effort to engage all students in the learning environment. Such a teacher does not use one set of instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students. Instead, structure is a key element in a culturally responsive classroom, which varies based on the needs of the students. Teachers in a culturally responsive classroom modify their knowledge and experiences by devoting attention to classroom contexts and individual student needs and experiences (Irvine, 2003).

Culturally responsive pedagogy is valuable in schools with a large concentration of poor and disadvantaged students as well as marginalized cultural groups such as African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans (Irvine, 2000). Students from these groups often bring a distinctive set of cultural beliefs, values, and norms to the school setting that are incongruent with middle-class cultural values and school norms. The culturally responsive classroom uses a variety of teaching methods such as peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and hands-on approaches to learning, including models,

manipulatives, and other concrete representations (Irvine, 2003, p. 4). When important aspects of students' cultures are excluded from the school setting, it results in low self-esteem, miscommunication, and the possibility of school failure (Irvine, 1990). To help students from culturally diverse groups succeed in school, educators must incorporate important aspects of the students' home life, community, beliefs, and values into the curriculum.

Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that teachers who subscribe to a theory of culturally responsive pedagogy consciously "work to build strong relationships and connections with their students in order to prepare students to effect change in society, not merely fit into it" (p. 382). Teachers who support this theory capitalize on students' home and community cultures by forming strong relationships and connections with students and affirming their personal and cultural traits. They, thus, are able to identify commonalties between themselves and the students, encourage a positive self-concept, and treat students with respect in spite of their cultural and social differences. As teachers comes to know and care for their students, they become role models for how students should construct their lives.

Gay (2000) is also well-known for her work in culturally responsive teaching, which she describes as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). She offers practical methods for bridging gaps between teachers, students, parents, and schools by providing opportunities for input in curriculum matters and issues that concern them.

Culturally responsive teachers use basic principles of good teaching that are similar to the effective teacher research. However, they are able to adapt their practice to meet the needs of a diverse classroom setting. In cuturally responsive pedagogy, the student–teacher relationship is important because teachers affirm personal and cultural traits of students by providing an environment of mutual respect, fairness & support which extends far beyond the classroom setting (Irvine & Armento, 2000).

The belief is that all students can learn and each educator should provide the appropriate materials and environment for student success. Teachers demonstrate that they value diversity by highlighting the uniqueness and similarities in the classroom and assisting all students in accepting the diversity.

As school populations become more culturally diverse, it is important that school administrators and teachers become more sensitive to the needs of students. Most importantly, culturally responsive teachers serve as role models for caring as students begin to construct their lives as they learn to care for others in a global society.

An ethic of care was embedded in African American schools and communities throughout the South especially during the height of desegregation (Siddle Walker, 1996). Siddle Walker (1996) developed a body of literature on African American segregated schools in the South and discovered that care was significant in the development of Black students. When teachers demonstrated care in the Black schools, it involved not only the students but the students' family and community. Caring on the part of teachers and administrators meant that high standards for learning were established because they knew that students needed to reach their highest potential in order to compete and succeed in society.

Hale (2001) describes the racialized treatment that has contributed to a high failure rate among low-income children in predominantly Black schools: high unemployment rates, poor working conditions that eliminates possibilities for school participation, limited or no educational experiences, and low expectations on the part of educators for African American boys and girls (Hale, 2001). The distinctive cultural background of African American students should be considered when developing educational programs. Historically, churches, schools, and communities provided educational and cultural experiences to educate African American students. Hale posits that building on strategies from the past should be used to improve the academic performance of poor and working-class African American students. Finally, Hale recommends improving educational opportunities for African American children by closing the achievement gaps that exist between Black and White students. African American students should be afforded similar learning opportunities as their White counterparts.This would require that stakeholders such as parents, teachers, and the community form a coalition that focuses on preparing African American children for leadership roles in our country. Hale concludes that "learning while Black" is achievable by African American students.

The research presented in this section describe the various ways in which care is demonstrated towards African American students and students from other ethnic backgrounds. Historically, African American schools were places where students experienced a caring environment because teachers, parents, and administrators wanted their children to have limitless opportunities in terms of leadership roles and job

opportunities. The use of teaching strategies that support the learning styles of a diverse student population have

Historical Models of African American Principals

Historically, the Black principal served as a role model for Black children and was viewed as the authority on educational, social, and economic issues in the community. The Black principal was responsible for establishing all-Black schools, a cultural symbol in the community. Tillman (2004) indicated that African American principals were "transformers, translators, and cultivators" and were held in highest regard by the African American community (p. 194). Black principals demonstrated various forms of caring: exposing students to good teachers and good teaching strategies, showing sympathy, empathy towards students, and compassionate towards all students (Tillman, 2008).

Siddle Walker (1996) examines the history of a segregated school that operated from 1934 to 1969 in Carswell County, North Carolina. Her study reveals the type of schooling delivered to African American students during an era of legal segregation. She explores why the community, teachers, parents, and students valued this school and how they were able to provide a nurturing educational environment in spite of the injustices of segregation. She examines the level of care and the high expectations demonstrated by the adults in both the community and school settings.

The principal, N.L. Dillard, was the role model for expressing care for students at Carswell County Training School. Mr. Dillard demonstrated care that was both interpersonal and academic. Examples of interpersonal caring include "knowledge of the students (both personally and academically), availability to them, omnipresence as a

figure in the school and community and his personal interest in the students' development into productive adults" (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 127).

Mr. Dillard and the teachers at the school demonstrated academic caring, which was articulated in the 1954 SACS report. The principal and teachers expressed concern about providing a curriculum that addressed both the interests and needs of the student body (Siddle Walker, 1996). Overall, the principal was the role model for caring in the school in both theory and practice.

In a later study, Siddle Walker (2009) examines Black schools during segregation by focusing on the activities of the Black school leader, or "professor." She highlights the leadership role of one professor, Ulysses Byas, in Gainesville, Georgia. She examines how the national, regional, and local Black educational networks, along with the familial and cultural values, influenced his work in a variety of Black schools in the South. Siddle Walker also explains how the cultural cohesiveness of Black schools and Black communities during the era of desegregation in the South was an advantage for Black children.

Siddle Walker (2009) reports that the principal and other stakeholders wanted to ensure that Black children were receiving a high-quality education comparable to that of their White counterparts. The local school boards, however, did not provide the same, if any, resources to Black schools as they did to White schools. Therefore, the principal's role was to collaborate with the faculty and the community to secure resources for Black schools. The Black principal sought means to provide instructional resources that mirrored those of White schools in the South. The Black principal during this time period

also demonstrated care by communicating high expectations for Black student performance (Siddle Walker, 2009).

Tillman (2008) reviews selections from the research of Dr. Asa Hilliard. His work is situated in the context of African American principal leadership and the education of African American students. Hilliard believed that teachers and principals must create and maintain educational environments that are caring and just for all students. According to Hilliard, positive interpersonal relationships among students, teachers, and principals create the type of learning environment that promotes student success.

Tillman (2004) focuses on the role of the African American principal in grades pre-K through 12 both before and after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for Blacks and Whites unconstitutional. The research first examines Black principals during the pre-*Brown* era, then focuses on Black principals during the post-*Brown* era, and finally elaborates on major themes that emerged during the study and the absence of discussion on race in the educational leadership literature. Tillman includes case studies, ethnographic research, and a review of the emerging body of literature on African American women principals. The author relies on narrative writing to give voice to Black principals. During the pre-*Brown* era, Black principals performed many roles in providing educational opportunities for Black children. They established and operated public and private schools, secured funding and other needed resources, formed alliances with the Black community, and assumed dual roles as educator and activist for Black children (Tillman, 2008). Although the schools were segregated, the Black community valued education and worked harmoniously with Black educators to provide the

necessary resources for the education of the children. Black principals were role models for "servant leadership" as they demonstrated an "ethos of service" in the Black community (Tillman, 2004, p. 174).

Many African American principals were displaced after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Tillman (2008) finds that resilience of Black principals compelled them to start schools of their own in Black communities. Resilent educators demonstrate high expectations for all children regardless of race which led them to develop curriculum for a diverse student population (Polidore, 2010). Tillman's (2004) study of Black principals during the pre-and post-*Brown* era focuses on four themes: resistance to ideologies and individuals opposed to the education of Black students, b) the academic and social development of Black students as a priority, c) the importance of the cultural perspectives of the Black principal, and (d) leadership based on interpersonal caring (p. 173).

Tillman (2004) highlights their lives and work of Black principals during the pre- and post-*Brown* era and their employment status immediately following the *Brown* decision. According to Tillman the literature surrounding the *Brown* legacy does not currently highlight the strong leadership role that African American principals in pre-K–12 played during the pre-and post-*Brown* eras. During the pre-*Brown* era African American principals demonstrated their commitment to the education of Black children by forming alliances with other Black leaders to develop schools, and they worked in Black schools where the facilities and educational materials were substandard.

Black Women Principals and the Ethics of Care

The voices of urban principals are often “muted” or “silenced” in to the school reform debate. Race and gender have played a large role in the exclusion of African American women in decision-making in school systems throughout the country. The number African American women principals has increased in recent years, bringing a wealth of knowledge to the field of educational administration. Using the metaphor of “visibility,” this research attempts to describe the world of African American women principals as a struggle for equitable recognition in the field of education comparable to that of their White male, Black male, and White female counterparts. African American women’s experiences may provide useful direction to future administrators who aspire to work in urban or suburban school settings.

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) illuminate and expose lived experiences of three African American women principals who served successfully in urban school settings. The study shows that African American women principals continue to experience a “legacy of struggle” as they strive to have their voices heard within the field of education. The life of each principal was explored through individual profiles and storytelling, which produced portraits of their leadership styles in urban schools.

The study highlights the realities, reconstructions, and resolutions of three African women principals who attempt to unmask and challenge the power of racism and sexism operating within the public school systems in our country. Each of these three important themes are discussed separaterly in the sections that follow.

Realities

The Black women principals were educational leaders who demonstrated a strong self-image and cultural understanding of their "place" in society (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Their personal histories helped them to understand that the origin of problems in the school setting, such as the lack of resources and access to programs and activities, was not a result of parent and student apathy. They insisted that Black students' unsatisfactory academic performance be viewed within the larger context of public education's exclusionary and bureaucratic practices. Through an awareness of the bureaucratic culture and the political processes present in schools, they developed a vision for their schools that would enhance academic levels and student performance. Though they often confronted obstacles when implementing changes in teaching practices, the principals continued with their missions.

(Re)constructions

African American women have socially constructed images that strive to dominate and rule them into accepting submissive roles in society. For African American women, stereotyping has become a major instrument of power (Collins, 2000). The principals rejected stereotypes and assigned identities that portrayed them as being lesser or deficient because of race or gender. The personal stories of all three principals are characterized by strong spiritual and family experiences as well as strong character formation. They honored their cultural and racial backgrounds by sharing accomplishments and obstacles that strengthened their perceptions of who they are as Black women.

Resolutions

The three African American principals continued to take on risks by implementing new and innovative programs in spite of the verbal reprimands and criticisms from the central office and their White counterparts. The drive to improve student achievement and the quality of education in their schools was their highest priority. They were often threatened with demotions and dismissals because of their failure to yield to the tactics of county-level leaders, who attempted to dismantle academic programs. All three principals expressed a grounded personal philosophy about educating "at risk" students and those living in poverty. "Conveying a nurturing spirit and deep spirituality was a pivotal (re-)construction in the decision making process and in creating a culture of caring" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 362). Reconstruction of power and using it to empower others in the school setting was the core theme of the study.

According to Bloom and Erlandson (2003), schools where poor, "at risk," and African American students dwell along with African American urban women principals are deemed invisible. "Listening to the voices of African American women's lives in leadership may begin to change minds and social constructs about the 'Others' in America's public school districts" (p. 352).

Urban schools in America present many challenges for school administrators. With student bodies becoming more economically and ethnically diverse, increasing budget restrictions, and ongoing bueaurecratic demands in relation to state and local testing requirements, urban principals find the task of being school leaders very demanding. Despite this, African American women principals are increasingly assuming

leadership roles in urban American schools (Loder, 2005). They perceive the principalship as being akin to “community mothers” (Collins, 2000) “who were obligated to rebuild schools and communities through nurturance, teaching, and leading” (Case, 1997, as cited in Loder, 2005).

Loder (2005) studies the leadership testimonials of a small group of African American women principals who shared the challenges they experienced during an era of social change—the Civil Rights Era and the Chicago Public School (CPS) Reform Act of 1988. Loder explores the unique racial, gender, and generational statuses that helped to shape the perceptions of their roles in the school and the interpretations of urban school reform. The author employed in-depth interviews, observations, and primary and secondary sources about the historical background of the CPS reform.

The participants in this study represent a subset of 5 out of 11 African American women principals who were born during the pre-Civil Rights Era. They were selected because they had similar professional and personal attributes. They were all born between 1931 and 1948 (entering the teaching profession in the 1960s), and they had similar professional experiences and similar perspectives and viewpoints that were influenced by their tenure in CPS. In additon, Loder (2005) limited his sample to principals who had spent their entire careers working with African American students and poor families.

The unique racial, gender and generational statuses of these African American women principals who came of age during the Civil Rights Era made them vulnerable to the impact of governance reforms that restructured long-standing authority relationships between African Americans and parents. The principals expressed a humanitarian approach to school leadership by demonstrating love, mothering, guidance, and nurturing

toward students and young parents. The Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 required that parents become a part of school governance and decision-making. This type of parental involvement posed a unique set of problems for African American principals, especially women (Loder, 2005).

Though limited, Loder's (2005) research provides insights into the accomplishments of a limited number of African American women principals. We are challenged to continue to provide additional research and policy frameworks that will address issues in regard to urban, female, African American principals.

Benham (1997) describes the different cultural and professional stories of three African American women principals. The main goal of the women in the study was to re-write their professional life scripts on two levels. First, as a public expression, they strove to write a story that is different from the school's uniform pattern. Second, as a personal expression, they wanted their stories to present a sense of how their identities have been influenced by race, gender, culture, and history. Researchers engaged in school leadership have not acknowledged the differences in practice and beliefs that African American women share. Instead they choose to highlight the positives or celebratory events in the lives of African American women, completely ignoring the problems associated with the role of being an African American woman principal. Little attention has been invested in the stories of female African American principals, partly because so few African American women hold positions of school leadership, such as school superintendents and principals (Benham, 1997). Teaching and learning—the process that connects all stakeholders in forming a positive bond, including teachers with students, teachers with families, and schools with communities—has not been identified as the

work of school leadership. Therefore, the stories of African American women principals have been excluded from the literature on school leadership.

Smith (2008) describes how the influences of race and gender impacted the educational leadership roles of three female African American high school principals. The study focuses on the professional backgrounds of each principal, barriers they encountered as they pursued the principalship, strategies they used to secure a position as principal, and their leadership conceptualization. Smith used in-depth interviews and narrative writings to investigate how the dual oppressions of race and gender intersected in the professional lives of the three principals. Based on Collins' (2000) BFT, race and gender heavily impacted the lives of the three African American principals. Four major themes emerged from the study: 1) the legacy of struggle, 2) the desire to nurture students, 3) facilitative leadership, and 4) increasing visibility in professional circles (Smith, 2008).

Smith's (2008) research confirms the underrepresentation of African American women in educational leadership. The voices of the three African American principals in the study revealed the impact of race and gender on their roles as principals. Each of the women related experiences that were linked to being African American and female, including hiring practices, stereotypic images, and leadership conceptualizations (Smith, 2008).

In spite of the challenges the principals in the study experienced, each of them utilized various strategies to overcome the intersections of race and gender in their leadership. The most important strategy was to increase their visibility in professional circles by seeking leadership opportunities. They viewed their key leadership roles as a

commitment and obligation to nurture African American students in ways similar to how they nurtured their own children (Smith, 2008).

Summary of Literature Reviewed

The literature review presented studies on caring that examines the various ways care is demonstrated by teachers, principals and students. Many findings suggest that caring is central to education. There is some evidence that caring for students is linked to student achievement. When caring relationships are developed between teachers and students, academic achievement is observed and postive attitudes exist in the classroom. Noblit et al. (1995) and Tolliver (1993) identified specific behaviors that could be attributed to caring: listening to students, providing academic assistance, making yourself available to students before and after school and assisting with school work and setting high expectations for student academics and behavior. Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds may need to be cared for differently from their White counterparts. Instruction for culturally diverse students needs to take into consideration the students prior knowledge and experiences. Students need opportunities to practice care at school with individuals outside of the family structure.

There were many noteable gaps in the literature reviewed. Few studies have examined how caring has been practiced in schools headed by African American male and female principals. In addition, little to no research has focused on African American women principals and how they care for and nurture elementary children in school settings throughout the country. However, there are recent studies on effective practices that grew out of the work of Black women principals that may be appropriate for the current school setting (Benham & Cooper, 1998). As schools work to improve academic

standards and prepare students for college and careers, it is important that principals are able to balance these responsibilities with caring for students by using effective practices, serving as a role model for caring, and developing a school climate that exemplies care for students (Lashway, Mazzarella, & Grundy, 1997).

Another significant gap in the research regarding school principals is the lack of statisitical data available to allow researchers to make assertions about the principalship based on race, ethnicity, and regional studies. The U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics provides results from a 2008-2009 study entitled Follow-up Survey that addresses principal attrition and mobility; however, the study does not provide data about the sex or work region of the principals.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Inquiry and Black Women Principal's Ethics of Care

There are several operational definitions of qualitative research. Glesne (2006) describes qualitative research as a concept that involves different types of inquiry to assist researchers with the exploration and understanding of social phenomena from the perspective of those involved. The philosophical roots of qualitative research comprise different disciplines and vary in assumptions, foci, and methods. Qualitative researchers seek to understand and interpret how the participants in a social setting attempt to construct the world around them. In qualitative research, one of the roles of the researcher is to gain access to the various perspectives of the participants. Therefore, researchers participate in long-term interactions with relevant individuals in one or several sites. They have site-specific hypotheses, but they most often do not begin with them. Instead, they have an open, exploratory mindset to allow them to entertain a variety of issues that might arise, so they can gain new perspectives about their research.

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) define qualitative research as follows:

> Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. They study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomenon in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 4)

Denzin and Lincoln (2008) describe qualitative research as a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible and locate the observer in the world. The researcher serves as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data. "The researcher transforms the world into a series of representations, which include field notes,

interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 4). Data are gathered as the researcher looks for ways to construct meaning from the lived experiences of the research participants. The researcher uses a variety of empirical materials such as case studies, personal experiences, introspection, life stories, interviews, etc. that all construct meaning in the lives of individuals (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The researcher is looking for a combination of themes, categories, concepts, tentative hypotheses, and theories that can be derived from the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Unlike quantitative research, which posits that one reality exists, qualitative research enables researchers to explore inductively what those socially constructed meanings are, not constraining the researcher to ascribe to a predetermined set of categories of analysis (Glesne, 2006).

A qualitative approach is best suited for this study because the design allowed me to examine in-depth a topc that has received limited scholarly attention—Black women principals' ethics of care in the school setting. A qualitative approach also allowed me to explore the complexities of how racism, sexism, and classism have impacted their educational and career opportunities. As the primary data collection instrument in qualitatiave research, I have the flexibility to guide the research process in a direction that enables me to secure the richest data possible on the individual life experiences of Black women principals (Patton, 2002).

There are many methods of qualitative inquiry that could be used to explore the ethics of care exemplified by southern Black women principals. The methoodology for this study is informed by Black feminist and Womanist principles that privilege the knowledge gained through Black women's lived experiences. Patricia Hill Collins (2000)

specifically discusses the value of lived experience as criteria for meaning for Black women when she writes that: “For most African-American women, those individuals who have lived through the expereinces about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read or thought about such experiences.” (p. 257). In this study, the lived experiences of three Black women principals from the South serve as the basis of information for my inquiry. Additionally, my own lived experiences as a Black woman principal from the South also informs this research in two significant ways. First, it was my personal reflections on the connections between the care that I received as a youth and the caring that I enacted as a principal that served as the inspiration for this inquiry. Second, my lived experiences as a Black woman principal in the South and the personal relationships that I have with the other Black women who participated in this study reinforce aspects of personal accountability and mutuality inherent in Black feminst thought (Collins, 2000). In important ways, my story, and the stories of my participants are sociol-culturally and historically linked. As such, my primary methodology for this study is interviews, storytelling, and autobiographical reflections, but I utilize autobiographical inquiry as well to honor the social, cultural, and historical connections between myself and the Black women principals whose lived experiences are shared in this dissertation.

This chapter reviews the methods of storytelling and autobiographical reflections used in this study. Following this, is a discussion of the research setting, participants, and procedures for information collection and analysis used in this study that concludes this chapter.

Storytelling

Sharing life experiences in the form of storytelling has been widely used throughout history. Sharing stories about past events is a universal human activity and one of the first forms of discourse we learn as children. Storytelling is used by individuals of various social backgrounds in a variety of settings (Riessman, 2003). Storytelling is a way of understanding both our actions and those of others, how to organize events and objects in a meaningful format, and how to connect and view the consequences of actions and events over time (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008b). In addition to describing what happened, narratives also express emotions, thoughts, and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008c).

Ladson-Billings (1994) indicates that oral narratives have become an important force in the lives of African American women, as they unmask the social injustices that are present in their lives. In qualitative research, storytelling, life histories, biographies, and autobiographies are methods used by marginalized groups to construct meaning of their life situations. As He and Ross (2102) elaborate:

> [Counter narratives] contest the official or meta narrative that often portrays disenfranchised individuals and groups as deficient and inferior. Counter narratives…challenge traditional ways of engaging in and interpreting curriculum research and affirm the significance of curriculum inquiry as a form of liberatory or radical democratic practice… Counter narratives help tell silenced and neglected stories of repressions, suppressions, and subjugations that challenge stereotypes of Southern women, Blacks, and other disenfranchised individuals and groups and encourage examination of the forces of slavery, racism, sexism,

> classism, religious repression, and other forms of oppression and suppression on life and curriculum in schools, neighborhoods, and communities in the South….Counter narratives… illuminate the nuances of unjust, dominating, or hegemonic relationships….Counter stories can serve as sources of survival and sources of political and cultural resistance for socially marginalized individuals and groups…Counter stories challenge master narratives of race and other intersectional markers of identity that promote stereotypical and deficit-oriented representations of people of color (Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) … Counter stories can be understood as a form of talking back - a means by which marginalized groups can speak truth to power and, in so doing, begin the task of moving from silence and marginalization to speech and liberation (hooks, 1989). (pp. 1–2)

The oppression shared by Black women and other marginalized groups substantiates the significance of the power of "voice" as a means of combating dominant power structures in our society. Black feminist theology (BFT) supports the use of storytelling, specifically counterstorytelling, in my study. BFT presents the view that society operates within power structures that seek to maintain the status quo by marginalizing specific groups in our society. BFT breaks the silence of these groups by providing opportunities for a wider span of knowledge that is shared with society at-large. Therefore, storytelling is a critical tool of investigation into the lived experiences of marginalized groups because it helps tell the counterstories to make sense of their experiences.

Data are embedded in the stories that we share. Personal narratives reveal cultural and social patterns through the lens of individual experiences (Patton, 2002). Etter-Lewis

(1993) highlights the value of Black women's narratives that reveal the stories of their lives. Black women's experiences are influenced by multiple oppressions that have occurred simultaneously. Storytelling in my research provides a better understanding of Black women's experiences in the South and how these women negiotated the issues of race, sex, and gender. Storytelling, particualrly the counterstorytelling, in this study is crucial to the understanding of the life and viewpoints of Black women (Collins, 2000).

Autobiographical Reflections

Harris (as cited in Phillion, He, & Connelly, 2008) explains the significance of autobiographical writing. As an African American woman growing up in the South, I remember the events that raised my curiosity as a child, especially the Civil Rights Movement. Writing autobiographically allowed me to reflect on the influences that Black women had on my life during the early 1960s as well as events related to the Civil Rights Movement. Autobiography not only provided an opportunity for reflection but it also enabled me to come to appreciate the perservance, resilency, and commitment of African Americans who fought for equal access to educational, professional, and housing opportunities. The impact of living in the South before and after segregation affects how I respond to my present life events. I remember not having the opportunity to attend schools that were close to my home because I was African American. Because of my race, I had to walk several blocks to an all-Black school. These events, along with other similar experiences, have affected my personal interactions with colleagues, students, and other school administrators.

According to Harris (2003, "autobiography serves as a mechanism for us to examine the many lessons taught by our parents and mentors, our formal educational

experiences, cultural and life experiences all of which impact who we are, how we perceive, react to, and interact with others" (p. 37). My life experiences helped to frame my ethics of care in the school setting. In contrast to my early school experiences during segregation, as an administrator, I strove to provide many educational opportunities for students, regardless of their ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

Phillion, He, and Connelly (2005) suggest that there is a need for Black women to write about their lives because it corrects misconceptions. The descriptions of Black women in early literature use sterotypical images such as submissiveness, unattractiveness, manipulativeness, and being controlling, but current literature dismisses these former negative images inflicted upon Black women. Through the stories of the Black women principals who participated in this study and through the use of my own personal reflections, my research will illuminate the ethics of care engaged by Black women administrators. It is my hope that this research will also contribute to new knowledge about connections between caring and social justice for diverse public school students.

Research Design

Setting and Participants

Participants for this study were obtained through purposeful selection. Patton (1990) describes the value of purposeful sampling and how it leads to selecting information-rich cases, those from which we can acquire important knowledge about issues of central importance to the study. After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board to conduct this study, I contacted my participants to request that they be interviewed for this study.

Three African American women principals who grew up and practiced in the South were interviewed for this study. All three are currently retired. Prior to retirement, one was employed as an elementary school principal in Memphis, Tennessee, and another as a high school principal in a metro-Atlanta school system. The third principal worked in a metro-Atlanta elementary school. The ages of the principals range from 55–65 years of age. All of the participants were reared, educated, and employed in the South, but there is some geographical diversity because each grew up in a different Southern state—Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee.

One of the principals, Mrs. Black (pseudonym), is a very good friend who I have known for at least 25 years. We met in the school system where we both worked and later retired. We became principals at about the same time. I met Mrs. Brown (pseudeonym) through a mutual friend and discovered that both of us were retirees and that we both aspired to return to school to earn a doctorate in education. Finally, Mrs. White (pseudonym) is my husband's cousin, and we met more than 20 years ago. We had similar educational backgrounds and experiences, which helped in the bonding process. A detailed profile of each of the three participants is presented later in this chapter.

Procedure

All research participants were contacted prior to the interview and given a description of the study, a list of the interview topics, and a formal letter of request for participation. The letter they received included a formal introduction from the researcher, details about the study, and a description of the method that would be used to establish confidentiality.

The following research questions are explored in my study:

1. How do Black women public school administrators in this study describe living and working in the South?
2. How do Black women public school administrators from the South express themes of caring in education?
3. What themes emerge from the life stories of Black women public school administrators that tell about their educational beliefs and experiences?
4. How do the experiences of Black women public school administrators from the South relate to the education of different ethnic/ marginalized/racial groups?
5. Can the life experiences of Black women administrators from the South foster new ways of understanding care and education?

Data Collection

Consistent with storytelling and autobiographical reflections, multiple sources of data were used in this study (Creswell, 2007) to explore Southern Black women principals' ethics of care. I started the interview by asking each participant to share a story that demonstrated care for a student while they were principals. Semi-structured interviews were also used with a listed of guided questions in different categories such as: introduction, family/community, educational experiences, professional experiences, church experiences and the principalship. The interviews lasted from one and a half to two hours. The interviews were held on different dates and times at locations selected by the participants. The questions for the interview protocol were guided by current research and discussions with my dissertation chairperson. Hard copies were distributed to the participants to enable them to make corrections and modifications to their written narratives. All of the interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by a certified

transcriptionist.The full interviews from each participant appear in Appendix A of this document.

In addition to the participant stories and interviews, I also relied on telephone and email conversations with the participants, my background knowledge of the participants, professional resumes, and my own personal reflections on my lived experiences as a Black woman administrator to inform this inquiry.

Autobiographical Inquiry Methods and Issues of Researcher Subjectivity

My autobiography was developed to assist me in reflecting on my experiences of growing up, receiving an education and working in the South. I was able to compare and contract my stories with those of the participants.

