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With the face of American schools changing rapidly to reflect a more diverse population, today's educators must work purposefully to create a teaching and learning environment that embraces the sociocultural differences of its students. While the ethnicity of students has become more diverse, the school principalship remains mostly white, with school leaders of color being almost non-existent (Kafka, 2009; Rousmaniere, 2007; Pollard, 1997; Tillman, 2004a; Tillman, 2004b). When combined, the demographic changes in student population, the *lack* of ethnic diversity in the school principalship, and the pressure of high student achievement cause educators to investigate the effectiveness of school principals in culturally diverse schools.

Keeping all of these factors in mind, the purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand leadership in culturally diverse schools and to gather data from principals currently leading in these settings, utilizing Lezotte's Effective Schools Research (1990) as indicators of effectiveness.

Based on interviews conducted, four commonalities were found. First, the school leaders began as *teacher* leaders. The principals in this study also had a keen sense of self-awareness and exhibited a sense of shared identity with the community they served. These principals all possessed a sense of urgency and no excuses mentality when meeting the needs of students. Based on observations, two additional commonalities were found. The principals all advocated for their students through relationship-building and held high expectations for teaching and learning in their schools.

This study also includes implications for school leadership preparation programs. These included creating a safe place where future school leaders can become aware of their cultural selves and allowing more internship experiences in culturally diverse schools.

I HAVE WHAT IT TAKES: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK AT LEADERSHIP  
IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOLS

by

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Approved by

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my husband Anthony and children, Jalyn and Maurice.  
Thank you for sacrificing your wife and mommy for the completion of this work. I only  
love you!



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I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge my participants, Candace, Anthony, Reginald, Josephine, Betty, Jeanette, and Chris for their sacrifice of time and wisdom to this research. I would also like to thank my chair, Dr. Carl Lashley, for having more faith in me, at times, than I did in myself. Your guidance and support have made me into the school leader that I am today.

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I cannot let this opportunity pass without thanking my mom. You are my best friend, confidant, and biggest cheerleader. Thank you for removing all barriers in order for me to complete this dream. Your unconditional love for me has taught me to be a better wife, mother, leader, and researcher.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT**

School leaders have the immeasurable task of ensuring equitable education for ALL children, regardless of their race, creed, color, or ethnicity. Moreover, as the demographics and sociocultural makeup of schools changes, so must the principals who lead these schools. Leadership in schools must ensure that students of color are held to the same expectations as their white peers. For all school leaders, regardless of their ethnic background, the process of providing equitable instruction begins with thorough self-examination and continues with making conscious efforts to provide culturally proficient and culturally responsive leadership (Johnson, 2007; Terrell & Lindsay, 2007).

In this chapter, specific changes in the demographic makeup of American schools are described. A description of the demographic makeup of educators in American schools is also provided. The lack of educator diversity coupled with the demographic changes in student population have forced educators to take a different look at what it means to be an effective school leader. This is explained in this chapter. Finally, discussion is furthered by an explanation of Lezotte's Effective Schools Research (1985; 1991; 2008) and how its correlates can be used to identify characteristics of effective schools and leadership. The limitations of ESR are also explored to show where further data is needed.

## **Student Diversity**

Many demographic changes have and are occurring in America's public schools, including the adjustments seen in the faces of students we serve. Schools are becoming sociocultural and political grounds where the pluralism and diversity of our country's many cultures collide with the social constructs of principals, teachers and, students who inhabit them. Demographically speaking, by 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that about 50% of the U.S. population will be non-white. Roughly half of the American population will consist of African American, Hispanic, and/or Asian people ("African American students," 2008). There are an estimated 4.4 million American Indian and Alaska Native people living in the continental United States, representing 1.5 % of the total population. During the 1993-1994 school years, there were nearly 5 million Hispanic students in our nation's public schools. By 2005-2006, just over ten years later, that number had doubled. In 2000, it was estimated that 1.2% of public school children were American Indian or Alaska natives, 4.5% were Asian or Pacific Islanders, 15.1% were of Latin American origin, and 17.3% were African American (Marx, 2004).

Further, according to Aud, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, and Wilkinson-Flicker Zhang (2013) from 1990 through 2010, the number of white students in U.S. public schools decreased from 28.9 million to 25.9 million, and their share of enrollment decreased from 61 to 52 percent (Aud et al., 2013). In 2010, white students made up 50% or less of school enrollment in 12 states in the US and in the District of Columbia. According to the Aud et al. (2013), black students had the largest percentage of students in public schools in Mississippi and the District of Columbia while Hispanic students had

the largest share of public school enrollment in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas. Because of these dramatic cultural changes in our schools, diversity has flourished as a buzz word and, in many cases, refers the physical browning of American public school populations.

### **Educator Diversity**

While the face of students in many schools has changed tremendously, the ethnicity of those charged with engaging them in the teaching and learning process has changed very little, with the majority of teachers and other educational leaders being white. Our teacher populations have remained virtually unaffected as middle-class, white, and, female, with less than 15% of America's teachers being African American or Hispanic (Hauc, 2011). According to Howard (1999), about 90% of all public school teachers in the United States are white and most grew up and attended grade school and college at English-speaking, white schools and universities. More specifically, according to Marx (2004), 83.5% of elementary school teachers and 85.9% of secondary school teachers are white. Needless to say, many of these teachers simply do not have the experiences and backgrounds to prepare them for the diverse student population they will encounter in the classroom.

Following the demographic pattern set by the profiles of teachers, school leaders remain predominantly white in both elementary and secondary fields. According to the Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, and Orlofsky (2006), 82.4% of all public school principals are white, while 17.6% are considered minority. This includes 10.6% of principals who are African American, 0.7% who are American Indian or Alaska Native,

and 0.5% who are Asian. It also includes 5.3% of principals who are Hispanic and of single or multiple races and 0.4% who are multi-raced but not Hispanic (Strizek et al., 2006). Again, this overwhelming white presence in today's schools combined with the demographic changes being seen in students signifies the need for white school leaders to think critically about how they plan to face the diversity within our schools. With all of this being known, how do school leaders cope? What is it like to be the leader of a school with a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds?

According to Riehl (2000) the aforementioned struggle to reach diverse populations of students is not a new one. She notes that "generations of administrators have espoused treating teachers and students equally, regardless of their social class, race, or ethnicity" (p. 183). The statistics on the color of those providing academic instruction to students have continuously reported that they have white faces, while the faces of those receiving the instruction continues to darken, becoming increasingly African American, Asian, and Latino. What this means is that educators have no choice but to become knowledgeable about race and the role it plays in both their lives and the lives of students and their families, since our student population looks very different from our teacher population. Not recognizing the impact of race in the lives of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in the school can impede principal's effectiveness as a school leader.

### **Effective Schools Research and Diverse Schools**

The change in the demographics of students in our schools has afforded us the opportunity to examine and change the leadership of our schools. In school leadership,

not only should research studies investigate and analyze the work of principals in diverse schools but should look even more closely at the work done in *effective* diverse schools.

The work of Lawrence Lezotte, the major contributor to Effective Schools Research, further supports the previously discussed demographic changes in student population. He states (2008):

Said another way, the number of children coming to public school who have been historically the easiest to teach (middle class) is in steep decline and the number of students coming who have been the more challenging to teach (low income) is increasingly significant. The number and percent of minority students continues to increase as well and these students also tend to be disproportionately poor and disadvantaged (p.1).

According to Lezotte and Bancroft (1985), Levine (1990), and Lezotte (1991 & 2008) effective schools research has yielded us great insight into what makes a school successful. Effective schools research was conducted under the fundamental premise that the “primary function of schooling is teaching and learning” (p. 303). As a result of this belief, school leaders must be aware of the pieces that need to be in place in order for a school to be deemed *effective*.

With American schools demographically changing and the standards and expectations of school leaders, teachers, and students rising, it is important for school leaders to be knowledgeable of the challenges of leading a culturally diverse school. It is also important that both future school leaders and current leaders of culturally diverse schools receive support and ideas on how to overcome these challenges.

Lezotte's Effective Schools Research (1991& 2008) was chosen because of the explicitness of characteristics that should be found in ALL leadership and school environments, regardless of the demographic backgrounds of students. This research gives very concrete and observable characteristics of effective schools and their leadership. With many of the correlates, one can determine the existence of the descriptors by simply observing the school environment or simply talking with school leaders. Lezotte's ESR was also chosen because of the limitations in its research background, which is discussed in the next section.

**The Correlates of Effective Schools Research.** According to Effective Schools Research, or ESR, there are seven correlates of effective schools, as outlined in Table 1. These correlates are often described individually but are not independent of one another. According to Lezotte (2008), these correlates are interdependent. It should also be noted that the indicators of one correlate often affect another correlate. Nonetheless, before understanding the characteristics of an effective school as separate entities, one must first have an understanding of principles that serve as a foundation upon which these correlates were organized. For the purpose of understanding the larger impact that these correlates can have collectively, they have been divided among two defining principles of effective schools research: 1) equity in the quality of the teaching and learning process and 2) data-driven decision making.

**Table 1. Effective Schools Research Correlates**

Category	Correlate	Indicators
<b>Equity in Quality</b>	Safe and orderly environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Environment is free from physical harm of teachers and students</li> <li>✓ Building and Facilities are clean and well-lit</li> <li>✓ School/Classroom rules are clearly posted</li> <li>✓ Exhibits a collaborative teaching and learning environment</li> <li>✓ Cooperative learning is encouraged among both teachers and students</li> <li>✓ Portrayals of children and adults include several different races and ethnicities.</li> </ul>
	Climate of High Expectations for Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Attitudes and beliefs in student achievement for all are evident (mission statement)</li> <li>✓ Higher level questioning is apparent</li> <li>✓ School/Principal/Teacher responses to when students don't learn</li> <li>✓ Student engagement</li> </ul>
	Clear, Focused Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mission statement is in kid-friendly language</li> <li>✓ Clearly visible throughout the school building</li> <li>✓ What/How students will learn is shared and known by all</li> <li>✓ High expectations are held by adults for all students</li> <li>✓ Highly engaging lessons</li> <li>✓ Differentiated instruction within classrooms</li> </ul>
	Opportunity to learn and Student Time on Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Master Schedule (teacher implementation of such)</li> <li>✓ Student engagement</li> <li>✓ Instructional strategies within the classroom</li> </ul>

<b>Data-Driven Decision Making</b>	Instructional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Instructional mission is communicate to all stakeholders, including parents and teachers</li> <li>✓ Evidence of a community of shared values</li> <li>✓ Empowered teacher leadership</li> </ul>
	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Variety of assessment practices</li> <li>✓ Responses to assessments as tools</li> <li>✓ Use of technology in student-monitoring process</li> <li>✓ Students monitor their own progress</li> <li>✓ Use of authentic assessments</li> </ul>
<b>Both</b>	Home-School Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Parental involvement is encouraged</li> <li>✓ Parents are contacted regularly</li> <li>✓ Interaction between parents and teachers is frequent</li> </ul>

Lezotte, L. (1991). *Correlates of effective schools: the first and second generation*. Retrieved from <http://www.effectiveschools.com/images/stories/escorrelates>

***Equity in quality.*** According to Lezotte (1985), “an effective school is one which demonstrates both quality and equity in its program outcomes” (p. 307). Effective schools can only be those that are committed to learning for ALL. Leaders of effective schools must believe that their school can reflect a “learning for all” philosophy through both student outcomes and performance. This is one of the most fundamental ideals of effective schools research (Lezotte, 2008). Quality of a school and its programs can be evaluated by looking at the school’s overall achievement levels, which must be sufficiently high enough to signify acceptable mastery of the essential curriculum (Lezotte, 1985). Equity, then, is evaluated by the distribution of the achievement levels, which must not vary across major subgroups of the student population.

In examining equity in quality in an effective school, several of the correlates apply. First and foremost comes the safe and orderly environment, which indicates the physical cleanliness and safety of the school building as well as procedures and policies that keep it orderly (Levine, 1990). Climate of high expectations for success, having a clear and focused mission, and opportunity to learn and student time on task are correlates that also contain indicators of overall school quality and equity. To further investigate the pieces of equity and quality within a school, one must ask how the school's definition of effectiveness addresses both quality of teaching and learning and equity of resources and opportunities (Lezotte, 1985). Not only must a school provide quality instruction, it must do so for all students.

***Data-driven decision-making.*** Since it is such a large part of school leadership, decision making must not be done haphazardly for a school to be effective. This is why the remaining correlates of effective schools fall under the utilization of data to drive decisions. The first of these as listed in Table 1 is instructional leadership. This correlate comes with the belief within effective schools that there must be collaboration and ownership among the staff in order to successfully initiate and sustain school improvement and success (Lezotte, 2008). Not only does instructional leadership refer to the principal of a school but it also refers to the empowerment of teachers to take on leadership roles within their profession. Together, the principal and other adults must work together to create a community of shared values and expectations within student success (Levine, 1990).

The other correlate that defines data-driven decision-making within an effective school is frequent monitoring of student progress. According to Lezotte (2008),

In the effective school, pupil progress over the essential objectives are measured frequently, monitored frequently, and the results of those assessments are used to improve the individual student behaviors and performances, as well as to improve the curriculum as a whole (p. 9).

The assessment process must be primarily to determine the effectiveness of the school in terms of student outcomes and must focus instructionally on student mastery, not coverage, of a curriculum. More importantly, once data is collected on student mastery as well as instructional effectiveness, effective schools must prepare to adapt to the indicated needs of students and teachers. In other words, data-driven decision-making is not only about the information gathered but the action taken afterwards.

The remaining correlate, home-school relations, could fit into both of the aforementioned categories. According to effective schools research, positive communication and interaction between home and school are a mainstay within an effective school (Levine, 1990; Lezotte, 1985; Lezotte, 1991; Lezotte, 2008). Parents should be encouraged to participate as a member of the collaborative teaching and learning team both in and out of school. This contributes to “learning for all” culture that is to be created equitably and supports the decisions made by school leadership (Lezotte, 2008).

**The Limitations of Effective Schools Research.** While the work of Lezotte and others has shown what a school should have in order to be effective, practical examples

of Effective Schools Research within the context of a *culturally diverse school* would further help school leaders.

***Lack of attention to affective factors in schools.*** Practically speaking, one of the major limitations of Lezotte's ESR is the lack of attention to factors such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status within schools. While Lezotte acknowledges the demographic changes occurring in today's American schools in his current research, *how* these changes *affect* schools' effectiveness and leadership is unclear. In its earlier form, these considerations were also made unclear. According to Sizemore (1985), ESR included achievement of total school populations, giving little attention to the specific achievement of poor, minority students. Janson (1995) calls this "control for background characteristics" (p. 187) and describes this as the researcher's tendency to observe school effectiveness based solely on school-controlled variables. With this approach, the "intercorrelation between student background characteristics and school outcomes" are not considered (Janson, 1995, p. 187).

***Lack of consistent academic expectations.*** Further, Levine (1990) suggests that not all schools investigated in ESR were held to the same academic expectations, perhaps showing *growth* on instructional assessments but not *proficiency*. He warns,

Much of the researcher involves inherently problematic multivariate analysis that tends to base conclusions on schools that have been identified as effective but that do not differ greatly in achievement from other schools of comparable socioeconomic composition. (p. 578)

This means that although school effectiveness was defined, this definition may have looked differently for different schools. Levine and others (Levine, 1990; Jansen 1995; Hannaway & Talbert, 1993) suggest that not all schools analyzed in ESR were held to the same standards, with some schools utilizing data at only lower grade levels and others using only students' performance on basic skills assessments.

*Lack of practical strategies.* Another major limitation of Effective Schools Research is the provision of hands-on strategies for school leaders who wish to create more effective school environments. Levine (1990) states,

The correlates represent issues and challenges that faculty must grapple with to make their schools effective—they are not detailed “prescriptions” or “recipes” for attaining that status. Innumerable steps must be taken to make a school’s climate and culture productive, improve leadership, enhance expectations and requirements for satisfactory student performance, strengthen instructional arrangements for low achievers, or bring about schoolwide improvement with respect to other correlates. No specific action or set of actions is right for every school. (p. 582)

While Levine (1990) creates a to-do list for school leaders wishing to make their school environment more effective, *how* these things are done remains up to the leader. Explicit examples of the ESR correlates are not provided for principals.

This research study will attempt to provide real-life examples of culturally diverse schools that exemplify the Effective Schools correlates and will explore the leadership in those schools in hopes of providing current and future principals with ideas for implementation of the correlates.

## **Purpose of this Research**

Because of the previously described demographic changes that have become evident in America's schools and the need for all schools to be effective, it is of the utmost importance that school leaders become culturally *proficient* and *responsive* leaders (Johnson, 2007; Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). It is also just as important that school leaders are aware of research-based principles like Effective Schools Research. These principles could affect standards that aid in determining the success and effectiveness of a school and its leadership. One missing piece for administrators is exactly *how* to reach effectiveness with a variety of populations. It is, therefore, a goal of this research study to provide some examples of real school leaders who interact daily with diverse student populations and to better understand the work of these principals and their leadership in culturally diverse schools. It is also a goal of this study to provide educators with suggestions and implications based on observations of successful school leaders in action that, in turn, will help both current and future principals in culturally diverse schools. Through interviews and observations, I intend to answer the following questions.

- What experiences affect a principal's leadership in a culturally diverse school?
- What role does race play in the leadership of a culturally diverse school?
- What characteristics and leadership qualities are evident in principals who lead in culturally diverse settings?

A better understanding is needed about how principals practically apply research-based characteristics of a culturally proficient school leader to real-life effective and

successful school settings. In order to find the answers to the above questions, I interviewed seven principals in a variety of educational settings. These principals have led or currently lead in a diverse school setting. Because of the varied meaning of the word “diverse”, I chose to specifically define it as having a white population that is less than 60% of its student population. Participants were also observed at their schools in order to create a more complete analysis of their practices.

As an assistant principal in a culturally diverse school, it was important for me to ensure that my participants represented an assortment of school leaders. I was fortunate to have both Black (3) and White (4) school leaders, as well as male (3) and female (4). I was also able to include at least one participant from each K-12 educational setting. Of the participants, three were elementary principals, one was a middle school principal, and three were high school principals.

I was able to analyze the characteristics of each principal as well as whole group responses and interactions from the interviews and observations. Upon these examinations, characteristics and qualities of the school leaders revealed themselves. I then used additional literature to provide further support for each leadership quality.

## **Overview of Chapters**

In this chapter, I have expressed both the demographic changes in the student population of today's schools and the lack of teacher and school leader diversity in those same schools. A description was also given of Effective School's Research, which provides a set of indicators that describe characteristics of effective schools as defined by Lezotte (1991 & 2008). I have also discussed some of the limitations to Lezotte's ESR (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993; Levine, 1990; Sizemore, 1985) and how this study aims to explore those limitations.

Chapter Two will offer a review of the literature in the area of culturally responsive leadership in schools, including culturally diverse schools. Chapter two also goes on to describe the inner challenges of principals in becoming culturally responsive leaders, which is separated into two sections. The first outlines the possible challenges of white school leaders who may lead in diverse schools. The second section outlines the possible challenges of African American principals who lead in diverse schools.

Chapter Three describes the research methods used in conducting the study. A thorough portrayal of each research method is given, including interviews and observations. A brief depiction of each participant and their schools is given, followed by a more detailed one. The methods and processes of analyses are also given in this chapter. Chapter three also discusses my subjectivity as the researcher in great detail.

Chapters Four and Five explain the findings and trends derived from the interviews and observations of participating principals. These findings were divided into two chapters, with Chapter four outlining results from what participants said in

interviews, while Chapter five connects what participants said to what they did in observations. In addition, in Chapter Five, a connection is also made between the correlates outlined in Effective Schools Research and data gathered from observations and interviews.

Chapter Six clarifies the implications of my findings, including the use of Effective Schools Research. It also gives suggestions to current and future school leaders in their development into culturally responsive principals. The last part of this chapter gives suggestions to graduate and leadership preparation programs that prepare principals.

### **Looking Forward**

In Chapter Two, focus is turned from changing school populations and Effective Schools Research (ESR) to the school leader him/herself. Keeping ESR and its limitations with students of color in mind, I emphasize the need for principals to become culturally proficient and responsive leaders. While much of the school leadership population continues to be white, I recognize that black school leaders must also be culturally proficient and responsive to create more effective school environments. Therefore, challenges for both white and black school leaders in becoming culturally proficient and responsive are explored.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

Acknowledging the demographic changes in America's public schools, educators must change the way we lead and teach. One way to do this is through the fostering of culturally responsive leadership (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). A major aim of this chapter is to review what current research reveals about culturally responsive leadership. Several themes emerged as studies were considered and are discussed. First, through the exploration of other studies that investigated principals, the need for culturally responsive leaders was prevalent and proven influential in the leadership of culturally diverse schools (Johnson, 2007; Riehl, 2007; Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). Next, commonalities in the studies showed culturally responsive leadership that included the ethic of care and creation of voice for minority groups (Cooper, 2009; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). I continue with a description of the use of self-examination in school leaders, since this was also prevalent in the studies reviewed (Cooper, 2009; Hyland, 2005). The final aim of this chapter is to inform the reader of potential obstacles of school leaders who wish to become culturally responsive, taking the race of the school leader into consideration. To achieve this, a detailed description of the challenges both white and black principals may encounter as they develop into culturally responsive leaders is included.