As a Black woman principal exploring the lived experiences of other Black women principals, it is possible that the race/ethnic and gender identities that I share with my participants may cause me to over identify with their stories and, in so doing, present research findings that reflect my own beliefs rather than the stories that are actually emanating from the participants. My use of aspects of autobiographical inquiry in this dissertation strengthen the trustworthiness of this inquiry by serving as a formalized reflective commentary on my thoughts prior to and after interviewing my participants; by carefully and honestly attending to similarities and differences between my lived experiences and those of my participants, I am acknowleding the influence of my own subjectivity in the research process and at the same time, increasing the credibility of my research (Lincoln, 1995).

General Description of the Participant Interview Process

Mrs. Brown suggested that we meet at the home where she grew up in southwest Atlanta. She shared a wealth of information that presented a historical picture of the community where she was reared. Mrs. Black is a volunteer for a tutoring program at her church, so we met in a meeting room at her church. Finally, Mrs. White lives in Memphis, so I traveled there and met her in the home of a relative because she felt there would be fewer distractions.

Initially, the principals were honored and excited to participate in the interview. As we moved closer to the interview date, Mrs. White did not feel her stories were exciting and she selected someone to replace her for the interview. I reassured her that she had something to contribute and encouraged her to participate. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Black were quite eager to share their stories, and both of them had to be redirected to the questions throughout the interview. To help them feel comfortable, I began each interview with a request that each principal share a special story from her days as a principal that she felt demonstrated care for students. After sharing their stories, they were asked to respond to a prescribed set of interview questions. Prompting was used throughout the entire interview process, and sometimes clarifications and examples were given. One of the principals became teary-eyed as she talked about how she had to struggle to get teachers to share her sentiments about caring for students. Some of her teachers were not willing to go that extra mile for students, so she had to become the student advocate.

What I found to be most exciting was that all of us had experiences with students who returned to the school setting after graduating from high school or college to say

“thank you” for caring for them. It confirmed that students were aware of how much we cared for them and that they felt that their positive life outcomes stemmed from a caring principal.

I left the interviews with affirmation that caring does make a difference in the lives of students. All of us placed caring for students at the top of the list because we took ownership for the life outcomes of our students. Because we spent more time with them than some of their own parents, we needed to do all we could to let them know that we cared. The principals left the interview with positive feelings about their work in the schools. I do not think they had realized the influence they had had on the lives of young people until they were able to reflect on those experiences during the interview.

Participant Profiles

Mrs. Brown

I had the privilege of interviewing Mrs. Brown in the home where she grew up in Atlanta, Georgia. The neighborhood is an older African American community where descendants of the African American families from the 1960s lived and many new families now reside.

Mrs. Brown grew up during the 1960s on the south side of Atlanta, Georgia, in an area called High Point. She and her family lived in an apartment complex in this middle-class African American area. Then, her family moved to the Collier Heights neighborhood, a more affluent, predominantly Black area where all of the homes were built by African American builders. The neighborhood had African Americans who were doctors, lawyers, teachers, and public officials. She lived with her mother, father, one sister, and a brother. Her mother did not work during that time period, and her father was

a postal worker. Her father was determined to move his family to an area where they would feel comfortable and the children could attend good public schools. She attended both elementary and high school in that community.

After graduating from high school, she attended Emory University from 1967 to 1971, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in English with a minor in education. She continued her education at Georgia State University from 1976 to 1980. She received her Master of Education degree in English, and in 1996, she got a Leadership Certification in Supervision and Administration. Also during that time period, she worked on a diploma in Advanced Studies in Teaching, which she received in 1998. She received her Doctorate of Philosophy in Educational Studies in May 2013. Her emphasis was on policy, K–12 leadership, and community involvement.

Mrs. Brown's first teaching position was as an English teacher at an alternative high school in the Atlanta metro area. She remained in that position for 4 years before she became chair of the English Department at the same location. She worked as an assistant principal at a high school from 1998 to 2000 and finally as principal at the same high school. After serving as principal for 3 years, she was promoted to the Director for High Schools in a metro-Atlanta school system for one year. In that position, she supervised English, math, science, social studies, the arts, physical education, drivers' education, and industrial arts curricula. After one year, she was promoted to Assistant Superintendent. In that position, she supervised 22 high schools and their feeder pattern middle and elementary schools for four years.

Mrs. Black

The second principal is Mrs. Black. She grew up in a small village in the early 1950's (it was not a township yet) called Prairie, Alabama, which is located about 33 miles from Selma. She described the village as having plains that extended a long distance with very few trees in the area, which is why it was named Prairie. She lived with her mother, father, one sister, and two brothers. The population of the village mainly comprised Black families who were farmers or sharecroppers. Many of the families in the community were poor and received very little education. Both of her parents were teachers, but they performed administrative duties as well. Mrs. Black attended elementary and high school in her neighborhood and walked across the street to school to attend classes or to participate in extracurricular activities. She graduated from high school in 1966 and then attended Spelman College from 1966 to 1970 where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Music. After graduating, she enrolled at the University of Tennessee and began taking education courses and teaching music part-time. She enrolled in a Master's program at Georgia State University in 1970 in Music Education.

She did not originally plan to become an educator. However, she started to feel at home in the profession, probably because her parents had been educators. She said that it felt like a family business. She knew that it was not a place for getting rich, and she knew the rewards were not always apparent. Seeing young people learn and making a difference in their lives has been her goal ever since. She decided to pursue advanced degrees in education as she continued to teach music in the public school system before becoming a school administrator.

She received her Leadership Certification from Georgia State University and then she enrolled in the University of Georgia's Educational Administration & Supervision Program to earn a Specialist Degree, which she attained in 1990. Then she became an instructional lead teacher in an elementary school for 11 years. She served as an elementary principal in two metro-Atlanta schools for 7 years.

Mrs. White

The third principal, Mrs. White, taught for more than 20 years, both special education and regular education. She was born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, during the mid-1950s in a household with her mother, father, and nine siblings. There were six girls and four boys, and she was the second-oldest child. Her parents always had other children and adults living with them, some were family members and others from the community. She attended primary school, junior high, and high school during the 1960s and early 1970s.

She graduated from high school in 1972 and entered college at the University of Memphis in 1972. She graduated in 1978 with a Bachelor's degree in special education. In 1986, she entered Trevecca Nazarene College in Nashville, Tennessee, and she graduated in 1988 with a Master of Science in Administration & Supervision. She continued her education at Trevecca Nazarene College until 1989, when she earned a post-graduate degree in General Education, Administration, and Supervision.

Mrs. White began her teaching career as an elementary special education teacher from 1978 to 1984 and a first-grade teacher from 1984 to 1994. She was transferred to a different elementary school in 1995, where she served as a classroom teacher/tutor for 10 years and a curriculum coordinator for one year. Then she was promoted to assistant

principal at the same elementary school for one year. She became principal in 2003, and she served in that capacity for eight years at two Memphis City Schools, beginning in 2003 until retirement in 2011. Mrs. White is one of my husband's relatives, and we have developed a strong relationship over the years. She always seemed to be passionate about her role as principal, and I thought she would have interesting stories to share.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used for data analysis of the participant interviews, and my interpretation of the data was informed by principles of Black feminist thought. Transcripts of the three participant interviews were analyzed using open, axial, and selective coding to determine how each of the participants' responses could provide insight into the five research questions explored in this study. To make synthesizing and understanding the transcripts easier, I organized and categorized information from the transcripts in a table with headings that were developed from the interview questions. The categories of information derived from the participant interviews is presented in Appendix C of this dissertation. I examined the data to identify similarities and differences in the narratives. Another aspect of data analysis for this study involved comparing and contrasting my personal reflections on my lived experiences as a Black woman principal with the emergent themes from the participants. After identifying themes in the participants' interviews, analyzed autobiographical writings about my own experiences related to each of the research questions. A final step in the data analysis procedures for this research involved identifying areas of commonality and difference among all of our experiences.

CHAPTER IV

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents analysis that was derived from the multiple sources of data collected for this study. The data is presented in three forms and organized by research questions: (1) the stories of the individual participants, (2) the emergent themes that resulted from analyzing the participant interviews together, and (3) my autobiographical reflections upon my own lived experience as a Black woman principal in the South. In analyzing the information collected for this study, recurring themes were found between the three participant interviews and between my own lived experiences; the presenation of the data in the three forms described above is intened to represent the research equivalent of Rondo—a musical form where a recurring leading theme is used. This research version of Rondo was deemed most appropriate to illuminate the mutuality between the stories of the three Southern Black women principals who participated in this study and me. A discussion of the ways in which data collected for this research sheds light on the research questions concludes this chapter.

Research Question 1

How Do Black Women Public School Administrators in This Study Describe Living and Working in the South?

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown shared how her parents were pretty adamant about not making a difference in what they could and could not do in the Atlanta area during the segregation era. She explained this in the following way:

> Even though it was totally segregated in the city, we went to every cultural event we could possibly go to-for example, the Fox Theatre-Black people could only go to the Fox Theatre up the fire escape on the outside of the building. That's the way we came out of the Fox, and so they (my parents) never said this is what Black people had to do. I remember my senior year in high school, the Fox was opened so that everybody could go, and it was a big deal: my whole senior class-all the students at the Black high schools were able to go in through the front door and up the steps of the Fox for the first time, and the movie we went to see "The Fall of the Roman Empire."

She viewed this event in history as well as other accomplishments she experienced in her neighborhood as important milestones and that led her to become a successful adult.

Mrs. Brown stated the following:

> When I finished high school, you couldn't tell me that I couldn't move mountains. I was an excellent student; my teachers said I was an excellent student. I took advanced classes and I did well on the SAT's. So I thought that I could move mountains! Then I went to Emory thinking I could move mountains, and ran into a mountain.

During high school, she excelled in journalism and was a featured writer on the high school newspaper staff ; her high school success in journalism convinced her that she

would do well as a reporter on the newspaper staff at Emory University, where she had been accepted to attend college.

> College was particularly un-supportive because I was among the first Black students to help integrate Emory University and so at the time that I was freshman there, there were only about 24 African American students, so nobody cared about us, nobody cared about me.

She was ignored by her teachers and verbally harassed with racial epithets by White students at Emory. She signed up to be a volunteer for the newspaper, but no one ever called her. This lack of care and support continued throughout her enrollment at Emory.

The Black students at Emory became a very close-knit community. She wrote a newspaper article and after the publishing of the article, the Black students decided to demonstrate just as there were demonstrations at other local colleges and universities. Emory was shut down for two weeks. They disrupted a morning church service and took over. They had a speaker and they spoke about the inequities and injustices at Emory as students. Although they were contained in a small building for a few days and surrounded by law enforcement, they would not compromise. They were able to continue their education as the university made some concessions.

> We got our first Black administrator as a result of the protest, we wanted more Black professors-we got a few. And so, if we'd just talked about it and didn't have student protests, nothing would have happened. So I got my voice back. They didn't give it to me, I took it.

Like her experiences at Emory, her early administrative experiences were also troubling. She approached a male principal and asked him how to get into

administration. He said, “You don’t have what it takes to be an administrator.” Therefore, Mrs. Brown dismissed the idea of administration until another male principal later encouraged her to pursue it.

Before becoming a principal, she was an acting-principal. She asked the superintendent about a raise for the position, but she was told that there would not be a raise for that title. She felt discriminated against because the men she knew who were “acting principals” received additional compensation.

Mrs. Brown’s description of life in the South illustrates themes of racial and gender discrimination. She ran into obstacles of racism and sexism at Emory University when she was not given the opportunity to work on the school newspaper staff, when her professors refused to allow her to speak in class and when White classmates refused to sit next to her. She considered moving into administration but a male colleague discouraged her from doing so. When she was an acting-principal, she experienced salary discrimination that was not experienced by other acting principals who were male.

During our interview, Mrs. Brown expressed awareness that great strides had been made in the South and more specifically in the Atlanta area in terms of integration and better opportunities for Blacks. However, through her experiences, she learned first-hand that for Blacks and for women fairness and equality were not always practiced. She realized that her goals might take longer to accomplish because of the attitudes of people in control, but she was persistent and finally met her professional and educational goals.

Mrs. Black

When describing life in the South, the second principal, Mrs. Black, described the major injustices she observed in her community and in neighboring cities in Alabama.

I didn't have anyone on my mother's or father's side of the family who lived to see voting. My grandfather lived until 1961, so he did get the chance to see the Montgomery boycotts. They began to see some of the changes that began to happen, but to actually experience the opportunity to vote-it never happened.

She described how the Civil Rights Movement impacted her high school years in the 1960s.

I remember the education demonstrations- I did not participate in as many as I probably would have liked to but I did get to participate in a few. Just before I left for college, there were major demonstrations. But finally, there were not any more tests that required people to interpret the Constitution or the tests people had to take. No longer were there laws that required Black people to step off the sidewalk. If a Black person and a White person would come alongside each other on the sidewalk, the Black person had to move over, it was basically an offense if someone complained. I really don't feel hatred, but I did always feel that there was a lot of wasted energies that could have been expended in other ways.

As an undergraduate, she attended Spelman University, and when her husband went back to college to complete his degree, she learned of a promising federally funded teaching position. Although she did not originally want to be a teacher, she took advantage of the opportunity. She started teaching and began taking classes at the University of Tennessee in January of 1970. She enjoyed teaching but could not find a teaching job when she moved back to Atlanta, so she began working at the Bell Telephone Company. She did not like working with adults as much as she had enjoyed

working with children. Thus, she began to attend classes at Georgia State University to get fully certified.

Mrs. Black was aware of the limited professional job opportunities for Blacks, especially women in the South during the 1960's and 1970's. In her interview, Mrs. Black revealed that in order to accomplish her goals, she had to be flexible in terms of the type of job or profession she was willing to accept. In addition, she had to be flexible about where she was willing to live; moving from Georgia to Tennessee opened new doors for her but she eventually moved back to Georgia when she learned of different opportunities that were of interest to her.

> So I actually ended up teaching because I enjoyed it. I guess in a way it was a family business, and I knew it was not a place for getting rich. I knew it was a place where the rewards can't be seen but seeing young people learn and making a difference in their lives was most rewarding.

Living and working in the South meant that she had to be prepared, in some cases, overly prepared for jobs because she was a Black woman.

Mrs. White

The third principal, Mrs. White, grew up in Memphis, Tennessee. She reflects on how the neighborhood where she grew up experienced a rapid transition from predominantly White to an all Black neighborhood in the early 1960's. She observed a similar transition within the public schools in her neighborhood also. The elementary and junior high school became predominantly Black schools but she and a few of her friends had to travel across town to attend a predominantly White high school. She describes her high school experience as one that was not supportive of Black children.

> In my high school, we didn't have the best principal. He really didn't want us there but there was one Black teacher and she was my English teacher, "Miss Prim and Proper." You would say, "When I grow up I want to be like that and I'm going to treat children the way she is treating us." This lady made me feel comfortable. I was a chubby girl and I didn't have the best self-esteem and ran into a teacher who sees the good in a child and makes me feel good and a light comes on.

Miss White remained in her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee, and attended Memphis State University, which is now the University of Memphis. She stayed at home because she was not ready to "hit the real world." Like Mrs. Brown, she experienced difficulties in college as one of only a few Blacks on a recently integrated university campus. When she entered the University of Memphis, Blacks were not very welcome. There was a definite lack of support for Black college students, and they had little choice but to endure the negative experiences they faced. She said, "There was no one to complain to about what's going on in situations. … You had to take it." "The English Department at UOM was well-known for not passing Black students in English because we could not speak proper English."

When she was a college student, she was forced to attend school an extra semester because of an incorrect grade that her professor refused to change despite her persistent requests. In addition, the incident brought her grade point average down. Mrs. White remained philosophical when describing her undergraduate experiences. She described Memphis State as "not the best place to go but you still got a good education and every

instructor wasn't like that but that's in everything." She said there were still pockets of racism in the school but that such experiences made her a better person.

She met a Black professor at UOM who became a confidante when she had questions about a sibling who was a special education student. The professor helped to relieve her anxiety about the special education classes and their conversations inspired her to pursue a degree in special education.

As a special education teacher, Mrs. White again experienced a lack of care and support. During her first year of teaching, she worked with a principal who did not want special education at her school. The principal was uninformed and apparently unconcerned about the special needs children attending her school. Mrs. White was ignored and forced to work in what she referred to as a "closet" until she met with a special education supervisor who was visiting her school. After communicating her needs to the supervisor, Mrs. White received the resources she needed to work with her students. Referring to the incident, she stated, "I would have stayed in the closet the rest of the year, but I had the opportunity to start doing my job." Soon after, she left that school and went on to teach resource students at a different school.

Mrs. White did not want to become an administrator. She loved what she was doing. She saw things that needed to be done, and she did them. Every morning, she went to school early and watched the children playing outside. As school began, she would stand in the hallway directing children, and she liked doing it. The principal saw this and noticed her leadership qualities. The principal began to push her more and more as he observed what she was doing. He told her, "I don't want to act like I'm pushing you away from the classroom, but this field needs people that act like you." As he continued to talk

to her about moving into administration, she began to consider it because she thought she might be able to have a bigger impact. “I could do even more things, I would not have this classroom and I would be able to see more children and work with children in other classrooms that I am not seeing.” She said that she would not have become a principal if it were not for him. He had strong beliefs about people, and she said that he was able to recognize people who were truly committed to the education of children.

Mrs. White described living and working in the South as preparation for a career that would afford her the opportunity to work and provide care for children. Through her college experiences, working as a classroom teacher and as an elementary school principal, she learned to look beyond the unfairness, injustices, and alienation that she often felt. Her mother and other Black women in her life planted resilience, perseverance, and determination in her head. One of the most important lessons she learned was to remain focused and keep a positive outlook on life. By doing so, one could overcome obstacles and become a positive role model for young people.

Emergent Themes from Research Question 1

The principals experienced unfairness, either in college or in their professional lives. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Black did not feel that they were given opportunities for advancement in their careers. Mrs. Brown described discriminatory practices in college such as being excluded from the newspaper staff because of her race and being ignored during classroom discussions. She also recounted an incident when a Black male principal discouraged her from pursuing a career in administration, stating that she did not have the skills for the position. Although Mrs. Black did not experience the same types of discrimination in college, she felt that there were limited professional

opportunities for Black women. Though initially she did not have the goal of becoming an educator, she experienced limited opportunities in other areas. Eventually, she decided that she wanted to impact the lives of children in music, so she became a teacher and then an administrator.

Mrs. Brown, Mrs. White, and I had similar college experiences. All three of us felt little support for Black students on our college campuses. However, a Black woman college professor became Mrs. White's mentor and confidante, and eventually inspired her to enter the field of special education. Unlike Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Black, she received encouragement to become a principal from a Black male principal. He assisted her in understanding how she could impact the lives of children by serving them in a different capacity.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

Growing up in the South prepared me for my entry into college. My experiences included the following: attending segregated schools (elementary years), observing marches and protests during the Civil Rights Movement, and participating in school integration during the 1960s and 1970s. These milestones prepared me for the next level in life, my college years. I felt as though I have been preparing for college my entire life. I thought by moving away from the Deep South, life would be quite different. Little did I know that the small town in Virginia had very similar problems to those of my hometown in South Georgia.

The campus was located in a small town in the Shenandoah Valley in southern Virginia. The college population was about 750 students. The majority of the students were White, upper-middle-class females from different parts of the United States as well

as from other countries. They were most often referred to as “southern belles.” I was one of 10 Black students enrolled in Mary Baldwin College. The faculty and staff were predominantly White during my first two years of college.

I remember having to play catch-up during my freshman and sophomore years by participating in study groups and receiving private tutoring and attending summer school. I remember the social deprivation I felt because I was in an environment that did not support Black students. Speakers and activities on campus that highlighted the accomplishments of Blacks in America were very limited.

Black students decided to organize a Black Student Alliance whose main purpose was to work with the faculty and administration to add cultural experiences and Black professors to the college faculty. The only Blacks on campus were women who were secretaries, housekeepers, and members of the cafeteria staff. Many of them provided moral support during those difficult times. Most of the faculty and administration were cooperative in terms of meeting our needs, but we encountered some resistance to our request to meet the needs of the Black student population. The Black Student Alliance was a means of addressing the issue of race in the college setting, and it provided opportunities for the voices of Black students to be heard on a predominantly White college campus.

When I graduated from college, I moved back to my hometown and was hired to teach special education at the high school from which I graduated. Black teachers there acted as mentors and supported me throughout my first two years of teaching. I always had the desire to remain in the field of education with the hope of making a greater impact on the lives of students. As a school administrator from the late-1990s until the

mid-2000s, I wanted to have a strong impact on what happened in the schools were I was assigned. There were a few Black female principals who had more experience in the position than I did so they became mentors and supported me throughout my first few years in the principalship. Because I was able to relate to the injustices I experienced in the school settings from grade school to college, my first and foremost concern as a principal was that the adults working in my school demonstrated care and fairness when working with students.

My experiences of living and working in the South were very similar to those of the principals in my research. All of us lived in segregated neighborhoods populated with Black families from mixed socioeconomic backgrounds. During our elementary years of schooling, all of us attended predominantly Black schools. Our high school experiences were different, Mrs. White and I attended integrated high schools, and Mrs. Black and Mrs. Brown attended predominantly Black high schools. Mrs. Brown, Mrs. White, and I attended predominantly White colleges or universities. We had similar experiences of not feeling welcome or being excluded from campus social activities. In contrast, Mrs. Black attended a historically Black college and did not experience the same types of treatment. After graduating from college and entering the education profession, all of us experienced sexism in the form of not being promoted to administrative positions at the same rate as our Black male counterparts. We were not encouraged to pursue administrative positions until later in our careers.

Research Question 2

How Do Black Women Public School Administrators From the South Express Themes of Caring in Education?

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown's recurring theme was "A total school serving the total student." Her goal was to assist in the development of social skills as well as strong academics: innovative programming to develop the whole child. One example of her attempt to develop social skills was reflected in her designation of each holiday to a specific grade level: Thanksgiving was juniors' day, Christmas was seniors' day, Valentine's Day was for the sophmores, and Easter was for the freshmen. The cafeteria manager put white tablecloths on the tables and provided a special meal. Mrs. Brown brought in music and a huge sound system so they could play classical and jazz music in the cafeteria. On those special days, students could invite their parents to have lunch with them, which allowed them to see what their children were doing at the school. The students learned how to interact appropriately at a large social event that involved a large number of students and parents.

Another event she sponsored was "Most Improved Student Luncheon." The school also had a Principal's List and the Top Ten Students List, but Mrs. Brown realized there were students who were never going to be on either of these lists but who were improving. The "Most Improved Student Luncheon" was for those students who moved from a "D" to a "C"; the teachers nominated them, and they received special recognition.

According to student testimonials that she collected, the luncheon gave students an incentive and showed them that somebody was looking for them to improve both academically and in terms of attendance. All of these events provided opportunities to celebrate student success. The message she transmitted to students was that "you are special and we want you to feel special." She said that she wanted students to leave school feeling that the adults in the building cared about them.

Finally, Mrs. Brown thinks that caring is essential to the principal's role.

> I think we are better administrators when we take the time to care. I'm just gonna do this, and then I'll leave. But when we take the time, I think that we nurture, and like I said before, when we see the children as *ours*, it's not just a job. It becomes a calling. They have to know that they answer to a higher power. When I was a principal, I realized that it wasn't about me. It really wasn't about the salary with me, it was about what difference I had been called to make in somebody's life. And if I don't do it, who would do it? Now, as I said, men don't feel that way, but I think when you couple that calling with the nurturing, you have a whole different kind of animal.

Mrs. Black

The second principal, Mrs. Black, had a strong knowledge of curriculum, which meant she understood the skills that students needed to move to the next grade level and to how to help them attain mastery of certain skills. She understood how to plan individualized lessons for students based on assessment data. When she was assigned to a small metro-Atlanta elementary school with about 400 students, she was able to put her knowledge and skills to good use. The majority of her students lived in public housing or

apartments and only a few had single family homes, but the community was socioeconomically diverse, with a few Emory University students. There were at least 10 students for whom English was a second language, which meant that teachers had to individualize and tailor the subject matter.

She had high expectations for all students, although some were disadvantaged and did not have parents who were engaged in the school setting. Therefore, many of her students and parents viewed her position as a mothering role. “The mothering simply came from experience, from working, going to workshops and trying to learn and getting to observe and see children.”

The school was about 50 years old, and the homes in the area were even older. This school had students who were of the third generation—their parents and grandparents attended the same school. Some students had a grandmother or a grandfather who would visit them at school, and they were former students themselves. According to Mrs. Black, it felt like a very tight village. Despite this village-like atmosphere, the students were not receiving academic support from their parents, so the school had to provide these opportunities. Mrs. Black realized that she and the faculty could not accomplish everything they were trying to do during the school day, so they developed an after-school tutorial. This innovative programming extended beyond school hours to give students what they needed. They provided individualized activities during classroom instruction as well as after school. Some of the teachers were paid for tutoring in the after-school program, but there were also teacher and community volunteers. Students, teachers, and parents felt that this program provided needed extra academic support for students, particularly in the area of reading. Mrs. Black’s idea of caring was

embodied in her statement “We must go the extra mile to help students,” just as her parents, grandparents, church leaders, and college teachers had done for her as she moved through life.

> The care, I think, is recognizing and remembering cultural differences that existed in the school and how every child was affected by what we said or did at the school. I haven’t seen many children that don’t like to learn and I’ve never experienced a child that didn’t achieve some degree of success when that light bulb of understanding comes on, no matter who the child is—it does not have to be verbal. You see it, you see it in their faces, you see it in their expression. So that’s what we’re constantly trying to find, and because we had a number of students who had different food requirements, we had students who had different religious backgrounds, what you had to do was make sure that *you* stayed focused. How does that child become the best reader, the best thinker, the best at mathematics or arithmetic skills or whatever—the best at taking language and making it their own. We had to focus on the students.

Mrs. White

Mrs. White expressed the importance of educating the whole child. “I think we accomplish academic things with children but we forget about activities that teach girls to become ladies and boys to become gentleman.” She expressed the importance of students understanding how to behave in a manner that is important to their growth and maturity.

Mrs. White shared the importance of having partners in education. Because she understood the value of business and community support, she sought out partners. She was the first Black principal at her school in the _____Community. All previous

principals had been White, and the Kiwanis Club had previously funded 100% of many projects at this school. The Kiwanis Club had previously provided backpacks, school supplies, and so forth for children at the school. When the ethnicity of the principal changed, so did the support from that organization. The Kiwanis Club began to provide very little, so she sought out other organizations. However, the Kiwanis Club did not stop helping with tutoring, and they had great tutors who continued to volunteer.

In an effort to build support, Mrs. White pulled together a small group of Iowa State University graduates who "adopted" students at the school. In addition to giving personal items to the students, they also provided items that the school needed. Every time they came, they brought items for the children. Mrs. White also discussed the Marine Corp's Toys for Tots campaign, which helped fund a few projects in the school. They could not give money, but they brought in donated items. At Christmastime, the kids all received toys.

Mrs. White realized that schools cannot operate in a vacuum. "Principals have to reach out to the business community in an effort to provide needed goods and services for students."

Similar to Mrs. White, one of my goals was to engage parents in the school setting as much as possible. Although both of my parents had full-time jobs, they were always involved in school activities. They supported events by attending PTA meetings, holiday programs, and school fundraisers that required their presence.

Emergent Themes

Mrs. Brown created activities that rewarded students for outstanding achievement and for those students who were showing progress as they moved towards achieving their

goals. She also created activities that enhanced students' social skills. She designated each of the holidays to honor a specific grade level and provided a special meal for students and their parents. Her idea of educating students was to have the social skills support the academic skills.

Mrs. Black acknowledged the language barriers and weak academic areas that some of her students faced. She encouraged the faculty to provide individualized lessons during classroom instruction as well as during the after-school tutorial. Teachers and parents supported the after-school tutorial by participating as volunteers.

Mrs. White used community and business support as a means of providing volunteer services and tangible items for students in her school. She worked hard to establish these relationships, and she had to make certain that each partnership was the right match for her school.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

In one of the schools where I served as principal, we were quite successful at getting the mothers involved by having them volunteer to read to classes, make copies for teachers, shelve library books, etc. Fathers were not as involved in the school setting, so one of my goals was to have them come to the school and volunteer on a regular basis. This would provide support for the school and would also allow the students to view fathers as positive role models and contributors to the school's academic program. It was especially important for boys to see their fathers in a supportive role. This act demonstrated care for students by engaging not only students but families in the educational process. I wanted parents to feel included in the academic advancement of

their children. I believe that if parents are a part of the educational process, students feel supported and will perform better in school.

The Black women public school administrators interviewed for this study expressed themes of caring in education using a variety of strategies. The principals did not have access to a lot of financial resources, so they were creative and innovative in terms of providing activities to support and meet students' needs. For example, I engaged parents in the educational process by soliciting both mothers and fathers to become volunteers to support not only their children but other students as well. All of the principals expressed caring based on their previous life experiences. In their developmental years, many of them observed adults who were creative, resourceful, supportive of school activities, and persistent in making sure that students were prepared to succeed in life.

During the interviews, all of the principals were asked to share one caring act they felt had a major impact on the instructional program. Mrs. Brown recognized students for improved academic progress by having special days designated to celebrate student accomplishments. Mrs. Black led teachers in providing individualized instruction to a select group of students in her school, and Mrs. White solicited support from community partners or adopters. She believed in developing a partnership with the school and community in an effort to support students.

My caring act was different from the other principals in the study because it focused on parental involvement, which provided an opportunity for parents to become a part of the educational process. I felt that parents had a lot to offer in terms of their

professional skills and talents and that they would also become more aware of their role in supporting the schools efforts in educating students.

The principals' caring acts impacted their schools' academic and social environments, which served as safety nets for students. All of the principals appeared to be passionate about specific areas of supporting students as they shared one specific caring act.

Research Question 3

What Common Themes Emerge From the Life Stories of Black Women School Administrators That Reflect Their Educational Beliefs in Regard to Caring for Students, Effective Practices, and Early Influences on the Decision to Become Principals?

A great deal of information was collected from the participants regarding the third research question. Participant responses are grouped below by category related to the different aspects of this question: educational beliefs about caring, educational beliefs about effective practices, and early influences on the decision to become a principal. The section on early influences is further organized by parental early influences and other early influences.

Educational Beliefs About Caring for Students

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown described how adults can be role models for caring. "I had a model for leadership that I would have never had if I had grown up any place else. I had caring

principals, caring teachers-even the teachers who weren't good teachers but they were still caring."

She was encouraged throughout school by teachers who cared.

When I became a principal, my motto for being a principal was not about leadership but what I lived and experienced from the principals I had. These principals had a way of educating children-based on what I learned, this was systemic among African American principals.

She explained how segregation and living in the South impacted the leadership model that was practiced and shared by her teachers and by administrators. If segregation had not existed, she was not sure if Black educators would have had the impetus to push forward by saying, "It's on you to make it." She felt that these educators got to know her and cared about her as a person. She also felt that the model for her position as principal did not stem from what she learned in college leadership courses but rather from what she learned and experienced from the principals and teachers she encountered during her schooling. She said that it was not by chance or accident that the teachers and principals she encountered during her childhood set goals for the students; rather, it was based on the need to help students survive. Black people had to work hard to survive in America. Her teachers often said, "You're in a race, and you're already four laps behind." Because Black children were viewed as the future, Black teachers and administrators felt that they needed to invest in them because they had to succeed. The Black community prepared Black children to become leaders by becoming examples and role models for leadership. The lives of African American children were heavily impacted if the community did not provide a support system to help ensure student success (Watkins, 2005).

Mrs. Brown also described caring as more than the "touchy feely" things we do for children. She said "Caring is also about sharing the harsh realities about the struggles students will face." Black educators prepared children to step out of the segregated world and into a different world, and they had to be ready.

Mrs. Black

According to the second principal, Mrs. Black,

> The greatest opportunity to care is when you as the building leader, develop a school culture that is based on student success. From the moment that students walk into the building, they should know that the adults in the school setting genuinely care about them.

She compared it to the communal type of caring that was observed in Black neighborhoods of the South during the 1950s and 1960s. The community members had relationships with each other. They shared resources and checked on each other when someone was ill; they took care of the children in the neighborhood as if they were their own. They encouraged the children to do their best in all situations—at home, at school, and in college or other endeavors. The community members pooled their resources in order for the children to have opportunities to go on fieldtrips, both local and out of the city, and to pay for extracurricular activities and clothing for special school events. Mrs. Black said that a similar sense of community can exist in the school setting if all of the faculty and staff exhibit communal care for the students.

> The principal's role is to help children to get from point A to B. And you will get there any possible way that I can find to help you get there. I don't have to do this with just one child. I have enough space, I have enough energy, I have enough

love, I have enough caring, I have enough resources, and I have enough in this ability to help you get from point A to B in the best way possible.

Mrs. White

The third principal, Mrs. White, contended that "caring is universal." "All children want to feel cared for, regardless of their ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or religious preference." She said that "the practice of caring works well in all settings but that it can be "modified" to fit the needs of the student population." She recalled the Black women who cared for her and that many of them had their own special ways of caring. The women understood her need to develop positive self-esteem and tried to provide her with the support she needed. During her childhood, she often described herself as being "chubby," which impacted her self-esteem. Her high school teacher was aware of this, so she nurtured her and offered suggestions for clothing, make-up, and hairstyles that were best suited for her.

A college professor at the University of Memphis became her mentor and confidante when she questioned the placement of one of her sisters in a special class in school. Black women at her church demonstrated care for her by insisting that she practice her reading skills, and they loaned her books to use at home.

For Mrs. White, caring meant that you have the ability to care for all children. They have different needs, and caring can be tailored to meet the needs of the student body.

Emergent Themes

All of the principals in the study shared a distinct set of educational beliefs about caring for students. Although their beliefs were different, they described how caring

adults can have an impact on the lives of Black children. The adults practiced caring behaviors with the hope that children would become caring adults. Mrs. Brown shared how Black educators (in her school growing up) demonstrated care for Black children, and she demonstrated a similar type of care for children in her school. Mrs. Black's perspective focused on the importance of the principal's role in developing a school culture that is centered on student success. The principal sets the tone of the school environment and becomes the role model for engaging adults in performing caring acts for students. Mrs. White described how the diversity of student needs requires that principals understand how to care for a specific group or for individual students. All three principals described actions or identifiable behaviors that were associated with the care they received as children.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

My educational belief about caring is that everyone in the school setting who is associated with the students should demonstrate care for them. My perspective is similar to Mrs. Black's belief about developing a school culture that focuses on caring. The role of the principal is to serve as the role model for caring and to communicate that perspective to the faculty, staff, parents, and the community. The adults who work with students should demonstrate interpersonal and institutional caring. In this way, "caring is implemented and modeled at all levels of schooling" (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 90).

Beliefs About Effective Educational Practices

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown believed in educating the whole child. She also stated that "You can't educate a child if the child was not in school." She organized a Saturday School that allowed students and parents to discuss behavioral infractions and determine as a school and community what measures needed to be taken to decrease recurrences or to eliminate the problem. One subject of Saturday School discussions was consistent student tardiness to class. Mrs. Brown asked students to identify their reasons for being late. She discovered that students did not feel they had enough time during the transition between classes to socialize. Therefore, she adjusted the school schedule to allow students time to socialize. The faculty members realized they did not have to cut instructional time, but they provided guidelines for use of the social time that resulted in fewer offenders. She felt that the academic program was meeting students' academic needs and that having time to socialize met the need for socialization and positive interactions with others. She said, "Educators have to find out what is preventing students from being successful. And once you find out what it takes for them to be successful, then you put the safety nets in place."

Mrs. Black

Mrs. Black identified children in her school who were unsuccessful at learning to read. They were not progressing from remedial reading classes to the regular classroom. Mrs. Black used a team approach to determine the best strategies to use with remedial students. All content areas required modifications in order for the children to be able to read and comprehend the lesson content. After a few months, students who needed

reading practice were given instructional time to walk around the building and find adults who would listen to them summarize chapters. Each time they met an adult, they read to him or her and signed off on a page stating that they had read. These students, who months earlier had been intimidated by the idea of reading, were walking around finding parents in the building, seeking out teachers who were in the hall or office areas, and asking "Excuse me, can you listen to me read?" This made the children speak up. No adult could say "no" to a child who wanted to read.

> The bus driver, the person going into the cafeteria, wherever it was, if that child saw an adult, he or she would read a paragraph or a page. It gave children more confidence and helped to improve their reading skills.

Mrs. White

Mrs. White did not have good parental involvement at a school located in the _____Community of Memphis. Therefore, she had to find innovative ways of engaging parents. She implemented a "No Excuses" Night at one of her schools. She sent out flyers and had T-shirts printed that said *"No Excuses" Come to _____School and See Signs of Greatness.*This event kicked off her parent involvement program, which was necessary because parents would not participate in school activities unless their children were performing at a PTA event: "We had to do so much to get those parents coming to the school and attending meetings. I had to do a lot to turn this school around." She used Title I funds to rent buses to bring parents to the school for meetings. The community had three major apartment complexes, so she visited each and asked the resident manager if she could put up notes to let parents know about meetings and that the bus would provide transportation. She and the facilitator tied balloons around the bus stops to alert parents

about the pick-up locations. They offered dinner at the meetings (although later this was no longer allowed under Title I regulations). It took a semester to get the parents on-board, but by the end of the spring semester, about 50 parents were regularly attending the meetings, which was a great accomplishment for her school. She was not afraid to implement new ideas to meet the goals she set for the school.

Emergent Themes

Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Black discussed effective practices that were used to increase student success both academically and behaviorally. Both principals identified key issues in educating their student populations, and they targeted those areas and developed specific programs to address those needs. Mrs. Brown's goal was to educate the whole child. For children to benefit from the educational program, they had to attend school and follow the prescribed code of conduct. She established safety nets such as a Saturday School in an effort to support children in social and emotional areas. Mrs. Black identified reading as a weak area, and she provided interventions to increase students' reading abilities. Mrs. White's focus was on increasing parental involvement. She explained how parents were an important resource in educating students and developing support systems for children. My focus was to help students accept responsibility for their actions, and in so doing, students would develop good interpersonal and leadership skills.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

My effective practices had to do with the development of a discipline program that focused on helping students understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviors. This understanding led to the development of an action plan in conjunction with the teacher's assistance. The students took ownership of their misbehavior, but the teacher

played an important role in assisting the students in developing the action plan. Parents also became a part of the behavioral interventions. Therefore, caring for students was demonstrated by engaging significant others in the lives of students.

Although our effective practices were different, all of us focused on changing students' behaviors academically and socially. Therefore, my effective practices provided one step towards developing appropriate academic and interpersonal skills.

Early Influences on the Decision to Become an Administrator: Role of Parents

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown described both of her parents as being supportive throughout her years of schooling. Her mother was her first teacher. As early as Mrs. Brown could remember, she had a blackboard and chalk, and she would line up her dolls so she could teach them. Mrs. Brown recalls her mother taking her and her siblings to the library and reading to them. Her mother early on encouraged her to become a teacher. Her mantra was "you girls will go to college." "I want you to go to college so if you get married and to a no-good man, you can support yourselves." Going to school was never a question in her family; it was where the children were going to go. Homework also was assumed. Mrs. Brown was quite clear that the person who influenced her most about going to college was her mother.

Mrs. Black

Mrs. Black, in comparison, said that her parents greatly influenced her. During her childhood, reading, learning, and exploring a variety of topics was required and expected, never optional. She could not remember a time when going to college was

optional. Her parents sacrificed so that their children had extra opportunities to be prepared for the next level of education.

Mrs. Black majored in music as an undergraduate, with a focus on piano and a minor in organ; later, she added psychology as a minor. Her parents drove almost 90 miles every-other week throughout her high school years so that she could study piano from a teacher at Alabama State University. This was a rare opportunity, and it was a big sacrifice for them to drive her for all of those years.

Mrs. Black learned from her parents primarily by example. Her mother worked full time and attended college at night. Her father drove her mother to Selma, Alabama, about 50 miles away, once or twice a week. She and her siblings sat in the car with her father and completed their homework while their mother was in class. In addition, her aunts worked all day and took college courses in the evening. These role models demonstrated to her that you have to make sacrifices in terms of time and money to get ahead.

Mrs. White

Mrs. White explained that education was very important to her mother. Her mother grew up in a big family in Arkansas. She was not able to finish school at that point in time nor did most of her siblings.

> So [her mother] was like, "you all are going to finish school and everybody's going to do *something* when you finish high school. High school is not going to be the end of what you do. You can't sit in this house and do nothing."

All of the children in the family pursued extra schooling after high school. Her oldest brother went to Ole Miss and became a doctor. Another sister went to several vocational

schools: “most of us think of her as a caregiver.” Her little sister went to college and became a teacher. Two other sisters attended vocational school for secretarial studies.

Emergent Themes

Parents played a major role in the lives of all principals. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. White described their mothers as being significant influences during all levels of their education. Mrs. Brown described her mother as her first teacher because she provided instructional tools and devoted the time and energy to ensure that she was successful. Both Mrs. Brown and Mrs. White heard their mothers’ voices as they shared their perspectives about the importance of Black women receiving an education. The mothers did not want their girls to depend on governmental agencies or men to take care of them. They stressed the importance of being independent and pursuing degrees that would afford them opportunities. Based on their personal experiences, the mothers described the struggle their girls would face as Black women trying to get a job that would enable them to become self-sufficient if they were not educated. Therefore, they kept the idea of receiving an education at the forefront of the discussion.

Mrs. Black described both parents as role models for her pursuit of an education and a career. Both of her parents attended college and later became school administrators. Therefore, going to college and becoming a professional was never optional. In comparison, my parents did not have college degrees. But they wanted my siblings and me to have greater access to job opportunities, so they encouraged all of us to pursue a degree in a specialized area of study.

All of the principals felt that their parents understood the challenges they would face if they were not educated. Professional opportunities would be limited, and they

would be more susceptible to racism, classism, and sexism. The parents in each family expected all of their children to complete high school and continue their education, which would lead to greater job and career opportunities.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

Both of my parents played an important role in my educational and professional accomplishments. Throughout my life, they stressed to me and my siblings the importance of being independent and having the resources to take care of ourselves. They did not have the opportunity to go to college, and they wanted all six of their children to attain a college or technical school degree. They shared this expectation with us beginning in elementary school and continuing until we completed college. We would often hear them say, "You are going to college or vocational school because it will open the doors to greater job opportunities."

Other Early Influences

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown identified several adults who she considered positive influences throughout her early years of development. For example, she discussed a sixth-grade teacher in her elementary school who intervened when she felt Mrs. Brown was not being treated fairly. At the school, the teachers and administrators expected the students to be smart or above average in their ability levels. However, it was common knowledge that the smart kids were placed in a specific teacher's class. She was placed in this teacher's class because she arrived late in the school year, not because she was classified as one of the "smart" kids. Two students in that class were safety patrols, and Mrs. Brown wanted to become a safety patrol as well. Her teacher told her that she did not have the grade

point average to be a patrol. Another teacher investigated her grades and discovered that she had one of the highest grade point averages and IQs in the school. Therefore, she was able to become a safety patrol and eventually became the captain of the patrols.

Mrs. Brown also said that she frequently was ill with asthma and missed a lot of school in the seventh grade. Her teacher provided aspirin or cough drops for her when she started coughing. When she was not feeling well, her teacher asked a co-worker to get her a Coke from the teachers' lounge (which was forbidden). This teacher encouraged her to take her medication to prevent having to go home due to illness. She felt that the teacher cared for her in a special way. Although she frequently missed school, when she returned, the teacher was always kind and understanding and encouraged her to work hard. Mrs. Brown also mentioned a dance teacher who started a dance club on Wednesdays in the auditorium that was attended by about 200 girls. The dance teacher encouraged her and her classmates even though many of them could not dance, and she taught them to be graceful. One of the students went on to open her own dance studio. Mrs. Brown said that she wanted to emulate the dance teacher's positive example and attitude.

Mrs. Brown also said that she received the overt message from her neighbors that "you need to go to school." A high school teacher lived across the street and always encouraged her and the neighborhood children to go to college. Everyone who surrounded her talked about how proud they were of her accomplishments.

The church played a major role in developing self-confidence and allowing Mrs. Brown to use her gifts and talents. "The Black women in the church basically ran everything." She remembered participating in Vacation Bible School and Easter speeches. She also recalled telling Bible stories using felt characters. She delivered her

first sermon when she was 13 years old as the Youth Day speaker. Everyone thought she would become a minister. Through this experience, she began to develop the confidence to speak in public and to recite long passages.

Mrs. Brown's mother and father were very supportive of her participation in church activities. She said that her father was very critical but not in a negative sense. If he heard her do a speech that was less than excellent, he would say "You can do better next time." Her mother made suggestions such as "You need to put a little more emphasis on this." Mrs. Brown's church also offered acting as an extracurricular activity, which was an informal extension of the education process and gave her confidence in public speaking. A woman at the church named Ms. T. wrote the plays. Mrs. Brown said that if you can speak in front of people, you can do almost anything. She attributed all of these opportunities to do public speaking and to recite long passages to the Black women in her church.

Mrs. Black

In comparison, both of Mrs. Black's parents were teachers who later took on administrative roles. She said that she could not recall a time when she could not read or write. As a preschooler, she lived across the street from the school and often walked over and spent part of the day there, even before she was old enough to officially enroll. The first-grade teacher allowed her to come in along with the principal's grandson, who lived next door to the school. She said they learned to read the Dick, Jane, and Spot books. When they got tired, they would go home.

They both went back the next year as full-time students. Because they used the books the year before, the teacher provided a different set of books just for them, she

realized this years later. Mrs. Black said that she felt that this experience of not having to repeat something just because it was a convenience for the teacher had an impact on her. The teacher found a way to adjust the lessons to each student's abilities and letting them perform. This experience greatly influenced her.

Mrs. Black also remembers Mrs. _____, her sixth-grade teacher, as being a good role model. This teacher energetically taught all of the subject matter, and she was kind and respectful. Her classroom was positive and had an aura of being well-managed. She was serious and confident and wanted all of her students to succeed, so she spent time providing extra support if needed. Mrs. Black also recalled another teacher, Mr. _____, who was her fourth- and fifth-grade teacher. He often told the students to sit quietly as he handed out copies of the *New York Times* or other major newspapers of the time. He read current events, encouraging them to learn about events in other parts of the world. He also felt that young Black children needed to know what the world was like for Black people. He showed his students how they were left out of many of the events in the country unless it was a criminal offense.

Some of the young people in her community moved north to Detroit, Chicago, or New York to find jobs in factories, but very few went away to college. Mrs. Black decided to pursue a college degree because she felt it would provide opportunities for her.

Mrs. Black participated in the Young People's Church, where young people had the opportunity to stand up and speak up. Students gave speeches during Easter and Christmas. She was nervous about speaking in front of a group, but with practice, she overcame her fears. These experiences built her self-confidence and pride.

Her maternal grandparents did not attend school beyond the fifth grade, but they were adamant about their children getting an education. This was so important to them that they moved about 40 miles with their first few children to a house located across the street from the school. They sent all of their children through school and most did quite well. Mrs. Black was proud that she was able to go to school every day, because some of the young people were not able to do so. When students missed school, the teachers would start over in the textbook. She did not find it hard to move ahead with her schoolwork in spite of the repetition that occurred in the teaching of the lesson content. She was not angry about it, but that became an influence, too. Some teachers consistently took time to help students catch up and help them move along with other groups of children. These teachers did not try to keep all of the students in the same spot; instead, they provided a foundation for the students and allowed them to move along at their own pace. This type of learning heavily impacted how Mrs. Black later worked with children in changing individual lives.

Mrs. Black said that during high school she did not have the best principal. He was White and did not want Black students at his school. There were very few Black teachers on staff at the high school. She described herself as “a chubby girl” with poor self-esteem. She recalled her Black English teacher, who was often referred to as “Miss Prim and Proper”: “She made all of the Black students feel comfortable in class because she realized that they weren’t given the opportunity to attend school with their friends who were at the Black High School.” Mrs. White often said to herself, “When I grow up, I want to be like that and I am going to treat children the way she is treating us.” This

teacher made her feel comfortable, and she described the teacher as one who saw the good in a child and made a child feel good "and a light comes on."

Mrs. White

The third principal, Mrs. White, grew up in a close-knit community. She said that the neighbors watched her and the other neighborhood children play outside, and if arguments or fights began, they would intervene by talking to them about how to get along and about sharing toys and games. The neighbors felt responsible for helping to raise the children on their street. If a child's parents were not present, the neighbors would deliver the punishment and tell the parents about the incident.

Mrs. White also discussed two church women who influenced her: one was the minister's wife and the other was a teacher "and you just didn't mess up when it came to Miss_____ ." In her Sunday school class, this teacher would relate the week's lesson to the current school lessons. According to Mrs. White, "You'd better know how to read when you got in Miss _____'s Sunday school class, too! Because she was going to make you read or she wanted to know why you couldn't read the way it was supposed to be read! She made you think, gosh, I want to be one of those." Mrs. White felt that Miss _____ genuinely cared.

The minister's wife loved children but did not have any of her own. She directed the youth choir, which all of the children in the church joined. Every Thursday, the children had to walk to church for choir practice. They would complain, "but at the end, she had all of these treats for you when it was over. She made all of us feel special throughout the rehearsal. She was always encouraging us to do our best." Mrs. White said that her interactions with these two women strongly influenced her life.

Summary of Other Influences on the Decision to Become an Administrator

The people who influenced the lives of the Black women principals in this study were primarily Black women who lived in their communities—they were parents and grandparents, teachers, neighbors, and church women. These women took on the traditional role of "othermothering" in which female relatives and other women share support, nurturing, and sometimes childcare responsibilities with a child's real mother. This is a valued caring tradition in the Black community.

The Black women were committed to helping Black children succeed in all areas of their lives. Therefore, they made sacrifices in terms of their time, talents, and resources to make certain that Black children were prepared to compete in our society.

In addition to parents having an impact an impact on the lives of the principals, there were other adults who served as positive influences and role models for them as well as other young people in the community. Mrs. Brown and Mrs. White identified Black female neighbors, teachers, and church members who demonstrated care by encouraging them to do well in all of their life endeavors. These women provided opportunities for them to identify and use their gifts and talents, and they provided technical support in areas as needed.

Mrs. Black credited her maternal grandparents as indirect influences, because they did not receive much formal schooling but they encouraged their children to pursue an education. She realized from her grandparents' experiences that education was necessary for survival in our society.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

As an elementary student, I most admired my fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Phillips. Mrs. Phillips was probably about 25 years old at that time. She was a fair-skinned Black woman who was about 5'5" and had a medium-sized frame. She had thick hair that was tastefully styled. She dressed in professional attire daily. She wore high-heeled shoes, dresses or skirts, hosiery, and jewelry that complimented her outfit. Her attire was always flattering. She had a pleasant smile and a great sense of humor. She usually named me as classroom monitor whenever she had to leave the classroom.

She often reminded me of how seriously I took my role as classroom monitor. "When I left the room, I never worried about classroom behavior because I left you in charge." Mrs. Phillips recognized my leadership skills, and she often stated that she knew I would become successful in my educational endeavors. Mrs. Phillips observed that she had other students in the classroom that were skillful in a variety of areas. She would assign students to grade papers, cut out pictures, and assist with bulletin boards. She took on a "mothering role" to my classmates and me. She was kind but firm in terms of managing student misconduct. She was married but did not have children of her own, so she treated us as if we were her children.

Mrs. Phillips invited me to her house on a Friday to spend the night. After securing permission from my parents, she picked me up from my home. She approached the driveway in a late-model vehicle. I had not ridden in many new vehicles. She drove me to her house, which was located in an affluent African American neighborhood not far from where I lived. Many of the Blacks who lived in the neighborhood were business leaders, educators, doctors, lawyers, and politicians.

When we finally arrived at her house, I observed a nicely decorated home with beautiful furnishings in every room. She made me feel welcome by introducing me to her husband and giving me the freedom to move around her home, watch television, and enjoy the treats she purchased for me. During my visit, we discussed my career goals and aspirations, educational possibilities including college, occupational interests, and, most importantly, she encouraged me to "pursue my dreams with confidence."

Her resounding words have remained with me throughout my life, especially as I began to face many challenges in the school setting. Mrs. Phillips had many of the attributes of a caring teacher: she set limits for students, had high expectations, and encouraged us to do our best work. Mrs. Phillips served as a role model, and I have tried to emulate many of her positive qualities throughout my life. She was instrumental in my decision to become an educator.

Another Black woman who influenced me was my grandmother. She was one of my caretakers, especially during the summer months when my two younger sisters and I were on vacation from elementary school. She was affectionately referred to as "Big Mama." Big Mama did not meet a stranger; everyone was her neighbor. Not only did she care for us, but she demonstrated care for other children in the neighborhood. In the Black community, adults took on the responsibility of caring for all of the children who lived there. She would discipline my sisters and me as well as other children in the neighborhood by explaining why we had to behave in a specific manner. She felt that good manners were linked to positive life outcomes. When we were in my grandmother's presence, we had to behave like children by showing respect for adults and demonstrating good manners by using words such as "please" and "thank you."

My fifth-grade teacher and my grandmother saw that I had the potential to do positive things with my life and often reminded me of my responsibility, not only to other young people but to my siblings as well. They viewed me as a role model for other young people.

Similar to the principals in my research, other Black women also influenced my decision to become an administrator. These were mothers and/ or grandmothers, teachers, neighbors, and youth leaders at church. All of them realized my leadership potential and encouraged me to work towards a better life for myself. They provided activities and opportunities to help me develop my skills and talents.

Research Question 4

How Do the Experiences of Black Women Public School Principals From the South Relate to the Education of Different Ethnic/Marginalized Racial Groups?

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown felt that Black women can relate to marginalized groups because they are members of a marginalized group themselves. They can relate to the unfairness, the isolation, and the low expectations that society holds for them. She mentioned the buzz words “the at-risk population,” which she said sounds degrading. Mrs. Brown did not think of any children as being “at risk.” Instead, she asked “What a teacher could do to improve student achievement?” Regardless of the ethnic group, she said that “it is important that we hold high expectations for all children.” In her school, she pushed the motto: “The Whole School Serving the Whole Child.” Every morning on the intercom

she said, “Good morning, Saints and Scholars.” She planted success in their heads at the start of the school day. She talked about making deposits in educational bank accounts and said that “Being a scholar meant a student had to behave and had to achieve.” Thus, Mrs. Brown felt that students from diverse ethnic groups or backgrounds just need opportunities and exposure, and they need the best teachers they could possibly have to give them that exposure and those opportunities.

Mrs. Black

The second principal, Mrs. Black, realized that care is present when educators recognize and remember that there are cultural differences in the school. “Students are affected by what we do and say at the school level. “Every child has a brain and the ability to learn.” She said, “I have not seen many children who did not want to learn.” She had never experienced a child who did not achieve some degree of success if the right activities, lessons, or skills were presented to him or her. In her school, diversity included not only ethnic backgrounds but also varying food requirements, religious backgrounds, and styles of dress. Above all, the educators had to stay focused on helping the children learn. They had to determine what could be done to develop the best reader, the best thinker, the best mathematics or arithmetic skills, the best at taking a language course and making it their own. She compared the diverse nature of the school with having a “big table.” At this table sit 10 students, and there is a large amount of diversity in terms of parental expectations. The principal’s role is to keep teachers motivated to give the children the tools and training they need to succeed in school and in the world. She assisted teachers in moving students forward.

Mrs. Black attributed her appreciation for diversity to her music background. As a music teacher, one of the first things she looked at was the music and language from all school cultures . She remembered presenting music that represented different countries. “When I found something that came from a student’s previous location, I became inspired when I watched the expressions on the students’ faces when they heard music from their culture.” It was her way of saying welcome, and it gave her an opportunity to do something big for a child, that is, recognizing his or her culture.

Mrs. White

Similarly, Mrs. White explained how “growing up a Black woman in America has contributed greatly to what it means to be different or an ‘Other.’” She faced some of the same struggles and issues that her students experienced such as feeling excluded, rejected, and inadequate in high school and college and sometimes in her role as principal. “I think you are able to understand and relate to the children and those issues.” She remembered what it felt like to be excluded or not to have a voice.

> I can relate to having ten other people in that house and I can also relate to being babysitter all night long and when Johnny lays his head down, he is not being lazy. He was simply up all night or something else was going on all night last night or he actually did not have a bed to sleep in at that moment. I had to go to homes and visit with parents who would not come to school for anything. Was this a comfortable neighborhood or home ? Maybe not. had to decide what outcomes I would like for most of my students to experience.