### **What is *Culturally Responsive Leadership*?**

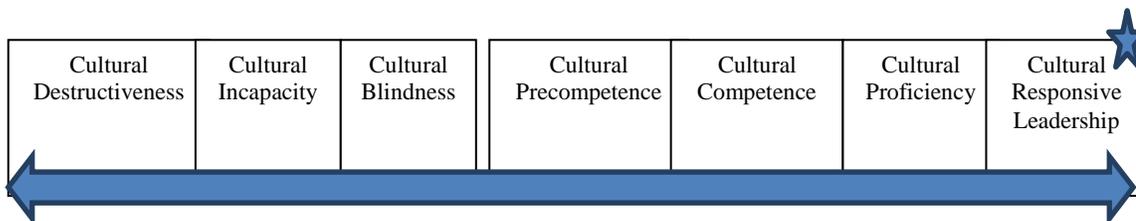
Terrell and Lindsay (2009) examine and define culturally proficient leadership as a process in which we as school leaders evaluate our own “assumptions, beliefs, and values about people and cultures different from our own” in order to be effective in diverse school settings (p. 5). It is important to note here that culturally proficient leadership is not attained overnight. It is more than a graduate class for teacher or administrative certification. Culturally proficient leadership is considered a progression through a continuum that allows school leaders to alter their focus from what is wrong with the students whom we serve to what it is that we as the adults need to do differently to meet their needs (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). For principals, becoming a culturally proficient leader is a journey and takes both time and initiative. Culturally *proficient* leadership leads to culturally *responsive* leadership.

In the next section, the *process* of becoming a culturally responsive school leader is discussed (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). Following this description, practical examples of culturally responsive principals are taken from current literature. From several studies containing actual school leaders, several characteristics were found, including the creation of a responsive school community (Johnson, 2007), showing the ethic of care (Johnson, 2007; Riehl, 2007), empowerment (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998), and advocacy and distributive justice (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Vaught & Castagno, 2008).

### **The Process of Becoming a *Culturally Proficient School Leader***

Terrell and Lindsay (2009) illustrate the progression into culturally proficient leadership and describe each step in becoming a culturally proficient leader (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009)**



The first point on the continuum is cultural destructiveness, which occurs when an educator tries to eliminate the cultures of those served within the educational setting. Next is cultural incapacity, which describes leadership that “trivializes the cultures of others and seeks to make the culture of others appear wrong” (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009, p.25). Cultural blindness occurs when school leaders choose to ignore the experiences of others in a culturally diverse school. After cultural blindness, the points on the continuum begin to transform and refine culturally proficient leadership. Cultural precompetence occurs when school leaders realize how much they do not know about the diverse settings of the school. At this point, a school and its educators make the choice to either continue in a positive direction or stop their efforts before any real change is made. Cultural competence can be reached once a teacher or principal leads with a clear alignment between his/her personal values and actions and the school’s policies and practices. With culturally competent leaders, an environment inclusive of new or different cultures is created.

While culturally competent leaders encourage inclusion, culturally *proficient* leaders take actions within themselves to better understand cultures different from their own. Once a school leader is considered culturally proficient, he or she is committed to

being a lifelong learner of diverse cultures, is reflective of him/herself and the educational needs of various cultural groups, and holds the belief that the mission of a school and its leadership is continuously seek innovative ways to meet the needs of diverse groups of students (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009).

### **Moving from Culturally *Proficient* to Culturally *Responsive* Leadership**

Terrell and Lindsay's continuum stops at cultural competence (Terrell & Lindsay, 2009). However, principals should strive to become culturally *responsive* leaders, the next level illustrated in Figure 1. With culturally responsive leadership, a school leader would need to reflect on any new perceptions s/he has learned from previous points on the continuum and actually *apply* them to a school setting. In summary, a culturally *responsive* leader is also culturally *proficient*. Essentially, culturally responsive leadership is the *action* part of the process where educators are actually doing something with their cultural proficiency. According to Johnson (2007), a culturally responsive leader is one that investigates and implements "practices that affirm students' home cultures, increase parent and community involvement in poor and culturally diverse neighborhoods, and advocate for change in the larger society" (Johnson, p. 49, 2007).

### **Examples of Culturally *Responsive* Leadership**

The next section of this chapter will describe specific school leaders found in literature. Each school leader demonstrates culturally responsive leadership in a distinctive way. While one principal creates a responsive school community, another utilizes the ethic of care. In addition, the school leaders described also show empowerment of others, a sense of advocacy, and distributive justice. Nonetheless, all of

these illustrations serve as practical applications of culturally responsive school leadership. Because culturally responsive leadership is created uniquely within individual school environments, each example describes *how* principals apply their culturally responsive leadership to establish these indicators.

**A responsive school community.** In her study, Johnson (2007) interviewed and observed three principals, two African Americans and one white. The purpose of the interview was to see if and/or how these school leaders implemented culturally responsive leadership. In her analysis, Johnson noted some commonalities in the way the principals responded to their diverse school populations. Two of the three principals maintained an *open door* policy in an effort to make their school more comfortable for parents as well as community members. They also used this accessibility to the school to help build communication between teachers and parents. Because all three of the schools that Johnson studied were deemed at-risk and even *bad* (Johnson, 2007, p. 51) the principals were on a mission to turn the look and feel of their schools around and intended to do so through creating an inclusive environment. They strived to build, as one parent put it, “a safe and nurturing child-centered learning environment that focused on addressing students’ basic and emotional needs” (Johnson, 2007, p. 52).

**The ethic of care.** In becoming culturally responsive leaders, the principals in Johnson’s study exhibited qualities that were prevalent in other studies of culturally responsive leaders (Johnson, 2007). One of these characteristics was displaying an ethic of care (Johnson, 2007; Noddings, 2012). According to Noddings (2012), the ethic of care begins on the foundation of a relationship that must evolve between the *carer* and

the *cared-for*. This relationship, called the *caring relation*, is built and nourished on the premise that as a need arises for the cared-for, the carer will respond to that need. Reciprocally, the cared-for acknowledges the carer's response to the need and shows gratitude. In Johnson's study (2007) the ethic of care and the care relation involved establishing a sense of belonging and welcome within the school, as previously described. Riehl (2007) further supports the notion of creating a sense of community and belonging and notes that changes within a school will not take pace unless all of the stakeholders, parents, teachers, students, and community members, understand and invest in the changes being made. Through the creation of an inclusive environment with the ethic of care, school leaders can create the power base needed to further educate all students, not just those of color.

**Empowerment.** Another quality displayed by school leaders who are culturally responsive is that of empowerment. One of the principals in Johnson's study made it a point to facilitate communication between parents and teachers, helping teachers better correspond with families from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Another modeled agency and advocacy for parents and students and set up *parent patrols* in parts of the community where drug activity was common. The principal stated that she made time to enable parents to become advocates and lobbyists for their children in accessing and mobilizing resources needed in the neighborhood. In their study of a middle school principal in an urban school district Reitzug and Patterson (1998) compared and contrasted a school leader that practiced leadership in an ethically and culturally diverse school through a lens of empowerment. They described Joe Clark, a well-known New

Jersey principal who lead his school with a belief in the necessity of control. Reitzug and Patterson also defined empowerment as “facilitating an individual’s belief in his or her ability/capability to act with effect” (p.152). Reitzug and Patterson (1998) studied this middle school principal extensively through interviews, both formal and informal, and observations. Through their analysis, Reitzug and Patterson (1998) also found that the principal, through her interactions with students, showed a caring nature and those students were empowered as a result of their interaction with their principal.

Further showing the ethic of care (Noddings, 2012), the care relation was strengthened between the carer and cared-for in Reitzug’s and Patterson’s study. Because of interaction with their principal, the students’ ability to understand their own needs and situations was enhanced. The principals’ beliefs in their ability to act in a way that would allow them to achieve their goals was strengthened. All of this was done through connecting with students on a personal level, such as learning their names and showing genuine concern for their well-being and the well-being of their families. It is very apparent in the narrative of the principal’s daily activities that she is sincere in her task of saving her students from the violence and adversities that they meet in their everyday lives (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998). Like the principals in Johnson’s (2007) study attempted to do with parents and community stakeholders, the administrator in this study believed strongly in making personal connections as a part of empowerment. Some of the aspects of empowerment through caring included establishing a personal connection, personal concern expressed through individual expectations for others, and connecting individuals to their communities (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998).

**Advocacy.** Perhaps one of the most influential contributions of culturally responsive leaders is that of advocacy for students of color and cultural diversity. A necessity for advocacy is the creation of voice. As mentioned previously, one of the principals in Johnson's study (2007) empowered parents to advocate for themselves and their children. Reitzug and Patterson (1998) concluded from their study of principals that in order for empowerment and advocacy to occur, the aspect of honoring voice must be present. This includes soliciting perspectives of others, particularly those from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds; accepting others' problems, concerns and wishes as important; and using gentleness to combat verbal violence. Reitzug and Patterson(1998) also noted that principals should not only seek out the perspectives of students and show through their interactions that students' concerns were legitimate and priority to her but that staff was encouraged to do the same. It was important that environments were created where both students and adults felt comfortable participating. This illustrates how important the voices of others were to the leadership of the school.

**Distributive Justice.** In their study of white teachers who had received training on structural racism Vaught and Castagno (2008) discussed the need for legitimizing others' voices and concerns through the use of distributive justice. In their implications, Vaught and Castagno (2008) further support this notion with the creating voice for minority teachers, students and parents. According to Vaught and Castagno (2008), "*distributive justice* is the idea that both individuals and groups are treated fair and equitably, only receiving advantages and privileges that they have earned or received in an equitable manner" (p. 110). Further, distributive justice would allow for collective

decision making and allow all groups and individuals affected to contribute meaning and provide them the authority to contribute their opinions with the confidence that they would be considered. Applying the framework of distributive justice would give a projected voice to those less heard from.

### **A Look Inward: A Necessity for School Leaders**

Culturally responsive leadership is a point of *action* for school leadership. As described, it is at this point that educators use their cultural proficiency and awareness of other cultures to make changes within the school setting. When investigating culturally responsive leadership, it must be understood that, in order to be culturally proficient, school leaders need to *reflect* on their own backgrounds as well as any new perceptions s/he makes as they experience cultural and social interactions of others. The next section of this chapter discusses practical examples of self-reflection and what it might look like in practical school settings.

**The need for self-reflection.** Several studies have shown the need for self-examination of principles and biases in school leaders (Cooper, 2009; Hyland, In her study, Cooper (2009) discusses a framework that can be utilized in encouraging cultural work in diverse schools and defines it as *transformational leadership*. She defines transformational leadership as leadership that “involves one’s engaging in self-reflection, systematically analyzing schools, and then confronting inequities regarding race, class, gender, language, ability, and/or sexual orientation” (p. 696). In order for school leaders to implement the ideals and standards that support empowerment, advocacy, and voice as described previously they must take a look inward and create a self-awareness of their

own strengths and weaknesses as well as what privileges, awarenesses, biases, and stereotypes they bring to the table.

Cooper (2009) examined two elementary schools, both of which had a student population that had less than 30% of white students and encompassed African American, Latino, and Asian students. After completing a narrative of each principal, Cooper (2009) found that, while principals mean well in their intentions to create inclusive environments for students and their families, biases and stereotypes unbeknownst to them can be damaging (Cooper, 2009). The principals in Cooper's study illustrated that, even though a school leader can claim to have the interest of students of color at heart, they still have biases to contend with. Through the exploration of three different principals who represented different cultural backgrounds, Cooper (2009) found the need for cultural leaders to constantly negotiate and monitor their own biases and prejudices in order to prevent schools from becoming tense and separatist environments where one group or interest is favored over another.

**Hyland's metaphors.** Hyland (2005) also maintained the concept of self-reflection as a cultural school leader in her study of white teachers who teach students of color. To further show the need for self-reflection, Hyland (2005) closely investigated four teachers at a school that was 72% African American and identified several metaphors that the teachers created for themselves as they saw their work. The teachers in Hyland's study (2005), both white and non-white, represented a variety of metaphors. From this study, Hyland (2005) was able to see "how these teachers sometimes operated in ways that supported a racist status quo, and the ways that they saw their practice as

working against racism” (p. 438). She also warns that without reflecting on the embedded stereotypes that contribute to decision making, educators can find themselves perpetuating the norms of hidden racism (Hyland, 2005).

***Educator as helper.*** One of the metaphors Hyland found was that of a *helper* or *benefactor*. In this instance, the teacher (white, Special Education) was satisfied knowing that she was there to help students of color and their families and shared stories of examples where she was illustrated as a *helper*. Her stories included one where the teacher helped a mother pawn her stereo to get money she needed to pay her bills. During this ordeal, the teacher prided herself in the fact that she held the mother accountable for the money she needed to get her stereo back, which the teacher clearly felt was helpful for the mother. She also mentioned that she felt like a *watchdog* for those who were discriminated against and didn't mind stepping in when necessary.

In contrast to the *helper* mentality, Hyland (2005) discusses the stereotypes that this teacher had, including the assumption that students and families she served could not take care of themselves. Also apparent in the way the teacher characterized herself was the sense of superiority over her students and their families, acknowledging that her way of doing things was the *right* way. (Hyland, 2005).

***Educator as assimilator.*** Another metaphor, exhibited by the second teacher from Ecuador, was that of *assimilation*. This teacher was clearly not White and stated that she did not see herself as a disadvantaged Hispanic. She further noted that “maybe that could be good for our students too-to stop seeing themselves as minorities” (Hyland, 2005, p. 443). This teacher felt she was a role model for students of color who could choose to be

white, just as she had done. Her narratives told of how she assimilated into whiteness and did not even speak Spanish, as some of her biological siblings did. This teacher also thought she was more successful than her siblings because of her use of English. Further, this teacher often attributed problems of her students and their families to their failure to assimilate (Hyland, 2005).

***Educator as intercultural communicator.*** Another metaphor Hyland introduced was the teacher as an *intercultural communicator*. One teacher saw herself as placing an emphasis on culture and described herself as being “interested in culture” (Hyland, 2005, p. 446). She noted her willingness to adapt to the norms of several different groups of people and she preached acknowledging the cultural differences of others and respecting them, even if they were different from her own. This was the same teacher who had taught at a Navajo reservation and described a willingness to learn cultural traditions and be nonjudgmental. Contrary to this metaphor, this teacher was only able to “see” white culture because of her work with the Navajo culture. However, she denied the politicization of white culture and displayed a disconnect between race, poverty, and discrimination.

***Educator as radical.*** The closest metaphor to culturally responsive leadership was that of the last teacher, who represented a *radical*. This teacher acknowledged the inequalities between white and other races and would often confront them. In order to be characterized as a radical, this teacher engaged in self-reflection that enabled her to see her own color-blindness. She used this acknowledgement to help her as she tried to learn from her students and their families. She used the inequities she saw in other white

teachers, such as the way that they talked to their students, as opportunities to blow the whistle in favor of students of color, which often resulted in a negative view of her by her colleagues. Not hindered by the way other teachers saw her, this teacher began to reach out to parents as a resource for getting to know her students better (Hyland, 2005). The downfall to this metaphor was that, while she was headed in the right direction, this teacher still did not fully see herself as an advocate for her students and their families. The term ‘radical’, Hyland (2005) discusses, insinuates that this teacher sees herself far from the norm. In contrast, as a culturally responsive leader, questioning inequity should be about *changing* the norm through your rebellion against it. Simply calling others out on their unfair treatment of others does not characterize culturally responsive leadership. It is the responsibility of culturally responsive school leaders to model advocacy for those they lead. This way, others not only notice the inequities of teaching and learning around them, but are able to act on rectifying them.

Because reflection and self-awareness are so important to the process of becoming both culturally proficient and culturally responsive, school leaders must be cautious about their own biases. Through self-reflection and self-examination, school leaders can acknowledge the biases and stereotypes that they bring into their leadership. Both Cooper (2009) and Hyland (2005) showed how educators’ use of self-reflection can empower them to question the status quo. The next portion of this chapter digs deeper into exactly *what* school leaders should be aware of, defining the realizations that school leaders must confront during self-reflection and examination. The next section also discusses challenges that both white and black leaders may face as they matriculate

towards cultural responsiveness and how these challenges might affect a principal's leadership.

### **Inner Challenges for School Leaders**

The teachers and principals in the studies previously reviewed are examples and show what culturally proficient and responsive leadership looks like in practical leadership. As seen in those studies, those that sit in the principal's office can offer a variety of characteristics. The most obvious categories are that of race and gender. Simply put, school leaders are either white or non-white, male or female. However, being a white school leader in a school with a diverse student population differs immensely from being a non-white school leader in the same setting.

The next section will take a look at what both white and non-white school leaders may have to contend with as they undergo self-reflection and examination. Confronting the challenges and realizations in this portion should occur as school leaders progress towards cultural proficiency and responsiveness.

**White School Leaders.** As stated previously, we have seen dramatic changes in the student populations of America's schools. While the students of color are becoming the majority in schools, the teachers and school leaders who are charged with engaging them in the teaching and learning process have changed very little, with the majority of teachers and other educational leaders being white (Strizek et al., 2006). What this means is that educators have no choice but to become knowledgeable about race and the role it plays in both their lives and the lives of students and their families. White school leaders have to be particularly careful to recognize one's own whiteness, white privilege, and

how they both can affect school leadership. Lack of acknowledgement of these, along with not recognizing the struggles and perspectives of people of color, can be impediments to a white administrator's effectiveness with non-white students (Figure 2).

***How can whiteness and white privilege prohibit a white school leader from becoming culturally responsive?*** White school leaders, particularly those working with diverse student populations, must first be openly aware that whiteness and white privilege exist. White school leaders must also recognize the limitations, including the lack of awareness of whiteness and white privilege, which they bring to their leadership.

*Whiteness as a standard of normalcy.* McIntyre (1997) defines whiteness as “a system and ideology of white dominance that marginalizes and oppresses people of color, ensuring existing privileges for white people in this country” (p. 3). While this is a very general and strong statement, it creates an umbrella under which the concept of whiteness can be further developed. First and foremost, the fact that McIntyre uses the words “system” and “ideology” brings together the notion that whiteness is an idea; a social construct, that comes complete with its own organizational structure. It is a culture in and of itself and is centered around the principle of white dominance that makes anything un-white less significant and, in many cases, inferior. Whiteness, to those who possess it, can be virtually invisible.

Since whiteness describes everyday life, inclusive of its own norms and interactions for many people often overlook it and take it for granted. The assumption is held by both white people and those of color that white people are just people, that non-whites are something else and, that race only affects those who have it. A prevalent idea

of whiteness is that of being “non-raced” and with it comes the idea that black refers to those who have race and ethnicity and white refers to just race, or lack thereof (Rothenberg, 2005). Rothenberg (2005) continues on the premise that whiteness has gone unnamed and unexamined because it has been uncritically and unthinkingly adopted as the norm throughout society. It is recognized that white people, including school leaders, fail to think critically about their whiteness because it comes with a sense of complacency and normalcy. Hyland (2005) says:

Whiteness is made out of materials that include socioeconomic status, cultural practices, peer group acceptance, and parental teaching, all of which lead to community participation [in] ideological constructions that support the ‘myth of racial neutrality’. (p. 431-432)

Sullivan (2006) suggests that we understand ourselves through our habits and refers to our everyday dealings as being deeply rooted in our beliefs about ourselves and how we fit into society. The lens through which we see things directly affects the standards by which we compare both people and events. If whiteness is used as the standard by which all others are measured, what does that say about the expectations of students and teachers of color? If educational successes and failures, by definition, have been set by white educators, what does that say about the inclusion of students and teachers of color and their input and attainment of educational goals? Part of being a socially and culturally sound leader is being knowledgeable about the needs of both individuals and groups of students, including students of color, as well as what meeting these needs may look like. Unless a school leader has become aware of the whiteness of

school leadership and the schooling process in general it is very difficult to evaluate the effectiveness, both successes and failures, of educational efforts for students of color. Another force to be reckoned with as a white school leader is the existence of white privilege. Kendall (2001) defines white privilege as an “institutional set of benefits granted to those who, by race, dominate positions of power in institutions.” White school leaders must not only understand the advantages they have by simply being white but that people of color are well aware of these advantages.