As a school principal, she provided cultural activities that included the majority of the school population. She felt that designating one month of the year as Black History

Month did not do justice to the cultural representation in her school. She established a Cultural Awareness Day with a few faculty members. They developed guidelines for the types of artifacts students could bring to school that represented their cultural group. This allowed students from different income levels or ethnic groups to participate. Teachers guided students in completing art projects and writing activities that they then shared with their classmates. As a result, students learned about each other.

Emergent Themes

The principals addressed the needs of the diverse populations in their schools in ways that were appropriate for their students. Mrs. Brown focused on the academic needs of marginalized groups in her school by providing academic support for students who were classified as "at risk," Mrs. Black provided similar support for students who demonstrated slow academic progress due to a language barrier, lack of exposure to a variety of learning resources, or poor school attendance. Mrs. White developed a Cultural Awareness Day that highlighted important aspects of the various cultural groups represented in her school. This was her method of acknowledging diversity and making children feel included in the school setting. I led my faculty, parents, and the community in converting a public school into a charter school in order to secure funding to enhance the school's curriculum. Caring was tailored to fit the needs of diverse student populations.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

The school where I served as principal had a diverse student population: African Americans, Whites, Hispanics, Koreans, Japanese, and other groups. The school population also included diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. The faculty and

community wanted to provide educational programs that addressed a wide range of academic needs such decreasing the language barrier that impacted communication between teachers and students, increasing parental involvement, and providing more technology to enhance student learning. Based on these goals, I led the faculty and staff in converting to a charter school. Becoming a charter school provided funding to be able hire a foreign language teacher and upgrade our computer lab, becoming a charter school meant that we could require that parents volunteer a specified amount of time yearly. We were able to develop a school curriculum tailored to the needs of our student population with funding from the state.

As principals, all of us recognized the importance of addressing the needs of ethnic/marginalized/racial groups. My method for addressing the needs of these groups involved a major undertaking by converting a public school to a charter. By becoming a charter school, we were able to develop programs and activities based on the needs of the student population. In the school where I served as principal, there were diverse religious groups, numerous racial and ethnic groups, and a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Some of the activities required funding such as the hiring of a Spanish teacher and the development of a computer lab. The State of Georgia Charter School Program provided the technical support and funding we needed to implement new curricula and activities to address the needs of the students.

Research Question 5

Can Life Experiences of Black Women Principals From the South Foster New Ways of Understanding Care and Education?

Mrs. Brown

Mrs. Brown's role models were primarily Black women: her mother, teachers, neighbors, a college professor, and church women. Throughout her formative years, she was surrounded by strong women. These women were like mamas, and they were role models for how children should be treated. She learned from their examples, and she practiced with the children in her school many of the behaviors she observed growing up. As her story shows, we become the mothers of the children to whom we have been entrusted. In doing so, we treat other people's children the way we want others to treat our children. Like the village or community where she grew up,

> Every child in the community becomes your child and every child in your school becomes your child. Because they are your children, you want to give them the best that you possibly can. Although you aren't their biological mother, you want to educate them well so when they leave the school environment, they can say,"Somebody cared about me. Somebody cared enough to educate me the way they wanted their children to be educated."

Mrs. Brown explains, "When we care for children, we do a better job of educating them." We no longer view the principalship as a job or profession; it becomes a "calling" or a form of "servanthood," because that is what she observed in her schools during her

formative years. According to Mrs. Brown, Black women principals must realize that they answer to a higher power. She realized it was not about her nor was it about the salary—it was about the difference she had been called on to make in somebody's life. "When you couple that 'calling' with the 'nurturing,' you have a whole different kind of animal."

Mrs. Black

Similarly, Mrs. Black said that being a principal means being in a mothering or parenting role. She was given the title of "mama" because she was the leader in the building, and she took several students under her wing by counseling them, providing extra academic support, and just being there when they needed someone to listen to them. She reflected on the type of mentoring/ mothering she had received in college from Mrs. Johnson, her music teacher. Mrs. Johnson went that extra step, mirroring the kind of behavior she saw in her teachers and other Black women in her family, the church, and the neighborhood. She wanted to emulate many of those behaviors. She felt that her mothering came from experience—from working, from her home life, including her community in rural Alabama. She viewed her role as *loco parentis*: you are the child's parent during the time they spend with you. She felt it was her role to lead the faculty and staff in protecting the children in all ways and making sure they were being served in the best educational setting possible.

Mrs. Black also felt that teachers who seem to add that extra something—not just the content, but the *caring* for what they do—are the most successful educators. "

> Also people who did that extra mile for <u>me</u> were, I thought, my most successful educators. They were the people who cared about the total child; they cared about

> what they learned; they wanted to see you well-adjusted; they also wanted to see you, as much as humanly possible, happy.

She believed the same thing applies to caring principals.

For example, Mrs. Black recalled growing up with a young man named Curtis. Curtis had a speech problem; he stammered a great deal. “There were no speech teachers at that time, back in the late 50s, early 60s, and this was the late 50s.” He was in the next classroom—her mother was the fifth- and sixth-grade teacher next door, and she was in the third- and fourth-grade classroom. The one person was allowed to interrupt the teacher in her classroom, Ms. _____, was Curtis, and she sometimes wondered why.

> Curtis has such a hard time saying “Excuse me, Ms. _____”—that would take a while. “Ms. _____ would like to borrow an eraser” or “Miss _____ would like to see somebody”—it didn’t happen every day, but it was fairly frequent, and I later found out, probably 35 years later, Ms. Sheldon and my mother had a plan. This was so Curtis would have to come and somehow get these words out and speak. That’s the extra care. That’s what nobody else is doing—they’re pushing you to that next step—he thought he was being the major focus in the classroom. But it was so that he would learn to speak and be able to speak in front of others. His brother was in my classroom, and I had that experience of talking to him just a few months ago. I said, do you remember when he’d come in and everything, and he said, yes, yes. And it would just be so hard because I wanted to say the words for him. The adults had a plan, but we didn’t know what it was! It’s taking you under the wing, that’s when the teacher who does what is necessary to help you develop and help you go further.

According to Mrs. Black, caring principals can see where children need extra attention or encouragement. For example, she discussed sending an extremely shy child on an errand to a few classrooms. “You try to find ways to encourage them. You involve teachers, and you talk to the parents about ways to help a student move forward.” She said that this extra push can move the child from being the tail-lights on the car to being the headlights.

> It’s the extra care, that working with parents, the teacher, and particularly the child. Whatever we can do through the school setting or the extracurricular settings—that idea of getting *everybody* to the front of the bus, to being the headlights, should be our goal.

Mrs. White

Similarly, Mrs. White viewed the life experiences of Black women administrators from the South as focusing on the village concept of educating children. In other words, everyone who entered the students’ space had a role in his or her education. Thus, she said that Black women have historically involved other people in educating children. They have used their own resources and invited the community to become partners in supporting all children. According to Mrs. White, this is where the humanistic view of education can be observed. We focus on the education of all children regardless of race and cultural backgrounds. Black women can relate to many of the experiences of children; therefore, empathy and compassion become an important part of educating children.

Emergent Themes

According to the principals interviewed, all of the adults associated with the children in the neighborhood participated in their growth and development. It did not matter whether or not the adults were educated. They wanted Black children to have as much exposure as possible to social and educational activities to enhance their knowledge of events in the real world and prepare them for future endeavors. Other models of care seem to intimate caring for individual children for whom the adult is responsible, but African American models of care emphasize caring for the whole group as well as for individuals. In addition, caring for these women was coupled with justice. The three principals wanted their students to have equal access to resources, opportunities, and nurturing from the adults they encountered in the school setting.

Other-parenting became evident in the lives of the Black women principals interviewed—Black women teachers, principals, and church women became involved in their lives and in the lives of other Black children who lived in their communities. Black parents and educators historically worked together for the good of all children. As they worked to uplift the race, they hoped that all children would benefit from such advancement.

Growing up in the South provided an insight into how caring for children both collectively and individually would enhance the lives of all of the children. Focusing on one group or on individual students would not promote or enhance the race. Therefore, the focus in the South was to work towards developing a better life for Blacks in our society.

The Black women principals expressed their educational beliefs about caring by describing how one's practice best illustrates that you care for children. They did not provide theoretical aspects of caring but instead discussed ways in which caring for children can be intentional and can be reflected in their daily work as principals. They sought ways to support children with caring acts in the school setting. Because caring was prominent in the Black communities of the South, they learned to care early in their lives; thus, they entered the profession with practical examples of what it meant to care for students. The effective practices they used were methods for supporting a caring environment. Each principal knew what it meant to care for children and the practices they used originated from their personal experiences and definitions of care.

All of the principals had Black women role models for care during their early and professional years of life. All three principals described their parents (particularly their mothers), teachers, women in the church, and Black women in the community as being role models or influences. These women interceded when problems arose at school, encouraged them to continue to work in spite of the obstacles that were present, and demonstrated how they could survive in adverse situations. They wanted them to be become independent thinkers and decision-makers. Although, some of these women did not have degrees or had not finished high school themselves, they still found ways to encourage young people. All three principals emphasized how their mothers were their first teachers and how their mothers communicated their expectations for success.

The principals expressed themes of caring based on previous life experiences. They understood that there would be obstacles in terms of providing educational

programs and activities for children due to limited financial resources, so they had to be creative, resourceful, and persistent to get what they needed to support children.

All of the principals felt that living and working in the South meant that educational and professional opportunities would be limited for Black women if they did not focus on staying in school and going to college. They witnessed discrimination first-hand as they lived in segregated communities and attended segregated schools. Two of them attended predominantly White colleges or universities and met much discrimination in that environment. As they entered their professions, they realized that men dominated certain positions in education, and they had to wait much longer to secure administrative positions. Living through the Civil Rights Era helped them realize that fairness and justice was not present in many of the schools during that time period nor was it present in the schools during their tenure as principals. Therefore, they were determined to make sure that all children in their schools received the best educational experiences possible.

The life experiences of Black women administrators can foster new ways of understanding care and education. Five major points stood out from the interviews as new ways of understanding care and education : a) A variety of support systems emerged that focused on support and care for Black children, such as parents, grandparents, neighbors, teachers, school administrators, the community, and the church; b) caring was the foundation of the education that occurred within the school setting; c) the principals viewed their roles as more than a school administrator but as the "other-parent," advocate, or "servant leader"; d) caring is universal—all students want to feel cared for; and e) adults are role models for caring.

Researcher's Autobiographical Reflections

My perspective on how Black women public school administrators from the South can foster new ways of caring centers on how the African American educational tradition emphasizes care and justice for all children. In such a setting, children in the school and community would have equal access to resources that would enhance their lives academically and socially. Our current school settings sometimes places emphasis on children who are smart and forget about providing the same opportunities for children who are academically challenged. A new perspective for caring would be to provide opportunities for all children to receive enrichment lessons, higher level thinking activities, and strategies that support a caring and just school setting. Teachers in predominantly African American schools want children to have the same exposure to fine arts, fieldtrips, and guests speakers as predominantly white schools. The women in my study were educated in predominantly Black elementary and high schools during the 1950s and 1960s, and they were a part of a caring school culture that existed in the schools during that time period. These schools had dedicated and committed administrators and teachers who worked together in ways that demonstrated care and responsibility for the development of children, families, and neighborhoods. Due to the lack of funding for activities and instructional materials, African American educators sought out resources that could be used to develop the academic programs in segregated schools in the South, which received little or no monetary support from local boards of education.

Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004) suggest that "within the African American tradition, a strong culture of care existed that can be built upon in efforts to restructure

urban schools" (p. 98). As we look at the current state of education, we see that it continues to place emphasis on comprehensive school improvement and accountability in an effort to make students college and career ready. These are significant goals and outcomes for American students as we strive to prepare them to compete in a global world. In addition to preparing students for college and careers, we want schools to prepare students to become caring and just in their interactions with other members of society. There are important aspects of caring found in the African American culture that demonstrates how we work to preserve and improve the community with the intent of improving life circumstances for all children.

My perspective on the new ways of caring is similar to that of the principals in this study. All of us agree that we had to develop a strong support system for students, which meant that we sometimes took on parenting roles with students and that we engaged the faculty in providing a similar type of care for students. Providing the best education possible meant that sacrifices had to be made—time, finances, and our families—in order to accomplish our goals of serving students. Caring and nurturing were evident in my interactions with students as I worked to provide academic support for students. Most importantly, I became a role model for caring. Students were able to observe caring behaviors, and it was my goal for them to emulate those behaviors.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings that were derived from this study relating to Black women principal's ethics of care. Three Black women principals from the South participated in this study and shared their experiences of living and working in the South and of caring for and educating diverse youth. Five findings emerged from this study: (1) Black women principals' ethics of caring are socially and culturally derived; (2) Black women principals simultaneously engage in interpersonal and institutional forms of caring that are intimately connected to issues of justice; (3) Life in the South was both a curse and a blessing for Black women principals; and (4) Black women principals are servant leaders who sacrifice themselves for educational justice. Below, these findings are presented, and their implications for contemporary educational policies and practices are discussed.

The ethics of care articulated by Black women principals in this study were socially and culturally derived from the acts of caring they received from parents, relatives, and other influential members of their communities (**Finding 1**). All of the principals described their parents (particularly their mothers), teachers, and women in the church and the community as being positive role models or influences for the caring they engaged in. Stories told by the participants suggested that caring women in their communities interceded when problems arose at school. These caring adults encouraged the participants to continue to work despite the obstacles that were present and they demonstrated how the participants and other neighborhood children could survive in

adverse situations. Although some of these community care-givrers did not have degrees or had not finished high school, they still found ways to encourage young people.

The partipant accounts of caring adults in their neighborhoods is supported by literature on African American kinship networks. In African American culture, women in the community, neighbors, gandmothers, and friends all played important roles in assisting birth mothers with caring for children. These caregivers are described as kin or "fictive kin," and they worked collectively to support African American children. The adults in these relationships provided emotional and financial support, goods, services, and childcare, all of which contributed to maintaining intergenerational and community connections (Everett, 2004, p. 158).

Like the caring adults who influenced them, the Black women principals in this study engaged in caring practices that were designed to benefit the whole child and the whole student population in their schools. Their practices were connected to the practices of caring that they received growing up. As principals, the participants wanted their students to have equal access to resources, opportunities, and nurturing from adults they encountered in the school setting.

The Black women principals in the study were keenly aware of the needs of their student populations and thus identified areas of focus in their schools that would help students succeed academically within a nurturing and caring school environment. They selected curricula and extracurricular activities with caring in mind. Two of the principals focused on developing the whole child, and in so doing, they developed activities that addressed students' academic, social, and emotional needs. The other principals in the study developed innovative ways to engage parents in the education of their children. The

common thread of caring among all of the principals was to prepare students for confronting inequitable and undemocratic social structures (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 229).

The effective practices that the principals identified and implemented resulted from their understanding of what students need in order to succeed in school and later in life. The Black women principals explored innovative ideas and reform methods used in school restructuring and school improvement models. The principals expressed themes of caring based on previous life experiences. They understood that there would be obstacles in terms of providing educational programs and activities for children due to limited financial resources, so they had to be creative, resourceful, and persistent in doing what was necessary to support children. The Black women principals demonstrated care for students through the effective practices they implemented in the schools. The caring acts were intentional and were reflected in their daily work as principals. They sought ways to support children through educational activities and events that were motivating, interesting, and inclusive. Because caring was prominent in the Black communities in the South, they learned to care early in their lives. They entered the profession with practical examples of what it meant to care for students and the effective practices grew out of their personal experiences and understanding of care.

If care becomes the foundation of education in our school settings, we must encourage school administrators and teachers to develop a school culture that exemplifies care in all aspects of schooling for children. We first and foremost must identify principals and teachers who are committed to developing a caring school environment. In addition to the principal encouraging teachers to develop a culture of care in the

classroom and in the school setting, the principal engages others who are associated with the students (parents, grandmothers, community, etc.) in becoming a part of a caring community where adults take a vested interested in making children feel cared for. If care becomes the foundation of education, the curriculum will become more student-focused or child-centered in ways that addresses specific needs of children. If there are large language barriers in the school, soliciting help from outside resources or using resources within the school setting to provide support for children who are speakers of other languages demonstrates care for students.

For each of the participants in this study, institutional and interpersonal caring took place simultaneously, sending positive messages to students that their principal cared for them and wanted them to become successful students and adults. "Interpersonal caring refers to addressing the academic advancement, personal needs as it relates to family and the home environment, and social and emotional development of students" (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 90).

The following are some examples of interpersonal caring described by the principals in this study: providing funds to sponsor students on fieldtrips, soliciting donations for the "Toys for Tots" campaign, and privately sharing personal health supplies with a student. "Institutional caring refers to the structures that principals implement in schools for the enhancement and personal growth of students" (Siddle Walker & Snarey, p. 90). A few examples of the institutional structures that were prevalent in African American schools include extracurricular programs, assembly programs, the homeroom plan, and the curriculum (Siddle Walker & Snarey). The principals in this study identified several institutional caring structures including

activities designed to increase parental involvement, Saturday School, tutorials, and "special days" designated for honoring student accomplishments.

Black women principals in this study simultaneously engage in interpersonal and institutional forms of caring that are intimately connected to issues of justice **(Finding 2)**. The Black women principals in this study practiced caring in ways that promoted justice, fairness, and equality as they provided curricula that addressed the needs of diverse student populations. The interpersonal and institutional caring for students that they practiced mirrored the caring that had been prevalent in segregated African American schools throughout the South (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004), and the "othermothering" they practiced was a common feature in the African American culture in which they grew up.

According to Siddle Walker and Snarey (2004), African American schools of the past did not focus on one aspect of the students' lives but on multiple issues that could affect student performance. The caring that was observed in segregated schools was a commitment to justice. Students were educated in such a way that they would use their knowledge and skills to combat the inequities that existed in our society. They would work to accomplish justice and fairness for humankind. Therefore, caring was a means to an end for the Black community. African American principals had a deep compassion and understanding of the communities in which they worked (Lomotey, 1989). Similarly, the principals in this study worked to provide care and justice for all students under their leadership, which offers an important example for current leadership practices.

Life in the South was both a curse and a blessing for Black women principals who participated in this study (**Finding 3**). They described negative consequences of growing up in the racist and sexist south, but also described the efforts of caring community members to shield them from and help them to negotiate the dangers of southern living. While they experienced the negative treatment associated with life in the segregated south, the participants also acknowledge the insights into oppression that life in the South provided then. Growing up, receiving an education, and working in the South helped the Black women principals recognize their marginalized status and impacted how they interacted with other marginalized groups in their schools. As a result, caring became the foundation of the education that occurred within the school setting. Thus, life in the South was described as both a curse and a blessing for participants.

All of the principals interviewed for this study felt that living and working in the South meant that educational and professional opportunities would be limited for Black women if they did not focus on staying in school and going to college. They witnessed discrimination first-hand when they lived in segregated communities and attended segregated schools. Two of them attended predominantly White colleges or universities and encountered a lot of discrimination in that environment. When they entered their professions, they realized that men dominated certain positions in education and that they would have to wait much longer to secure administrative positions. Living through the Civil Rights Era helped them realize that fairness and justice had not been present in many schools during that time period nor was it present in some of the schools during their tenures as principals. They, therefore, were determined to make sure that all children in their schools received the best educational experiences possible.

The principals were aware of the marginalized groups that existed in their schools such as English Language Learners (ELL), special education students, and diverse ethnic or religious groups. As Black females, they were able to relate to these groups of students because of the discrimination and alienation they had experienced in the past. As principals, they addressed the differences and the needs of marginalized groups by implementing reading programs and special days that targeted the needs and interests of specific groups of students. The goal was to include students in different aspects of the school environment and as well as incorporating aspects of the students' cultures into the school.

The principals in this study supported an inclusive school environment where diverse ethnic groups were represented in school activities and where teaching strategies responded to and included those differences. Not only did they acknowledge the ethnic diversity that existed, but they also acknowledged the diversity in learning styles. "Learning to accept individual differences and to celebrate diversity as an enriching experience are broad principles consistent with democratic values and the creation of caring schools that support children's growth and development" (Banks & Banks, 2005, p. 391). The principals modeled inclusive behaviors through their actions, not just in theory. Students had visible evidence of an inclusive school setting as they personally decided whether to participate in programs and activities.

Growing up in the South provided participants in this study with insights into how caring for children both collectively and individually could enhance the lives of all children. Focusing on one child in an effort to improve his or life circumstances would enhance the lives of all children. The principal is the role model for caring and sets the

tone for caring in the school. By observing the principal and other adults, children will come to know what it means to care and practice caring acts towards others. Therefore, the focus in the South was to work towards developing a better life, not only for Blacks in our society but for all students.

The Black women principals in the study viewed their roles as more than a school administrator but as the "other parent," "advocate," or "servant leader," and they stated that they made sacrifices for educational justice (**Finding 4**) during their tenure as principals. The participants in the study viewed their roles as more than school administrators who were charged with carrying out the day-to-day tasks of monitoring instruction, supervising teachers and staff, and implementing the academic programs. Although these professional tasks are extremely important, the participants in this study viewed their roles as servant leader. They were self-sacrificing leaders who worked hard to develop educational opportunities that would provide students with the survival skills necessary to succeed in a segregated society.

Greenleaf (1991) describes a servant leader as a person who feels that she needs to serve and then seeks to lead in order to serve. In addition, a servant leader is one who makes sure that other people's needs are being served. There is a distinction between the principal who aspires to lead first and a principal who aspires to serve. A servant leader is defined as "one who wants to serve first and then seeks to lead in order to serve others" (Greenleaf, 1991, p. 7). Alston (2005) describes characteristics of servant leadership in relation to Black women educational leaders: "they have a strong sense of efficacy and they are empowered to carry out their mission to serve, lead and educate children" (p. 681). Woodson (2013) describes the importance of service by stating the following: "If

we can finally succeed in translating the idea of leadership into that of service, we may soon find it possible to lift the Negro to a higher level" (p. 81).

Some examples of servant leadership emerged during the interviews. Mrs. Brown developed a Saturday School, which meant that she had to devote time to developing a curriculum and to attending the school. Mrs. Black sought out various strategies such as developing individualized curricula for students. Mrs. White developed a parent involvement model in an effort to engage more parents in the school setting. Greenleaf (as cited in Marina & Fonteneau, 2012, p. 72) also stresses that servant leaders help to build community within the institutions they lead. The African American women principals in my study took on the role of "othermothering," which demonstrates their commitment to sharing in the responsibility of caring for students. Another example of how they practiced servant leadership is through the development of curricula that consciously included marginalized groups in the school setting. Children's needs were always at the forefront of the academic program.

These African American women made sacrifices as they tried to fulfill their roles as principals. The sacrifices sometimes cost them relationships with husbands, children, other family members, and friends. The Black women principals in my study described the many demands of the principalship and the personal challenges it presented for their families. For example, Mrs. Brown said that if a person were to approach the principalship correctly, it had to be a "24-7 job." She reflected on having to leave home in the middle of the night and sometimes during family events to take care of school problems. Mrs. Brown explained that she experienced problems similar to those most families experience raising adolescents or teenagers, and many family situations had to

be placed on hold because of her job. She said that she sacrificed a marriage to her principalship. She described being a principal as stressful, and this stress manifested itself in health issues—she had high blood pressure and struggled with insomnia. She also felt that being a principal is different for males: women typically manage the household and the children, which makes the principalship less stressful for men.

As an African American administrator, I faced similar trade-offs between the job and my family. I retired two years early because my son was entering middle school and I felt that he needed extra support in order to succeed. It was a major sacrifice because I ended my career early so that I could meet the demands of my family. Although my husband was very active in my son's life, I felt the need to take on the role of caretaker, which enabled me to interact more positively with my son both at home and at school.

The principals in my study demonstrated servant leadership as they sacrificed time with their families and their monetary resources, which they used to purchase instructional materials and services. They focused on creating an educational environment that would develop the "whole child" (Siddle Walker, 1996). "Children were not just to be recipients of academic instruction: rather, school was to be a place where all the varied needs of their student body could be addressed" (Siddle Walker, 1996, p. 204). The principals provided what they thought was necessary for student survival: a positive school culture that emphasized the importance of student/teacher relationships. They implemented activities that encouraged the development of students' talents and skills, and they demonstrated high expectations for student achievement. The lack of financial resources did not impair their ability to demonstrate care for children. The institutional structures they created required the principals to make personal and

professional sacrifices to support the schools' programs. They remained focused on their most precious commodity, the students.

In addition, servant leaders demonstrate a strong sense of spirituality, which allows them to perform their tasks with excellence (Alston, 2005). Marina and Fonteneau (2012) describe how spirituality and faith are natural extensions of servant leadership. The principals in my study did not discuss spirituality as a motivating factor for how they worked and interacted with children. However, one participant viewed the principalship as a "calling," stating that we treat children the way we want to be treated or the way we want others to treat our children. Another principal viewed the principalship as a ministry—you are placed there to serve children and you serve wherever you are assigned to work.

As principals, they demonstrated care and concern to ensure success for all students. They advocated for African American students in terms of making certain they had equal access to academics, extracurricular activities, and career options. In segregated schools in the South, Black principals and teachers worked as advocates for students by making certain they were aware of scholarship opportunities, academic support and other resources available to struggling students (Brooks, 2012). These Black women principals who lived and practiced in the South demonstrated resilience, strength, and determination as they struggled to advance themselves personally and professionally (Baker, 2009). Despite the injustices they experienced such as racial and sexual discrimination, they remained focused, positive, and unwavering in their goals to become successful adults and professionals. What sustained them throughout this period were the

Black caring women who helped them endure the struggles as they tried to advance themselves.

Historically, African American women have demonstrated care and concern not only for themselves but for the African American community as a whole. This is an example of "womanism," which describes "individuals who are committed to the survival and wholeness of an entire people" (Walker, 1983, p. xi). The African American principals in this study did not only commit to the survival of African Americans or to the provision of educational opportunities for African American students, but to the survival of humanity. The goal was to identify a political strategy that would ensure that students have the right to live as whole, free, and liberated human beings (Douglas, 1994). The principals in this study viewed education as a political strategy that would liberate marginalized students and combat oppression: as a result of their educational experiences, these students would be able to work with others in a unified community. In this way, all students become a catalyst for change in terms of eliminating oppression and alienation within our society.

Sacrificing Black Women: An Unresolved Issue

As I reflect on the lives of African American women in the United States, I see that we have taken on sacrificial roles as caregivers and nurturers. This role emerged during life on slave plantations and as women became domestic workers, and it continues to impact our current role expectations. The stereotype of natural caretaker continues to permeate the lives of African American women today, leaving them to take on self-sacrificing roles in which care for others takes precedence over care for oneself (Lake, 2012). This was certainly the case for myself and for the Black women principals who

participated in this study. The sacrifices made by Black women for the good of humanity seems to be taken for granted with little focus on the harm that comes to Black women as a result of these sacrifices. The persistent sacrifice of Black women in the field of education and otherwise, is troubling and worthy of continued research (Roseboro and Ross, 2009).

Conclusion

This study honors Black women in the South who were “othermothers,” “sistas,” and friends who supported Black children in the South during the late 1950s and 1960s. The life experiences of the Black women principals who participated in this study revealed interconnections between the caring these wonen received and the care they provided to students. This research also revealed that Black women principals’ simultaneous practices of interpersonal and institutional caring was intimately connected to these women’s pursuit of educational justice. Finally, the life experiences of the participants illluminated the practices of servant leadership Black women principals engaged in and the significant sacrifices they made to educate all children.

The life experiences of Black women principals from the South can foster new ways of understanding care and education when focus is placed on the commitment these women had to justice and the creative strategies they utilized to help children suceed despite financial, social, and beaureaucratic obstacles.Serious reflection on the lives of the Black women principals in this study makes clear the love, support, nurturing, and care that impacted their lives and enabled them to become the servant leaders that they are.

This dissertation began with a hit song from the 1970s entitled “A Song for You,” written by Leon Russell in 1970. I used the song in the title of my dissertation to acknowledge the dedication and unselfish support of the Black women who influenced my life and the lives of many other Black children. They devoted their time, energy, and financial resources to support the Black women principals in this study and countless other Black women and girls throughout the South.