*White privilege: The benefits of being white.* One of the greatest benefits of white privilege is the access to power and resources purely based on the color of your skin (Kendall, 2001). Statistics show that whites are almost ten times more likely to get a home loan than non-whites, which directly affects both races’ standard of living. Positions of authority, such as school leadership, can also be counted in this area. Since white people already dominate positions of power in our institutions those who wish to also occupy positions of power and are white already have a leg up and such is the case with many management positions (Kendall, 2001). The fact that whites have occupied power positions has greatly affected history as we know it. Historically, those in power have also been the ones to make decisions for our communities, including schools. Since whiteness is dominated by the theory that to be white is to represent the majority norm and mainstream society, white power figures, in their decision making, often feel as though they are a reflection of everyone. According to Rothenberg (2005) white privilege can give whites the authority to make judgments about others (including people of color) and have those judgments stick to become part of the set of norms that continue to

contribute to racial categorization. It allows those who are privileged and in positions of power to exercise their authority without the worry of being challenged (Kendall, 2001; McIntosh, 1988; Sullivan, 2006; Rothenberg, 2005).

*Challenges to cultural responsiveness for white school leaders.* White privilege, according to McIntosh (1988) is an “invisible package of unearned assets which I (whites) can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious”. While intended to describe white privilege, the unconsciousness discussed in this statement holds true for whiteness as well. Because both whiteness and white privilege are held as norms, they often go unquestioned and unrecognized by white people. This can be a huge obstacle for white principals who lead in diverse school settings, since people of color are usually very well aware of the existence of both whiteness as a cultural norm and white privilege. White principals who do not acknowledge their own whiteness and white privilege will have difficulty becoming culturally responsive leaders for two reasons. First, they will have difficulty acknowledging the existence of alternate perspectives, particularly those from people of color. This can result in a lack of empathy for others. Secondly, without the acknowledgement of whiteness and white privilege, white school leaders will also find it difficult to flexibly adjust their expectations for others, resulting in a lack of adaptability.

*Lack of empathy.* Whiteness existent in educators can also cause a lack of empathy toward others. By definition, empathy represents the ability to share another’s feelings, being able to relate to them. I wish to use an alternate definition that suggests that to be empathetic is to recognize another’s point of view. It is also the capacity to be

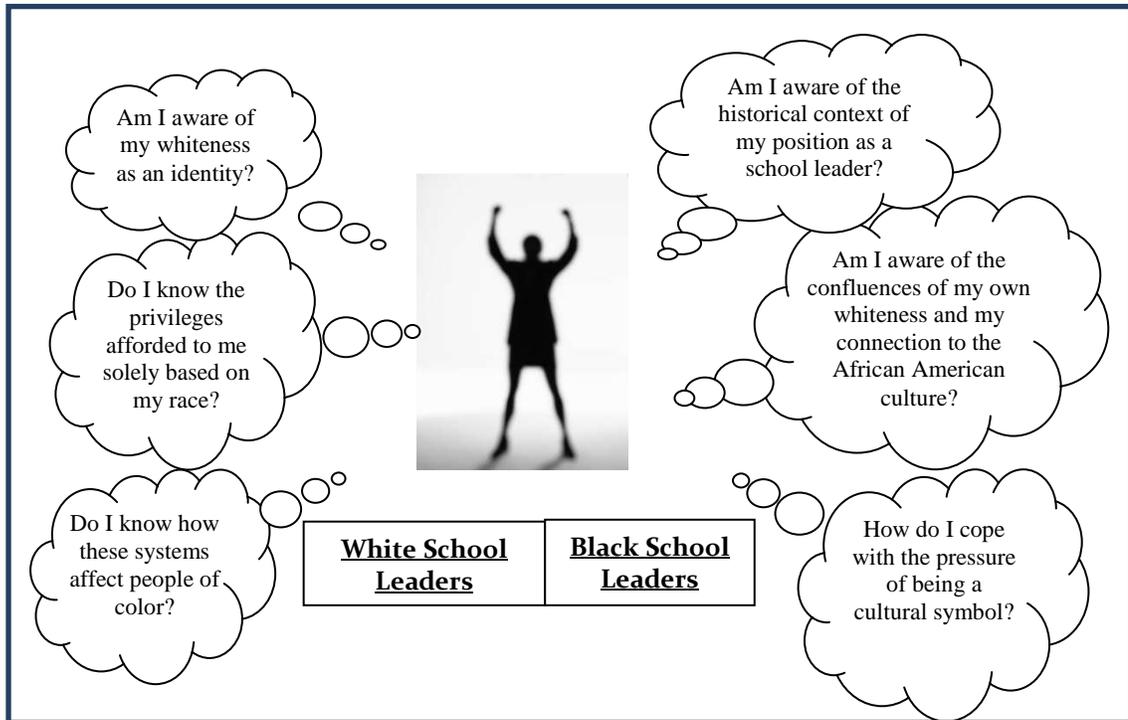
aware of and understand another's position. Whites who are unaware of their whiteness, are only aware that they are separate, physically, socially, and culturally from people of color (Giroux, 1997) and can't identify with their struggles and victories. In a school, a lack of empathy can be detrimental. Since whiteness is the norm both culturally and academically in many of our schools, school leaders must be aware of this as well as who has access to this norm. Because many whites are not aware of their whiteness, they are also blind to the fact that their race and color affords them certain privileges, which people of color have no access to (McIntosh, 1988). Families of color may be aware of the American dream as depicted in television commercials and magazine ads but may not have access to the means necessary to attain it. White school leaders must confront the realization that people of color, because of their knowledge of white privilege, can bring a different perspective to the school environment. This perspective, as a part of cultural responsiveness, needs to be acknowledged and respected.

*Lack of adaptability.* Whiteness can also prevents white school leaders from being able to adapt or be flexible within a number of contexts. If white school leaders are constrained by their own whiteness and lack understanding and recognition of color and race as social constructs, what can they adapt to? Dyer (1997) suggests that whiteness as an ethnicity represents social neutrality and is often taken as the human ordinary. Since the societal standards set by whiteness describe the "ordinary", the assumption is often made that people of color are "out of the ordinary". This assumption supports the ideal that many whites have that students and teachers of color should conform to their norm, which, as stated previously, was set up based on the whiteness standard.

Without identifying their own whiteness and the whiteness of the traditions by which they hold others accountable, it would be very difficult for a white school leader to empathize with their population of color in regards to the steps they have to take to reach the “norm”. This ideal could also hinder whites from being adaptive and flexible in academic, social, and cultural situations simply because of the belief that it is others that need to adapt, not them. Whiteness represents the attitude that “they” (whites) are what everyone else (non-whites) should want to be like and set the bar for everyone else to attempt to reach (Allen, 2004; Jay, 1998; McIntyre, 1997; Rothenberg, 2005; Sullivan, 2006). Once school leaders come to grips with their whiteness, they are able to flexibly and consciously modify goals and ways of attaining them based on individual and collective student and teacher need.

**African American School Leaders.** Much like their white colleagues, school leaders of color also have social and cultural obstacles to contend with. While there are endless ways to categorize “non-white” ethnicities, for the purpose of this study, the descriptor “non-white” will be specific to African American, or black, school leaders.

**Figure 2. What Do School Leaders Have to Contend With?**



*What challenges can prohibit a black school leader from becoming culturally responsive?* The impediments of African American school leaders can be divided into three categories. I describe these three major ideals as the historical context of the African American principalship, the pressure of being a cultural symbol, and the awareness of the confluences of their own whiteness and connection to the African American culture (Figure 2).

*The historical context of the African American principalship.* A major concept that African American school leaders must be aware of is the historical context of the African American principalship. Unlike white principals, black ones have a history of displacement. Prior to the pivotal *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, African

American school leaders were only seen in African American schools. According to Rousmaniere (2007) black principals and their segregated schools were virtually invisible to the public school system. In black schools was the only place people of color, such as teachers and students, were found and many of the all-white school boards and superintendents had no interest in the education of black children, leaving the black principal as the sole decision-maker in many cases (Tillman, 2004a; Tillman, 2004b). Many black school leaders enjoyed serving as the connection and liaison between the school and the community as well as soliciting resources from parents and organizations that supported black schools. Nonetheless, despite the power they held within the school and black communities, the black principal had virtually no power outside the black community (Rousmaniere, 2007 & Tillman, 2004).

*The black principal as an endangered species.* The passing of Brown v. BOE (1954) led to near extinction of the African American school leader. Despite its intentions, Brown v. Board of Education led to the destruction of thousands of the previously described black schools, teachers, and principals. In the words of Rousmaniere (2007) “black principals faced literal extinction” under the controversial legislation (p.21). While it took a few years after the ruling was rendered for schools to integrate, the loss of black principals was felt immediately. According to Tillman (2004a) between 1954 and 1965, more than 38,000 black educators in 17 southern and border states were dismissed from their jobs (Kafka, 2009; McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Rousmaniere, 2007; Tillman, 2004b).

To further show the impact Brown had on black principals, Rousmaniere (2007) writes that between 1964 and 1971 the number of black secondary school principals fell from 134 to just 14 and that in our home state of North Carolina 600 black principals lost their jobs. For those black school leaders that were not simply removed from their positions altogether, other positions, such as minor administrative jobs working under white principals or classroom teaching positions, were created. Still, most of the African American principals who lead black schools were usually those who lost their jobs to White administrators (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). Therefore, the black principalship was almost non-existent.

Black administrators must be aware of the historical context of their positions because of the implications still seen by today's principals of color. The black principal is still a rarity, leading to a shortage of colleagues to be able to collaborate with. This can make the already lonely principal's position even more isolated. Black administrators must also be aware that because they are an endangered species, they face the possibility of being held as a martyr for social justice and educational equity for black students, which I discuss next.

*The black principal as a cultural symbol.* During the era of segregated schools the message spread through education in the black society was simple. The only way to remain free was to participate in education. The mindset of black principals, which was shared with both students and teachers alike was that, while money, civil rights, and property could be taken from you, knowledge attained through an education could never be stripped. It was this belief that led African American school leaders to fight for

curricular equality and black educators perpetuated this message throughout the community, advocating for those that could not advocate for themselves (Tillman, 2004a; Tillman 2004b). As mentioned in the previous section, black principals did not fare well after Brown versus Board of Education. With the black principal as a minority as a result of Brown versus BOE, the black community no longer had an advocate for their children's education. They also lost the role models that had been held in such high regard within their communities. With the disappearance of black principals came the lack of recruitment and retention of quality black teachers and other educational professionals and nearly all of this occurred because many whites involved with education felt that the black schools had done an ineffective job of educating black children (Tillman, 2004a). School boards, who were usually white, then began to take matters into their own hands, hiring white principals to educate both black and white students.

Perhaps the most detrimental effect of desegregation brought on by Brown v. Board of Education was the change in the schooling environment for black students. Since there were few to no black teachers or principals to serve them, students often fell through the cracks of the educational system, suffering from a lack of motivation, nurturing, and encouraging (Tillman, 2004b).

As a result of the mass removal of African American principals during desegregation, not only are today's black principals a minority but face the continuous pressure of being a cultural symbol for the African Americans they serve. Many of these school leaders see it as their duty to provide equitable education to students of color and

to continue carrying the message of deliverance through education in their leadership. According to Tillman (2009) in a review of research on post-Brown African American principals, the equity in the education of black students was a number one priority for these school leaders. This is an enormous obligation for a single school leader to take on, especially if they serve in an area where they administrators who look like them come few and far between.

*Whiteness in blacks: A help or hindrance?* The last and, perhaps, most difficult obstacle that African American school leaders need to confront is the awareness of the confluences of their own whiteness and their connection to the African American culture. According to Tillman (2009),

In the segregated schooling and in many predominantly black urban schools today, black principals practice leadership based on their insider status and their membership in the distinct black culture. Same-race/culture affiliation appears to influence decision making at the school site, as well as the selection of teachers and interactions with parents (p. 193).

*Collective identity.* Ogbu (2004) defines this same race/culture affiliation as “collective identity” (p. 3). This refers to people’s sense of who they are and their “we-feeling” or sense of belonging. African American school leaders can possibly have two collective identities. One can be their connection to main-stream society, which, as mentioned previously, contains norms and socially constructed boundaries that have been put into place by Whites and the systemic structures of whiteness.

The other collective identity connects African American principals with other blacks and contains norms and socially constructed boundaries that are based on the

shared struggles of African Americans as a racial group. According to Ogbu (2004), the collective struggles of any minority group, including blacks, can be categorized into four groups. First is the involuntary incorporation into society, which deals with minorities being forced into their status as minorities rather than by choice, which, speaks directly to blacks being brought to North America during slavery. Next, both instrumental discrimination and social subordination include the denial of equal access to things like housing, education, and jobs, which, many blacks are still wrestling. Lastly, collectively and historically blacks have had to endure expressive mistreatment, which includes outward displays of disparagement and unfair treatment (Ogbu, 2004). These “status problems” (p. 4) create a connection between those who in the minority group that experience them, forming a collective identity.

As a result of the potential existence of dual common identities, African American school leaders who lead in schools of color combat daily with the assumption by others that they share commonalities with the diverse population they serve, when the truth may reveal something much different. The truth is that, much like their white counterparts, black school leaders have to also be aware of their own whiteness. It can be assumed that because they have matriculated to an administrative status that black principals have experienced some degree of academic and professional success. With this success can come the burden of acting white. The burden of acting white began historically with a discussion of the achievement gap that existed in student test scores. Researchers asserted that one cause of the ‘test score gap’ was the “burden of acting white imposed on black students” (Sohn, 2011, p. 218). According to Sohn (2011) this

ideology stems from the view of black students that academic excellence was [is] something that only white students attain. Further, any student who is black and achieves academic success is ridiculed as acting white. The burden of acting white then manifests itself through student achievement when black students underachieve for fear of being labeled as acting white (Goff et al. 2007; Ogbu, 2004; Sohn, 2011).

*The burden of acting white.* Black school leaders can also feel the burden of acting white. The educational system is one that was created and based heavily on ideals of whiteness and white privilege and perpetuates these ideals with its teachings of history and use of standards developed by societal figures who are white. African American administrators then have to navigate their content knowledge of educational standards and the assessments that measure mastery of these standards and their identity with the black community, which may not hold the same educational standards and assessments as priority. Black principals must be aware of both of their collective identities and how the confluences of their racial/cultural identity and their connection with the whiteness of their academic and professional successes affect their leadership.

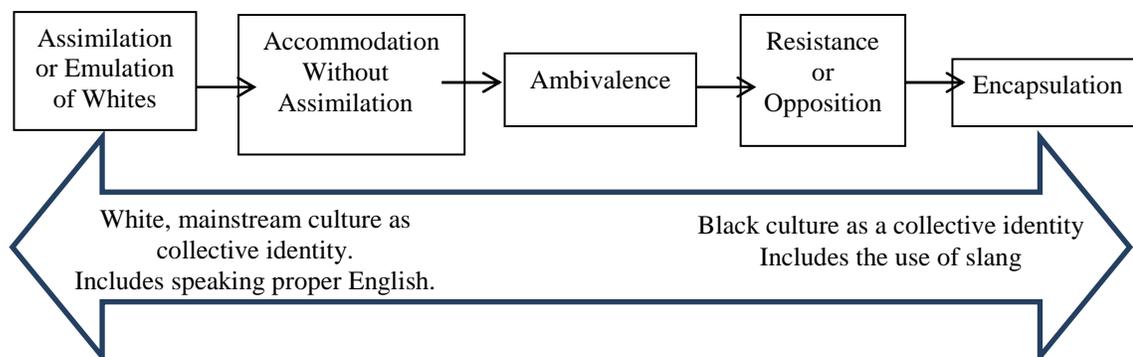
*Coping with whiteness.* Figure three shows the different coping strategies in managing the tension of “meeting the demands of the white controlled situations”, such as the schooling process, and the demands to conform to the norms of the black community (Ogbu, 2004, p. 21). African Americans can choose to assimilate or emulate whites through their learning to talk using proper English and/or behave according to white standards. Using this strategy, black professionals choose to abandon black cultural

norms, such as dialect and slang, and take on more “proper” ways of speaking and behaving.

The next coping strategy is that of accommodation without assimilation. African Americans in this category “adopt white cultural language (proper English) frames of reference where necessary in order to succeed in school or in other white controlled institutions that are evaluated by white criteria” (Ogbu, 2004, p. 22). However, they do not neglect what they know as black culture or their black identity. Ambivalence is the next coping strategy, where the belief is that the success of blacks has very little to do with their assimilation into white culture. This ideal may also include the mentality that, no matter what is done, if blacks are turned down or not given opportunities, it is because of other factors and not because of their behavior or lack of proper English. Resistance or opposition is the next coping strategy and deals with belief by some African Americans that assimilating into the white culture will cause them to lose their black identity. They may also believe that conforming to some norms of mainstream society is unnecessary because they are white impositions on blacks. Finally, Ogbu (2004) refers to blacks who live within the boundaries of black culture, perhaps because they have not learned to talk or behave using proper English, as being encapsulated in black culture.

Much like white school leaders and their awareness of their own white identities, black school leaders need to be aware of their coping strategies in regard to their whiteness. As stated previously, they need to be aware of both collective identities and the roles that both play in their leadership.

**Figure 3. Continuum of Coping Strategies**



### **Conclusion**

After learning of the population changes in students, the strengths and weaknesses of Effective School Research and its correlates, and the need for culturally proficient and responsive leaders, I remain curious about *how* principals become culturally proficient leaders within schools with diverse populations. How is effectiveness defined in culturally diverse schools? What are the day-to-day, moment-to-moment interactions that are necessary for school effectiveness within diverse populations? Within effective schools how do principals foster relationships with teachers and students different from them racially, ethnically, culturally, and socioeconomically? Knowing the need for the ethic of care and the creation and encouragement of a spirit of advocacy within schools with diverse populations I still wonder if there are qualities, characteristics, or specificities principals need to know as they try to be effective in their schools.

## **Looking Forward**

Chapter three will take a closer look at the research methodologies used in conducting this study. It will explain the action steps in the study as a result of what was learned through the literature review. Chapter three will also give a detailed description of each participant and their schools and discuss the trustworthiness of the research methodologies.

### CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

A major purpose of this study was to better understand the reality of principals who lead in culturally diverse school with the use of Lezotte's Effective Schools Research (1991 & 2008) as a foundational principle. Therefore, I classified this study as a phenomenology. This type of qualitative research "seeks to understand the *essence* or *structure* of a phenomenon" (Merriam, 2002, p.93) and recognizes that the purpose of this type of study is to understand or focus on the experiences of others. In the case of this study, I wanted to understand the daily experiences of principals who lead in diverse schools. I also wanted to understand how their own sociocultural experiences informed their daily leadership. Lastly, I wanted to investigate which ESR correlates (Lezotte, 1991 & 2008) were most prevalent in the schools selected and *how* these school leaders went about maintained them.

According to Merriam (2002), phenomenological research looks deeply at a person *and* his/her environment, not a person *or* his/her environment. Phenomenological research often highlights the interaction between human subjects and their surroundings. The researcher's focus is on the relationship between the participant and their environment, as the researcher becomes a mere observer of that environment (Merriam, 2002). More specifically, phenomenological research attempts to bring clarity to everyday human experiences, which are believed to be important or typical to a group of

people. In this study, the phenomenon was leadership in culturally diverse schools. I wanted to better understand what the principalship *looked like* in culturally diverse schools and *how* school leaders in this type of school went about their everyday work, taking into consideration their own cultural backgrounds as well as the cultural backgrounds of the students, parents, and teachers that they serve.

For my research, I wanted to capture the social, cultural, and political backgrounds of principals and understand the how principals' navigate through their own personal beliefs, principles, and experiences as well as how these inform and affect their leadership in an effective non-White school. I also aspired to better comprehend the unique experiences in diverse school settings that inform them on how to effectively lead a school with a different sociocultural background from their own

To make the connection between what I wanted to learn about participants and the current research on principals who lead in culturally and socially diverse schools, I questioned and analyzed how the interactions of the principal participants compared with what the current literature says about leading in a culturally and socially diverse schools. I also studied potential challenges that both black and white principals in these schools must surmount. I then used the Effective Schools Research (ESR) correlates and indicators to further analyze principals' actions and to identify the most prevalent characteristics observed in their leadership.