“Rondo” is a musical form that repeats the main theme over and over again. One of the recurring themes in this study is the presence of Black women at every developmental stage in the lives of the Black women principals who participated in this study— in their early schooling, in high school, during college, when they were teachers, and during their principalships. I used the research equivalent of rondo in this study to connect themes of caring through the past and present life experiences of myself and the three Black women administrators who shared their stories with me. These back-and-forth movements between analysis of my own life story and those of my participants illustrate connections between self and society among Black women. These connections are significant because they demonstrate the support system that Black women have often provided for each other in African American communities. This support was evident in the “othermothering” that women provided children in African American communities and through the creation of safe spaces for African American women where they could express themselves freely and openly without reflecting mainstream ideologies.

The early presence of African American women in the lives of the participants provided safe spaces Collins (1990) shares three primary safe spaces for African American women: relationships with one another, African American women’s blues

traditions, and the voices of African American authors. In my research, the Black women principals established relationships with other Black women in all phases of their lives. Through these interactions, they gained important knowledge about how to survive as African American women. Although mothers had the strongest influence in the lives of the women interviewed, other women provided affirmation and support in terms of their educational and professional choices.

African American women provided a safe and secure venue for other Black women to be able to speak freely, to obtain advice, and to receive encouragement. These types of conversations began very early in their development. Many of the participants remembered other African American women telling them that they must get an education to be able to compete with their White counterparts. There were also conversations about career and college choices. The main point here is that Black women do have safe spaces where they can express their viewpoints: these safe spaces help in resisting oppression by providing places for Black women to express themselves freely.

Collins (2000) explains the importance of stories and narratives that describe the lived daily experiences of African American women. Black feminist thought recognizes the emergence of a number of themes that construct the lives of African American women and emphasizes the feminist perspective that race, gender, and class are parts of an overlapping oppression. During the interviews, the Black women in the study constructed their own voices and self-defined viewpoints, thereby rejecting the stereotypes that Black women have been subjected to in the past through racist and sexists images (Collins, 2000). My hope is that this research will become another safe

space for Black women principals to read about and be encouraged by the servant leadership of the participants in this study.

My dissertation concludes with a song that I wrote to honor the Black women who participated in this study and the strong and caring Black women who nurtured my own servant leadership. They were encouragers and supporters and were ever-present in the lives of younger Black women. We know they will always be there, if only in our hearts.

"I Will Always Be There"

Through the sunshine and the rain

The joy and the pain

With the sunrise

After gray skies

When a door closes

After smelling fresh roses

A new birth of life

Through fortune and strife

When life ends

And a new one begins

Safely in His arms

In a palace of glorious charms

In the rondo of life

Where there is more pain and strife

Look up at the sky

With love and hope

I Will Always Be There

—Lyrics: Beverly Cox

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

COMMUNITY / NEIGHBORHOOD

1. Describe the community where you spent your childhood and teenage years. Include the name of the city, state and historical facts. Describe the neighborhood demographics.
2. Describe the different social justice movements in the city or neighborhood, e.g. Civil Rights Movement, Women's Rights, etc.
3. Who were the people that impacted your life in terms of life choices during childhood, teen years and adulthood (going to college or becoming an educator, e.g.)? Tell how each one influenced your life.
4. Who or what influenced your decision to become a school administrator? Were there other Black women that impacted your education and career choices? If so, describe?
5. Did teachers or administrators where you attended school or college influence your decision to become an educator? If so, please explain?

FAMILY/COMMUNITY

1. Describe your immediate and extended family.
2. Describe growing up in your environment (family values/behavioral expectations).
3. How did your family view education? How did your parents influence your educational accomplishments?
4. What kind of family support (emotional, financial) did you get when you decided to pursue your college education?
5. Describe individuals (family or neighbors) who influenced your educational and professional decisions.

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. Where did you attend college? Describe your college environment?
2. Why did you decide to attend this college?
3. Describe the mentors or individuals that influenced your career choice to become an administrator. What character traits did they possess?
4. How did your college experiences affect your career choice?
5. Describe the obstacles that blocked your progress in terms of your education? This includes classism, racism, and sexism.
6. How did you overcome these obstacles?
7. Did you apply these methods for overcoming obstacles to your profession as a school administrator?

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

1. Describe your professional experiences in sequence (teacher-principal).
2. Why did you choose to become a principal?
3. Describe briefly the demographics of one of your schools?
4. How did you meet the needs of your “At Risk” population?
5. Did you provide special curriculum activities for the general population? Describe a few of them.
6. How do the academic or social activities implicate care for students?

CHURCH EXPERIENCES

1. What types of church activities contributed to your academic, social, and moral development as a child or teen?
2. Describe the adults that were mentors or influenced your educational or career decisions?
3. What was the role of your church during that time period?
4. Did you observe caring adults in the church setting? Describe a few of them.

THE PRINCIPALSHIP

1. Provide a description of one of the schools where you served as principal. Describe the school population, socioeconomic status, faculty & staff, and the community surrounding the school.
2. Describe some unique features about your school. What made it stand out in the community?
3. Describe the student population-racial make-up, and socioeconomic status. Does the community have primarily single family dwellings, apartments or other living arrangements?
4. What are some specific or unique needs of your student population?
5. What curriculum activities, programs, or events did you implement to address the specific needs of the student population? Explain your rational for implementing these special programs or events

APPENDIX B

NARRATIVES OF PRINCIPALS

Interview with Mrs.Brown

Transcribed by Elizabeth Wilson

NOTE: I have used [ ] for unintelligible words or phrases.

Q: Start by telling me a story, one special event or something that happened while you were a principal that was an example of caring for students– something you can share to get us started.

A: I was a principal and I had just been told that the College Board had inequities. Now I was very much aware that to teach AP classes was like a plum for teachers. And they had small classes, they had the brighter students, and when we started talking about opening the AP classes up to students who actually may not have had the best grades, but for some reason they demonstrated ability, teachers balked at that and they weren't very pleased. I had this student in my school that came to me and he said, I want to take AP chemistry. And I said, well, what do your grades look like? And he said to me, to be honest, I haven't been the best student that I could be, but my teacher, Miss _____, according to her, she says I should be able to do a good job. So I said, well, let me go talk to the teacher. And I went to talk Miss _____ and Miss _____ said, yes, this young man can do the work. She said now he made a "D" in my class, but he can do the work.

So I talked to the AP chemistry teacher, and he said, I don't know. His background doesn't support it. And I went back to the student, I said, you know the teacher has some questions about it. He said, I know I can do it! He said, I've just been bored, I've been messin' around. I said, OK, I'll make a deal with you. I said I know who is going to teach you in that AP chemistry class first semester, and if you don't do well, then next semester, you'll have to drop it. He said, I promise I won't disappoint you. We put him in the class and he made a "B" in AP chemistry. Then – this was his senior year – and so in his senior year, I saw him walking around the hall, and he was almost in tears, and I said what's wrong with you, and he said, I just lost my work for my English class. I said what about it? He said, I lost it in the computer, and the teacher says if I don't turn it in this afternoon, I'm gonna fail that class. And I said let me go talk to him. So I talked to the teacher and I got him to extend the deadline for his work. And he passed the class. He stayed in AP chemistry – I think he made an "A." But that's not the end of the story.

The AP chemistry teacher said I got a [message from student] and he wanted you to know that he had just graduated from medical school! And he wanted you to come because he realized that if you had not intervened, he would never have made it that far. So that's just one of the stories I have as a principal.

Q: And that's what I'm looking for. Principals who have shown a special concern or care for students just like the story you told…

A: Let me give you one other thing. This is not a story but – One of my mottos is a educating the whole child [ ] And one of the things that I believe is that you couldn't

educate a child if the child was not in school. And so the history of that is the child misbehaved, was late to class or was suspended for three days before then – and I told the administration that we want to do something different. And what we had was a Saturday school. But it wasn't just a Saturday school, because the parents had to come as well. And it was more like a seminar, because what we talked about was, why were they late to class, what things kept them from getting to class on time? And we actually had them talk about it and put the reasons up on post-its and what we discovered from that is they were using the time in between the classes and whenever to socialize, because they did not feel like they had enough time to socialize. And so rather than having four minutes to get to class, we adjusted our schedule to give them a little bit more time to get to class. And what we found is – we didn't cut our instruction time, we just sort of adjusted the lunches. And we told them that – we just gave them some specific guidelines and what we found is that (a) we had very few repeaters who had to come back on the Saturday. The parents were listening to them and saw they had to reinforce what the school was saying. And our suspension rate decreased substantially – to the point that the head of student affairs indicated to me that from the time that I was principal, our suspensions decreased substantially to almost nothing , and along with that, our student achievement increased: not just because of decreased suspensions, but because of some other things… So my thing was – you always educate the whole child. You can't throw them out – you have to keep them *in* school. And you have to find out what it is that's preventing them from *being* successful. And once you find out what it takes for them to be successful, then you put the safety nets in place.

Q: I want to hear personal stories about growing up in the South-- your childhood, your teenage years, the city where you grew up, other facts about the city, the neighborhoods, etc.

A: I grew up in Atlanta. My parents – we lived in a place called High Point, which is going toward the south side of Atlanta. High Point was reputed to be the place where middle-class African Americans lived. In that apartment complex, you had postal employees – my daddy was a postal employee – you had, teachers, doctors, that kind of thing. Then Collier Heights opened up and I remember – if you are aware of Collier Heights, it's on the national register as one of the first communities that has been black owned and black built in the U.S., so when you came down Hamilton E. Holmes Drive, everything to the left represented Collier Heights, and when you were coming down OldKnow Drive, I think you could see a difference between the small little houses and then you get to – when you get to the brick homes, that's where the end of Collier Heights began. And every house in Collier Heights was designed and built by blacks. My parents moved there in 1960, and believe it or not, they purchased this house for $16,500, and my father was a postal employee. So this is where we grew up and we went to Collier Heights Elementary, which is no longer there. And it served everybody in this area, and then when I finished Collier Heights, I had to go to Henry McNeil Turner High School, which was so over-crowded, we had to have double sessions.

A: And so we moved there in 1960 and [ ] and when I finished Collier Heights, I moved to Turner – and it was so over-crowded that [ ] eighth graders went to school

from 12 until 5, so there were double sessions. Then in January 1963, Harper opened. And in the year it opened, it won the architect award for the best design in the southeastern United States. In 1963, we went to a school that had a girl's gym and a boy's gym, showers, and lockers. We had a little theater for dance, and we an open display area – Let's see, what else did we have? It was just a total innovative design. And our first principal was Mr. _____ and he had been the principal of Carver High School, and then our next principal was Mr. – I'll think of his name in a minute. And then the last principal that I worked with was [ ]. So we had a series of principals who were firm, they cared about children, and they ran a good school.

Just to show you, my graduating class – Tony [last name] – lawyer to Wayne Williams, he's very well known, One of my best friends became the head of Denver (?) in Fulton County. Another friend of mine was [ ] hospital in Cook County, Chicago. Another friend of mine is [background noise]

Our class just did things! And [ ] This was a large graduating class. It was a segregated school, but yet they prepared us to go around all around the country. For example, one went to Morehouse, Cornell & Spelman. And so this is just kind of thrown in – I don't know if Harper would have made AYP [ ] except we did well enough to go and then do well in our chosen professions. In my neighborhood we lived close to doctors' children, postal clerks' children, [ ] service children – we all went to school together. We knew that there were children who had no materials, but we lived in that neighborhood. What that whatever was going on, we were able to take advantage of. We *knew* each other. In Atlanta at that time, because the community was so isolated and --

seniors at Harper knew seniors at Washington & Turner H.S. – you knew the students, so there was a camaraderie that extended just that school.

Q: During that time, the 60s, describe the social justice movement in the city or neighborhood or you can describe one that you heard about nationally.

A: I can't tell you exactly how old I was, but I remember this was during the time when Atlanta was integrated, and subsequently, I heard about how businesses came together, they knew Atlanta was going to thrive, and they couldn't be like some of the other cities that had violence, etc. So the mayor – Ivan Allen – contributed the phrase, "A city too busy to hate." And so, Rich's which is now Macy's was *the* striving store – Rich's was home grown, so Dick Rich was the founder of Rich's and that was the thing – we couldn't go to the Magnolia Dining room – black people had to eat in the store basement. We went on Saturday to the store basement to see everybody – a tiny place not much bigger than this. The restroom was in the store basement. And it was early on that I remember – there were colored and white water fountains in Rich's. And I remember as a little girl, probably about 7 or 8, being tempted to turn on the water, in fact I did turn on the water in the colored fountain and then turn on the water in the white fountain and they were the same. For some reason, for a little girl, I thought if I turned on the water – I didn't realize the colored was just for me, but I thought the *water* was gonna be colored!

My parents were pretty adamant about not making a difference in what we could and could not do. Let me explain that. Even though it was totally segregated, we went to

every cultural event we could possibly go to – for example, the Fox – black people could only go to the Fox Theatre up the fire escape on the outside of the building. That's the way we came out of the Fox, and so they never said this is what Black people had to do. The same thing with what used to be the city auditorium. In order to go see a concert or Holiday on Ice we had to go up and sit in the balcony – the highest tier of seats in the balcony – so that when the skaters came on the floor [ ] we couldn't see that part of the program because the seats were so high up there… But you know – whatever we could do culturally, we did. Because of segregation there were Pascal's and Busy Bee (?) restaurants for Blacks. So on special occasions, we'd patronize our own restaurants. So we grew up with those kinds of standards. But when they got ready to integrate Atlanta, Rich's was one of the main places that they integrated. There was one [cough] that I knew well --- [ ] organizing. They said, OK, we are <u>not</u> going to – and it was Easter time. You know, Easter is a big time for shopping [voice overlapping] – we're not going to shop at Rich's and what ended up happening is that you went to a place called Wells Fargo on Marietta Street – everybody went to Wells Fargo to buy their Easter stuff, and, in my opinion, they weren't as pretty as they had [ ] to really dress up, but shortly thereafter we were able to go into Rich's. And I remember my senior year in high school, the Fox was opened so that everybody could go, and it was a big deal: my whole senior class, Washington H.S. whole senior class, Turner H.S. – all the students at the black high schools were able to go in through the front door and up the steps of the Fox for the first time, and the movie we went to see was to see "The Fall of the Roman Empire."

Q: Who were the people that impacted your life in terms of making choices about going to college, what courses to take, who influenced you to go to college, etc?

A: My mother's mantra was "you girls – well, all of her children – she was talking to girls at the time – you girls will go to college I want you to go to college so that if you get married and have a no-good man (?), you can support yourself – that's what *I* heard! That you'll go to school was never questioned, it was where you were going to go. And it was – you came home from school – you sit down, as soon as you get home, you eat your dinner, if it was your turn to do the dishes, you did the dishes, and then you started on your homework. So beyond a shadow of a doubt the woman, the person who said you will go to college was my mother.

Q: When you described the community, I can see a good visual picture. Were there other black females, like neighbors or teachers that had some influences on you? Did you get the same message from them as your mom?

A: That's interesting. I didn't get the overt message that you need to go to school. There was a teacher who lived right across the street, and she's deceased now, but she was teaching at Washington H.S., but she would always encourage us, she encouraged me – I can't speak for anybody else – to go on to school/college – and that wasn't overt, she was just encouraging. And just everybody who surrounded us talked about how proud they were – they pushed me, but they were talking about how proud they were of the accomplishments that I was making. I had one 6th grade teacher – we moved here,

like I said, in 1960, and I was in the 6th grade when I started at Collier Heights and my reflection of that now is that they had already expected you were a smart kid, you were above average. It was common knowledge that the smart kids in Ms. Hawkins' class – I was in Ms. Hawkins' class because I came late – and I remember so vividly how we were – they had two volunteers for patrol [safety patrol?] and I wanted to be a patrol. And they said that I didn't have the average to be a patrol. And so this Ms. Welch, my teacher, she told Ms. Thompson that apparently she hadn't checked her records. She has, if not *the* highest, one of the highest IQs in the school. And so, because of that, I was able to be a patrol and I got to be a captain of the patrol. So she fought for me from the get-go, and then she would say, I'm going to put her [ ] and so she fought for me, even though I was just in the sixth grade. Against the hierarchy that existed. A lot of these children were doctors' children, a lot of children…

I remember once I was going on a trip to somewhere, and my father wrote a check and he said we'll pay for it with this check. And when I took it, they said, we can't take your check. I remember – my father was not a very vocal person, but I can remember him going up to the school and he was telling the people, he said if you will take Dr. So-and-So's check, you are going to take my check, because my money is just as good as his. I ended up going on the field trip, and they took his check. But that's just one of the ways he supported my education, but not just saying you're going to get an education, but implying you're just as good as anybody else. And whatever anybody else can or will do, you're going to be able to take advantage of it.

That's about formal education – there was another lady in my church named Ms. Turner. And Ms. Turner actually wrote plays for us. And they were very good plays, and

we didn't take them seriously, and she'd get frustrated – but that was just one of those extra-curricular activities that the church offered. And it was an encouragement to continue in a kind of informal education – not formally, but informally.

Q: That's great. Those experiences sound so similar to my experiences. That is wonderful to hear those stories about people in the neighborhood. Also you told me your mother was very strong in terms of … Who or what specifically influenced you to become a teacher or an administrator – what really moved you from teacher to administrator?

A: Teachers or administrators. My mother would sit us down when we were kids for a kind of lecture – looking back on it – she didn't say you take this and – and so in that regard, she was my first teacher. But early as I can remember, I had a blackboard; I had chalk, and my dolls lined up to teach them. I remember her taking us to the library and reading to us and maybe she thought I didn't see this – but I wonder – I was about three years old -- she was one of those early encouragers to be a teacher. And one story I started to tell – because in the summertime, I would teach the children in the neighborhood. I would gather them -- I knew my ABCs and my numbers and I wanted to teach. And as I got older, I would get paper from my teachers at the end of the school year, and I would use that to create little lessons and things for the other children in the neighborhood during the summer. So we would have summer school and take up dues, and then at the end of the summer, we'd have ours little party. We'd get some Kool-Aid and some cookies – but it makes me think of my 7th grade teacher, Miss Spivey. I was so

sick when I was young with asthma – and I missed a lot of school. And I remember I would have to [ ] aspirin or what, but I was in school and Miss Spivey – I would start coughing and she sent some teachers down to get me a Coke and that was forbidden – and she said for me to take the medicine – aspirin or whatever. But she just cared for me in a special way. Even though I was out from time to time because of the severity of the asthma, when I would come back, she was just kind – she was always understanding and always encouraging me.

And thinking about it today, I had a dance teacher. We actually had a dance club at Thomas H. Slater Ele. – that's where I started because it was right down the street – from high school. Her name was Miss .T and Miss T. would have easily 200 girls in the auditorium on Wednesdays 'cause that's when we had dance class [club?]. And she had the dance club.

Now some of her students went on to become famous dancers. One lady's name is Barbara (?) and she went on to start her own dance studio. But it was there that Miss Truett encouraged us – I mean, a lot of us couldn't dance – can you imagine -- 100 women in a room full of girls and just teaching them how to move graceful, encouraging them, so that helps with education, developing teachers who set such a marvelous example that I wanted to be like them.

Q: These are people who gave a lot of life – they couldn't buy a lot of stuff, but they wanted to give their time and talent.

A: They invested in us what they *had.*

Q: So you've talked about the positive role models. When you taught school, tell me about that. Where did you start, what grade, what you taught?

A: That's interesting because I finished in downtown [ ] undergraduate program so you could get your teacher's certificate. And one of my professors, by the time I finished, was in Fulton County. And he got me a job interview for a teaching job in Fulton County. I think it was at Riverwood H.S. – so the principal said, well, you're African American and you'll be teaching students who – you'll be teaching kids (something about BritishLit.) these students who have been to England. How can you teach them? And apparently the answer I gave him was alright and they offered me the job. And I did some soul searching. And I said [ ] I want to give back to my community, and so I was not given the job after I turned that job down. It was – the nexus (?) of integration in Atlanta, so they were (weren't) hiring black teachers in the school – I was at Harper and the assistant principal at Harper, who had also been my 8th and 10th grade teacher wanted me – he was in charge of hiring and he wanted me – he called me up and he said, listen Miss ____, I've got a position in English open. Be prepared to report on Monday – that was [ ] opportunity I'd been waiting on.

Then he called and he said there's been somebody else who happens to be white – integrated – so they -- for three straight years. Finally, he calls and says I have a position for you. By that time, I said, I don't want to hear it. And he said, no, no, be prepared to report on Monday. Well, by that time, I had been promoted to a supervisor in a bank, and I had *just gotten* the promotion and promised that I would do that job for at least a year

before I left. So I had promised to stay there for a year, but then the opportunity that I had waited for and trained for – so I told them, look, I have to give two weeks notice. A teaching job has opened up and I needed to take it. And they were angry with me and demoted me. They told me to go back to my previous job. It was ugly.

But I did report in October. And I started at Harper H.S. where I had graduated. So that's where I started. I worked for 10 years in Atlanta City in the English department, and then I felt like I had the call to go to work in a private Christian school and so I left the public school system and went to work in a private Christian school in Atlanta Public School -- they had such an influx of black children in the school – it was a white church, but they had such an influx of black children, and they decided they didn't want to have the school anymore – the board of trustees of the church. So they closed the school and I needed a job. So I applied to Atlanta and they were slow, and I needed a job at the *beginning* of the school year, because I had two children , and DeKalb County hired me – so I went to work for DeKalb in 1984 and worked in DeKalb until 2008.

Q: What was your first position?

A: My first position was English teacher in Open Campus H.S. and I stayed there for 14 years. I moved from English teacher to department chair to assistant principal at Open Campus. And then I left Open Campus, and I was assistant principal for instruction and I went to another as an assistant principal for instruction, and then the next year, I became principal.

Q: Sometimes when we work as a teacher or assistant principal, we have to set goals try to – or sometimes people say you have to be a principal. What prompted you to become a principal?

A: My principal told me I needed to be a principal. I needed to go into administration. I really didn't – when I first went to DeKalb, having had the experience of being a head mistress of a private school, I thought I wanted to go into administration. So I went to my principal – one of my principals was a male, and I said, look, how do I get into administration? And he said you don't have what it takes to be an administrator. And I thought, well! So I dismissed the idea of administration. And it wasn't until later that another principal, male, encouraged me to go into administration. So the first one was discouraging & stern, and the second one was very encouraging. They were both men.

Q: Interesting. So you decided to just go onto school – I want to ask you a few questions about your family background. Who else besides your father and mother? Siblings?

A: Two sisters and one brother.

Q: You told me how your mother was a strong force…

A: She was a strong force and my father was a supporter. My father bought books on books on books.

Q: How did you get to college? Did you receive scholarships?

A: Yes, I was so fortunate t because I went to [ ] High School in 1966, and that was just at the crux of Johnson's "Great Society," and so there was a lot of money for qualified African Americans. So I looked at Vanderbilt. I looked at the Illinois Institute of Technology – I looked at a lot of schools. And finally decided on Emory because they offered the best financial package and they were close enough to home that if I wanted to get home I could. I lived on campus.

Q: So Emory was the school you were [ ] administrator degree.

A: I got my undergrad from Emory, and then my master's in English from Georgia State, and then I got my specialist from Emory. And I did add-on (?) in administration at Georgia State.

Q: So I can tell that you got most of your education here in the South. [A: All of it!] Any mentors or people who were especially supportive while you were at college?

A: College was particularly un-supportive, because I was among the first black students to help integrate Emory, and so at the time that I was a freshman there, there

were only about 24 African Americans there, so nobody cared about us, nobody cared about me. There was just nobody to care about us.

When I came back and started working on my specialist, I was in [ ] and there were two people who were very, very encouraging. Dr. _____ and [name]. And the experience in the department of education studies on the *graduate* level was so much different from my experience as an undergrad. And they were very encouraging. As a matter of fact, when I finished my specialist at Emory, everybody was saying stay on and get your doctorate now, but because of finances and needing to work, I didn't. I guess because of the time period and being in a predominantly white institution, I just didn't have those people, anybody, nobody who seemed encouraging

Q: You mentioned two educators at the college level – they made the experience different from the undergraduate experience. How so?

A: I remember vividly sitting in a class with Dr. _____ and there were only three African Americans in the class, and she was saying how cool is this -- just to be able to sit and have a dialogue at Emory University with African American women! Three African American women! Three African American women n this day and time! She was challenging, the work was rigorous but we had dialogue and we talked about the issues that we found around African American children and the difference that we could make. She was always telling us how smart we were. We were always *smart* African American women. [ ] former administrator, my students [ ]. So much so that when I left that

program and was in administration, I [ ] and I could contrast that to how much less confidence I had when was an undergrad. I was in the undergrad program on campus for two years, because it was so traumatic for me. I left Emory as an undergraduate and didn't return for 10 years.

Q: Let me ask you about that? What was traumatic? Because I think this leads into my next question. I'm thinking about obstacles that impeded your progress or caused some discomfort.

A: When I finished high school, you couldn't tell me that I couldn't move mountains. I was an excellent student; my teachers said I was an excellent student. I took advanced classes, I did well on the SATs – I remember the score, but I know that I didn't score below 1000 at least. So I thought that I could move mountains! Then I went to Emory thinking I could move mountains, and ran into a mountain. I remember Miss _____ she was my journalism teacher and she was also my French teacher in high school – anyway, having worked on the newspaper staff in high school and being a feature writer, I knew how to write so I volunteered to be a reporter for the "Emory Wheel." They had just done an article – "we need people, we need people." And I said I'd like to write, and they said, oh, really? Give me your name and number and we'll call you. Well, if they'd called me I did not know it . So I was very sad . And if I sat here, my white classmates would to go to the other side of the room.

I did two little experiments. I'd move my chair from time to time just to see ifthat was really happening– and it was the same thing. If I sat back there where they sat, they

sat in the opposite side of the room. And I had one teacher – it was a music class – and I had my hands up like this during the whole class period, and toward the end of the class, I looked to see if I was invisible or not, ‘cause he never called on me, but he’d call on my white classmates. People would stand at the door and shout, “Nigger, nigger, nigger!” – that kind of thing. So it was hard – and you remember I told you that my parents didn’t emphasize race, they emphasized *opportunities*. To come from that kind of background, It was very traumatic.

Q: How did you overcome these obstacles? Let’s take as an example of wanting to work on the newspaper staff. How did you overcome that obstacle? Did you give up? Did you go talk to someone?

A: I think I just got angry. And I think the catalyst for my anger was an article that was printed in the “Emory Wheel” – It said “Are the Negroes at Emory Happy?” And you know, at that time, that’s what they called us “ Negro.” They surmised that we were? Because we were there and we were somehow thankful? And I was *furious*. So what I did – I went around to every black student -- not the graduate students, they were different. But I went around to every undergrad and asked them if they were happy. I asked them what were the problems they were having, and wrot an article as a result of it. And after I wrote that article, I was asked to write a feature article for the Emory magazine about entitled “is the Negro extremely passive – and the answer was no. they brought us there and did not provide safety nets for us. Not at the beginning, because we all had academic abilities but in terms of the environment, in terms of the culture, in terms – we can do this. It was the environment at that time There were no black fraternities or black

sororities. The first black who ever went to a fraternity was Larry_____ and he was the first black – and they only admitted two or three other black males. No black females. And yet they'd let you go through rush and give you the sense that you might get into a sorority, and then drop you at the last minute. So there we were left with nothing. And so we became a very close-knit community – just a few of the black students. And I wrote the article, and shortly after the article, we decided to demonstrate just as there were demonstrations at other colleges around here. And we shut Emory down for two weeks. We went in, disrupted a morning church service, and took over. We had a speaker and we talked about the inequities and injustices at Emory as students. We stood in Cox Hall and they called the police, they called the State patrol and we stayed in a little house for two or three days while we were surrounded and I only found out in the last three years that the plan was to expel us all and they were going to prosecute us and put us in jail. But I wouldn't compromise – and we were allowed to continue our education. The university made some concessions – we got our first black administrator as a result of that, we wanted more black professors – we got a few. At least during that time. And so, if we'd just talked about and didn't have student protests nothing would have happened. So I got my voice back. They didn't give it to me, I took it.

[NOTE: http://www.emory.edu/home/about/anniversary/essays/africanamerican.html]

Q: On to the church experience. The church has always been the heart of the African American community. You talked about a lady earlier – Ms. _____? [A: Yes.] – OK, did that do much for you in terms of giving you a voice? As female – it's interesting you

said Mrs. _____. Was it mainly black females in the church that you could identify with, who provided support you?