More specifically, I examined data taken from interviews, observations, and archival data from each school to get a clearer picture of each administrator and his/her school setting. Analysis of the experiences and strategies that participants revealed during

both interviews and observations informed me of trends within these participants' and their leadership. Combined with the current research, I gained insight on how these principals use their backgrounds and past experiences to help them understand how race affects their lives as well as the lives of their teachers and students. I also gained insight on the confluences of the principal's race, their background culture, and the effect this can have on their leadership of a culturally diverse student population.

### **Choosing Participants**

I wanted to have six to ten participants, including both White principals and principals of color. This range was chosen because of the variety in participants it would afford, yet it was not too overwhelming for data collection. To select the sample of principals and schools, I chose to solicit three different school districts that were close in proximity yet represented both urban and rural characteristics. Once permission was received from these school districts to conduct the study within their schools, I then searched the districts for schools with diverse populations. For the purpose of this study, I defined "diverse" as a school with less than 60% of its student population being White. This means that 40% or more of the school's student population was non-white. This number was chosen with the intention that participants with this percentage of minority students would see the immediate connection of the study to their daily work. It was also thought that with a larger non-White population, such as 40% or more, a variety of interactions between school leaders and white and non-white students could be observed. To determine a school's diversity, I used the school's demographic data, as indicated on

the NC School Report Card and other archival data, such as the school's improvement plan and website.

Once principals were chosen, they were sent an invitational email. Initially, twelve invitational emails were sent. The emails principals received were identical and contained information about my background and why I was conducting this study. It also contained an approximation of time, including observations and interviews, the principals would need to devote to the study. From the twelve invitations, three participants responded, volunteering to participate in the study. Since the desired six to ten volunteers was not reached, further recruitment was necessary.

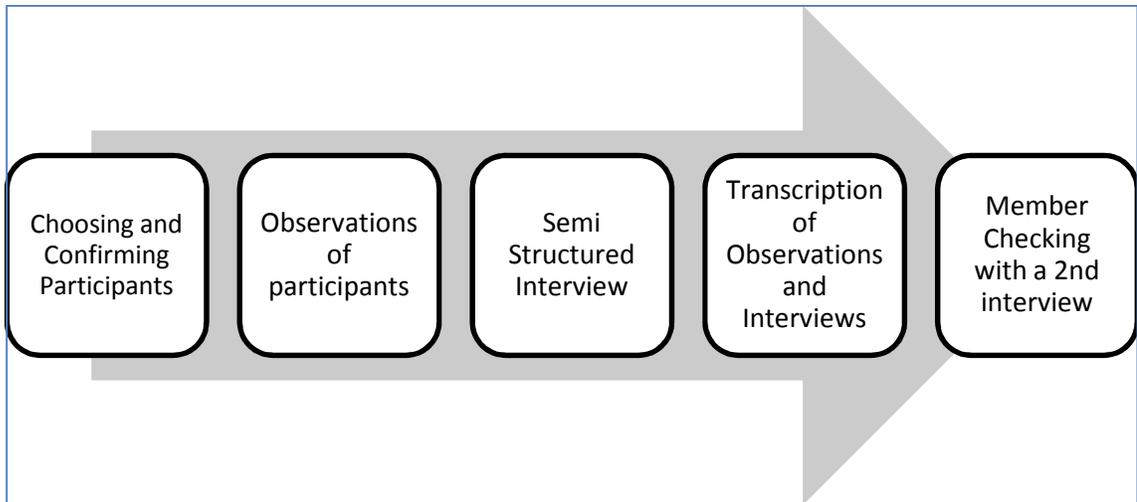
Additional participants were sought through the recommendation of professors of Educational Leadership at UNC-G and I utilized snowball sampling to ask participating principals for recommendations of other school leaders who led in culturally diverse schools and would be willing to participate in the study. As a result of these combined efforts, data were collected from seven participants and used for analysis. A more detailed description of each participant is included later in this chapter.

### **Data Collection**

Once the seven participants were identified and confirmed, data collection began. Figure 4 is a flow map that shows the sequence in which this process took place, beginning with the choosing of participants. Observing participants occurred next, followed by an interview with each participant. Once initial data was collected, I transcribed observation notes and interviews. Once this was complete, participants took

part in member checking to add an additional layer of thoroughness to their contributions to the study.

**Figure 4. Data Collection Process**



**Observations.** The observation portion of the data collection process started with communication between the researcher and participants in order to schedule time for observations. As mentioned, I wanted to observe principals in action in order to get to know their leadership style in an authentic school setting as well as collect data using the correlates of ESR. Because of these specificities, each observation took place during a normal instructional day at the principal’s school. This was clearly communicated to participants so that the observation served as time to study their interactions within their *actual* school environments. The unpredictability of the school leader’s daily role was also taken into consideration and the possibility of a variety of activities was held as being a “normal” part of the principalship.

In addition, the observation also served as a time for principals to offer any information about themselves or their schools that they felt was pertinent for me to know. All seven principals used the initial observation as a time to show me around their building, introduce me to teachers and staff that we came in contact with, and give me background information including the culture of the school and any major changes they had initiated during their leadership.

I observed all seven principals at their schools for at least three hours each. In one instance, this time had to be broken up into two different observations, a morning and an afternoon, because of a scheduling conflict. For the other six participants, the three or more hours were continuous. During the first observation of the first participant, the seven correlates of Effective Schools Research and the indicators of the correlates (Appendix A) was used as an actual observation recording sheet. Throughout Chris's observation I attempted to write what I observed in the correct categories. This was ineffective. Too much time was spent trying to decide where a particular observation went on the guide. For the remaining six observations, raw notes were taken and the observation guide was used more specifically during the data analysis portion. This assisted in determining, based on the Effective Schools Research, which correlates existed as a part of the principal's leadership. The easiest way to determine this alignment was to utilize indicators found in Lezotte's research (Lezotte, 1985; Lezotte, 1990; Lezotte, 2008). Observation and field notes were taken by hand, word-processed, and saved as electronic documents.

**Participant Interviews.** The next step in the study was extensively interviewing the selected seven principals who lead culturally and socially diverse schools. The purpose of the interviews was to become more closely acquainted with each principal and his/her background. Interviews also provided specific information about how the principal perceived him or herself as a leader and identified his/her strengths and weaknesses in regard to leading in a culturally diverse school.

Initially, it was planned that, after the observation, participants would receive an email prompt to respond to in writing. The prompt simply stated for principals to describe how they got to where they currently were and was meant to give principals another method of communication through which to provide background knowledge about themselves. It was also thought that the email prompt would provide more flexibility in that principals could respond at his/her convenience, giving as much of a response as they chose. Lastly, the email prompt was to serve as the beginning of a conversation that was intended to continue with the actual interview, with interview questions stemming from what was communicated in the email response. However, several changes were made with this. I decided to send the email prompt out prior to the observation to give participants ample time to respond. I sent the email prompt to all seven principals and, after two weeks, only one had responded. In addition to lack of response, the one response received did not give as much detail as I'd hoped about the participant's background.

Because only one principal responded to the planned email and the response was not as substantial as I'd intended, a question was added to the interview protocol

(Appendix B). I simply asked participants to tell me how they got to where they were.

The sole participant who responded was also the first observed and interviewed. I decided that I would still ask the first interview question in hopes that he would expand his answer given via email. When asked, the participant gave much more information about himself and appeared more comfortable in sharing his background with me. It was clear that I needed to add the question to the other interviews as well.

Subsequently, the question replaced the proposed email prompt and, much like the email prompt intended, served as a catapult for the later interview questions. As a result of this minor change, I was also able to establish more of a relationship with participants by actively listening as they told his/her stories. This included maintaining eye contact as well as asking follow-up questions. Participants' responses to the addition to the interview protocol provided a critical insight into each principal's journey to where they currently are that would not have been attained through a written response. In all, fourteen interviews were conducted. The initial seven interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 1 ½ hours. These interviews were longer than the follow-up interviews because for most participants, this was the first encounter with me. The second interviews, which served as a member checking interview, lasted between 30 and 45 minutes for each participant.

The interview fulfilled its purpose, extended and clarified the observation data, and gave an inside look at the emotional workings of these school leaders who lead in culturally diverse schools. It also provided me with further insight into the personal lives

of participants, since many of the experiences discussed were from his/her own childhood and schooling experiences.

**Transcriptions.** For the purposes of thoroughness, reliability, and validity, I chose to personally transcribe all raw data. While time consuming, this allowed me to develop a relationship with the data and created a bond of trust in what it revealed to me. Since my hands were the only ones “in” the data, it was much more accurate in portraying both *what* participants said and *how* they said it. While transcribing, I was able to make notes about trends or statements that were repeated. However, once the act of transcribing was completed, I then reviewed the raw transcripts of each interview, complete with pseudonyms for participants and his/her schools, to remove the emotion of the participants’ tones.

When analyzing the responses of the white participants, it was important for me to keep the essence of what I wanted to know in mind. I wanted to better understand principals, both black and white, lead in culturally diverse schools. I essentially wanted to understand the culturally relevant part of his/her leadership through his/her eyes. When interviewing white principals, the only way for me to do this was to try my best to remove any judgments or preconceived notions I carried about the subject and separate myself as much as possible from culture as I experience it. This, admittedly, was difficult for me because the perspectives represented were from a completely different world from mine as a black female. I had to refrain from the element of surprise at some of my white participants responses as well as allow time for reflection on participants’ responses.

Once documents were transcribed, pseudonyms were given to all participants and his/her schools to ensure anonymity. All transcripts, electronic recordings, and observation notes were kept securely in a locked filing cabinet or in password-protected files when not being analyzed. The information that participants provided was used for research purposes only.

**Member checking with additional interviews.** As seen in Figure 1, an additional interview was added to the data collection and analysis process. To further ensure trustworthiness, I engaged in member checking of interview transcripts and observation notes to make certain that each participants' contribution was accurately noted and read as they intended it. The transcriptions participants' reviewed, however, were those with pseudonyms instead of his/her real ones. This was done so that participants would focus less on the identifying features of the data and more on the *content* of both observations and interviews. Interview transcripts and observation notes were sent electronically as password protected attachments to each participant. This way, participants could read them electronically or print a hard copy.

Participants were asked to respond to the email containing the member checking documents with a convenient time and date to conduct the member checking interview. By this time, a relationship had been built between each participant and I and a more timely response was received than that of the first email question. The second interview itself flowed much more smoothly than the first and seemed merely a conversation between friends. This was important to me, since I depended on each participant to offer constructive feedback about the data collected from them. In addition, I needed each

participant to feel that they could be completely honest with me about the feedback provided as well as any details they wanted to add to his/her interviews. Member checking also aided in capturing any reflections that surface as a result of revisiting the interview. For example, if a participant made a comment that was unclear, the member checking interview was an opportunity to seek clarification so that the data was not misinterpreted.

### **Taking a Closer Look: Who Were the Participants?**

To be included in this study, participants had to be principals of a K-12 school with an ideal student population that is less than 60% White. This means that almost half of the student population must be non-white. However, I found it necessary to include one participant, based on the recommendation of others, who does not currently lead in a diverse school setting. While this participant does not currently lead in a diverse school setting, he has past administrative experience in at least one culturally diverse school.

Participants were initially recruited based on a search of school districts within close proximity of the researcher. From the aforementioned search, three participants volunteered. Because this was not the desired six to ten participants, the snowball effect was used, where initial participants were asked to recommend other potential participants. Once this happened, the additional potential volunteers received the invitational email to ask for participation. One additional participant was added as a result of a recommendation from a participant during an interview. Three additional participants were added as a result of recommendations of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations professors at UNC-G. These participants were suggested because of their

involvement in UNC-G's Masters of School Administration program. A brief description of each participant, their educational experiences, and a portrayal of their current school follows. Figure 3 also shows a compilation of each school's state assessment data, including composite scores, percent proficient in each ethnic group, and the achievement gap each school possesses.

**Candace.** Candace is a white female, elementary school principal who began her career as a high school guidance counselor in an urban school district. Because Candace got her MSA as a high school counselor and wanted experience in a K-5 setting, she did her administrative internship at an elementary school in her school district. Following her internship, she was placed directly as a principal in an elementary in the same school district. She remained principal at this elementary school for five years, before coming to her current principalship at Rose Elementary.

***Rose Elementary School.*** According to 2011-2012 data, Rose Elementary is a traditional educational setting that serves pre-kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and has 28 certified teachers and 323 students. On the state's end-of-year assessments, which takes data from 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders, 55.6% of white students performed at or above grade level while only 33.7% of Black students did as well and 40.3% of Hispanic students performed at or above grade level. This was evident of a large achievement gap between white students and Hispanic and black students. According to the state, there is also a category for economically disadvantaged students, indicating that Rose Elementary has a large population of students with a low socioeconomic status.

Rose Elementary is classified by the state as a priority school, which means that its school composite score, including both reading and math scores, is between 50% and 60% (50.4%). This means that about half of 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Rose Elementary are performing at or above grade level in reading and math. According to 2011-2012 data, students also did not make expected growth in proficiency between the 2010/11 and 2011/12 school years. Candace is a white female principal in a school that is about 49% black, 49% Hispanic, 1% white, and 1% Asian.

**Anthony.** Anthony is a White male, elementary school principal who taught middle school for 8 years before pursuing his MSA. During this time, he was named Middle School Teacher of the Year by his school district. Following his tenure as a middle school teacher, Anthony became an assistant principal at an elementary school, where he stayed for three months. In the middle of his first year as an assistant principal, Anthony was placed as a principal in an elementary school for students who were new to the area as English speakers. Some of these students are refugees while others are children from migrant families. After a couple of years in this diverse school setting, Anthony became the principal at Clover Elementary and this is his second year at Clover.

***Clover Elementary.*** Clover Elementary is a traditional, elementary school that serves pre-kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. With 51 teachers, it serves 716 students. As of the 2011-2012 academic year, 94.4% of White students in grades three, four, and five at Clover Elementary performed at or above grade level. This is a sharp contrast with the 56.5% of black students who performed at or above grade level and even further from the 54.5% of Hispanic students who did the same, indicating a huge achievement gap.

Nonetheless, Clover Elementary is classified by the state as a School of Progress, which means that their composite score for all 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders in reading and math was at least 60% and the school met expected growth as outlined by the state. Anthony is a white male principal in a school with a student population that is comprised of 64% black, 3% Hispanic, 27% white, 4% multi-racial, 1% American Indian, and 1% Asian students.

**Chris.** Chris is a white male, who, unlike the previous participants, did not begin his career in education. He began his career in higher education working in graduate club sports in the student affairs division of a university. He met his wife, Lauren, and upon their decision to buy a house in Chris's hometown, a rural town, he decided to become a history teacher. His first teaching position was at an alternative school. After one year in this setting, Chris moved to a middle school, where he continued to teach for three years. Following this period, and upon participation in the district's MSA cohort, Chris became an assistant principal at a middle school, where he served for two years. After his tenure at the middle school, he became principal of an elementary school. After two years at the elementary school, Chris was transitioned as principal to another middle school in the same school district, and, after two years, was moved again to a high school, where he currently works.

**Tyner High School.** Tyner High School is a traditional public high school, which serves students in grades nine through twelve. According to 2011-2012 state data, Tyner is home to 61 teachers and 825 students. Because it is a high school, Tyner's assessment composite includes English I, Algebra I, and Biology test scores from all students

participating in these courses, indicating the percentage of students who have a passing score. School attendance is also factored into the school's composite score. At Tyner High School, 71.1% of white students were proficient on state assessments, while 59.6% of black students were proficient. Hispanic students fared better than black students at Tyner, with 60.8% of them being proficient. According to the state's performance designation, Tyner High School is a School of Progress because its composite score was at least 60% and it met high growth, as outlined by the state. Chris is a white male principal leading in a school serves approximately 837 students, with 47.5% of those students being black, 35.7% being white, 10.5% Hispanic, 6.1% multi-racial, and 0.12% being Asian.

**Reginald.** Reginald is an African American male, who is principal at a magnet high school, McDonald Academy. To obtain his undergraduate degree, Reginald participated in a teacher preparation program, sponsored by the state of North Carolina, called the Teaching Fellows program. This is a scholarship program that allows its recipients to repay their undergraduate scholarship with time spent as a classroom teacher. In order to receive the scholarship, high school seniors have to matriculate an intense selection process, including an application and interview. Acceptance into the Teaching Fellows program requires academic success as well as a want to work in the schools of North Carolina. As a Teaching Fellow, Reginald majored in Chemistry and did his student teaching in an urban high school.

Following graduation from college, he went to work in a laboratory as a chemist. After realizing that lab work was not for him, he went back into teaching and returned as

a science teacher to the same high school that he did his student teaching at. After teaching for a few years, Reginald decided to seek his MSA through his school district's cohort. He then received an assistant principal position at his school. He remained there for 3 years and transitioned to another assistant principal position at another high school. After this, he became principal of a middle school and remained there for 3 years. Following his principalship at the middle school level, Reginald became principal of his current school, McDonald Academy.

*McDonald Academy.* McDonald Academy is a traditional high school and serves students in grades 9 through 12. It is also a performing arts magnet school that serves its entire school district. In order to attend McDonald, students have to apply and attend an interview. They are then hand selected to attend the specific program of their choice. The curriculum at McDonald includes culinary arts, mechanical engineering, automotive, construction, HVAC certification, and other performing arts, such as theater. McDonald serves 296 students and has 47 teachers.

As seen in Figure 3, the data from McDonald Academy did not show an achievement gap between white students and non-white students. While the composite scores at McDonald include the same assessments, all cultural groups, including white, black, and Hispanic, had a percentage of greater than 95%. This means that 95% of students in these groups had a passing score on their assessments in Biology, Algebra I, and English I. Nonetheless, McDonald is labeled an Honor School of Excellence because 95% of students are performing at grade level and the students showed high growth, according to state standards. Reginald is a black male principal at a school with 75%

white students, 18% black students, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic, 2% multi-racial, and 1% American Indian. It should be mentioned that even though the student population at McDonald Academy does not meet the parameter of less than 60% white students, Reginald was chosen because of his past leadership in a culturally diverse school. He was also the only black male school leader in the sample, providing great insight with the data he provided.

**Betty.** Betty is an African American female who began her career as a bank manager and even had her Masters in Business Administration. It was after a marital change that she decided to seek becoming a teacher in order to be more accessible to her daughter. As a result, she became a high school business teacher and continued to pursue her MSA through her district's cohort with Appalachian State. Betty then became the assistant principal of a middle school and stayed in that position for a year. Following that year, she became principal of an elementary school, where she stayed for four years. It was at this time that she became principal of the current middle school that she leads now.

**Tyner Middle.** Tyner Middle School is a traditional middle school, serving 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The school's 626 students are being served by 45 classroom teachers, according to 2011-2012 state data. Performance composites for each grade level consist of reading and math scores and indicate a 17 point achievement gap. As of 2011-2012, 60% of white students at Tyner Middle passed both their grade level's reading and math assessments. In contrast, only 42.5% of black students passed and 43.7% of Hispanic students passed both tests, indicating an achievement gap of about 17 points. Tyner

Middle School has been labeled as a school with No Recognition. This means that 60% to 100% of students are performing at grade level. However, the school did not meet expected growth as outlined by the state. Overall, 54% of Tyner Middle's students performed proficiently in reading and 69.5% performed proficiently in math. Betty is a black female principal in a school comprised of 42% black students, 36% white students, 15% Hispanic students, 6% multi-racial, and less than 1% of both Asian and American Indian.

**Josephine.** Josephine is a white female, elementary school principal. She began as Reginald did, as a NC Teaching Fellow, and got her first teaching job as a half-time reading teacher. Josephine stayed in this position for one grading quarter and then became a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teacher. She taught 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for 5 years at her current school. She then moved to a brand new elementary school as a classroom teacher and served on the leadership team. After 1 year at this school, Josephine served on a Department of Public Instruction assistance team. On this team, she was an instructional coach and served low-performing schools. She remained in this position for 2 years and came back to her initial district as a curriculum coordinator. While in this position, she participated in her district's MSA cohort. She then became an assistant principal at an elementary school. After working there for a few years, Josephine accepted a principalship at her current school.

**Marshall Elementary School.** Marshall Elementary School is a kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade traditional elementary school that serves 715 students with 58 classroom teachers, according to the state's 2011-2012 data. While Marshall is one of the

largest elementary schools observed in this study, its composite scores show a pattern similar to the other schools in the sample. Like other school in this study, Marshall also has an achievement gap between white students and non-white students. According to the state, 61.5% of white students performed proficiently on their end-of-grade tests while 44.6% of black students and 45.9% of Hispanic students were as proficient. Marshall's overall composite showed that 48.2% of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders performed at or above grade level in reading and 71.6% of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> graders performed at or above grade level in math. Because of this, Marshall Elementary was named a Priority School. Expected growth was not achieved, according to state data. Josephine is a white female principal leading in a school that is comprised of 56% black students, 9% Hispanic students, 13% Asian students, 13% American Indian, 7% white, and 3% multi-racial. With such varying percentages in all cultural groups, Marshall Elementary was the most diverse school setting in the sample.

**Jeanette.** Jeanette is an African American female who is a high school principal. She too began as a NC Teaching Fellow and became a middle school PE in a rural county. She spent 5 years as a teacher in that county and then transitioned to her current school district as a middle school PE teacher. After 2 years of teaching, the middle school's principal left and the assistant principal became the school's lead administrator. This left a vacancy for an assistant principal, which Jeanette became. She completed the school year as an assistant principal and was moved to her current high school as an assistant principal. She remained the assistant principal for 5 years before becoming the

principal of a transitional high school. Jeanette was principal at the Middle College for 5 years before coming to be principal at Ritz High School.

***Ritz High School.*** Ritz High School is a traditional high school that, according to 2011-2012 state data, serves 785 students in grades nine through twelve. Ritz High School has 51 teachers that provide instruction to its students. Based on the state's school report card, using English I, Algebra I, and Biology assessments to form the composite scores, 71.9% of white students passed their end-of-course assessments. In contrast, 61.8% of black students passed their assessments and 67% of Hispanic students performed proficiently. The achievement gap at Ritz, while a noticeable 5-10 points, is not as evident as in the other schools represented in the sample. Ritz High School is categorized as a School of Progress by the state, with at least 60% of its students performing proficiently in English I, Algebra I, and/or Biology. The school also met expected growth, according to state data. Jeanette is a black female principal leading in a high school with 36% of its students being black, 33.5% being white, 25% Hispanic, 1.5% Asian, and less than 1% being other and including multi-racial students.

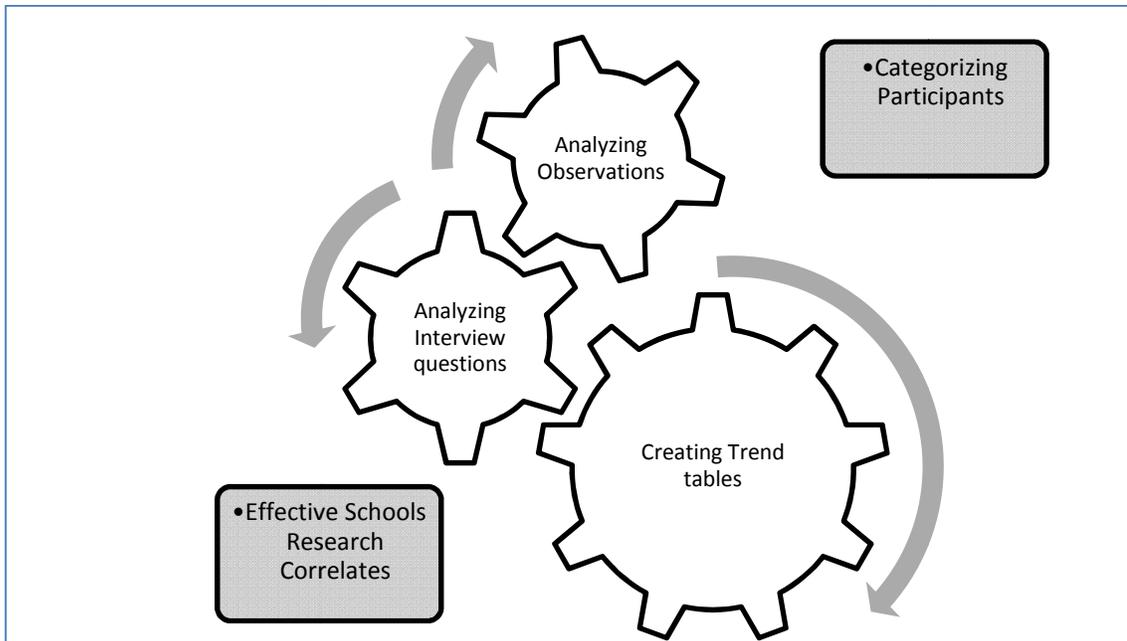
### **Data Analysis**

While data collection was done in a very structured, linear way, analyzing the data collected was not a linear process. Each piece worked in conjunction with the others to inform my interpretation. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

During the analysis process, there were times that only one portion of data, such as the interview responses, were examined for patterns and trends. While at other times, both the observation and interview data were analyzed for their contribution to findings.

This occurred several times, as connections were made between what participants were observed doing and what was said in their interviews.

**Figure 5. The Data Analysis Process**



**Categorizing participants.** All participants were strategically chosen, representing all three levels of schooling, elementary, middle, and high school. Three of the principals served in elementary schools, three served in high schools, and one served in a middle school. Moreover, participants also represented both gender and ethnicity, with male and female as well as black and white participants. Within the sample of principals, two were white females, two were black females, two were white males, and one was a black male.

In addition to being grouped initially, participants were also grouped according to their responses to interview questions and observations during data analysis. For

example, if more than one participant had similar responses to a particular question, they were grouped together and the characteristics of the group described. This technique helped in identifying trends found in groups with similar cultural, professional, or ethnic characteristics.

**Analyzing interview responses.** I began to investigate the data collected with the analysis of principals' interview responses because of the categories that had already been created with the interview protocol questions. The transcripts of participants' responses were printed and cut into pieces by question. Each question was labeled with the participant's name so that it was clear who the response had come from. Once a participant's answers were cut, the responses were then put into piles by question. For example, all of question one's responses were put into pile, all of question two's responses were put together, and so on until all of the interview questions had responses from all seven participants. This physical process allowed for analysis of one question at a time and allowed me to look for patterns and find words or phrases that were repeated in participants' answers to the same question. These repeated words and phrases became the common themes found from participants' responses. From the common themes, a generalization was made that encompassed the themes found in the raw interview data.

Once a generalization was made from each question's responses and its common themes, I found that some of the generalizations and themes were so similar that they could be combined into larger and broader ideas. This was the case for the interview questions that had to do the principal's background experiences and how the principal felt those experiences had contributed to their leadership in a culturally diverse school. I was

also able to combine question responses regarding the effect race has on the principal's relationships and interactions with others from their perspective and, in some cases, the responses to how race effects the lives of students and teachers from the principal's perspective. Questions regarding advice for other principals and school leadership programs were not combined because the implications principals provided were intended for two different groups.

**Creating trend tables.** A generalization in this study is a statement that encompasses the trends or repeated words and phrases from the data collected and provides an umbrella for each trend to be further explored. To assist in organizing participants' quotes from interview transcripts that directly supported the generalizations and trends found, a trend table (Appendix C) was created.

This was simply a table with the generalization at the top and each participant's column underneath. As I read and re-read participant's responses, notable quotes were highlighted. These quotes were then put under the generalization they supported on the trend table. This not only allowed me to see a broader connection between participants but also helped the interpretation of the data to stay grounded and true to its nature. Trend tables were created for four generalizations as a result of interview analysis. The data collected supported the following trends and generalizations were created. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

- School leaders beginning as teacher leaders
- School leaders' keen sense of self-awareness

- School leaders' shared identity with students
- School leaders' sense of urgency and "no excuses" mentality.

**Analyzing observations.** Analyzing and interpreting data collected through observations was not as cut and dry as doing so with interviews. Each interview was guided by question, which meant that a structure had already been assigned to its analysis. With observations, the predetermined structure, the ESR observation protocol, had to be abandoned during observations because of the time it took to complete it. However, after observations notes were transcribed, I used a similar process as the one described for interviews.

As I read and re-read observation notes, I began to highlight actions, quotes, or characteristics of school environments that were repeated. From these repetitions, themes emerged. Some of the themes further supported generalizations that were made based on interview data. Other themes found in the principal's observations supported new generalizations. If a participant's observation data supported a theme or generalization already acknowledged from interview responses, it was added to the appropriate trend table under the participant's name. If there was not already a generalization or trend table created from themes found in observation data, one was created and specific details from each participant's observation noted under their names. Observation analysis yielded three new trends. The data collected supported the following trends and generalizations were created. These are discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

- School leaders' Use of background experiences to lead the way
- School leaders' sense of advocacy for students

- School leaders' expectation of top-notch teaching and learning

### **Utilizing the ESR Correlates**

Figure 5, which was seen previously, graphically shows how the data collected from interviews and observations worked to create and inform the generalizations and trend tables. It should be noted again that this was not a neat and linear process. Each time a piece of data was read, there was always the possibility of new insight. Therefore, there was an ongoing relationship between what was discussed in interviews, seen in observation, and interpreted during analysis. The use of trend tables proved dramatically helpful in keeping my personal and professional thoughts, insights, and interpretation closely tied to what the data actually revealed and minimized the bias that could have skewed study results. The trend tables also created a correlation between what was said in interviews and what was seen and done during observations. When combined, the observations and interviews created a holistic picture of the data collected from all principals.

Once all trend tables were created, complete with what participants said and did, another layer of thoughtfulness was added. Based on what was said and done by participants, which Effective Schools Research correlates were most prevalent? More importantly, what were the explicit, practical things that principals did do to exhibit these correlates in a culturally diverse school setting? To answer these questions, I returned to the observation guide, which contained leadership characteristics for each correlate. For this portion of data analysis, I elected to only use observation data. I made this decision because I wanted to further understand what ESR correlates look like in practice. It was

important for me to be able to provide future and current school leaders with *observable* behaviors and practices that could be applied directly to their leadership in order to make it more effective, based on Lezotte's Effective Schools Research. Since this was a major goal of this study, I identified the prevalence of ESR correlates on the data from observations alone and based them on the most common indicators from the leadership of participating principals. These are discussed in Chapter 5 with other findings based on participants' observations.

### **A New Chapter for the Researcher: Moving Into Administration**

During the recruitment process for participants, one of my participants, Candace, contacted me with a potential assistant principal position. After interviewing and being offered the position, I became the assistant principal at a school with the characteristics I wished to study. Because of my position as assistant principal, much of my observations of Candace came on a daily basis. I journaled to document the day-to-day interactions she had with students, parents, and teachers. The data collected through journaling is shared in both Chapters four and five. I also used this assistant principalship as an opportunity to explore my own biases as a middle class, African American female working with a diverse student population.

### **Trustworthiness**

The participants in this study are actual principals who lead in a school where the student and family population is less than 60% white. Because the principals deal with issues of race, cultural, and sociality on a daily basis, the data collected was very individualized and authentic. Each educational leader brought his/her layers of

experiences, feelings, and interactions with others to this study. While they are all different, I captured both his/her contrasts and his/her similarities in the interviews and observations through my analysis of trends.

The structured process applied to the selection of participants, the use observation guide and interview protocol, and the search for trends in all data collected make duplicating a qualitative study similar to this one very feasible. This study was conducted in a southeastern state, affording me the opportunity to investigate a diverse educational system, with school systems ranging from inner-city to very rural. This diversity allowed me to study principals from three different school districts, so as to get a holistic perspective on how the principal's experiences with diverse families differ. All of this adds to the richness and uniqueness of the study itself.

### **Looking Forward**

Having described the purpose, participants, and methodologies used in conducting this qualitative study, the next chapter will reveal the findings and trends gathered from the data. For purposes of clarity, I have chosen to represent the trends and findings from all data collected with two different chapters. First, Chapter four will discuss trends found in participants' responses during their interviews. Chapter four also refers to the principals themselves and the subjectivities, biases, and background experiences they bring into their leadership and how these may affect their perspectives when leading. The second category, Chapter five, encompasses the more practical side of school leadership. Chapter five also includes trends recognized during participants' observations. Chapter

Five also includes connections between participants' observations and the Effective Schools Research correlates.

## CHAPTER IV

### INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I intend to illustrate how each participant's background informs his/her day to day interactions. For this part of analysis, the interview protocol (Appendix B) and participants' responses were used to determine similarities, or trends. The interview itself gave participants an opportunity to verbalize how they used their own experiences to help them create a safe and inclusive learning environment for students where teaching and learning are a top priority.

#### **The School Leaders: Leading From the Inside Out**

I believe you lead out of who you are.  
Anthony, principal of Clover Elementary School.

One of the main purposes of this qualitative study was to better understand how a school leader's background experiences contributed to who they were as a principal in a culturally diverse school. "I believe you lead out of who you are" was a lived reality for the administrators in this study. From the data collected in the interviews, I found three generalizations to be true of these leaders in their diverse settings. First, each principal began his/her leadership as a kind of *teacher* leader. Secondly, school leaders in this study had a keen sense of self-awareness. Thirdly, the leaders in this study developed, through their own experiences, a sense of shared identity with the parents, students, and

teachers they served. Lastly, these principals shared a sense of urgency and *no excuses* mentality when meeting students' educational needs.

**School Leaders begin as Teacher Leaders.** The findings from participants showed that all seven of them began as teacher or other subordinate leaders in school settings *before* becoming administrators. Josephine, principal of Marshall Elementary School, stated that, as an example of teacher leadership, she got to participate on the leadership team for planning a brand new school. Jeanette, principal of Ritz High School, states:

So I went and taught middle school, loved teaching middle school. And then, 5 years there, and became the person at the school... within 2 years I was on the leadership team, I was department head. I was...you name it, I was doing it at my school.

Even when moved to her current school district as a teacher, she commented on how, within two years, she was, again, on the leadership team. "So as much as I tried to hide, (I) still got pulled into leadership things there." This comment mirrored the teacher leadership of the other participants.

Anthony, principal of Clover Elementary, was named Middle School Teacher of the Year in his school district and noted in the interview how, during this process, district personnel learned of his administrative certification. Because they knew he was a great teacher through the Teacher of the Year activities, they encouraged him into administration. Candace, principal of Rose Elementary School, began her career in education as a high school counselor. Yet, she still commented on how, as a counselor,

she was still able to develop into a school leader. “The principal that I had at that time had me doing a lot of coordinating and organizing of things. I ended up doing the schedule; a lot of things that were administrative.”

Reginald, principal of McDonald Academy, dittoed the participants in stating “While teaching, I was leadership team chairperson, department chairperson, assistant athletic director, etc. etc., doing all those different things.” He also gave insight as to why this type of teacher leadership experience is important as a school leader, stating in the interview that he “began to see a lot of the inner workings of a school and that’s where the itch for administration began.” Other participants described this “itch” as well. Both Candace and Jeanette discussed how their motivation came from being a teacher leader under the administration of a less-than-stellar principal. Candace furthered this by saying,

You know, the person [principal] that we look at and say there’s no way I can do what they do and then the next person comes along and you’re like ‘oh I could do it so much better than *this* person is doing it’. There’s no way I could mess it up this bad.

Two of the participants, Betty and Chris, were not initially in teacher education programs and entered teaching as a second career. Betty began as a bank manager and, admitted that as a classroom business teacher, she was not a conformist. “I was out of the box and I had a young principal who was kind of out of the box.” Even as a teacher, Betty taught using relevant curriculum and differentiation in order to effectively engage her students. This was obviously something she was very proud of. When discussing the business law class she taught, she stated,

We talk about Common Core today, I was doing Common Core back then because that's all I knew. I had permission to tape Judge Judy sessions, uh, your TV court sessions, and apply those to the book. So I had the kids hooked.

Betty, much like the other participants, took advantage of teacher leadership opportunities afforded to her. Within 2 years of teaching, she continued teaching in the regular classroom and began teaching at the community college. "I was actually teaching community college, I was teaching accounting at the community college because I had an MBA. I had also picked up a GED class and then that summer taught elementary students." Betty prided herself in having taught at every level there was to teach, including elementary and post-high school settings. This experience informed her additionally as a school leader, making her much more knowledgeable about teaching and learning for students at different ages and developmental levels.

Chris, principal of Tyner High School, began working in club sports at the university level and tells a very unique story about how he became a teacher leader. As luck would have it, he came into teaching as a history teacher and it took a special event to motivate him to become a school leader. Chris said,

And what led me into administration was, uh, the district was in the process of redistricting and there was a community group that had put a flyer out and one of our teachers at Tyner middle brought it in and showed it around and it said if you don't want your kids going to Tyner come to this meeting at a church. And I was shocked. It's a country church, white country church. And so a group of about 6 of us middle school teachers, we went to that meeting and we sat in the back and after about 30 minutes of just constant, just...I don't know how else to describe it other than just blatant racial statements directed at Tyner. These parents didn't want their kids going to, what I perceived, a black school. And they talked about all

the drugs and the fights every day. I was getting upset and I could feel my heart pounding and after about 30 minutes I just stood up and introduced myself. Introduced the people that was with us and everybody was kinda shocked and just told them that was they had been saying was not the truth about Tyner middle school and I encouraged them to come at any time to visit the school, come to my classroom and visit my class. And the next morning, there was a knock at my door first period and the superintendent came in. He was at that meeting and I didn't know it. He came in and spent 2 periods in my class. I was scared to death. I didn't know if I was getting fired or what (laughs). He told me that he was impressed with what I said and that he could see me going into administration. And up until that point I never ever dreamed about administration.

Chris' experience is one of bravery and teacher leadership that, subsequently, led him to be a school leader at the same school he was defending.

In summary, with all participants, it was clear that teacher leadership was an important part of their administrative careers. The experience of being the recipient of educational policies, procedures, and expectations can highly impact your leadership once you become the distributor of such policies. All of the administrators understood, through their pre-principal experiences, the "inner workings of a school" and used this knowledge in their day-to-day work as school leaders.

**The School Leaders' keen sense of self-awareness.** With all of the principals who participated in this study, a sense of consciousness of who they were as people was very evident. During the interview, several questions were geared towards race and the impact it had had on the leaders' lives, both personally and professionally. Both black and white principals have several factors to contend with, many of which have to do with being keenly aware of their own subjectivities and biases when leading in a non-white school (Cooper, 2009; Hyland, 2005; Johnson, 2007; Riehl, 2007; Vaught and Castagna,

2008). Amazingly, all principals, regardless of their ethnicity, were very self-aware, making note of their own experiences and how those experiences informed their leadership.

The participants who were white principals were acutely aware of their privilege, including opportunities that they were afforded that people of color may not have been. They also acknowledged when they became attentive to their race and the impact that race and ethnicity had on the world around them. Several participants brought this up when asked if race affected their leadership. Candace, for example, talked about her mother, who'd taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade in several diverse schools and would come home and tell her family stories about her students and their experiences. She said,

And she would come home and tell us stories about things. It opens your eyes to what other people are facing. And once your eyes are opened to that, I guess you either decide that you're going to turn your back on it and just focus on what you wanna see in the world or you're actually gonna do something about it.

The opening of one's eyes that Candace refers to was an important epiphany in her life. She acknowledged in the interview that, growing up in a middle-class white family had not afforded her a variety of opportunities to interact with people of color, including Blacks. It was not until she went to college that she was "liberated" and released from the constraints of her childhood. She stated,

It's easy when you're in the ivory tower to see all the things that are wrong and you know, you remove yourself enough that you're able to say, ok, well, here's how all these systems are at play and hurting children and da, da, da. I was entrenched in it long enough...or away from it long enough that I could say ok.

The “it” that Candace referred to had to do with the disparities of students and families of color that she became aware of as she matriculated through undergraduate and graduate studies.

While it took Candace a while to “see” the inequalities and differences between her perspective on the world as a white female and how a person of color might view the world, both Chris and Josephine interacted with people from diverse backgrounds from a very early age. Josephine, a White female, spoke of having several, thoughtful interactions with blacks.

My best friend was black, and still is. So I’ve always had experiences, more than just ‘hey how are you doing’. You know, like *real* relationships. I guess that’s a comfort level some people don’t have and that’s something I was comfortable with because of working relationships. I went from a very diverse high school to a very not diverse college.

The fact that Josephine was able to recognize the differences in racial makeup of her high school and college shows that she was aware of the representation of different ethnic groups and held her interactions with people of color in high regard. The importance of maintaining a “real” relationship with someone different from you is also evident.

Josephine notes that having a real relationship is more than just exchanging pleasantries and includes getting to know a person, their likes, and dislikes. That is the only way of disputing one’s preconceived notions about another and broadening one’s comfort zone. Josephine even spoke of an interaction during college with a person of color, which encouraged her to use culturally relevant pedagogy in her classroom. She said,

And I do remember when I was in college I was with someone and we were at somebody's [house], like a friend's cousins or something, it wasn't in the projects but it was very low income ...but I remember his conversation with me. He told me, he knew I was going to be a teacher and he told me 'now I just need you to make sure that you teach ALL types of history, that you just don't teach white history...that you teach everybody's history and you look at different ways.' He was like 'and you look to see who people are and teach about all different types of people'.