A: Yeah, the black females in the church basically ran the thing. You know, the youth organization – we met every Wednesday, and so we'd do all kinds of various things and then Mrs. _____, who was my pastor's wife, she was also a teacher at Washington H.S., she kind of orchestrated vacation Bible school, and at that time, VBS went from 9-12 in the summer. And then Ms. _____ was always involved with the the Easter speeches, and one of the things we would do is have Bible study, I mean Bible stories, and so when I became old enough – I don't know if you've ever seen people who have the little figures that you cut out and put felt on the back of it – a story board – and you tell stories – well, when I became old enough, that's what I did. I told the stories using these felt characters. And so, I delivered my first sermon when I was 13, and I was a Youth Day Speaker, and then everybody thought that I would be a minister. And probably would have gone that route, because it was from there that I started speaking – you know, in church – but there were some other things that I … Yeah, that's where I got the ability to have the confidence to speak – I mean, you learn the 13-verse Easter speech from memory and reciting it – and having a father, who was very critical, not in a negative sense, but if I said the speech and didn't do an excellent job, he'd say you can do better next time – that kind of thing. And my mother would say – you need to put a little more emphasis on this. Those were the kinds of things that gave me the confidence to know that I could speak in front of people. And if you know how to speak in front of people, then you can do almost anything.

Q: We talked about your principals, there were male principals – the one in particular that inspired you – talk about one school when you were the principal – tell me about that experience.

A: The school where I was principal was _____ with 99.9% African American – we had one "other" either Hispanic or white in the school. At that time, it was mostly middle class, we were not a Title 1 school. We had parents who – we had some parents who very active and they wanted the same thing for their kids that they saw at other affluent schools in the County. And they had been a thorn in the superintendent's flesh for several years. So when they removed the principal, then I became interim principal in March 2000. And I asked the superintendent, the then-superintendent, would I get a salary raise. And he said no, you are *acting* principal. And then I said, well, why is there *not* going to be a salary raise? And he said do you realize how many people there are who want this job? Who want this opportunity? And I looked at him square in his eyes and I said there may be many who *want* this job, and who want this opportunity, but there's nobody who can do the job that *I* can! He said thank you and you are now dismissed (?). So I was still acting principal – they did that deliberately to keep me from receiving a raise and yet other people were put in the same position – men – where they had to step in and do the job when the principal was removed and made "interim," and the difference between acting and interim was salary.

Q: OK, so that was one school where the demographics were basically – black students. Your "at risk population," would you say you had a large at0risk population at that particular school or if you didn't – how did you address the "at risk" population.

A: I didn't think about any of the children being "at risk." What I thought was what can a teacher do to improve the student achievement of these students? And that's why I never considered them at risk. It was the whole school serving the whole child – that was my motto. And every morning, I'd get on the intercom and said good morning, Saints and scholars. And then I talked about making deposits in the educational bank accounts. And I talked about being as a [ ] scholar you have to behave and you have to achieve. So, to me, they just needed opportunities and exposure, and they needed the best teachers they could possibly have to give them that exposure and those opportunities.

Q: Can you pinpoint activities that people can say – you know, she really does care about the students. Any specific events? I know you talked about a Saturday school. I like that. Anything else similar where people would respond by saying "she really cares for children?

A: I would have to think… a total school serving the total student. My whole goal was to have the affect match the academics. And so what I did – I knew that every major holiday – and for example, Thanksgiving would be for juniors' day, and then Christmas would be the seniors. Valentine's would be the tenth grade, and then around Easter would be the ninth graders.

I would have the cafeteria manager put white tablecloths on the tables and we'd have – I brought in music *every* day and I bought a huge system so I could play classical and jazz in the cafeteria. But on those special days, the seniors could invite their parents to have lunch with them, and they would have a special meal for just this… Everybody would have a special lunch to invite parents in and let them see what it was we were doing.

Another thing that I did was "most improved student" – you know, we had the principal's list, we had the Top 10 and everything, but I said there are students who are never going to be on the Top 10, there are students who are not going to be on the principal's list, but there are students who can make an improvement. So we had the most improved student breakfast and those were the – if they came from a D to a C, and the teachers nominated them, then they got to be with *their* parents. And so what I found just from the testimonies – students were – it gave them an incentive and it showed that somebody was looking at them to improve, most improved academically most improved in terms of attendance as well.

Q: That's wonderful. And it shows that you really cared and tried to do things to build students' self-esteem.

A: The other thing was that I started a [ ] and fine arts festival, a spring band contest, and this would be a fine arts festival to showcase the arts – music, jazz, that kind of thing. And so on Sunday afternoons and for two years ago [ ] what we would do – I think it was a Sunday after Mother's Day, and have the jazz band perform, we would have the

orchestra perform, we'd have the dance groups perform and the students who were in AP art would display their art all around our cafeteria, 'cause we didn't have a gym. So I would sponsor a reception, so that the parents and the community could come in. They would have the reception and they would sit down and we'd entertain by the various groups that we had at school. I called it the fine arts festival.

Q: I know the students really enjoyed that.

A: They did, they did. And it gave the parents an opportunity to see their work and it gave the students an opportunity to perform and it built self-esteem When I run into students now who were there when I was there – I ran into a student the other day and he said, Ms. _____, he said you know, you're the best principal I ever had and [ ]. And I was at Ruby Tuesday's and I saw one of my former parents and she said, you know, [name] and I were just talking about you, and they said you owned the school and you loved the children. And students I run into now, say, Ms. _____, I'm still a Saint and a scholar. There are sacrifices you make as a woman trying to do that.

Q: Tell me one more thing about – Is there anything unique about growing up in the south? Do you think you took with you to the school a specific set of caring ideas ?

A: Absolutely. Absolutely. Personally – there was segregation. And because of segregation, I had a model for leadership that I would never have had if I had grown up any place else. I had caring principals. I had caring teachers– even the teachers who

weren't good teachers – I mean, I'd ignore what the teacher said – they were still *caring*. They cared about me as a person. They *knew* me. As much as you can know any student. But I was encouraged throughout by teachers who cared. And so when I became a principal, my motto for being a principal, was not about leadership. My motto for being a principal was what I lived and experienced from the principals that I had. And based on what I know on how African American pedagogy for education, it was not happenstance that these principals had these goals, that these principals had this way of educating children – based on what I had learned, this was systemic among African Americans principals. Now had I grown up in the North, I don't think I would have had that. Because I'm not sure that this pedagogy was prevalent in the North. I think it was just prevalent in the South because we had to survive, and – I mean, we as a people. And if I've said it once, I've said it a thousand times, you are our future. We *have* to invest in you! You have to succeed. We don't have any choice but to teach *you* because you got to pick up the mantle and run with it. They knew that. They knew that they were preparing others for a future that they were not enjoying (?) and perhaps that they could not see, They were preparing us to step *out* of this segregated world and step into a different world. Had we not been segregated, I don't know if we would have had the impetus to say, it's *on* you to make it! I used to hate it when my teachers would say, you know, you're in a race and when the bell goes off, you're already two laps behind. But that's true. And you got to run to catch up. And see, the thing is – we knew going into it that we had to run, we had to be there, we had to work hard. If it had not been segregated, I don't know if we would have given the children that message, i.e., now it is segregated, in fact, [ ] but, in people's minds, [ ] but in an integrated world, who's telling the children you

have to run hard? Who's telling these children, who is giving them the reality that when the whistle sounds, they are not two laps behind, they're *four* laps behind. Because of schools that are [ ], because of everything that is turning this and that (?), they have more going against then now then –because of the school to prison pipeline – they don't have the structure, they have more obstacles now. We can – people who care about us, who kind of said, we're the ones who lead you and guide you, OK? The children today – even the black teachers don't care about them – not in the way *our* teachers cared about us. They might say, oh, so and so is a knucklehead] but they never gave up. The teachers – a lot of teachers today – not all – but a lot today have – they drank the Kool-Aid. They are spouting the same rhetoric . They're not leading and they don't believe in them anymore.

Q: I understand because as I talk to other principals, [too much echo -- unintelligible] I'll share it with you, too. We talked about one school, we talked about the population. Would you say the social economic status of the school represented the demographics of the community where the school was located?

A: At that time, it was lower, middle, and upper class student population.

Q: What about your attitude (?) apathy?

A: No, I tried to deal with [ ] – I think I probably had about 70 teachers, and I had about eight white teachers.

Q: What would you say made your school stand out?

A: The fact that the community *loved* their school. I had one young person tell me, you don't understand. I bleed blue on blue the school colors are blue and white. So they *loved* their school.

Q: Would you say that – in some of the schools you'd had second and third generation students – do you feel like that was the case?

A: Later that was the case, but not [some background noise here! Honking?]

Q: So basically the first time – first generation…

A: You mean the first generation to go to high school?

Q: Or to go to that school there. Did the parents go to that school?

A: No, uh uh. They were [ ]. It was a very close-knit community at that time. At that time, everybody introduced me to somebody's cousin, and so it was very close knit in that regard, so you had cousins, nephews, that kind of thing going to the school, but not necessarily the *children* of children. Now, that is the case.

Q: You said something about sacrifices of being a Black woman principal?

A: If you're going to do the job of principalship right, that is focus on the instruction, focus on the extracurricular, focus on the parents, focus on the children, then it's honestly a 24-7 job. I mean, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I can't tell you the number of times that I would get a phone call – one time at about 11:30 and the band had just come back from a game, and there were some problems, there were kids who did not like the band, so they were just acting crazy – so at 11:30, I had to get up. I had been home for about an hour, and go to the school, and just really [ ] the kids. I mean I had to be the Gestapo of solders (?) – yelling, and you know, if you don't GET on that bus – so you have to be the general and then you have to be nurturing at the same time. And you have to tell them you don't play, because you have their best interests at heart – that's all a part of doing the job. But aside from that, as a female, you have children. You may have a husband. Your duties and responsibilities in your home don't stop, and yet your job, if you're going to do it well, is 24-7. So how do you reconcile and – at the time when I was the principal, my youngest son was pubescent, I mean in the middle of it, just goin' haywire! Now he struggled with trying to make it, trying to figure out first who he was in the school system but because of the experiencies (?) of the job, my husband said, you aren't spending time at home. And you know, I told him it takes three years to get school going school – and I know I'm sacrificing – and really, I recall there were days when I would come home at 7 o'clock, you know – he would have picked up our child and he would have started dinner, and sometimes, with the best intentions, I'd sit down [ ] and fall asleep. And that's when I'd get home at 7 o'clock – that would be *early*. And

so, in this case, I sacrificed a marriage, and in talking with other principals, this may be just peculiar to me, but a lot of principals, male and female, find that a principalship is so stressful – I remember prior to becoming a principal I did not have high blood pressure, after I had high blood pressure medicine – it's sense gone down, but that was part of it – sleeplessness, insomnia, waking up at all times of the night trying to figure out is this the best way, should I do this, should I do that… It's a physical toll and an emotional toll. And – a relationship toll. You'd see that with my husband, even though I worked in Atlanta, very rarely could I get over here to see him my parents because there was *always* something going on at the school. Now, with a male principal it is different], they don' t worry about who's going to get meals prepared, keep the house warm and so he can *be* the principal and have an income. And a woman doesn't have a poor wife – I'm not speaking generally, I'm talking about a role (?) -- I was in a line one day at the [ ] counter and I was kind of remarking about how much there was to do, and I was telling my friend, I said, what am I here for? And she was like – [laughter] – and two women standing behind me laughing – I want somebody to do for me what a wife usually does. A principalship is a very demanding job if you're [ ]

Q: I want to go back to another question for clarification. Were you able to identify any unique or specific needs of your student population? Anything that stood out that they really needed ? Unique needs.

A: For instance, what they wanted was to get the best education that they could get. And the parents wanted the same thing.

Q: Can you give me an example of a specific need?

A: The parents wanted the children to have lots of after-school activities, like maybe a chess club or dancing. Another school wanted just after-school care. They wanted a place for those kids to be after school because they worked till 6 o'clock. The other school – as long as there are people to [ ] things to enhance learning. We had a lot of extra-curricular activities and I encouraged that. So they pretty much – the band and the football team kind of were the sports, and the dominated, and they kept other kinds of clubs – I encouraged this. But I think when I first came, the core parents we had were middle class and they wanted AP courses. They wanted more – that's why I say academics – they wanted more AP courses, they wanted – 'cause we only had three, I think, when I came and we increased it to 6, 7, or 8 courses?) – We built courses so we could have those AP courses, even if I didn't have 10 students to make it, I had the flexibility that I could juggle things around and alternate [ ]. And – the research showed that high school students need to start later, elementary schools earlier. And so we piloted in our cluster, just starting earlier – and our school – we started earlier, attendance [got better???] – elementary school started earlier – maybe it was 8:40 – and then middle school. And that first [ ] – the discipline referrals decreased, the atmosphere in the school was totally different. Like – you walked into the school and it would be quiet. You knew it was an academic environment and it was just the extra time that they had [ ] – but I basically wanted an academic atmosphere. And that's what worked.

Q: So you created an academic atmosphere for the students? You looked at that aspect of it. Some of the things you did was to add AP classes, add extracurricular activities and start school later is that correct?

A: Starting school later was one of the things that increased AP courses – I looked at our test scores and this was in 2000, before "No Child Left Behind," and I said, wow? I said, who's teaching 11th grade math? And I asked the department chair who are the best teachers math in your department? And she told me who they were – I said we're going to switch the schedule: this person is going to teach the 11th grade math and our scores increased. Not only that, I said – I put my *best* teachers with my 9th graders – I gave them upper classes, and oh, they did not like the switch. But I said that will change. The kids need the background to *move* farther in the 9th grades (?) and so I said – you got to teach, 1, and they did – and their scores increased. I had fewer math drop-outs. So I took my best teachers to where my greatest need was. And that was based on research. That was not based on what I thought. That was based on – my 9th grade [ ] instructor, and I started – it was an informal 9th grade academy, but I put all the 9th graders on the same floor.

The previous principal didn't believe in that. But I put all the [9th grade] students on the same floor with the best teachers and I put my strongest administrator down with them – and I said now you work this. I said I don't need to micro-manage you, you run it, because it's your school. And it just made sense.

Q: Wow, that's a great story. I think we're winding down now. What do you think is unique about a Black woman's ethics of care ?

A: We're mamas, we're mamas. We have a strong history of strong women. And we know what it's like to have a grandmother who corrected us. Or the lady up the street who says, I'm gonna tell your mama. Or the community person – and so, if we follow in that tradition, we treat other people's children the way we want somebody to treat our own children. And it's not like permissive mother. It's like, OK, you're *my* child. Every child in the school is my child. You're my children and I'm going to give you the best that I possibly can. I may not be your biological mother but I'm going to educate you well, and when you step out of this place, you can say that somebody cared about you, somebody cared enough to educate you the way she would want her children to be educated.

Q: So – how do you think caring plays out in the administrator's role as the school principal?

A: I think we do a better job. I think we are better administrators when we take the time. All of us don't take the time. Some of us see it as a job, I'm just gonna do this, and then I'll leave. But when we take the time, I think that we nurture, and like I said before, when we see the children as *ours*, it's not just a job. It becomes a calling. They have to know that they answer to a higher power. When I was a principal, I realized that it wasn't about me. It really wasn't about the salary with me, it was about what difference I had

been called to make in somebody's life. And if I don't do it, who would do it? Now, as I said, men don't feel that way, but I think when you couple that calling with the nurturing, you have a whole different kind of animal.

Q: How can these practices that you just talked about – nurturing and being the other mother – how can [ ] to support students and enhance learning? How can those [ ] be used to help students [ ] – replicated…

A: I don't know – that's a hard question. Because if you're in leadership -- you often read about Nel Noddings and the ethics of care and servant leadership – you assert leadership. So, the only thing I think that can be replicated is the mentor – mentorship, culture – just like I told you. My motto for being principal was what I saw and what I experienced growing up. If women who inspire educational leadership don't have it, if they don't see it – how are they going to do it? Just reading it in a book – it just becomes head knowledge, not heart knowledge. And I mean, this may be overly sentimental, but I really believe that education has got to be what you do up here – but what you translate here. You take care what you hear and you translate it through your heart, and that's where people know you care. I have to ask faculty members who have told me, Ms. [name], I wouldn't do this for anybody but you. Students who say, Ms. [name], you know I really like teaching at all – when I was teaching (?) but you know, because I liked *you*, I did the work. And I can remember when I first went into the school system. While I was principal. And I was trying to get the faculty to [blah, blah, blah???], and one of the – it

was a parent – he walked up to me and he says, you know, people don't care how much you know, they want to know how much you care.

Interview with Mrs. Black

for Beverly Cox

Transcribed by Elizabeth Wilson

NOTE: I have used [ ] for unintelligible words or phrases.

Q: What I want to do first of all is to have you reflect on your role as a principal and tell me a very short story about something that you remember that stands out in your mind as it relates to a student in your school.

A: After I retired as principal, I think one of the of the greatest experiences came, when a student tried to find me after getting in junior high school. And he went back to the old school and found some of the teachers and he wanted to let me know that he was OK in middle school and had improved in reading and so on. And his words were I just wanted to say thank you, because when I felt a teacher was mistreating me, when I felt my student friends were mistreating me, you always cared about and protected me and I'm OK and I can do this now in high school – at this point he was going to high school the next year, in junior high. He just wanted me to know that. And I thought, that was one

of the greatest rewards – I have had students who have said things and whatever, but for a child to go out of his way to find me and let me know what things meant to him has been one of the richest rewards – it's something no paycheck can ever provide.

Q: What a neat story. It's not the case all the time! Now, I want to talk to you about your personal background. I'll just ask you to talk – would you talk about where you spent your childhood and teenage years, including the name of the city, state and any historical facts you want to share.

A: I grew up in a small village in Alabama, about 33 miles from Selma, Alabama. The name of the village, and I call it that because it was not a real township, and it probably had 100 people – it is Prairie, AL as in "Little House on the Prairie" – plains and you could see a long distance because there were not so many trees. It's grown up more now. I experienced going to school in the community with a school right across from the house. I always walked to school and to any activities that were there. And I played on the campus pretty much all my life starting as a young child. This school had been established after slavery by the freedmen board in conjunction with the Presbyterian Church. The school was established in 1894, and it sent a missionary to the place to begin teaching, and they also began working on finding individuals who had some education – it wasn't necessarily a college education, but maybe a high school education in the area who would begin teaching -- because these individuals were over 30 years old either them or their children. This little school had a historical impact on the community. It was a school where my mother and 10 of her siblings went through the

school and graduated one at a time, through the 9th grade. By the time I went to school there, it was beginning to be absorbed by the county- Wilcox County, AL. The county was beginning to pay the teachers, but the Presbyterian Church continued to provide support by providing a Bible teachers' chapel service once a week, materials, supplies, and many things that made the school affordable. The schoolmarm was funded by the Rosenwald Foundation. The school has been existence for 100 years this year.

Now, school was always a communal situation. My mother was a teacher, my father was a teacher, and later they ended up doing more administrative things, and that was the basic background. I never can remember not reading and writing. I went to school because I would walk over part of the way, and the first grade teacher would allow me to come in along with the principal's grandson, who lived next door to the school. We'd go to school part of the day and [ ] I learned to read Dick, Jane and Spot. So I don't remember *not* reading those books. So at the end of that year when I was about four, probably four and a half – when the report cards were passed out indicating promotion to the next grade, I just wanted to a report card too. When the teacher finished passing out report cards, I said, "I didn't get a report card." She said you'll have one next year when you go to school full time! 'Cause I was going to school part-time and when I got tired of it, I'd go home and I wouldn't go back to school any more during the day.

So the next year when we went back to school – both Gene and I – (Gene is currently an engineer for the military, and lives in San Diego (CA) – we both went back the next year and because we'd used the books the year before, the teacher really, looking back, gave us our own books. We didn't know that – and she went and taught the other kids. She would do her reading with little books and so on. So I think that's one

experience of not having to repeat something just because it was a convenience for the teacher. The teacher found a way to take you where you were and let you perform. I think that was a great influence on me in my life.

Q: Talk about the demographics there.

A: At that time, and even now, the 2010 census – and reflects – the county is 3 to 1 African Americans to Caucasian Americans. And there are a number of counties there in Alabama that still have a high African American population because there were a lot of slaves in that vicinity at one time. So as people were freed, they didn't necessarily leave. They became sharecroppers. When I was growing up there were still a number of sharecroppers and so on. One of the principals who gave a lot, was a Northern Presbyterian person who served in the North. And when he moved to Alabama, he found that the educational level for people who wanted to work on his land was so very low that he gave the land for another school called Miller's Ferry. It expanded to the point where nurses were trained, there was a canning factory, there were dormitories, and it was the Presbyterian Church that built the dormitories and so on. And that's mostly where I came [ ]. There had been teachers' dormitories and a dormitory for girls and a dormitory for boys at this one time, for just about 30 years. And the principal's home, which also had some space for some teachers to live in it. And the church was next door to the home. And that started out with approximately 13 acres of land. So there was a whole campus, there was more than a school campus. And the church was never involved in trying to proselytize – the Presbyterians – very little was mentioned, and now

there's a little museum about the school, and you'll find numerous people who will say they never realized that it was ever associated with the Presbyterian Church. We can remember the presence (presidents?), but never really associated it, because we nobody tried to make us come [to church]. So the experience was that someone – this was a joint venture in the sense that someone – a white person, a Caucasian, made an initial investment in the land and in contract with the Presbyterian Church to get people into [ ] – those who needed active training in the school system there – [ ] pretty much for black students very, very widespread. So many people wouldn't have to go miles and miles to get this education. [ ] for a short time because of the kind of work – farming and so on. But having the dormitories meant that students could go to these places and they would work. They had to do all of the work including raising some of the food that they would actually eat for a meal. It became somehow affordable (?) for families. Parents always had to pay tuition – that meant they may have brought some wood, cut from where they were to go in the pot belly stoves to help keep the building warm. They brought vegetables – whatever they farmed. And that was part of how they paid tuition. [ ] in order for their children to go to school – [ ] walk to it or lived on the campus. So [ ] collaboration, education was quite important. It was a way out. And many, many citizens graduated from high school in places where maybe two or three towns over persons never got beyond the 8th or 9th grade because there wasn't a school that was any higher than that. So I grew up in a community where education was so important. There were problems with the Jim Crow laws and so on –Voting would have never happened. My grandfather never saw voting happen.

Q: Describe the social justice movements that occurred during the years you grew up in Alabama.

I didn't have anyone on that side of the family who lived to see voting -- my grandfather lived until1961 so he did get a chance to see the Montgomery boycotts. My grandmother, who would talk about how she rode the bus with Rosa Parks, but that was 87 miles away. They began to see some of the changes that begin to happen, but to actually experience the opportunity to vote – it never happened. But their children who lived to adulthood and did get a chance to vote, and then became educators and so on. The Movement impacted my high school time in the 60s, because during that time there education demonstrations – I did not participate in as many as I probably would have *liked* to have, but I did get to participate in a few. And just before I left for college, there were major demonstrations. Actually, they happened the next year. But finally, there were not any more of the tests that required people to interpret the Constitution or the tests that people had to take. No longer were there laws that required Black people to step off of the sidewalk. If a black person and a white person would come in alongside each other it was basically an offense if someone complained . A Black person could actually get arrested because in that little town as well as Selma, AL [ ] and whatever, because in that little town, supposedly – and I found out it was true in Selma and other places too, in many cases – if the two of you were on the sidewalk, an African American was expected to step *off* the sidewalk to let the white person go by.

There were no city buses there. But I do remember our mailman, Mr. Barnes. Mr. Barnes was probably my greatest reminder of Jim Crow laws. Mr. Barnes drove a pick-up truck and carried the mail for a fairly large route, and this group (?) taken to the county

seat in Selma, Alabama, 15 minutes away. He would have the mail in the back of the truck, which was covered, so nobody could ride in the back – where the mail was, ‘cause that was official business. But if he picked up a white person and a black person to ride they would pay him something to ride over to the little town, to do grocery shopping or something like that, I saw this and my sisters remember, too – Mr. Barnes actually sat in the middle of the cab of the truck and he had the white person on the side where the steering wheel was, and the black person was on the other side. Basically he would drive the truck. I think those kinds of things, those separate things – so much energy was expended on the wrong things, if everyone is given an opportunity to learn, to explore freedom’s enterprise and so on, have made much more progress. Therefore, most people as they became educated and went to college – that was pretty much the only thing you could do as a professional and that was to teach, or to be in some form of education. Therefore, the other students who finished high school left and went north to work – in the factories – in car factories in Detroit or industries in Chicago – many left to go to Boston. Lots of people became professors and teachers in other places, and then, the next generation went in to other jobs. But that was a problem – we were always in segregated schools. The funny thing about it – the Presbyterian Church always had some white involvement just because Presbyterian Churches of the North merged. So you would actually see people coming in to visit our schoolsfrom the north, that had some interest in our schools.. And very often, they would support it and they would [ ] county that they [ ] they would be around and would join in at lunch (?) out of that town and back in Montgomery [ ]. And the people – that’s just the way it was. The traditions. It didn’t end up leaving me with – I really don’t feel a hatred, but I did always feel that there was a lot

of wasted energies and having expended them into other ways and have been freer to do things that also – Also, we had [ ] that [ ] I could never say or do anything that really would be unkind to *anybody* [she goes away from the phone -- pause]

Q: Who were the people that impacted your life in terms of life choices like during your childhood or maybe your teen years – who impacted you the most during your childhood about education… influenced you on your career, etc.?

A: I think my parents were probably the greatest influence because reading and school [sudden change in volume affecting clarity of voice – something about learning] there was never any option. I don't remember ever knowing that there would be anything other than going to college and they did things, they sacrificed to be sure that we had extra opportunities to be prepared. And one of the things I can think of is – I majored as an undergrad in music, majored in piano and organ minor– and later [psychology as a minor?] – but anyway, they drove almost 90 miles every other week all throughout my high school time, from about 7th grade to 12th grade – for me to study pianofrom a teacher who taught at Alabama State (?) – and that became an opportunity that, I think, is rare and it was a big sacrifice for them to do that all those years.

My paternal grandmother was a schoolmarm. She had a house full of books. She had actually finished junior college at Selma University. At that time, was pretty much a rarity, especially for women to have – I have a picture of her graduation class – It was pretty rare for her to have gotten that far. Sometimes, she would get a ride part of the way to school, when she was going to school. Other times, she would walk 25 or 30 miles to

get back to school – some of the things she would tell us. So she always had extra magazines and books, She provided eggs and something else -- had chickens and so on – to a lady who lived about half a mile away – she lived in a so-called [name of the town in Ala.] – this was a white lady, Miss Easley. So my grandmother would [ ] would send the eggs and some kind of vegetables, and Miss Easley would always send all of her Reader's Digests and Life magazines back, and that was how they traded or bartered. And my grandmother would not get rid of these, because she had a porch on the side of the house and that side porch was full of books and magazines – Reader's Digest, Life Magazine – and when I'd go and visit her in the summer, there they were. And you could just read and read and read –when you were not any your chores or whatever. And I think that's what helped to me to learn to write better and so on. These were things that were just standard in literature. But she would always finish the book even if she gave herself an extra [ ]. She would give us poems, some of which I still don't understand. But she'd give you something like Emily Bronte's poems or whatever – they always somehow made it clear that education was important. And my grandfather on that side had also had a military education – I don't know how or why – I always thought he was [ ] things and managing – he paid off the mortgage for one of his siblings back in the Depression of over $30,000, which I [ ] or something like that. And he worked very hard to keep a number of jobs to do that, bartending (?) – at other times of the year and so on. And both of them were resources in the community, because so many who did not [ ] at that time. You'd see them come and give a letter to someone who lived somewhere [else], or say, will you check this bill that Mr. so-and-so gave me at the store – is it added up right, is it correct, this amount of money and so on? So they saw the need for education in that way.

My other grandparents, my maternal grandparents – neither of them had an opportunity to go probably beyond the 5th grade, but they were adamant – so much so that they moved about 40 miles with their first few children – my mother's oldest siblings – to come to the place where the school was, and by then the Presbyterian Church had a farm (?) near – and they sent all of their children through [ ] – most of them did quite well. And so that's the kind of influence – and so we knew people who knew people who were learning to read, all of our friends [ ] whether their parents had been to school or not. They still had to go to school and they had to learn. They may have to stay out for the time of the crops [harvest] and so on. And there you have a different kind of influence for me, because I was proud that I was able to go to school every day. But kids stayed out for the crops – some of my friends – the teachers would start over in the textbook, and I didn't find it hard (?) to have to do the same – six capitols or whatever it is – again. I'm still not (?) angry about it, but that became an influence, too, I think, as an educator later on. That boundary (?) where people always had time – just continually to move them along. Not try to keep their child to stay in the same spot – get that foundation and move along, therefore [ ] change for individual lives.