From this point, Josephine further discussed how, as a result of this interaction with a black acquaintance, she tried to incorporate literature that taught students about black culture beyond Harriet Tubman and Martin Luther King. She even talked about using one of her favorite books, "The Watsons go to Birmingham", as a book study with students at her current school. Josephine also showed that she was keenly aware of how others, including families of color, perceived her.

So I do remember my first day of school and I can come off with my AP calls "Suzy Sunshine". That's what she calls me sometimes and so I do get that piece. And so, I think sometimes I can have that appearance of kinda like I'm aloof and I just don't understand different people, and I'm not gonna be able to connect with you because you are a different race than me. I think sometimes I can be sometimes perceived like that.

Chris, a white male, spoke of his own awareness of privilege during his interview.

I've had to really reflect on my own upbringing, my own bias, because we all have bias. Um, you know as a white male with three white brothers and predominantly, my whole family, lots of males. You know, and they're all in Firewick county and there was a lot of things that I was aware of, and I remember hearing my grandfather say never my dad, but my grandfather and the racial comments that were made and there were some things that you knew weren't right. And I, it's so innocent, I look at my son in kindergarten and I think about myself in kindergarten.. and my best friend was Bobby Travers, and he was a black student, and race...black /white

never even meant anything to me until one day another student said, he's black, you know, why are you hanging around with them. And all of a sudden you know, I'll never forget that. But that's something you start looking at and then you start putting that together with things you hear your grandfather say and I just knew then that it didn't make me feel good.

When asked how race affected his leadership, Chris sincerely answered:

Unfortunately, there's a ton of history in our country where race has been used and continues to be used as a factor that hinders progress of others so I understand it and try not to be offended by it. There are things that others have went through that I never will experience and only know about through third party readings and things. But it's definitely impactful in how they [people] think and how they view things. And I just have to understand that.

Gaining the trust of families of color was a concern of white participants. They felt that, as seen through their comments, once they were aware of the inequities between the experiences of Whites and people of color, they had to acknowledge the reason for any distrust people of color may have towards Whites. Participants acknowledged that a major part of being a school leader in a culturally diverse school includes working to rebuild this trust with families of color. Anthony, a white male, stated:

Race is a huge issue and I can tell that there are still parents in our neighborhood program who don't trust me. And the reason they don't trust me, which I can completely understand, is because for years and years, they sort of felt like they'd been underserved and underrepresented in this school, and unwelcome. Now, whether or not the school intentionally did that doesn't matter because that's their perception.

With this comment, it was clear that he not only recognized the attitudes of people of color but felt that those perceptions were justified. The other White participants'

comments were along a similar vein. A simple awareness of racial injustices was not enough. Each school leader realized that in addition to acknowledging the existence of inequities, one must be willing to take action in correcting them.

Like their white counterparts, the black principals who participated in the study also recognized the racial and ethnic challenges that they faced as leaders in schools of color. Their responses were further divided into three main challenges. First, they all discussed the need to be an advocate for students of color in their fight against negative stereotypes and the need to urge students of color to combat those images as well. Betty, a Black female, discussed dealing with discipline issues with black males particularly. She said,

Sometimes I, and I'm able to say this because I look like them, but sometimes if I have a group of students who are not behaving properly, and a lot of times I have black males. And, you know, I'm able to look at them and say look at each other, tell me what you notice. And they'll tell me 'we all black'. And I'll say 'yep'. And I'll say do you know the statistics for black males? And they'll tell me they all in jail because they've heard it. And I'll say 'yes', but I say, but do you also know that you can change statistics? You hold the key to change statistics.

Reginald, the only black male who participated in the study, also shared his insight on this challenge.

I understand what the research says about African American males, not just African American, but males of color that subscribe to everything the data says. That really frustrates me.

He further discussed how he dealt with the pressure of "saving black students".

I had to come to a very harsh realization that I cannot save every one of them, I cannot. That was a very tough lesson for me to learn. I mean it really, really hurt me because I knew...I know what's waiting for them. I feel there's already two strikes against minority males, minorities period. And so you try to let students know about the pitfalls that await them if they continue to make negative decisions. And, you know, because it can never be said that you did not at least try to warn them.

Jeanette, a black female, expressed similar feelings, in addition to feeling like a cultural symbol, beginning with her teaching career. She stated,

So I came on up here to Alamance county, went to Rosely Middle school, loved Rosely middle school, um, had a great time at Rosely middle school because I was a role model for kids who hadn't seen anybody like me. I was an educated black woman, uh, coaching, articulate, that they had not seen so now I'm the black person, that when you think about a black person, I'm the black person that you associate with and you do have another stereotype. So, really took that to heart.

Secondly, black principals acknowledged the need to "play the game", navigating the majority White professional culture of school leadership with their personal black cultures. Both Betty and Jeanette spoke of this in their interviews. Betty explained that her superintendent sometimes said "You do know you're white, right?" and although it was said in a joking way, Betty admits that she, much like Candace, did not become "realize" this until she was actually made to write about the she was raised in her MSA coursework. She discussed how her eyes became open to her race. Candace said,

I'd written before but never made to think about this and the question was how were you raised. What impacted you the most? And there were 5 little ladies that really impacted me the most. My mother worked shift work, my father worked shift work so I stayed with my grandmother and grandfather. And there were five women, Ms. H, she was German, there

was Ms. W, she was White, Ms. MK, she was white, Ms. Jenny, she was black, and Ms. Sally was my grandmother, she was black. And, as you can imagine, these women had come up during segregation. And as a little girl I can remember they did everything together. They ate lunch at one another's houses. And, um, they pretty much shaped the way that I think and I didn't know what they were talking about at the time but the little White ladies would say 'Don't be prejudice when you grow up'. And I'd say 'ok', had no clue what prejudice was.

With this account, Betty showed that, while she was aware of being black, she did not have any negative memories of being treated unfairly because of her color. Because of her positive interactions as a child, it wasn't until her graduate work that she became aware of her cultural self and how "white" she was.

Jeanette, on the other hand, became aware of her whiteness and even mentioned "playing the game" while in college. She mentioned "playing the game" and the "rules of the game" several times, when discussing the obligation she had to her students of color. "We've gotta teach them the rules of the game. It's vital, it's life or death." The "game" refers to mainstream White culture versus what students, and Jeanette, experienced as black culture. Jeanette expressed repeatedly how she navigated both of these worlds and the importance of teaching students to do the same.

The last challenge that was evident was one that black principals brought up in the interview. This was the pressure to be successful among their white colleagues and having to overcome racial barriers to do so. This challenge surfaced particularly when black principals were asked about how race affected the lives of their teachers and students. Betty discussed that her principalship was at an elementary school that had

always had a white male principal. Because of this, she felt she had to prove that she could provide effective leadership.

So I will also tell you that typically, that Dominion Elementary never had a female or a black principal until I. And Dominion history... Dominion is the first public school in the state so they're steeped in tradition and I was able to go in and I'm sure they saw a black lady. But then, after a while, there were able to see that I was a black lady, yes, but I was a person who cared about their children in that school. And so it no longer mattered.

Later in the interview, she further stated,

One way that I break through their color barriers, sexual barriers as far as female, is that they see that I'm willing to get down and dirty. I don't ask them [teachers] to do anything that I wouldn't do.

Jeanette articulated the same types of interactions and pressure with her colleagues when asked how race affected her leadership. She said,

First I'll talk just about being a black female as a leader, um, and understanding that everybody won't necessarily take, uh, criticism or feedback from a black female. Um, dealing with some of the males that I had to deal with who felt like they didn't have to listen to me because I was a female. I mean they never would have articulated it that way but your passiveness when it comes to following my directives says that same thing. Um, you know, never being in your face but definitely not... you know 'I don't have to do it. You're not gon make me'.

When discussing her role as an assistant principal at the same middle school where she taught and felt like a role model for students of color, Jeanette spoke about teachers and their thoughts about her leadership and decisions she made.

I also kept that lens [race] because I felt like even if nobody questioned it out loud, they were thinking it. It makes you want to be better than the average bear. I'm keenly aware when I'm in that setting. In that respect, it [race] probably has a positive affect because it makes me strive to be the best that I can be because I don't want anyone to every question my ability to be here because of the way I look.

Jeanette shared a story about an interaction with a white colleague that further illustrated the pressure she felt to be "better than the average bear".

I had that conversation with someone else, who, we were going to something, and myself and the other African American administrator were in our suits and the other white male was wearing a collar shirt, polo and khakis. And he said you guys are all dressed up, we just going to so and so... I said I know you won't ever... and this is a colleague that I could say this to and it made him think, I'm certain. I said 'no one will ever question your seat at the table. We can't ever let it be that someone questions our seat at the table' and he was like...He says "Oh I hear you now". He got it, but it had to be brought to his attention. Um, so yeah, um, it [race] does affect those things. Your appearance, your dress, how you approach certain situations, um, it effects the way I lead and interact with others.

Reginald also discussed how race impacted his interactions with white colleagues and how it contributed to the need to "be careful who you trust".

If you look at the pictures of principals on the wall, you won't see one that looks like me. I don't take that lightly but I also understand that race and people's fear of it or even biases are still alive and well. Just a lot of times today, people don't put sheets and cones over their heads, they wear suits and ties and dresses. So, you know, you just try to navigate through that as best you can. And never, ever take it personally, you can't take it personal. If you take things personal, you won't last long as an administrator. You just have to see it for what it is.

This shows Reginald's awareness, much like Betty's and Jeanette's, of not only how race impacts their own leadership but how race and the existence of biases and stereotypes can impact others and their perception of leaders of color.

In summary, white principals in this study were very cognizant of their own whiteness and how their race privileged them. They also recognized how this privilege wasn't afforded to people of color. Through their interactions and "real" relationships with people of color, they extended their own comfort zones and were willing to not only remain mindful of the existence of inequities as barriers for people of color but to take action in removing those barriers.

Black principals felt the need to combat negative stereotypes of minorities and expressed the need to encourage their non-white students to do the same. They also acknowledged the need to navigate the majority white culture of their professional worlds and their identities as blacks as well as being aware of how a relationship between the two affects their leadership. Black administrators in this study also noted the need to share the "rules of the game", which they felt they were knowledgeable about, with students of color. The last challenge of black principals who participated in this study was the pressure to go above and beyond to attain success in the eyes of their white colleagues.

**School Leaders and a sense of shared identity.** The last and most prevalent theme from both interviews and observations was the existence of a shared identity with both parents and students. School leaders in this study, both white and black, have common experiences with the parents and student populations they serve. Through their own life experiences, they develop a sense of shared identity with parents, both white and

non-white, acknowledging that their interests are with providing students with the best education possible. With students, the school leaders developed a sense of connection, based on what they had experienced in their lives. The participants also used their own diverse backgrounds to inform their leadership when dealing directly with parents and students.

Regardless of their race, all of the participants viewed their shared identity as two-fold. One identity was as a teammate with parents. All participants expressed the need to show parents that they were a part of a team with a common goal in mind, both advocating for the success of students. However, the white principals revealed the need to show parents of color especially that they intended to promote the best interest of their children. This seemed to be more specific to circumstances of discipline or where a child's well-being was at stake. Josephine even shared an incident where her black assistant principal wasn't confident that Josephine, as a white principal, would be able to establish this shared identity with parents of color. She said,

But, so there was this incident...kindergarten child had gotten on the wrong bus. Mom and dad were here. Dad was going ballistic outside "Where's my baby". We had located the child, bus was bringing the child back, teachers come in and tell me "You've gotta get outside, this parent, this dad is going crazy out there". And so I go out there and so, my AP, she is telling me, 'stay out of this'. The dad's got long dreads in his hair, tattoos all over the face, his arms and stuff. I don't care. So I go, 'Hi I'm Josephine' And I go 'How can I help you?' We have found your son, he is on the way back. And my AP is telling me, I have this, you just go back...I have this. Now, I don't know but I kinda took it as she felt that she was gonna be able to help him because she was Black and I wasn't gonna be able to because I was White or maybe not because I was White, maybe so. But didn't know if I was gonna be able to connect with him. You know, I proved myself a little bit then.

The “proof” in Josephine’s situation was the shared identity with parents of color that she had their child’s best interest at heart. Chris talks about a similar circumstance with establishing a shared identity with, especially with discipline, parents and students. Chris shared,

I think you just, you prove yourself by doing right by people. And you can’t ignore race but you just, you just accept it for what it is. It’s a difference in people, and you value other people and I think that that allows others to see you as someone that’s accepting and they will accept you in return so...there’s been lots of instances I could talk about where...whether it’s teachers, not teachers, but whether it’s students or parents that would, would bring up race as an issue in decisions. Um, and I would just have to go back to policy or to the event and say ‘Let’s look at the event. Let’s not look at anything else, just deal with the event.’ And once people can do that it kinda removes some of the emotion.

One black principal talked about a similar challenge in convincing parents that they were advocates for what was best for the student and creating that shared identity. Betty discussed the reluctance of parents to trust and gave several examples of black and white families where she noted that consistency was the best way to prove to parents that she cared about their kids, as well as the others served under her leadership. When sharing one such account, she said,

I have 2 parents that are banned from the campus because they laid the cheerleading coach out one night after a game and the bus had gotten back to school. So they pretty much jumped her, not physically, but you know, cursing and what not. And she felt very intimidated by these two parents and the cheerleaders. They were all sitting in the floor, everywhere. This little girl raised her hand and said I feel like I’m the cause of this. She said I called my mother so she would come and raise cane with the cheerleading coach. All because they were standing in their lines and talking. And the cheerleading coach said “You are going to run 10 laps

tomorrow". So she told the other little girls, you wanna see my mama and daddy come up here and get her? And so she called so I took her off the squad and the parents actually came, they fell right into the daughter's...so I banned them from campus. And so, (Me: were they black or white?) Black. So when they came in to talk to me and the cheerleading coach, I had the coach here and the athletic director. I talked to the parent and the parent said "Well can my daughter get back on the squad?" And I said no she can't. And she said, well are my husband and I allowed back on campus. And I said no, I said no you're not but do you understand why you're not and she works for the employment security commission. So I ask her, I said let's try to understand what happened. I said if someone...I said you know, right now people are economically deprived, they don't have jobs. And I said now if someone without a job were to come into your place of business and jump you verbally the way you did the cheerleading coach, I said what would your boss do. She said oh they would be out of there. And I said so what makes this any different? And, you know, she just calmed down. And I told her I said you know what we're gonna work on this and after a year's time, we'll look at the situation again. And when she left, she told me she said, you know I really appreciate talking to you and she said I can't wait till I'm allowed back on the campus again, I think I really like you (laughs).

In the interview, I noted that the above interaction was with Black parents. When asked about her interaction with White parents, Betty gave another example of her consistency.

My interaction with white parents is just as smooth. Here goes a scenario. We have a dress code, it's our county's dress code and I go by it. No holes above the knees and this young lady wore holes above the knees and when daddy came in, daddy and mom came in both and they were both just torn out of the frame. I sat back and I just listened to him and I said "you know, I understand exactly what you're saying. I said, now, if you were a student your shirt would be out of dress code" and he looked down at it. You know it could've caught him one way or the other but it caught him off guard and he just started laughing. He said "I see you're not gonna change this. My daughter is not going to be able to wear these jeans. I said no she's not and if she comes to school with them on, she has 2 options, we have shorts that go to the knee or she can call home and actually, there's a 3<sup>rd</sup> option if she wants neither one of those, there's ISS. But we are going to support our district...and remain consistent.

More prevalent than needing a shared identity with parents as a teammate and advocate for their children was the existence of a shared identity with students. The shared identity with students is different in that it involves the connection of the principal's background experiences with the experiences of the students they serve. Anthony's story is most illustrative of how a sense of shared identity can most impact leadership in schools of color. When Anthony shared his story, he said.

I believe people lead out of who they are. I don't have a particular leadership style I don't know that I believe in a leadership style. I believe in situations and that you apply the skill set that you have to whatever that situation is. But I think that comes from life, Life experience. My particular life just had a lot of adversity in it growing up. And, uh, dealt with a lot of stuff. Um, and, uh, you know, from the...just my upbringing was...My parents divorced when I was very young but the way that the divorce happened was, we went and would live with my mom 3 days a week and my dad for 4 days of the week but mom...they divorced, mom didn't have a college education, didn't finish high school so she moved into a housing project, much like Hampton Homes across the street. My dad was a teacher so he lived in middle class. So I would, I would...I grew up in 2 different, totally different environments. So initially we go into, move into a housing project, and so 3 days a week I'm in a housing project, 3 days a week I'm in a sort of a middle class neighborhood. Then little by little my mom sort of moved up. She moved from the housing project into a trailer park into a single family home and then into sort of a middle class neighborhood. So, and she worked all the time, so she was never home. And so growing up I was...I cooked, I cleaned, I ran the household for my younger siblings 3 days a week and 4 days a week, my dad was never present because he coached, he taught and coached. So at his house, there was a whole different context. So I learned to navigate 2 different cultural contexts, you know. Low income, uh, area to, also middle class to almost affluent, upper middle class. So I lived in those 2 worlds growing up, which was ironic because those are the 2 worlds that are here, the exact two worlds. And so, we weren't in the, and I have to say we weren't in the low income area for very long, uh, in terms of being in the housing project and...we were probably there for about 4 years, housing project and trailer park area, very very low income. But that's a ton of ad/diversity and so, first of all, you're going back and forth you

learn to be adaptable. So I think I'm very adaptable, very flexible. That was hard as heck growing up. Um, so I learned how to take care of myself, learned how to take care of others, learned how to be apathetic toward others, learned how to not, um, not be entitled but know that in life you have to work hard. And so those are all values that I bring to leadership and so I expect that out of the teachers that I teach. I expect my teachers to have empathy for our kids are coming from, even if they haven't experienced it themselves. But also to help, to be accountable and to be creative and adaptable and change and do whatever it takes to survive the situation and to be successful. You recognize the power and the impact that the individuals can have on your life outside of your family. And so, I recognize the impact that we can have in education, if we have an interest because I experienced it and I've lived that life. And I wouldn't trade my upbringing for anything because it's made me who I am.

While being a person of color is not something that Anthony had to contend with growing up, it is very clear that his diverse and adverse background affords him connections with some of his students that many school leaders don't have. The students served by Anthony's leadership have day-to-day experiences much like what Anthony went through himself as a child. Therefore, he is much more likely to empathize with his students and their families. The connections between Anthony's upbringing and his students' lives manifest themselves through his leadership, giving him a sense of urgency and advocacy in his practice. Jeanette also shared this commonality and used her own background to encourage her high school students. Jeanette shared,

I talk to my kids about sharing a situation. And that reminds me, I've gotta bring my yearbook because I talk to my kids very openly about my poor high school experience, cuz I had a decent high school experience because I was smart and I was an athlete but kids picked on me unmercifully in middle school because I was not a pretty child. I had buck teeth and I had big Coke bottle glasses and I looked crazy because of my body makeup. And so, it was very awkward. And so, I tell them all the time, I come a long way baby, Virginia Slims, you don't know. Um, and that, you can

always change your looks, when you're in control of your looks. There's things you're going to be able to do, but that's all the more reason for you to be a successful person, when you finish school so that you can do the things that you wanna do. I mean I wore glasses until I could pay for my own contacts. I didn't get braces until I was in college. Like, those were things that my parents couldn't afford to do for me when I was that age. Therefore, I had to wait until I could afford them myself and change my appearance.[I'm] very open with my kids about the struggles that I had in high school and how I can understand where you might be coming from but it doesn't give you an opportunity to not change your circumstance. You have to do these things to change your circumstance. If you want things to be different you can do it, I am living proof because I had to go through what you're going through. Um, so telling them those stories is very key.

In their leadership, both Anthony and Jeanette use their backgrounds to inform their day-to-day interactions with both students and parents.

In contrast to being able to identify with students' and sharing common experiences, Chris acknowledged the fact that, as a White male, he would never be able to identify with an experience one of his Black students had.

Because the perception at Tyner is that there are racial issues but inside it's not. It's not as much as what you'd...the community has made it bigger than it is. It's not a big deal. But it's the community that makes it a big deal. You have to be creative and make ways around that. You see it every day and I think it does impact kids. It has got to be so hurtful, and that's something I've never experienced, I've never had the experience of being turned away, or being pulled over, or whatever because somebody thought "You're a certain race and you might be up to no good". And I definitely know that our black students have. And they...I have a student now, Jaquan, who's an honor roll student, national honor society, and, um, I was driving downtown a couple months ago and he was outside, the police had pulled him over and he was outside his car and they were talking to him. I talked to him the next day and he said they'd gotten him for loud music. But I'm thinking, well, what if that was me going down the road with my radio loud. Would I have been stopped? And those are things that I'll never experience but if my kids do and their families do and

you have to understand that and understand the reasons they come and feel certain ways is because of some of those experiences they have. And I just have to understand it because I've never experienced it but I can imagine how devaluing that has to be.