Q: I heard you talk about your grade school experience. What about college? Tell me about that – where did you go to college, etc. And then who influenced you to become and educator?

A: When it was time to graduate, I really hadn't decided exactly what college I wanted to go to. And I assumed that I would go to one of the schools where my older

sister attended – Knoxville College – and that was [ ], and I really didn't want to go to [name] – I assumed that might be it. Or that I would go to school there in Alabama. But I also had the opportunity, between my 11th grade and 12th grade to go to another program that was funded too by the Presbyterian Church and Knoxville College [ ] summer studies skills (?) program for six weeks. The person who headed that was very busy trying to send us to schools where we could get scholarships, primarily in New York. He actually wanted us to go to some of the prep schools as a senior and maybe add on an extra year, going to State (stay?) two years. What would have been your senior year, plus one where you would go to [name – Holton?] College out in the Midwest. So we were beginning to [ ] standardized tests – tests while we were in the program. We were hearing from the Educational Testing Services from colleges that would have never been on our radar, on our screen – because those colleges [ ] were generally not even given around home. When I got ready to take a test in order to go to that program, we had to go to Selma to the Air Force base and take the test there. They had an Educational Testing Service (?) – and as I look back and had there been something like a Stanford or California Achievement or some kind of standardized test, because we had to have some scores to go into that program. And they gave those tests both summers. So we had colleges inviting us to look at them that were just never heard of. I didn't really find myself attracted to any of those either. But finally, it turned out to be a Presbyterian minister, a of [ ] had been at Morehouse College. He knew Atlanta very well (?) – and we were standing at some place in an informal setting and he said, [name], why don't you [ ] my choice of colleges – I hadn't made up my mind. He said why don't you apply to Spelman? That's a good school, I think you'd like [ ]. So I did! And I thought, OK, [ ]

apply for a [amount] scholarship [ ]. I did apply and I got accepted – and the rest was history. I went there and I did very well in my choice. So I think it was the right school for me. [ ] in many ways. One thing I did not want to do was be a teacher. I was sure of that when I was at Spelman. And I stayed away from it and ran away from it as much as I could. And after I went to college, I had [ ] teaching hours [ ] at Georgia State, and I had actually gotten an opportunity to *teach* school my first year out of college in Tennessee for a year. So I [ ] Georgia State for a master's and [ ] added on and I thought, just in case the music degree didn't work out, I would have teacher certification, and it would require only one more practicum because Georgia State didn't require [ ] for me to get certified [ ] Georgia. So, being the person I am, I took administration, too so I spent a lot of time at Georgia State before I went to the University of Georgia [ ].

Q: Now you say you went back to Tennessee to teach – you really didn't want to be a teacher, but something influenced you to become a teacher. Can you talk about that?

A: I had gotten married to someone who had graduated from college – my husband went back to college at Knoxville College [ ] to finish up his [ ] degree and he was already a teacher in [ ]. Through that [ ] campus and applied for a couple of jobs on the campus, and one of the people I met knew of a teaching job about 25 miles away. And knew of my degree in music. And I still wasn't really too concerned about that – of course, it was a good job, a good opportunity, and it was through some Federal programs that had been passed, so they were hiring people in the arts to add to the school systems around, in the Great Smoky Mountains and places like that, this was Sevier County,

Tennessee. So I got the teaching started, and began at the University of Tennessee that January. And that's when I decided [ ] psychology, whatever [ ] without my degree – had to be in our field. And that's where I got started. I did a couple of classes there, and one was [ ] so it really fit what I was trying to teach in [name – Stonewall. That's how I ended up being a teacher of music. [ ] at that time [ ] in education, you could get certified in Tennessee especially if you were in the arts. And I became certified at [ ] – I enjoyed it. I came back to Atlanta – I'm still not [ ] job [ ] I lived through a strike (?). I hated being in the building every day. I did not find that I enjoyed working with adult students as much as I enjoyed working with children. And that's when I decided and I went to the City of Atlanta as a specialist in art (?). [ ] And when Parks & Recreation all [ ], that's when I decided working with children again that I started to do the teaching requirements and that's when I went to Georgia State and enrolled in the education program [ ] to get fully certified and add on [ ] and so on. So I actually ended up teaching because I enjoyed it, I felt [ ], probably because my parents had been [ ] – I guess in a way [ ] and for business, and I knew that it was not a place for getting rich. I knew it was a place where the rewards can't be seen. Young people [ ] and seeing young people learn and for making a difference, hopefully, in their lives.

Q: Would you say that there were any black women that – your mother, a teacher, other black women that might have influenced you? Could you talk about one in particular that…

A: They were all big influences. Of course, both my aunts were in education [ ]. There were teachers [ ] But when I got to Spelman, there was a teacher there still [ ] I'd been having trouble with math, and I remember this lady was then a young lady. She had a family, a husband and her children, seeing that several of us in the math class that we were having problems, she said if you'll come to class 15 minutes early, three times a week, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. After you've done your homework assignments, I'll go through it with you the next morning. So if you have problems or questions, we can get it straightened out *before* class starts. And she was about the last [ ] – she lives in the Atlanta area. That kind of teacher, who did not go to class (?) [ ] in a 16-year-old, because this person was giving extra time just to help – because you showed an interest in learning, they were willing to go an extra mile and be interested in helping *you.*

My next year, the first year that Dr. Johnson, the organist at Spelman, was away finishing her Ph.D. out in the Midwest. The second year, Mrs. Johnson came back to Spelman and she became my piano teacher at that time, piano and organ teacher. I don't know why, but Dr. Johnson took an extra interest in me. Sometimes I was a babysitter for her daughter or whatever, but she was always checking on me [ ] – how're you doing, – it didn't have to be a music class. It could be other areas of study, campus life, wherever she… "Now how was your class this morning?" She continued to follow up through the next year. Finally, the next year, she persuaded my parents to allow me to go on domestic exchange, because during my sophomore year, in spring of sophomore year, April, after Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed – and during that time, she actually mentioned – there was a college from the Midwest, a Catholic all Girls College that was

interested in exchange, and a lot of this came about because of the dialogue with people after Dr. King was killed. And she headed that program and she mentioned she wanted me to apply for this program. I filled out the application, but really didn't think much about it. She took the time to call my parents while I was in Alabama during the summer, and said I really would like her to be one of our students to go on this exchange program. I believe there were 18 students – to this other place (?) and she will continue with her education, you'll continue to pay the same money that you paid to Spelman, even though the other place probably costs more. It probably cost about $10,000 more [ ], at least at that time, per year. But anyway, the cost and all would still be the same. And I think her extra intervention was what persuaded my parents to allow me to go. So, I was eighteen and a half and 19 during that part of my life, I was in my junior year. It was an experience that I am very grateful for. I think it allowed for a different kind of growth and a different kind of comfort with people from all walks of life. That particular place was not too far from Chicago. The music that you heard daily on the radio was music from Poland – polkas and things like that. Also at the time, the Catholic Church was beginning to experiment with the more modern type of music, and being a music major, I had a chance to experience that. I was active in things that were going on there. But Mrs. Johnson kept up with us while we were there. We had a faculty sponsor, but she always kind of kept up with us every few months to see how we were doing. And that was being a teacher that goes the extra mile, the teacher who takes you under her wings. And not just one person [ ] to another of my students. Also, influenced] of how I would become, as I became a teacher, for a student.

Q: Good. As you think about the principalship, administration, etc., who is the most [ ] administrator, starting I guess… Was there any individual – What made you really want to do that?

A: I guess by that time my mother had become a reading specialist or a reading administrator for the whole county actually, and she was doing workshops for teachers and so on. Also, she became a principal, and later a county office administrator. But she was probably my first influence. My father had been what you call a teaching principal. You were teaching, but you also did all the reports. And as a child, I always watched them do the reports, and they let me balance reports for them. So that was just kind of a learning experience. Also when I first began to pay attention in DeKalb County about "moving up and moving forward," I saw some individuals that I knew and one of those was Beverly [name] – I moved to a position that influenced teaching and learning. Then an instructional lead (?) teacher, who was later named assistant principal for instruction, meant you had a lot to do with how teachers taught and how students learn. You could influence learning, and I think that position I held [ ] teachers students services or having done principalship, I look back and I think serving as an assistant principal of two different, very different schools – one was _____ School and one was _____School they were both schools where the students that were probably in kind of the higher echelon in a sense, but students from a variety of places, especially at _____, where you had CDC students coming from different countries, from Africa, Asia and so on – the people from a higher echelon – I'm not speaking of money, I'm speaking of speaking several languages, and I think all that later led to things like the international

baccalaureate programs and so on. That was one experience. And because there was a very diverse population at School – a lot of parents were college educated parents and so on, you had to really begin to look at instruction in a very segmented way. You had to find ways to help students learn from all aspects, whether it being English as a second language, or whether it was a non-reader coming into school for the first time – back then we still had kindergarten, in my later years, we still had pre-school. But as instructional lead teacher, most of the time, kindergarten was the first formal experience that a child had. I was influenced by people who went from the ranks with us, from being teachers to instructional leaders. [inaudible question from Beverly] Yes, I think we went – which was another influence – a white teacher – I've had to answer to both of them. Black women – actually it took a long time before I was around a lot of black women in my professional life, as teachers – and that's what I've seen. I think you probably became the first black lady that I knew to move into the instructional portion – not as a specialist in special education or something else, but in the general school curriculum. And watching how one can influence teaching and learning, to me that is one of the most valuable positions that one can have. I always thought I'd be a greater influence as a principal, and I think there was a good influence there, but a lot of it came from that instructional background of beginning to deal with students and the *diverse* needs of students. Working with observing teachers, observing children, and helping them to grow. I did begin to see in DeKalb, Black individuals who began to move up in administrative later but at a very slow rate until the 1980's..

Q: Just one more thing. What hindered your progress in terms of education, things like racism, classism, sexism, because of the society in which you live – if so, what would you say was the greatest obstacle and how did you overcome that obstacle?

A: I think I had the advantage of being a person brought up in a positive environment regardless of whatever (whoever?) it was – it was such a positive influence and I look back at being discriminated against, I didn't even recognize it. Or if I recognized it, I would not even deal with it. I just continued to move, and so I don't remember any major obstacles because things were getting better for black females, things were getting better for women as we moved along, and I had these role models. I had these role models in my life who had overcome so much more. Who had been the grandmothers and mothers or aunts or whatever who had only had certain schools that they could go to, or only certain places they could teach and that kind of thing. Because black teachers at that time could not teach white children. But then as integration came along, even they were moved into those areas. So I got to watch them evolve in it. I was always a goal-oriented person and I did not have many obstacles. Actually all I had to do was [ ] the work and the opportunities would come and just try to be ready, and there was always such a push – I've always been a mover and an individual. I'm always trying to figure out what I might need to get ready for next, just in case. And that came from influences, too, but those people who were around me that so often protected me, or pushed me along…

Q: Going on to looking at the role of the church in our lives, especially for African Americans, do you feel like the church was an important influence on you? What role did that play, etc.? Any specific activities? Did you learn to speak out?

A: That's it! That's it! For a while – on Sunday afternoons my father was a part of the youth activities and whatever – young people's church or whatever they called it –the Young People's Association of the Presbyterian Church. We would have conventions and at those conventions we often had to learn a speech or something, so you had to all talk, you got to get up and… And also 4-H in my community had kind of
[ ] and so we had to participate in oratorical contests. My mother and her sisters and brothers always knew so many poems and spoke of having to always do oratorical including – when they graduated from 6th grade, each of them had to write their own [speech?] to be promoted to the 7th grade back in that day. Or if it was 9th grade to go into the 10th they had to write their own speeches to give – about a two minute speech or something. That was apart of finishing in order to go on to the next level. And they wrote it and it was graded and they had to speak it. So that was halfway routed in the community, halfway in the church also, so our church always made some opportunities through these youth activities, where you had to get up, stand up, and speak up! Be it an oratorical situation or whether you were reading the minutes of the meeting, or something – if you had to introduce somebody. That's where you learned to branch out as a speaker and, of course, everybody had something -- Easter speeches and things like that where you'd do it where…. I can remember being very nervous but there were those opportunities to speak up and they were very much oriented for my age group.

Q: How does that translate into working with children in the school setting? How did that help *you* in working with children in your school as a principal?

A: It made me very conscious of trying to provide opportunities for children to know how to speak up appropriately… Even as a music teacher, we studied timelines and things of history and song and learning verses and speaking or singing, there were some children who were already easily attuned to it. You wanted them to grow and move forward, and it made you very aware of the shy learner child who, unless someone made them stand up, speak up, sing, whatever they did and work in plays and so on – that kind of background in the arts, in music, or doing plays and try to help shy child came as a result of my knowing how I felt as a child, and having to be still made to stand up and speak up, whether I wanted to or not! Whether my knees were shaking or not. And I knew how that child must feel. So you – I think [ ] subconscious that you did, but it did become a conscious effort to do that kind of thing. Of finding that child and helping those children speak up. And I think one of the ways – probably my only real contribution as an educator – working with reading specialists, working with children who would be so unsuccessful with reading and social studies – they were being given remedial teaching and training. But they were never getting beyond remedial in many cases, or it was taking so long to move from remedial to the regular classroom. Working with several people – especially one or two reading specialist , it started with social studies and those reading classes – the reading teachers, who [ ] approval by going to a instructional coordinator – would summarize the material in the social studies textbook and make it more a reading

activity. And in the last school where I worked for four years – after about the first year, we had about [ ] where the children left remedial reading would walk around and summarize chapters and they were to find adults who would listen to them read. Every time we met an adult, [we'd have them] put an initial on the pile of paper and make just one [positive?] remark, like "Good!" or "Enjoyable" or something like that. These were the students who needed practice, practice, practice, in reading. But now they were walking around, finding parents who would walk into the school building, find the teachers as they walk down the hallway and say, "Excuse me, can you listen to me read?" – that made the child speak up. There was not an adult who could say "no" to a child who wanted to read. The bus driver, the person going into the cafeteria, wherever it was, if that child saw him, they could read a paragraph or a page. Whatever there was enough time for. It gave children more confidence and helped to improve reading.

Q: As a principal, to come up to you and want to read – did you take the time?

A: Oh, always – [voices overlapping]. At the first level (?), I just think just the child being moved to walk to an adult – whether is one that they know is your principal or not – they count (?) you. That takes a certain amount of growth or a certain amount of self-confidence and you can certainly not walk away. If you walk up and say, will you listen to me read – we taught the students how to say that – can you listen to me read, please, just for a minute – I'd like to read you a paragraph. The children were taught to say that, even way back, whenever it was – there was that naturalness to listen to them read. And I think part of that also comes from being a mother, because if your own child wants to

read to you, you want to *always* stop and hear them read no matter what you were doing, whether the bacon was burning or not! Turn it off and listen!

Q: When you talk about the school where you were, you said mother, and I think – to you as a principal – do you feel like the "other mother" for the children. Tell me a little about that.

A: Going to the principalship, I guess, was kind of logical step for me, being in the instructional portion. And I really strongly believed at that time that after even *more* of an influence on teaching and learning, I think to a certain extent I got that. I had some received some what I call a little mothering or parenting as an assistant or whatever – I always tried to learn from the persons that I worked *for*. But I can remember one of the nicknames that I had as a principal was "mama." They wouldn't say it exactly to me, but every now and then somebody would try to tell me that. And I really didn't have a problem with that. I wasn't always older than everybody. But you were kind of seen as being the leader of the building. You're either mom or dad – and dad could be the male principal or whatever. And that's part of [ ] people putting you under their wings – I think that was a part of the mothering as a gesture that I mentioned with Mrs. Johnson – a lot of people, when they went that extra step, those were the things you saw in them [ ] for their children or what mothers in the community did for you. And so, it was kind of a natural movement to that. And the mothering simply came from experience, from working, from dealing with it, and going to workshops and trying to learn and really getting to observe and see children. If you're standing there when they come in every

morning, and you're watching as they get off the bus or walk up the street or whatever, you know so much about the child before he or she gets into the school building when you say "good morning," and they say "good morning." Or whether you get the hugs or the hellos or the whatever. You already know just what kind of day the child *might* have and you get a chance to intervene right there. And you are, in a sense – I think what they call *loco parentis* or whatever – you're the parent of the child. They get hurt, if they learn, whatever, so there is that part of being sort of a parent when the parent is not present, that is always with you. And not only in the back of your mind, it's also in how you plan and work with the staff and whatever to protect children in all ways and make sure they are being served in the best educational setting possible. Teachers who seem to add that extra something, that extra – not just the content, but the *caring* for what they do are people I always perceived as being the most successful educator. Also people who did that extra mile for <u>me</u> were, I thought, my most successful educators. They were the people who cared about the total child, they cared about what you learn, of course, but they also wanted to see you well adjusted, they also want to see you, as much as humanly possible, happy, and one of my greatest examples of that was – he is deceased now – but his brother was in my class – I remember growing up with a young man named Curtis. He had a speech problem, he stammered a great deal. There were no speech teachers at that time, back in the late 50s, early 60s, and this was the late 50s. He was in the next classroom – my mother was the 5th and 6th grade teacher next door, and I was in the 3rd and 4th grade classroom. And the one person who would get to come in our classroom to say "excuse me" to the teacher, Ms. Sheldon (?), would be Curtis, and I would sometimes wonder, why? Curtis has such a hard time saying "Excuse me, Ms Sheldon" – that would

take a while. “Ms. McCall would like to borrow an eraser.” Or “Miss _____l would like to see somebody” – it didn’t happen every day, but it was fairly frequent, and I later found out, probably 35 years later, Ms. ____ and my mother had a plan. This was so Curtis would have to come and somehow get these words out and speak. That’s the extra care. That’s when nobody else is doing it – they’re pushing you to that next step – he thought he was being the major focus in the classroom. But it was so that he would learn to speak and be able to speak in front of others. And his brother was in my classroom, and I had that experience of talking to him just a few months ago, I said, do you remember when he’d come in and everything, and he said, yes, yes. And it would just be so hard because I wanted to say the words for him and he said – and so, the adults had a plan, but we didn’t know what it was! That’s taking you under the wing, that’s that teacher who does what is necessary to help you develop and help you go further.

You can see where children need that extra whatever or you say, well, this is the thing that I need to do to [ ] try to help [ ] extreme shyness – and maybe they’re the ones that get to take some kind of something around for a few minutes to several classrooms. You try to find – you talk to the teacher about ways to help children – you talk to the parents about ways to help a student move forward. And so often, the whole thing – and I got this expression from someone else – moves the child from being the taillights on the car to being the headlights. And that is what I think – that extra care, that working with parents, the teacher, and particularly the child, and any situation in the community – whatever you can do through the school setting or the extracurricular settings – that idea of getting *everybody* to the front of the bus, to being the headlights, there’s something about every

child that puts that child in front. You have many intelligences, you have multiple intelligences (?) – but find one or two that you push and promote for that child. If that child can [ ] be successful and develop confidence.

Q: Give me a little about the demographics of the school, etc.

A: The first school where I became principal – well, I became the principal in the middle of the school year, really about February officially – the principal was moved to another place, which was a lateral move – I had been the instructional lead teacher at that school for two and a half years [ ] so I knew the faculty in the way of serving as their assistant principal primarily in working in instruction. So it was a good opportunity. It was a neighborhood where many of the parents were, as I said, college educated, in the _____school area, some were doctors – many of them, there were many professionals. It was a semi-rural – as rural as one might find in DeKalb County – setting. It was a school that was set apart by distance from a community – I think that at that point the school had become predominately black. I didn't really see any changes in terms of learning and expectations from the teachers that were there. As to the time *I* got there expectations never changed. That's when you have a problem. Expectations never changed, so students were expected to do their work, they were expected to conduct themselves in such a way in classrooms where children can learn and others can learn. So, discipline or whatever the word might be was well established. The children were involved in working and teaching and learning, and so we tried to continue that very same environment. Helping the students reach their highest potential – there were some –

if you go by the demographics, on free and reduced lunches during the years I was there the school was never a Title I school, I believe until maybe my last year – this was going into my fifth year then – the last two and half I was the principal. Well, we had qualified for reading programs, so we had gotten two reading specialists about three years prior – no, two and a half years – reading was somewhat of a problem. This was also the time when things were going around the city – people were beginning to move from the Techwood area because the Olympics would be coming, and a lot of public housing folks were being sent to use (?) vouchers – Section 8 vouchers – so it made a difference with the educational experience for some of the students who were coming in from the Atlanta Public Schools. And the first group we didn't really realize how much a difference maybe until there would be some problems with some of the reading and whatever that maybe they hadn't always had when the children had come from feeder schools or from a school right there (?). And it was a scramble to hurry up and try to get students where they needed to be, academically in reading.

And so the former principal, the person I was serving under, had a background as a reading specialist. So, we went from one reading specialist to having two serve the need. And that was also the time of the state standards that allow the students scoring within a certain range on the standardized tests. That was my first real working experience as an ILT which included working with as many students that were remedial. But it was still nowhere near the majority. Our school continued to win "Pay for Performance", meet very high standards and so on, both when I was an AP and became principal. So we just kept working to bring the student where he or she needed to be and be as fast about it as

possible. A big influence was the teacher training we had from hearing about people like Escalante. When Escalante said yes, the students can do the higher math, but I gotta build a bridge. And so they have to come to school early, they have to come an extra hour and a half before school and do the basics.

Q: Was that something you got from Escalante?

A: Yes, that influence – along with Harry Wong's "The First Days of School." Escalante & Harry Wong they just really became the people that I tried to look at and use so much of what they did as a model. That's where you add tutorials, Saturday school, and some teachers just plain out volunteered to come and work with students.

Q: So that's one of the ways you tried to bridge the gap?

A: I had a firm knowledge of curriculum – I understood what a child needs to know, what a child has mastered, and what is needed to be successful, and to really individualize for the child. And that individualization became one of the biggest things in that demographic setting. For the first time, we began to give more and more tutorials – I had some of that in my background, but when I went to the other school, which was _____Elementary, there was a setting where for the first time I had dealt with students who were living in so-called public housing and that meant the demographics were different. There were high expectations of all students, it just meant that some were living in a different type setting and there were problems. And now, when you have a school where you have some students are third generation – their parents and

grandparents had attended that very same school – and when I went there, it was 50 years old that year and this was the place for the 1950s housing, GI bill, whatever – and the students who were there had a grandmother and a mother had come to the school or grandfather and so on, that had also attended that school when it opened as a child. So there's this very tight village concept that is going on. There were those who were renting places maybe because they are going to Emory University in med school or something like that. There are the students coming from public housing, there are students coming from apartments, because apartments had started to grow up around that area too. So we had a very diverse socio-economic background, but we also had students – probably – at least 7 or 8, who were second language students – coming from foreign countries. That meant you had to do some individualizing and tailoring of the subject matter.

Q: Would you say the care for the different populations – was it different?

A: Oh, yeah. Well, only in this way. The care, I think, is recognizing and remembering cultural differences that were affected by what we said or did at the school – not in the way – that every child is the same brain and ability to learn. Every child – I haven't seen many children that don't like to learn. I never experienced a child that achieved some degree of success when that light bulb of understanding comes to them, no matter who the child – it does not have to be verbal. You see it, you see it in their faces, you see it in their expression. So that's what we're constantly trying to find, and because we had a number of students who had different food requirements, we had students who had different religious backgrounds, what you had to do was make sure that

you stayed focused. How does that child become the best reader, the best thinker, the best at mathematics or arithmetic skills or whatever – the best at taking language and making it their own So, that means you had a big table – I compare (?) it to a big table – if you put 10 students at that table, you will have a large amount of diversity – you would have great differences about what are the expectations when they are sent to school. But your job is always to try to keep the teachers motivated, to give them all the tools and training they need to appreciate where every child is coming from, take them from that place and move them forward. And try to move them forward at as fast a pace as you could, but do what's necessary to make sure they have a firm foundation. Because if they've got that foundation, nobody can take it from them, no matter where you go, no matter what part of the world, you've always got that. And I think being in that setting that was, once again, international, that I was familiar with much earlier – even back at _____school, when I first went to _____school and so on. That opportunity for diversity – and I was made so aware just the other day when I was thinking this was one of the most important Jewish holidays, and having been a music teacher, that was one of the first places you ever looked at – music and language and information from all cultures of the world. And one of the biggest joys at _____School was when we found out we had a new student from wherever, we'd try to find something that came from their previous location- if China, try to find something Chinese, or if they'd came from Japan, find a Japanese folk song, and you'd happen to have it playing when they come into the room – and seeing their face and seeing that expression on that child who's hearing – or the child coming from India and hearing the sitar or something playing – you don't have to say anything, you don't have to make a big deal about it, but you're already saying welcome

and you're already saying there's something about you and it gives you that chance to do something broad for a child. And I don't know if – I don't know what you call it – that village concept – that's a mother and a father – the person that you're near is your mother and father for that time – whether they claim it or name it or not. So there are a lot of 21-year-olds and 22-year-olds who, when they begin teaching – they teach at pre-K or kindergarten or whatever – they want to feel like they also count (?).

Q: What do you think about a black woman's ethics of care?

A: That's just really just what I know. Because I am a black female and most of these individuals that I meet are black females that influenced me and did that extra… It's something I wish I'd studied to try to find [ ], but I would say – [voices overlapping] it's an acceptance. It's a given that you're accepted. You're appreciated. You can learn – like every child can learn, regardless of there being some obstacles. And somehow in the back of your mind you realize there are still some obstacles because of the world we live in. But a determined nature – and that's that thing out there that made you – a black female [ ] – perseverance, determination, you <u>will</u> succeed. You <u>will</u> get from point A to point B. And you will get there in the best possible way that I can find to help you get there. And I don't have to do this with just one child. I have enough space, I have enough energy, I have enough love, I have enough caring, I have enough resources, and I have enough in this ability to help you get from A to B in the best way possible.

Q: Do you see that these practices that we talked about can be used, can be transferred to other school settings? Can it be easily applied?

A: I think so, but it has to be intentional. There has to be a culture that the principal, the leader, sets. And that's that plan and planning and planning that goes *way* before you even meet the teachers. And then you meet the teachers and you meet the students and you meet the parents – that, in this setting, our focus is student success. Here's the way we can get to them. We need your input and we need your help. But I think everything we do in a school building, whether it's the school pledge, whether it's a school song, you get the students who are transferred from other schools and they have to suddenly become a part of a new school culture – last year, they were at this school, and this school was my [ ] – you've got to move to the next place. Every time, you have to start again. And every time, you set a culture that is based on student success, student progress.

Interview ends.

Interview with Mrs. White

Transcribed by Elizabeth Wilson

NOTE: I have used [ ] for unintelligible words or phrases.

Q: What I want to do first of all is to have you reflect on your role as a principal and tell me a very short story about something that you remember that stands out in your mind about caring for students.

A: I had one particular kid that I can think of now – I don't remember his full name, but – his first name was Brennan, but I got to know this kid in elementary school. He had the ability to do the work but he just wasn't. He pretty much refused to do the work. He was a singer and all he really wanted to do was sing and that's all he wanted to do – he was in his church choir, but he wasn't doin' his school work because that's something that wasn't interesting to him. And in elementary school at this same time he lost his mom – so I'm like, oh my God, nothing is gonna happen to this kid now. So I thought I'd kind of had to take Mama's place. So to get this kid to finish up his work I ate lunch with him and I would tell him " you're not goin' <u>home</u> until this work is done." But that was back in the time you could keep a kid after school – now you can't keep 'em after school. But you know – you're gonna finish this. You finish your work, you're eatin' lunch with me – it's after school until things are finished. When Brennan left elementary school, I pretty much lost track of this kid, for him to only appear in high school with my son . And all of a sudden, there's Brennan in high school, he's back into music, he's doing real well in music. He was going off to college, he had a scholarship in music and it was so

funny – once again, everything was going well – I lost touch with Brennan again. I was in a Subway Restaurant , and here comes Brennan in Subway – I said of all places, this kid walks into Subway. He wasn't in music, but he was an executive at the bank! You did go on to really do something – you look at this kid and think – what's going to happen once he leaves me – but you know, just a feeling…I'm mama now.

Q: Wonderful. That's a great story. I want to talk a little about you, your background. Describe the community where you spent your childhood years. Include the name of the city and state, and historical facts. Share information about your neighborhood (people, events and relationships).