While Chris was very open about the fact that he may not ever experience an interaction similar to what this black student underwent, it is just as important that he, as a white male, recognize that these interactions do actually happen to students of color. This acknowledgement can both create and strengthen a connection with students that, otherwise, would not exist.

**School Leaders and their sense of urgency and “no excuses” mentality.**

Because of a shared identity and common purpose with parents and students, where the principals feel personally responsible for the achievement and success of the students they serve, a sense of urgency in the provision instruction and a “no excuses” mentality was seen in participants. This did not appear to have racial or ethnic motives and seemed to have totally to do with whatever the principal had based their shared identity on. For example, Reginald, because he was a black male, based his sense of urgency on the fact that he could relate to his students of color and their parents because they were of the same ethnic group. As stated in previous comments, he was well aware of the “pitfalls” that awaited Black males after high school. In addition to this shared identity with students of color, Reginald also seemed to be able to create a shared identity with White students as well. He stated,

When dealing with a White student, I don't have a problem telling a kid, you know, 'look, I understand you come from a dominant culture. I

understand that. But the reality of it is that your funky attitude is gonna cause you to miss out on a lot of things that could be handed to you because nobody wants to deal with anybody that has a funky attitude’.

This acknowledgment is very similar to the one Chris makes when dealing with students of color. Although neither administrator can say they have experienced what the student is undergoing, both principals are aware of the existence of the larger structures that affect the student. To go even further, both school leaders react in some way to help themselves and/or the student grow. In Chris’s case, he grew and understood with more clarity what, for some Black males, is a harsh reality. In Reginald’s case, he tries to get White males to overcome their negative attitudes. However, participants acknowledged that part of the struggle in leading in a non-White school is getting teachers to understand the existence of larger structures that impede teaching and learning and helping students overcome these obstacles. Chris discussed his first encounter with “deficit thinking” in his interview. He said,

My initial experiences in teacher education was this kind of deficit thinking mentally, that, you know, you get what you get because that’s who they [students] are. And I always recognize that and it bothered me.

Chris is referring to the mentality that some educators have that students are doomed to achieve nothing more than the limitations set for them by larger structures. For students of color, this can prove detrimental to their educational success. Candace comments that some of her staff may have this mentality. She said,

Our ESL teachers did not know about the Civil Rights Movement. They didn't know. It happened here and they didn't know. Unless we educate people about this, they come in and they see what things look like. And it may look like there are more Black people in poverty and it may be because they're not trying or blah, blah, blah. But unless you know that history of oppression, you can't know that. Being sensitive, too, to the fact that I have to keep an eye on the staff and what they're ideas are about kids. And there are some that just flat out have to go because it's not what it needs to be.

Anthony discusses this too, reiterating that race is a huge issue for his community and asserting the need for teachers to overcome their own biases when educating students of color. Anthony had his teachers participate in non-threatening professional development that helped them to recognize their own biases. He commented,

We're no longer blaming people for being biased but it is, you are accountable, though, for once you recognize that it exists, what are you doing about it?

As a white male and female, both Candace and Anthony hold their teachers to high expectations for students of color and is careful to recognize those that pigeon-hole students of color with low expectations. Jeanette, as a black female, discusses having these high expectations with not only teachers, but the students themselves.

I have to be very careful because I have to let them know that I understand where they're coming from but I also let them know that they can't use the relationship, because I know where you're coming from and where you are, you don't get to use that not to do what you're supposed to do. I give you enough to let you know I know where you're coming from. But I'm not going to let you use my understanding of your situation to change the expectations for how to manage this work; because then I'm not doing you a service, I'm doing you a *disservice*.

Reginald discussed the use of data to detect potential racial or ethnic biases in teachers.

He states,

First and foremost, data will suggest a lot of times where there may be things you need to take a stronger look at. If you look in a class and you have a class which is, you know, maybe spit right down the middle, majority/minority students and yet your minority students are Ds and Fs and your majority students are As and Bs and you continue to see that pattern, there's a problem somewhere.

Reginald continues by saying that not all teachers have a “vested interest” in all students being successful and that as a school leader, it is his job to make sure that teachers are holding high expectations for all students and are providing them with the necessary instruction to be successful. If teachers aren't able to do either of these, it is necessary, as Candace said in her comments, to have them work somewhere else.

### **Looking Forward**

While this chapter has looked specifically at what participants said during their interviews, the next chapter will incorporate data taken from observations of participants. One purpose was to see each school leader in their actual leadership setting. I wanted to see how what they *said* during each interview connected with what was actually *seen* in the observation. Another purpose of the observation was to observe gather data about the prevalence of the Effective Schools Research correlates in culturally diverse schools.

**CHAPTER V**  
**WALKING THE TALK:**  
**CONNECTING WHAT WAS SAID AND WHAT WAS DONE**

As seen in Cooper (2009) and Hyland (2005), culturally responsive leadership occurs when a school leader takes *action* as a result of his/her cultural proficiency. It is not enough for school leaders to be merely aware of the biases and stereotypes that accompany them in their leadership. Principals in culturally diverse schools must use that awareness to create an inclusive teaching and learning environment where ALL students can be successful.

When conducting this study, principals were observed during a regular school day. This was done so that each school leader could be seen in their authentic school environment. The findings reported in this chapter are a result of the responses during the interview combined with the actions of school leaders as seen in observations. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how the participants in this study use their backgrounds to inform their practical leadership. Another purpose is to show how their beliefs and awareness about themselves, others, and the teaching and learning process manifest in the day-to-day interactions with others. At the conclusion of each section is a connection between observations of principals and the Effective Schools Research correlates. The most prevalent correlates are identified and described.

When both interviews and observations were analyzed, two trends were found. The first is school leaders and their advocacy for a safe and respectful learning environment through relationship-building. The second is the expectation of teachers and students that top-notch teaching and learning will occur in their schools. An explanation of both findings follows.

### **Using Background Experiences to Lead the Way**

All school leaders in this study expressed and acknowledged disparities and differences in societal as well as educational provisions for people of color. As seen in the previous chapter, all of the white participants shared their sentiments about their white privilege and the biases that they brought with them to their leadership. This included, participants acknowledged, their own upbringing and the experiences included in this. Candace even discussed becoming aware of these inequities in undergraduate and graduate studies, which, as a white female, was a breakthrough for her. Both Josephine and Chris talked about their friendships and interactions with students of color while they attended school and how important these relationships were in their current leadership, since they felt this better equipped them to work with families of color. Anthony's diverse background provided him with similar experiences. All of the white participants recognized the existence of societal factors that could keep people of color from being successful.

Black principals also acknowledged disparities and differences in provisions for people of color. However, they explained these acknowledgements from the perspective of possible recipients of such inequities. For example, while the white participants

recognized experiences of people of color which may have contributed to sentiments of distrust, black participants offered stories and anecdotes where they had personally encountered one of these experiences. Jeanette, in particular, provided specific examples of how being a black school leader was much different from being merely a school leader. She described how she felt she needed to go above and beyond to prove herself among her white colleagues. Reginald spoke about having his own sentiments of distrust towards White colleagues and the need to “watch his back”. All three black principals discussed the need to know and make students aware of the “rules of the game”, meaning how to navigate the dominant white culture and being a person of color.

### **School Leaders’ Sense of Advocacy for Students**

Because of their keen sense of self-awareness and the awareness of factors and experiences that play a role in keeping people of color behind, the school leaders in this study have developed a strong sense of advocacy for all learners, including culturally diverse students and families. Being informed by their own background experiences, all of the principals, regardless of race, expressed this need for advocacy for both students and teachers through creating a safe and respectful learning environment. It was apparent that they all felt it their obligation to ensure that every student felt appreciated and safe in their learning environments.

**Protecting the school environment.** This strong sense of advocacy was evident in all participants, with each participant demonstrating it in different ways, according to the needs of the school. For example, Jeanette stated that “a good portion of her work had been to rid the school illegal drug dealers. She also stated that she was trying to change

people's perception of her from being an enforcer to being an instructional leader. When observed, Jeanette spent more than half of the observation walking the halls and canvassing her school. As she moved about, she monitored lunch and encouraged students to keep their areas clean, picking up trash after themselves. She also encouraged them to sit correctly on furniture, including tables and desks. It was evident that she wanted students to take care of their school and wanted them to respect their learning environment. During her monitoring, Jeanette greeted students by name and asked many of them about their family members by name. This included black and white students alike.

As she walked through the school, several students approached Jeanette to discuss a variety of subjects. One student, a white female, stopped her to ask if she was coming to her tennis match. Jeanette asked if she would be playing singles or doubles. The girl responded that she would be in both. Jeanette said that she had a meeting but that she would see what she could do. Another student, also a white female, stopped her to discuss removing her from a class where she didn't think she was learning anything. Jeanette listened to what the student had to say in regards to why she didn't think she was learning. The student reported that there were others in the class that talked and were not respectful of the teaching and learning time and that the teacher, who was a white female, "didn't do anything about it". Jeanette asked the student to give her the names of the other students who were disrupting class. The girl said that she didn't feel comfortable giving the names at that moment. With that, Jeanette gave her a business card and told

her to email her the names. The student agreed and seemed pleased at the outcome of the conversation, as, she walked away smiling.

Before going to a meeting, a black female student stopped Jeanette and asked her to take her out of a math class that was “too hard” for her. Jeanette asked the student why she thought it was hard. The student said that she was having a hard time keeping up with assignments and was not understanding the content. She stated that she “just wanted to be out”. Jeanette explained to the student by name that the reason she had put her in that particular class was because she knew it would be a challenge but that she also knew that the teacher was willing to work with their students. The student said that she was afraid she would fail. Jeanette assured her that she would not fail. Nonetheless, the student still requested to be taken out of the class. At this time, Jeanette reminded the student of the class drop policy. If they wish to drop a class, students have to come in with their parents to talk to the principal. As the student began to talk, Jeanette took out her cell phone and scrolled to the student’s mom’s phone number. As she dialed the number, the student asked “Why are you calling my mama?” Jeanette told her that in order to drop the class, she had to meet with both the student and her mom. The student’s mom did not answer so Jeanette left her a message, asking her to call the school. She then told the student that if she really wanted to drop, she could bring her mom in and they could talk about it. The student proceeded to walk away and said “Nevermind”.

Similar actions were observed of Betty. Betty holds her role as school manager in high regard, as, during the observation, she urged her middle school students to be respectful of themselves and their appearance. She told one student to pull his pants up

and then followed him to class to ensure that he did it. As Betty walked through the halls of Tyner Middle School during a major transition and her students became too loud, all she did was hold up a closed fist. The students who saw her mimicked her and held up their fists too, immediately lowering their voices or cutting off conversations completely. During this interaction, she continued to hold a conversation and never had to turn to look directly at students. This showed that students were accustomed to her monitoring the halls and were well aware of the behavioral expectations that were in place to keep their learning environment safe and orderly.

As she entered a classroom during her walkthroughs, Betty pointed out a student, black female, who had been recognized by the school district for her beautiful singing voice. Her teacher, a white female, had recorded her performance with a county-wide chorus on her cell phone. As Betty listened to the song, she complimented the student and commented on another singing engagement the group had that she would be attending. As she prepared to leave the classroom, a student, White male, was sitting by the door facing the wall. When Betty asked “What is up with that?” the teacher said that the student was not having a good day. Betty presumed to walk over to the student and sat beside him to talk. She asked him what was going on. As the student began talking, he gradually moved his body around in his desk so that he was facing Betty. Once the conversation was over, she told him that she would check back on him before the end of the day. Betty’s beliefs in meeting the needs of students through their learning environment were also evident in her interview. She stated,

I believe that it's very important that regardless of your background, regardless of your economic situation, when you walk into a school, you should be able to leave all of that behind you. You should be the richest thing on earth and um, I believe that. When you walk into a school, you should be able to leave your cares behind. You should be the number one focus. Everything should be about you, as a student. The instruction that you're receiving should be about you. I feel like as a student, you should feel like it's catered to you. We call it differentiation.

Differentiation is not limited to the academic instruction provided in schools. One of the things Betty and her students took pride in was cleanliness of the school building and this provided another opportunity for differentiation for students. A unique consequence for some students who didn't follow the rules at Tyner Middle School was time working with the custodian. During the observation, students were helping to clean the cafeteria and hallways. Betty revealed that during their elective classes, students with discipline referrals helped clean the school and that this was an alternative for some students to in-school and, in some cases, out-of-school suspension. With parents' permission, this alternative kept students in their core classes but also gave them a consequence for negative behavior. While the students did not appear to enjoy what they were doing, the custodian that was helping to supervise them had positive things to say about his helpers, noting that the students took pride in what they were doing and didn't want others to "mess it up".

Reginald's interactions with students showed the expectation of a respectful learning environment. It was clear that maintaining an honest and open relationship with students was important to him. During the observation, Reginald greeted every student he saw as an adult. It was clear that students were comfortable and accustomed to

conversation with their principal, since many of them joked with him. As students entered the building, a white male with red hair greeted Reginald. Reginald joked with the student saying “I’m gonna dye my hair like that one day.” The student said that he could do that for their high school reunion. Reginald responded jokingly by saying “I might not have any hair for the reunion.” The student laughed. This interaction was indicative of the relationship Reginald had with his students. When he spoke to them, he looked the in the eye and encouraged them to do the same to him. He also shook their hands or hugged them as he addressed them.

Later in the observation, as Reginald was going into a classroom observation, two students, black females, stopped him to ask about the student vending machines being turned on. The students were concerned because for the past few days, the machines had not been turned on at 1 pm when they were supposed to be. Reginald told the girls that he would check on the vending machines. Immediately, he got on his walkie talkie to ask about the machines. It turned out that the machines were not to be turned on until 1:30, once lunch had ended. Reginald told the girls and they continued to their destination.

Josephine’s monitoring was along the same line as three black colleagues. Her school is a PBIS, positive behavior intervention and support, school. This initiative encouraged behavioral expectations be consistent with students and be environmentally dependent. Students, according to PBIS, should be aware of their movement, voice level, level of participation, as well as the consequences associated with meeting and not meeting these expectations. As she walked through the halls, Josephine reminded students of the appropriate voice levels and complemented several students on their

appropriate voice levels and placement of hands and feet in the hallway. As she walked through classrooms, it was clear that students and teachers were used to her presence because none of them stopped what they were doing to acknowledge her presence.

**Encouraging positive relationships.** During Chris' observation, however, his sense of advocacy was evident through several different student and teacher interactions. During many such interactions, Chris actually served as a mediator between a student and a teacher. During the first meeting, a student was convinced that the teacher did not like her and had come to talk to Chris about this issue. Chris allowed the student to share her thoughts, which included that the teacher always 'picked' on her. When asked to clarify herself, the student gave an example, stating that even when everyone else in the class was talking, the teacher only called *her* out and gave consequences. In response to this, Chris told the student that he would talk to the teacher and get the both of them together to sort things out. He then told her that "school is not about whether I like the teacher or not but the ultimate goal is to pass the class and move on to college." The student agreed and went back to class, with assurance from Chris that he would check in with her later. On the way out of his office to monitor the halls, Chris ran into a student who had come to school with no materials. He talked to the student and asked him if he would like to call home to see if someone could bring his things to school. The student said he would and proceeded to call home. Chris then went to the drop-out prevention counselor and asked him to "go by the student's house if he couldn't reach anyone by phone".

The last advocacy incident observed was during walk-throughs of the building. Once outside of a technology class, a male teacher seemed to be having some difficulty

with a female student. Both were arguing back and forth, with the student telling the teacher that she needed her laptop back. As Chris walked up to assess the situation he asked the student to go back into the classroom. He then found out that the student was angry because the teacher had taken her laptop while she was working for what appeared to be no reason. It was discovered that the teacher had told the student that she'd been 'acting differently' since a friend of hers had returned to school, commenting on how her behavior in class had taken a negative turn. This comment upset the student because she said that her "friend did have nothing to do with it". It was unclear how the incident had escalated to the point of the teacher taking the student's laptop but it was very clear that this is what had upset the student the most. It was at this time that the female student came back out of the classroom with her belongings. The teacher asked where she was going and she replied "The counselor". "No you're not, get back in the room" the teacher replied angrily. The student fussed back, still upset about the laptop that had been taken from her. Chris then asked the teacher if he could talk to the student, saying "Let me talk to her for a minute". With this, the teacher went back into the classroom and the student began to cry. Chris talked to her and found out that the student was doing her work and that the teacher had taken the student's laptop for what appeared to be no reason. Chris asked the student to go back into the classroom. Sensing her reluctance, he added "you're doing this for me" and asked the student to do him the favor of going back to class and trying to make it through the rest of the period. He told her that he would check back with her when first period was over. The student said that she would come and see Chris in his office when the period was over.

In all three of these occurrences Chris displayed that he cared about all of his students and wanted them to feel safe and listened to while at school. Race was not a factor in who Chris advocated for, since all three students were different races. The female student in the first incident was white and the teacher was white as well. The student in the second interaction was a black male. The female student in the last incident was Hispanic and the teacher she was interacting with was a white male. Chris proved that he believed in providing the best learning environment for all students, regardless of race, through his relations with students and teachers.

**Bringing disparities to light: Anthony's story.** Anthony's advocacy for students was evident in a much different way. His school, while a traditional one, has two educational programs. The first is a Spanish Immersion magnet program. It serves kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade students who apply and are accepted across the school district. Because the Spanish Immersion program is a magnet program, many students, if they do not begin kindergarten there, do not enter in later grades. This is because most of the instruction is provided in Spanish. Aside from the Spanish Immersion program, Clover Elementary also serves its neighborhood students with a regular education program serving kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The neighborhood program serves kids who live in Clover's school district and would normally be assigned to the school. Because of the two very different instructional programs at his school, Anthony brought up several perceived disparities between the 2 very diverse groups of students.

One of the big issues is 98% of the students in our neighborhood program are African American. Within our immersion program, there's more

diversity than people think, we're actually majority African American in our immersion program as well. the perception is what matters and the perception is that the immersion program is higher income white kids and the neighborhood program is...the kids in the neighborhood program are lower income African American kids. So there's a perception in the neighborhood that, you know, all of the affluent white kids in the immersion program get all of this, and here we are, we're the African American...And we're lower income. We're kind of looked upon in a negative way.

Anthony continued to comment on the difference in performance on state assessments between the programs. As a whole, Clover Elementary School enjoys a composite score of 70.4% in reading and 77.7% in math. However, while the Spanish Immersion program celebrates test scores in the 80s and 90s, the neighborhood portion of Clover Elementary performs in the 30s and 40s. Anthony said that he has worked hard to “shed some light on the huge disparity” between the Spanish Immersion and traditional programs. Because of their high composite score, Clover's school district would not recognize the disproportionate test scores between the two programs. Anthony comments that he had to go to the school board to advocate for his students. His hard work paid off. As a result of Anthony's efforts, Clover Elementary became a Title 1 school, despite the fact that only half of the school, the neighborhood program, was low performing.

Anthony said,

Neighborhood kids were not receiving any of the wrap-around services that they needed because they hid behind the successful test scores of the students in the Spanish Immersion program.

In addition to fighting for the school to receive additional funds and support services through Title I, Anthony also advocated to create the neighborhood program its own identity. He stated that the Spanish Immersion students had their own identity because of its magnet program. In creating the neighborhood program's identity, Anthony thought it best to include the community. He described his efforts in creating a leadership program that the students from Clover's neighborhood could identify with.

It took us a year last year to figure out what's the culture of Clover and what do we want to culture to be and so one of the issues that we identified was that our immersion program has a cultural identity. It's Hispanic culture and it's our kids learning to embrace that and learning to connect Hispanic culture to their lives, who they are. So they have this identity here. But our kids from the neighborhood don't and so they were just showing up. And so what we needed to do was, um, create an identity for them, or not necessarily...or help them discover their identity here, not that we need to give anybody identity. And we felt like the best way to do that was to celebrate them and to celebrate this community. So what we did is we created a theme for them and we call it our "Neighborhood leadership program" where we want them to see themselves as leaders and this is a historic neighborhood in Basketville. It's been a huge part of the Civil Rights movement in Basketville. First organized African American neighborhood, nobody in this school knows that. And so, we thought what a better way for our kids to feel a sense of pride and belonging than to help them identify with all these great leaders that grew out of this community. And so that's what we've worked really hard to do, is to promote that idea of leadership but we're rooting it in examples from the community. So every Fri. we have a spotlight on 1 of the leaders from the Samerston Community and what they contributed. We're embedding that.

During Anthony's observation, he referred to several students as "leaders". When he saw students in the hallway who were not following Clover's hallway rules, he told them that they were not "acting like leaders". He also referred to all students as "Mr." and "Miss".