A: I grew up in Memphis, my parents had 10 children, plus one adopted child. It was a good neighborhood. We moved into this neighborhood when I was about 5 years old, because I remember I hadn't started school yet but at the time we moved into this neighborhood, we were among the first Blacks to move in this neighborhood. The Blacks were moving into the neighborhood, which had previously been pretty much a white neighborhood, but there was white flight taking place. So all these homes were up for sale. We had white neighbors next door on one side and we had a few across the street -- but it was pretty much becoming an all black neighborhood. You were able to, at that time still, play outside and not worry about things happening. It was pretty much a very good neighborhood growing up. You had the neighborhood grocery store, you had the men coming around selling food to the families off of a wagon. But it was a good neighborhood to grow up in. At this time, we had a junior high school, maybe – I think it

was 5 years after we moved in before it became a Black school. So we were able to go there from the elementary school – [name] Elementary – to the middle school. Now when we were ready to go to high school, that's when things changed for us. We were originally assigned to the school which was an all-black school, but the year before it was my turn to go to the black school, the white school was opened up for the blacks to go. So, I didn't get a chance – I call it a chance – an opportunity to continue with the majority of my friends because there was a boundary line drawn, and if you lived on, let's say, this side of the track, you were able to continue to go to this school, and if not, you went this way. It wasn't the greatest experience of having to now ride a bus, when you could have walked to school. So you rode the city bus, and you paid every day to ride to the other school in a neighborhood that was not real close to us.

Q: Tell me about – what time frame are you talking about? Elementary years during 60's-70's.

A: 1960s – 1970's

Q: If you were to walk inside your house at the time, who would you see?

In my house you would have seen so many children.

A: It's very strange. I thought about this – I was talking to my sister there were so many people in our house – you know, earlier I said there was 10 of us, but it wasn't just the 10 of us. My mom ended up – who loved everybody as a kid, so if anything happened

to any other child, she took on other kids. My aunt who had eight children those eight children and my aunt lived with us for a period of time. My next to the oldest brother had children, and my mother had some of those children. So at no point in time would you walk into that house and not see over 10 children. And we're talking about 10 children and more who were there. When you came home doing school work, and you knew that once you came home, school work was done, you were *doing* work. I had to mop before school (?). So, she knew when someone [ ]. And she was telling on *everybody* – I mean, not just us, but my aunt's kids [ ] at the high school – and education was a big deal in that house. So Mom didn't work. My dad was the primary breadwinner, so she was going to be there] me there. IShe said " I'm taking care of these kids – you gotta go to school and you gotta get this education. "

Q: So your mother planted that information it in your head?

A: Yes!

Q: Tell me a little about your siblings.

A: I'm the seventh child from the oldest (three under me) – four boys, six girls. And the other child who my mother and father adopted, so I'm the seventh child in the line-up, I guess that makes me some kind of special child! [laughter]

Q: So how would you say – every child was different in that family in terms of education and aspirations and goals, how were yours might be different from you siblings? Are the [ ] other educated in the family? How are you different in terms of your career choices?

A: Education was just the thing for my mom. She grew up in a big family, too, and they were from Arkansas, and she didn't get to finish school at that point in time. Most of them really didn't' finish school that way. So it was like – you all are going to finish school and everybody's going to do *something* when you finish high school. High school is not going to be the end of what you do. You can't sit in this house and do nothing. So everybody in that family – my three older brothers – it wasn't the same way for them, but – the seven of us had to go somewhere. The oldest brother, Louis, got to go to college, [Ole Miss] so now he's a doctor. Then my sister Jeanette went to several vocational schools – most of us think of her as a "caregiver." She constantly went into those areas, but she never got there. But that was still on her resume. Then my little sister had to go to college, and she started teaching. There I think – you've got to go to college. The next sister – she decided she wanted to go to vocational school, she went to the secretarial studies of thing and the same applied to the next sister but everybody had to do something – you're not gonna sit in this house and do nothing! It wasn't going to happen.

She gave us opportunities to see "what's going to happen to you" if you don't! She said, let me tell you what it's going to be like if you don't go to college. So we went to bed very early because the next morning – and when I say morning, I mean morning – I mean

like 3 or 4 am in the morning, we're going to get up and you put on your clothes – you gotta put on something that's gonna to shield the body – you just can't go around in your shorts, you gotta wear good working clothes – you'd get up and you'd go out and you'd stand on the corner around 4 a.m. in the morning. It was not just you, we got some more people in the neighborhood [ ] My mom taught this lesson to us. So around 4 a.m. in the morning, there was this big yellow bus that pulls up and all of – I got to say this – all of these Black people would pile onto this bus, this big yellow bus. This big yellow bus then stops somewhere at a little store and then all the people would get off this bus – you go into the store and you get, back then, your quarter's worth of bologna, your crackers, your drink and we all got back on this bus. Then about the time the sun comes up, you're in this field. You're literally in a field of cotton. And everybody is getting off this bus into a field of cotton, because now you're going to chop cotton. Do I know what chopped cotton is? You know – cotton is just something you use in sewing stuff – [ ] actually were in this field of cotton. And your mom's telling you, this is what you're going to do and she's showing you how to chop cotton and how you pick cotton. You know, as a child, you haven't seen this but you've heard about it – and you feel this is legal slavery. After you started this row the sun is up – there's one child – that's gonna come around with this bucket and everybody has an opportunity to drink out of this same ladle [ ] which at that time was just [ ] – everybody is going to drink out of this – this is your water. Mind you, all of these old people were snuff dippin', or a cold or whatever. Everybody's usin' the same ladle. You have to use the restroom pick your spot – pick your choice. I said, I'm not doin' this! I will not. And my mom's like, oh yes, you will. This is what we do. This is what we came here for. And to them, it was an honest day's

work. This is an honest day's work. And you did this all day long. You can't get fired on this job! [ ] This is your job and you're gonna get it done– come on, I'm gonna do your row for you. I'm gonna do this row and show you how you do this right! We'd do this all day long until the sun goes down. Your Mother is standing there and saying, this is how we get back on the bus to go home. You know how we looked? You know how we felt? And how much was the pay for this day's work? You know, you're talking six or seven dollars and you thought you made some money. You knew then Yeah, you're goin' to school! I think that was one of the best lessons a parent could teach a child. Let's see what kind of job you *can* do if you don't have this education. And I really don't think my parents thought they were poor . I know all these people lived in this house who never wanted for anything. Where did this money come from? How hard did Daddy work for this money? That we never saw – but we were provided for at all times. I remember we had a little store that was about two doors from our house. My mama had an account at that store. And you know, nowadays… can you imagine how much she had to pay for those items she bought at this store, just to feed all of us, every day [ ]and we made it. I knew where *I* was goin'! I couldn't do that.

Q: You're basically saying that your mother and father influenced you to go on and pursue your education – that they were very instrumental in you going to college, going on to a profession …

A: Yes.

Q: So it sounds like your parents had a great impact on your furthering your education. What about people in your neighborhood. Was there anyone who stood out in your church, or community – mainly women – we're talking about black women in the South.

A: You know, I think there were two church women and one – I think her name was Margaret – she's dead now. And she was a teacher – oh, my God. You just didn't mess up when it came to Miss_____ . I mean, you had to be in her Sunday school class, and she taught that Sunday school lesson, and she would relate it to that school lesson, and you'd better know how to read when you got in Miss _____ Sunday school class, too! Because she was going to make you read or she wanted to know why you couldn't read this the way it was supposed to be read! And she made you think, gosh, I want to be one of those, you know? She just genuinely cared.

And then we had a minister's wife, she loved children, and she didn't have any children And she was the minister's wife, she directed the youth choir and all of the children in the church were in this choir. Every Thursday, we had to walk to church to go to choir practice and we would have rehearsal, we would complain but at the end, she had all of these treats for you when it was over. She made all of us feel special throughout the rehearsal. She was always encouraging us to do our best.

Those are two women that were in the church that had a big influence, I think, in my life.

Q: When you talk about growing up and church –who were the people in primary school or secondary school that influenced you the most?

A: In my high school we didn't have the best principal. He really didn't want us there But there was one black teacher and she was my English teacher, " Miss Prim and Proper." You would say, "When I grow up I want to be like that and I'm going to treat children the way she is treating us. This lady made me feel comfortable, I was a chubby girl and I didn't have the best self-esteem and ran into a teacher who sees the good in a child and makes a child feel good and a light comes on.

Where did you attend college and why did you choose that college?

Probably because I was still that chubby girl that didn't think she would make it if she went off to school. I stayed at home and attended Memphis State University which is now the University of Memphis. I stayed at home because I was not ready to hit the real world but going to the University of Memphis was a real different experience. It was not very long that they had also become integrated. Blacks weren't very welcome at all at the University of Memphis (UOM). You had instructors in college and there was no one to complain to about what's going on in situations. You had to take it. The English Dept. at UOM was well known for not passing Black students in English because we could not speak proper English . Most of us had to do basic English classes and more than once

before passing classes. It was known around the campus. I can tell you about an experience where I know my grade was incorrect. All grades were posted by social security numbers and if you went to talk to professors about grades, they would say “It’s correct and you would have visible proof and nothing would happen. So during that time the Black Student Government Association (BSGA) was formed and a lot of things went through the BSGA and a lot of things were presented through them. It wasn’t the best place to go but you still got a good education and every instructor wasn’t like that but that’s in everything. But there were still those pockets in that school. I had one professor and the class was over and she left to go back home to Iowa. I called that lady every day for a week before grades were posted, that caused me to be in school an extra semester because she would not change my grade. So I had to back to school and take one class before I could graduate because that one grade brought my grade point average down. But all of that made me a better person.

How did you overcome obstacles during that period in your life?

Just support from family, I think everyone new how bad I was feeling about this because I sent graduation invitations out but no one made me feel bad about it because I had support from my family. They said “you can do it, it’s going to happen.

Are there any women in your college setting that was a good mentor during this time period ?

We went through so much throughout this period. Throughout school, I had one sister in all special education classes. I had a professor I would talk to about these classes and the things that use to go on in these classes. Originally, I was going into regular education. My sister does not know this but my decision to study special education based on how she was treated on those classes. I don't think my parents ever really knew what those classes were like. I had a professor who I would talk to about these classes and the sort of things that use to go on in these classes. The children in those classes were called the "CDC" Crazy Dumb Children. I knew that I had a sister in these classes. We wanted to talk about how do you allow people to have the perception of these children in your school? These are the special kids with the special problems it hits home. To talk with her and share experiences about special needs children helped me to understand how to help my sister. All special needs children are not the ones you see in wheelchairs, with the braces and the obvious handicaps but what about the ones who have something not connecting up there. So having this mentor to talk to me about this really helped in that field.

What did you teach and how long did you teach?

I taught for 20 + year. I taught special education and regular education. It was my first year of teaching and my principal did not like special education. She did not want special education in her school. My classroom was a closet, previously a bookroom. The principal did not know where the special ed. Files were located nor did she know the

special ed. Kids' names. I spent the first six weeks of school in that closet. Until one day a lady came by who was a special education supervisor and it just so happened that her nephew went to that school. She came by to meet the special education teacher and when I told her all of these things, she immediately got everything I needed. I should have stayed in the closet the rest of the year but I had the opportunity to start doing my job. I left there and went to a different school to teach resource students. I loved it, nothing like it! You really got a chance to see growth in children. "Normal children did things just to be doing them but when you had special needs children, you knew the reason why they did what they did. If there was a misbehavior, there was something going on. You had a better feel for what you could do to help them. I moved from there to regular classroom and I missed my sped. I truly missed my sped. It was a more appreciated field, the children were, the parents were, I saw this growth in my children. I moved to another school and worked with "Success for All." I became a teacher tutor at that time. That took me back to my sped kids again because being the teacher tutor, I taught the reading group but after 90 minutes of reading group was over, you got the lowest kids back one on one. My God you don't know how you can help children until I got Mary_____in my class. This family had 15 children in the family, among the children there were a set of twins. We didn't realize all the things that were going on in that family until we had the opportunity to work with that child one on one. I found myself being able to ….well let's go back. When she was in my class, no one wanted to sit next to her because of the smell but you still had to get through the 90 minute block. During the one on one time, we had the opportunity to talk to this child. Not only do I work with her on instruction, but now I know there are 15 children in this house. Now I know you don't have soap,

now I know you don't have your own towel, now I know all of you sleep in this one bed together. If the babies are urinating on you at night, there is no soap to use in the morning so you have to get up and put clothes on and go to school. So, I called mom to ask if she would be okay if I could send some things home for this child. So we got a special bag together to help this child. It would stay between the two of us. In this bag I put the towel, the soap, the underwear, the powder and deodorant and we talked about what to do with these things and you really thought this was going to work but once it got home, it became community property in the house because everyone needed it now. So when I get her back and things aren't really changing and she tells me that this is what happened when the things went home. So now I talk to the guidance counselor and we provide for the whole family now. So now we know what this family needs to make it.

Q: After all of these years of teaching, who influenced you to become an administrator? Tell me how you moved from AP to Principal.

A: I really did not want to be an administrator , I loved what I was doing. I was at _____Elementary. I think when you see things that need to be done, you do them and every morning, I went to school early and I watched kids outside when it was time to come inside, I would come inside and stand in the hallway. I'm directing children, I think different, I liked doing this principal saw this and he noticed all of the leadership qualities but I wasn't going for anything different. There were children you knew they needed to

be cared for this is what your passion was and I think he pushed me more and more seeing what I was doing. I don't want to act like I'm pushing you away from the classroom but this filed needs people that act like you. I did not ask you to go outside and stand with those children and I did not ask you to come in and direct them to class in the hallway and you were doing this. He continued to talk to me about it and then all of a sudden I started saying "Maybe this is something I would consider doing." Maybe if I was in administration, I could do even more things, I would not have this classroom and I would be able to see more children and work with children in other classrooms that I am not seeing. I guess I am so focused on my group of children in my classroom, I don't know all of the issues that's going on with everybody in school. After hearing this so much, I said, yeah, this maybe something I would consider doing. The last principal I worked for influenced me into becoming a principal. He talked about being firm and fair. I would not have become a principal if it were not for him. He had strong beliefs about people and I think he had the insight to see people that were truly committed to the education of children. So he was my big influence.

Q. Describe the schools where you served as principal. Choose one of the schools and describe the demographics, unique features, and diverse ethnic groups. Discuss one of these schools and how you demonstrated care for your students.

A. I will talk about _____Elementary School. I chose that school because it's in the _____area of Memphis. It is like another city within Memphis. The children and the parents act as if they have never been out of the community, never

until I got to that area. These are parents who have their children's names tattooed on their bodies. I have never seen parents who walked in the school with every color hair under the sun. I have never had parents that you could not reason with. "If my child said it, It was true." It took a while to get the parents and children of that school turned around. I remember the children going on a fieldtrip and I went with them. We simply went downtown in the city of Memphis. In Memphis, you could see the Mississippi river downtown. The children honestly asked " What city are we in now?" From the school community to downtown Memphis is only about a15-20 minute drive but some of these children had never been out of the _____Community. There were some things the parents literarily did not want to happen. It was a school that was 100% African American. We were a Title I School and 100% free and reduced lunch. The parents felt they were also entitled to this free lunch. We had to establish that breakfast is a specific time, I need the babies here at this time. Parents felt when they came in for breakfast and the kids didn't eat the breakfast, they should be able to take the food home and finish eating it. We knew this could not happen. We were taking care of the children, we had to do so much to get those parents coming to the school and attending meetings. We had to do a lot to turn this school around. We had to use Title I Funds to rent buses to bring parents to school for meetings. We had three major apartment complexes. So I would visit these three complexes and ask the resident manager if I could put up notes to let parents know about night meetings and the bus will arrive for pick up. The facilitator and I would go over and tie balloons around the bus stops to alert parents about the pick-up location.

Q. Your children had a lot of needs. Did you develop programs specifically catered to the needs of the student population? Were there any unique activities?

A. I did not have good parental involvement at a school located in the _____Community of Memphis. Therefore, I had to find innovative ways of engaging parents. I implemented a "No Excuses" Night at one of her schools. She sent out flyers and had T-shirts printed that said *"No Excuses" Come to _____School and See Signs of Greatness."* This event kicked off my parent involvement program, which was necessary because parents would not participate in school activities unless their children were performing at a PTA event: "We had to do so much to get those parents coming to the school and attending meetings." I had to do a lot to turn this school around. She used Title I funds to rent buses to bring parents to the school for meetings. The community had three major apartment complexes, so she visited each and asked the resident manager if she could put up notes to let parents know about meetings and that the bus would provide transportation. My facilitator and I tied balloons around the bus stops to alert parents about the pick-up locations. They offered dinner at the meetings (although later this was no longer allowed under Title I regulations). It took a semester to get the parents on-board, but by the end of the spring semester, about 50 parents were regularly attending the meetings, which was a great accomplishment for my school. I was not afraid to implement new ideas to meet the goals I set for the school.

Q: What is unique about a Black woman principal's ethics of care compared to a white woman's ethics of care? How would you be different from a White principal in a school setting?

One of the key things is that you grew up Black in America. I know it sounds horrible. You had some of the same struggles and issues that children in your school had, I think you are able to understand and relate to the children and those issues. They can relate to having ten other people in that house, you can relate to being babysitter all night long and Johnny lays his head down, he is not being lazy. He was simply up all night or something else that was going on all night last night or he actually did not have a bed to sleep in at that moment. It's a total difference. I had to go to homes and visit with parents who would not come to school for anything. Was this a comfortable neighborhood or home? Maybe not. I had to decide what outcomes I would like for most of my students to experience.

Q. Can any of the practices be transferred to another school setting?

A. Looking at the experiences and wealth of knowledge. I think caring for children is universal. All children want to feel cared for. Anything can be used in another setting where there are no Black students or lower income kids. I think the practices can be modified to meet the needs of students.

I don't think we always educate the whole child. I think we accomplish academic things with children. I mentioned an organization "Girls to Ladies and Boys to Gentlemen." Do we think about these girls? Do we have organizations in our schools that teach girls To be ladies and how to conduct yourselves as a young lady.

Q. Why is learning to become a Black lady so important?

You can only do much for children between 8-3 pm and when they are here between 8:00-3:00, you do what you can do. We have got to teach our young Black ladies the appropriate dress. How do we sit as young Black ladies ? We have to teach them pride in being Black in terms of hair, clothing etc. We tried to teach our boys how to wear pants, without being oversized, and one of the requirements is they had to wear a tie.

Most of them did not know how to tie one. Members of the Black community would come into our school and bring ties to help the boys learn to tie them. I had one Black gentleman who wanted to teach the boys how to play chess. They were so excited about learning to play chess. They stressed that you can do something other than play basketball. So we had successful Black men telling the black boys how to get a job and move into a career. So if you want to be successful, you have to dress a certain way. As a young Black man, you have to act a certain way. These two programs worked in educating the whole child beyond academics.

APPENDIX C

ETHICS OF CARE INTERVIEW GRID

Ethics of Care Interview Grid

Principal	Mrs. Brown	Mrs. White	Mrs. Black
Grew up	Atlanta, GA, 1950s	Prairie, AL, 1950s	Memphis, TN, 1950s
High school graduated from	Harper High School, 1966	Wilcox Training School, 1966	Memphis High School, 1972
College major	B.A. English, Emory University, 1971	B.A. Music Spelman College, 1970	B.A. Special Ed. University of Memphis, 1978
Master's degree	M.Ed. English Georgia State University, 1980	M.A. Music Ed. Georgia State University, 1976	M.S. Admin. Supervision, Trevecca Nazarene College, 1988
Specialist degree	Ed.Admin, Emory, 1996	Leadership Certif., 1980, Georgia State , Ed. Admin., UGA, 1990	Ed. Admin, Trevecca Nazarene College, 1989

Early life

Describe childhood	• Lived with father, mother, 2 sisters, 1 brother • Middle-class	• Lived with father, mother, 1 sister and 2 brothers Home was built	• Lived with father, mother, 5 sisters, 4 brothers and 1 adopted child

community	African American neighborhood (postal workers, teachers, lawyers, & doctors) • Moved to Collier Heights in 1960s, one of first Black-owned, Black-built communities • Father purchased first home for $16,500	by her parents • Lower income neighborhood with farmers, sharecroppers, educators, & domestic workers • A very poor county in AL • Whites lived on a small track of land in community • Both parents were educators (teacher-administrators)	• Moved to the neighborhood at 5 years old • Among the first Blacks to move in to this neighborhood • Relatives with children occasionally lived with them • Neighborhood became predominantly Black a few years later • Considered a lower to middle class neighborhood with domestic workers, teachers, store salesmen/women, postal workers
Relevant historical facts	• Segregated department stores and public places with "Colored and "White Only" signs posted. • Designated sections in restaurants and theaters for Blacks • Boycotts and riots to obtain rights and privileges	• Education demonstrations in 1960s for school integration • Polling test for Blacks early 1960s. Test eliminated in late 1960s • Blacks boycotted local businesses that discriminated against Blacks	• Civil rights leaders planned several marches and boycotts in Memphis during that time period • Her parents participated in sit-ins and boycotts at restaurants and other public places • Boycott on behalf of sanitation workers was led by Dr. King. • Dr. King assassinated in 1968 in Memphis

Formal education: Elementary to high school graduation	• Attended predominantly Black schools • Collier Heights Elementary • Henry McNeil Turner High • Harper High School	• Attended predominantly Black schools in her community- Prairie Missions school 1–5 grades • Wilcox Training School 6–12 grades • Some teachers did not have formal education/degrees	• Attended a predominantly Black elementary and middle school in Memphis • Her sisters and she integrated a predominantly White High School outside of their neighborhood

Influences: How contributed to formal education, self-esteem, care for others to principalship

Teachers (good & bad)	• Sixth grade teacher fought to make her a safety patrol • A teacher provided extra support when she was ill and missed a lot of school days • A teacher started a dance club to encourage girls to become graceful and lady-like	• Sixth grade teacher taught all subjects with energy and enthusiasm. • Serious and confident and wanted students to succeed • Fifth grade teacher provided exposure to current events through major newspapers	• A Black English teacher referred to as "Miss Prim and Proper" made all of the Black students feel important or special • She specifically made her feel comfortable because she was "chubby" and did not have the best self-esteem • She often said "When I grow up, I want to be like that and I am going to treat children the way she is treating us."
Community members	• Received the overt message "You need to go to school." • A neighbor	• The career outcomes of community members assisted her in the	• Neighbors felt responsible for all of the children in the neighborhood • They assisted in

	encouraged her to go to college • Neighbors expressed how proud they were of her accomplishments	decision to attend college and pursue a college	the management and children-rearing of each other's children • Neighbors encouraged them to go to school and make good grades so they can go to college
Family, friends, and church	• Black women provided activities at church that enhanced artistic, drama and speaking skills	• Maternal grandparents encouraged her to complete high school and continue her education • Young People's Church encouraged young people to speak publicly	• Two of the church women were teachers in local schools • They related Sunday School lesson to school lesson • One of them required that you know how to read in her class • Minister's wife directed the youth choir. She encouraged them to do their best and she made them feel special
Role of mother and father	• Her mother was her first teacher • Her mother stressed the importance of the girls going to college. • "You girls will go to college was her mantra." • Her father wanted them to get a good education.	• Parents encouraged reading, learning, and exploring a variety of topics • Not going to college was never an option • Parents were role models for working and going to college at night • Parents supported	• Her mother did not finish school but she told them "You all are going to finish school and everybody's going to do something when they finished high school • All of children either attended college or

	• Both parents had high expectations for their children	her musical talent by driving 90 miles every other week for piano lessons while in high school	vocational school or received some type of training
Lessons learned from these experiences	• Students are more successful when they receive support and encouragement from adults. • Students can overcome obstacles if they feel good about themselves and have a strong self-identity. • Adults can be a greater support if they identify strengths and weaknesses and provide opportunities to strengthen or enhance them	• Sometimes we lead by precept and/or example. Some children need both • We need to set high expectations for self • Reaching goals requires some flexibility in terms of where we live and work • Set high expectations for all children to succeed regardless of ethnic background, culture and life experiences	• Her success can be attributed to the support of her parents, neighbors teachers and church leaders • It's important to know how to live in the world as Black women • Self-esteem is important in one's growth and development

Description of educational and work experiences after leaving community/hometown

When, what, and where	• Graduated from high school in 1967 • She felt that she could move mountains • She attended Emory University • Taught high school English at	• Graduated from high school in 1966 • Spelman College 1966–1970 • Taught music at the University of Tennessee 1970s • Moved to	• Graduated from high school in 1971 • Attended the University of Memphis and graduated in 1975 with a B.A. in Education • Taught special education for

	an Alternative High School • English Department Chair • High School Assistant Principal • High School Principal	Atlanta, GA and worked at Southern Bell Company • Worked for the City of Atlanta Parks & Recreation in Atlanta, GA • Taught music at two different elementary schools for about eight years • Instructional Lead teacher at two different schools for a total of about six years • Principal at two different elementary schools for about six years total	____years • Worked with a program called "Success for All." • Elementary Assistant Principal • Elementary Principal
Challenges and lessons learned	• Met racism and adversity at one of the colleges she attended • Learned perseverance and resilience during this time period • Decisions made are not always fair and just in regards to women and diverse ethnic groups • One of her principals who was a male told her she did not have the qualifications to	• A challenge was finding the right college and profession that would enable her to use her talents and skills to motivate students to learn • Adults can motivate and guide young people in making the right decisions concerning their future	• Black students did not feel included at the University of Memphis • She did not graduate from college as scheduled due to a poor grade and no means of disputing the grade • She learned there will be setbacks as you move through life but there will be family, friends and others there to support and

	become a principal		encourage you
Individual influences	• An African American woman professor in college was a positive role model and provided an venue for dialogue among the Black women enrolled at the college • One of her principals who was a male encouraged her to become a principal	• Black woman music teacher at Spelman College was her mentor • Black women administrators in school system who moved from teaching positions to leadership positions	• A Black woman special education professor at the University of Memphis became a confidante and mentor • One of her principals who was a male encouraged her to become a principal
Connections between education received in home communities and care they provided for students	• Black women in her community cared about her as a person by sitting down and discussing career goals. She demonstrated care for children individually and collectively by providing educational opportunities (special events or classes) • Adults set goals for the children. Set goals for children in her school by developing activities along with parental input	• She was a shy student and she was given opportunities to speak publicly. As a principal, engaged students in a variety of learning activities-speaking, singing, and memorization • Provided opportunities for children to read to adults in the building-teachers, parents, and administrators which helped to build self-esteem • Her parents encouraged reading different genres of books.	• She experienced some of the same issues as her students, eg. having ten other people in the house, having to be babysitter or caretaker. She demonstrated an understanding of certain behaviors from her students • You have to decide on the outcomes you want to have in life based on previous experiences in the home, neighborhood or school setting.

	• Community wanted them to survive in the world. She added more AP courses that would enhance academic skills and provide exposure • Adults prepared them to meet the challenges of a segregated society. Prepared students to meet challenges through the exposure to a variety of programs and activities (fine arts & AP courses)	She worked with her school staff to help provide extra reading support to students	
Description of school setting and formal curriculum (subject matter, demographics, etc.)	• A metro Atlanta High School with 99.9% African Americans • Middle class neighborhood • Good parental involvement • Focused on educating the whole child • Primarily single family dwellings	• Located in a semi-rural area in metro Atlanta. • School population changed from a diverse population to predominantly African American • Upper middle and middle class neighborhood • Parents were teachers, doctors, lawyers and business owners • Not a Title I school until a few years later	• Located in a lower income community near downtown Memphis • 100% African American student population • Title I school with 100% of children on free and reduced lunch program • Three major apartment complexes in the community • Very little parental involvement and

		• Faculty, staff and parents had high expectations for student performance • School demographics changed and reading scores dropped	participation

Ethics of Care

Caring act(s) demonstrated by principals in study	• Organized a Saturday School for students who had minor behavioral offenses. In an effort to decrease behavioral infractions and lower the out of school suspension rate • Saturday School included parents in decision-making for school rules	• Organized after school tutorials and Saturday School with teacher volunteers • Provided more individualized studies during classroom instruction • Primarily single family dwellings	• Sought out school adopters to support academic and personal needs of students • Kiwanis Club, "Toys for Tots" and Iowa State grads were adopters • Provided bus transportation for parents to attend school meetings