As additional components to the leadership program, a child-friendly mission and vision statement were also created and based on leadership qualities.

During the observation, another safety concern was brought to Anthony's attention. A Basketville police officer had gotten a complaint from a concerned citizen regarding morning drop-off at Clover Elementary. Anthony informed the officer that the problem began when parents wanted to park in front of the school to drop their students off. Signs on the street indicated that there was no parking, since traffic on the street was not completely stopped or redirected during morning drop-off at the school. Several parents who wanted to park their cars in the "no parking" zones had gotten into verbal altercations with Clover staff members who were responsible for getting students out of cars and into the school safely in the morning. As it turned out, Anthony had asked a parent who was very angry about the cars parking to drop off students to write to authorities about the problem, since he had done what was within his control. He had sent letters as well as talked personally with parents who parked to try to alleviate the situation and make it safe for students to walk to school and be dropped off. The Basketville police officer showed Anthony where the "no parking" zones were and told him that an officer would be on the street each morning to issue citations to anyone who wished to park in those areas.

**Bringing disparities to light: Candace's story.** Throughout our work together, Candace has shown her advocacy in a number of ways, as the other participants have. One of the most noticeable ways she advocates for her students is through maintenance of the school. Because Rose Elementary is such an old school building, several things need

to be repaired and/or require quite a bit of upkeep. One of such is the HVAC system in the school. As a result of repeated break-downs and consistent reports to the district's maintenance department, a new heating and cooling system was put in at Rose Elementary. However, there still seem to be problems with the system consistently heating and cooling when it needs to. This is a constant battle for Candace, since having a hot building in the summer and a cold building in the winter is not conducive to teaching and learning. Often, there are several calls and reports made to the district's offices before someone comes out to fix the problem. Nonetheless, she perseveres in ensuring that the building is comfortable for both students and teachers.

Another way that Candace advocates for her students is through the school's improvement plan. Because Rose Elementary's composite score is below 60% and they did not make expected growth on statewide assessments during the 2011-2012 school year, the school district has labeled the school a Priority One school. This means that Rose Elementary is eligible to receive several different kinds of support from both the state and district. Part of Candace's job as the school's leader was to pinpoint which areas of teaching and learning the school needed support with. Upon creating the plan and identifying the areas of need for Rose Elementary, Candace then took the plan to district officials, who then allocated resources to meet those needs. Daily advocacy through this plan occurs as a regular part of Candace's role. She has to make sure that everyone is held accountable for their part in the support of Rose and its teachers and students. For example, on several occasions, support people would not show up on their designated days. A representative from the Exceptional Children's district department was supposed

to be at Rose twice a week. However, someone was only there once a week. When Candace saw this, she called her regional superintendent to discuss why this needed to happen. The fact was that Candace had three new EC teachers on staff, one of which was in a self-contained classroom. She wanted to ensure that these teachers received the support they needed in planning their IEP meetings and meeting the needs of their students.

### **Effective Schools Research Correlates: How Does This Connect?**

The described interactions and observations discussed in this section portrayed several of the Effective Schools Research correlates, all of which are related to equity in the quality of instruction provided to students in schools. The central correlate seemed to be the creation of a climate of high expectations for success. This correlate involves the attitudes of all stakeholders and the belief in high student achievement for ALL students (Lezotte, 1991; Lezotte, 2008). It must be noted that for many of the participants in this study, creating a climate of high expectations for success began with establishing a safe and orderly environment, another ESR correlate. Throughout this segment, actions were described that show *how* participants use their own background experiences to advocate for their students and equity in the education provided to them. The principals' sense of advocacy became a clear, focused mission that was shared with all school stakeholders.

Further displaying the creation of high expectations for success correlate, all of the school leaders in this study believe strongly in advocating for students, regardless of their race or background. As seen through Jeanette, Betty, Josephine, and Reginald, a

genuine relationship with students where expectations are clear and consistent can be both a component and a result of this advocacy.

These school leaders also believe in the creation and preservation of a safe and respectful learning environment for all students, another ESR correlate. Both Chris and Anthony showed this through their interviews and observations by serving as mediators between students and teachers as well as activists for what is best for their students and school community.

### **Top-notch Teaching and Learning**

In addition to advocating for students and creating a safe and respectful learning environment, all of these school leaders exhibited the expectation of both teachers and students that top-notch teaching and learning would take place in their schools. These school leaders display instructional leadership through their fostering of an inclusive, instructional environment where students and teachers are held accountable for the instruction that happens in classrooms.

**School leaders as *instructional* leaders.** All of the participants, as noted in the previous chapter, began their tenure in education as teacher or other subordinate leaders before becoming principals. Through their teacher leadership, they got to experience first-hand many of the same curriculum, policy, and personnel changes that they, as school leaders, inflect upon their students and staff. Because of these experiences as teachers and, in one case, a counselor, these school leaders hold quality teaching and learning in high regard, taking a “no excuses” attitude towards student achievement. Teachers in these schools are also held accountable to such a mentality. The use of

professional learning communities was evident in all participants' schools. In this section, it should be noted that three schools are performing below 60% in reading (Table 2), possibly making them priority schools in this area, according to data provided by state assessments . They are Marshall Elementary (Josephine), Rose Elementary (Candace), and Tyner Middle School (Betty). However, it should also be noted that the administrators at these schools are have less than two years of experience at these schools. This is both Josephine's and Candace's second year at their schools and this is Betty's first year at her school. It is equally important to note these administrators' short times at their schools so as to highlight a few major instructional changes that they've made in their leadership, which were supported by both their interviews and observations.

**Table 2. State Assessment Data by School**

School	Composite Score			White Students	Black Students	Hispanic Students
<b>Rose Elementary</b>	<u>Reading</u> 41.7%	<u>Math</u> 63.8%		55.6%	33.7%	40.3%
<b>Clover Elementary</b>	<u>Reading</u> 70.4%	<u>Math</u> 77.7%		94.4%	56.5%	54.5%
<b>Tyner High School</b>	<u>English I</u> 64.5%	<u>Algebra I</u> 62.6%	<u>Biology</u> 64.5%	71.1%	59.6%	60.8%
<b>McDonald Academy</b>	<u>English I</u> >95%	<u>Algebra I</u> 91.7%	<u>Biology</u> >95%	>95%	>95%	>95%
<b>Tyner Middle School</b>	<u>Reading</u> 54.0%	<u>Math</u> 69.5%		60.0%	42.5%	43.7%
<b>Marshall Elementary</b>	<u>Reading</u> 48.2%	<u>Math</u> 71.6%		61.5%	44.6%	45.9%
<b>Ritz High School</b>	<u>English I</u> 71.5%	<u>Algebra I</u> 47.4%	<u>Biology</u> 78.7%	71.9%	61.8%	67.0%

*Collaborative planning with teachers.* When observing Josephine, about half of her day was spent facilitating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for her teachers. During these meetings, she discussed the use of common assessments and encouraged teachers to discuss different descriptors of assessments. Josephine also encouraged her teachers to use more open-ended questions on their tests and to rubrics to score assessments. This, she explained to her teachers, is a major shift in teaching and learning with the implementation of Common Core. Josephine also discussed an “environment checklist” that she had given to teachers and was soon to begin monitoring. This checklist was a compilation of items that Josephine and her support staff, including the assistant principal and curriculum facilitator, were to see when visiting a classroom. On this list was the use of anchor charts to guide instruction. Teachers were also to have “I can” statements for their lessons posted. In reference to this, Josephine told her teachers that “I cans weren’t for show. Their purpose is for students to connect questions with what they are learning.” During these PLC meetings, a few teachers had questions about posting their I can statements. One teacher wondered if she had to post all I can statements. Josephine told her that all of the I can statements that were applicable to her instruction should be posted where students could see them throughout the day. The teacher then questioned where she would put them. It was clear that Josephine was aware of the teacher’s classroom because she instructed her on how she could alter her current bulletin or white board to fit her I can’s for all subjects. She also reminded teachers that those I can statements should be referred to during instruction.

While assessment and “I can” statements were the subjects of Josephine’s observed PLC meetings, it was evident that Betty’s teachers also planned collaboratively, even though her participation in one of these meetings was not observed. As she walked through classrooms, her encouragement of collaboration was evident through the use of the same I can statements by teachers who taught the same subject. For example, two 7<sup>th</sup> grade math classrooms were visited and both had the same I can statement. The same was true for two 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies classrooms. While their teaching styles were a bit different, these teachers had planned their lessons together, as the content and academic vocabulary was the same in both classrooms.

***Holding students accountable.*** As Betty visited classrooms, she orally questioned students about what they were learning and challenged them to connect what they were learning to the real world. In one such instance, Betty went into an 8<sup>th</sup> grade social studies class that was discussing the upcoming presidential election. The teacher had been discussing the significance of the electoral college with students. She was informing students of the differences between the popular vote and the electoral college votes and what each could mean for the election. As she walked around the room, Betty asked her students if they were going to register to vote and when they would do so. The students answered chorally “18”. Betty then asked if they thought the election should or would have anything to do with race. This sparked a conversation between students that, surprisingly, was very open and comfortable. It was clear that the teacher had done a great job with discussing the election because students were able to describe each

candidate's political views and provided evidence as to why they did or did not support that candidate. Before she left the classroom, Betty gave the teacher a thumbs-up.

Not only did Betty support and encourage her teachers in providing top-notch instruction, she did it herself. From 9:20 am to 9:50 am, she has a group of ten students that come to her office and read with her. This is Tyner Middle's school-wide silent sustained reading time and Betty herself facilitates a group. The group comes together to read and then discusses what they've read. Betty said that she looks forward to the interaction as much as, if not more than, the kids do.

Jeanette discussed the facilitation of teachers' PLCs with her assistant principals during their weekly professional learning community meeting. During her observation, Josephine encouraged her administrative team, which included a curriculum facilitator and three assistant principals, to "get on the same page" about walk-through feedback to teachers. She told the team that she wanted "teachers to express to students why they're doing what they're doing". She further stated,

Kids need to know why they're doing what they're doing. We as a team need to stay focused on the following; having meaningful learning targets, teachers and students [need to] know what they're learning.

This shows that, even though Jeanette's school is not considered a priority school based on their state assessment scores, she still holds her teachers and even assistant principals accountable for effective instructional practices.

***Teacher observations and conferences.*** Reginald showed his expectation of excellent teaching and learning in a different way. Part of his observation occurred as he

completed his pre-observation conferences with teachers. During this time, Reginald went over with teachers what he would see during their first observation of the year. Through questioning, Reginald urged teachers to think thoroughly through their lessons. Reginald asked, “If there was one particular thing you wanted me to focus on during your instruction, what would it be?” This showed his expectation that all teachers would develop into reflective practitioners. During the pre-observation conferences, Reginald would ask teachers to list the resources they’d need to accomplish the goals they had outlined on their Professional Development Plans. He, again, urged teachers to think thoroughly and reflectively about how they were going to accomplish the goals they set for themselves and to advocate for their students through their Professional Development Plans.

*Interactions with others.* Anthony, in addition to all of the new initiatives put into place for students, still showed high expectations of students and teachers through his interactions with others. As students entered the building, he asked “Are you ready for learning?” He continued this when he did his portion of the morning announcements, greeting the school body as his “Jones family”. During the announcements, Anthony encouraged students to not watch as much TV or play as many video games. He warned them to “be careful because these activities could actually lower their reading scores”. When completing the master schedule, Anthony also showed that top-notch teaching and learning were of the utmost importance to him. For the neighborhood students that attended Clover Elementary, the academic schedule was recreated with as little transition time as possible. This meant that lunch, recess, and specials were placed in one blocked

period. In support of this Anthony commented “It’s hard to get students back ‘down’ after one transition.” He also required more small group instruction by having hired tutors go into classrooms as opposed to pulling students out of class to serve them. This was because he wanted the tutors to become a part of each classroom’s culture and build relationships with students.

Not only does Anthony have high expectations of students, but of teachers as well. He provides support for teachers and was observed meeting and speaking with the curriculum facilitator and other support staff about providing model lessons for teachers who were having difficulty in one content area or another. Anthony was also observed conducting a conference with a teacher about her Professional Development Plan. It was at this time that he revealed that on everyone’s PDP it said that they would produce at least a year’s growth for students and, for below grade level students 1.25 year’s growth.

Many of the aforementioned indicators of high academic expectations were also evident at Tyner High School. As Chris monitored the building, it was documented that each teacher had an essential question or “I can” statement posted, which appeared to guide their instruction. It was also observed that each teacher had a word wall, which is a unique find in a high school. Each classroom that was visited had a selection of vocabulary specific to the content that was taught in that classroom. These words were posted in alphabetical order for students to refer to during instruction.

***Protecting instructional time.*** In addition to these observations, Chris’ expectation of excellent teaching and learning also manifested itself in a different way. During his observation, a parent came in to visit his daughter. When Chris asked how he

could help the parent, the father said that he simply wanted to walk his daughter to class. Upon further discussion, Chris found out that the dad himself had attended Tyner High School at one time but had never graduated. Since Chris himself had attended and graduated from Tyner High School, he asked the man what year he'd attended. After holding a brief conversation to ensure that the student did not have a specific reason for inviting her dad to school, Chris told the parent that during instructional time, he liked to protect students from distractions. He also offered the parent alternate times that he could come and visit the school. This showed Chris' respect for high quality teaching and learning, free from any distractions. It also showed that he held parents to this same standard, since he openly communicated that message to the parent in his office. The parent agreed to come back at a more appropriate time and left the building.

### **Effective Schools Research Correlates: How Does It Connect?**

The described interactions and observations discussed in this section portrayed correlates which use data-driven decision making. The correlates in this section involve the “alignment that must exist between the intended, taught, and tested curriculum” (Lezotte 1991, p. 6). They also involve the expectation of high student achievement and belief in adapting the teaching, learning, and assessment process to meet the academic needs of students (Lezotte 2008).

Instructional leadership and frequent monitoring of student progress were evident with in Jeanette, Reginald, and Anthony. All three principals held themselves as well as students and teachers accountable for high-quality instruction and used opportunities such

as observation conferences and professional learning community meetings to communicate shared values and expectations.

In addition to the ESR correlates examined, Anthony, Betty and Chris showed explicit examples of home-school relations, the only correlate which encompasses both equity in quality and data-driven decision making. All three of these principals, through both their interviews and observations, showed clear but varied ways of involving parents and community groups in their leadership.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear that all participants, both Black and White, use their background experiences and cultural awareness on a daily basis to inform their relationship-building with students of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. They are conscious of the role that race plays in their lives as well as the lives of their students and see themselves as obligated to be responsive to the needs of all students. These participants also use their day-to-day interactions as opportunities to advocate for students, ensuring that all students, both White and non-White have access to high-quality, equitable instruction.

Participants provided clear illustrations of the correlates provided by Effective Schools Research. While these correlates serve as characteristics of effective schools, *how* to demonstrate these characteristics was made clearer for both practicing and future school leaders.

### **Looking Forward**

While this chapter has given a description of what was seen and heard from participants, the next chapter will describe how what was learned from participants can

be applied to current school leadership practices. It will discuss how current and future school leaders in culturally diverse schools can use what was learned from participants to inform their own practices. Chapter 6 will also give suggestions to school leadership programs who train principals to lead in culturally diverse schools.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **INFORMING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE**

A major limitation of Effective Schools Research (Lezotte, 1991 & 2008) is the lack of provision of hands-on strategies for school leaders to use in their daily practice. While Lezotte and others (Levine, 1990; Lezotte, 1985; Lezotte & Bancroft, 1985) give descriptors of *what* an effective school looks like (correlates), little information is given to principals about *how* to create those correlates. For school leaders in culturally diverse settings, it would be beneficial to have a plan of action for how to create an effective teaching and learning environment utilizing culturally responsive leadership. The participants in this study have provided principals with guidance as a result of their own leadership in diverse school settings.

The objective of this chapter is to use the data from the study to provide implications for leadership practice in schools with culturally diverse student populations. These implications can serve as action steps for principals in diverse schools. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section informs school principals who lead currently or wish to lead in culturally diverse schools. The second section provides suggestions to school leadership preparation programs as they educate principals to lead in culturally diverse schools.

## **Advice to School Leaders in Culturally Diverse Schools**

One of the interview questions specifically asked participants to give advice to up and coming school leaders who were to lead in a culturally diverse school setting. Because this question was towards the conclusion of the interview, I was able to make a more intimate connection with each participant and ask them what advice they would give me personally, since I am in my first year of leadership at a culturally diverse school. This made the conversation and suggestions with participants much more substantive and practical. As you will see in each implication, the participants gave concrete suggestions for *what* a school leader should do. More importantly in my opinion, is that they also gave specific examples of *how* to achieve the concrete suggestions provided in their advice. This section is structured so that each implication builds upon the one before it, making it a process that school leaders can undertake.

**Implication one: know thyself.** The largest part of being a school leader is knowing him or herself as well as what s/he believes about the teaching and learning process. This is done through self-reflection, where one becomes attentive to his or her own assets as well as challenges. Jeanette discusses this process as being crucial to the success of a school leader. Jeanette, a Black female, stated,

If you haven't spent some time in self-reflection to understand what your strengths are, what your weaknesses are, or what your challenges are...what your potential derailers are. What's your derailers? If you're not aware of those things, it's easy to see how you can *not* be successful as a (high school) principal. If you don't take stock of who you are as a leader, who you are as a person, and then put those things and see how it's going to work in a school setting.

“Taking stock” of yourself, as Jeanette calls it, is a deliberate and purposeful process. As you become a school leader in culturally diverse school, regardless of your own race, you must know what your own beliefs about the dominant culture are. You must also be aware of your own biases and perceptions of the world around you. Candace, a White female, discusses this.

One of the things that has to happen is that you have to understand what your prejudices are and you’ve gotta be aware of it to the point where you question yourself constantly. To the point that it’s irritating, but if you don’t then you’re not gonna be able to serve your kids the way that you need to. You’re going to have sort of a clouded picture of what’s going on with people who look like you, and that can happen anyway, but you’ve gotta be able to check it.

This “it” that she refers to is the view one might have of how s/he fits into the world around them. For White administrators, this means that they must recognize that they are a part of dominant culture and, as such, have privileges that people of color may not have afforded to them. For administrators of color, this means that they must be aware of the dominant culture and the privileges of others who belong to it. They must also be aware of the confluence of their own race and culture with the dominant ones.

To make the process of self-reflection and awareness even more actual, Table 3 was created with quotes from participants representing both cultural backgrounds. Each quote can serve as an action step for current and future school leaders. For example, Josephine, a White female, suggests that if a school leader realizes that s/he has not had much experience with people who are culturally different from them, the school leader

should seek out opportunities for this type of interaction, which, in turn, could make it less difficult to identify with the variety of people involved in a school community.

**Table 3. What Can You Do If You Find Cultural Limitations Within Yourself?**

Chris, White male	Jeanette, Black female	Josephine, White female
<p>For a white person going into majority minority schools, number one, I think you have to go in and embrace the fact that you're going to be under the microscope and that you... and to understand that and you have to seek out opportunities in the community to embrace the community and to support them. And I've been asked to speak at churches, black churches and, um, you say sure let me know. And I think sometimes at first, it's almost like it's a test. They are just seeing are you gonna do it. I'm like yeah I'll do it, no big deal. And you can't...you have to look at all of these opportunities as opportunities for you to connect with someone.</p>	<p>You talked about how it [race] affects my practice. Um, like sometimes I decide not to deal with a situation. I let one of my Aps, like my White AP deal with the situation. Like the White kid who thinks all the Black people run everything around here. I'm not gonna feed into it. It's about the kid. It's about who you are. And here are kids who have either learned from their environments or picked up somewhere that that's the case. So when you're angry, and I know you don't like Black people anyway, Mr. Jakes, your son is up here.</p>	<p>The more experiences that a person can have with people who look different from however you grew up, the better leader you will be. You have to put yourself out there and to grow in those areas because if you always have stayed in those same types of environments I think it is... I don't know because I haven't, but I think it would be harder to identify. I just think the more people can grow in environments that are different from their own to put themselves in, the better leader that they will be. And it's not going to always stand out because they're black, or because they're Hispanic...that's the person and that's how they're dealing with the situation that they're in at this moment. I think that's the biggest thing because if you're just kind of limited, you just don't know ...of what people are working through.</p>

Jeanette discusses how, as a Black female, her awareness of her own race impacts how she deals with White students, especially those that have openly declared that they are not fond of people of color. One strategy she uses is allowing students to work with an administrator who is the same race as they are. In the example used, both the assistant principal and the student was White. This, Jeanette shared, can take the race aspect out of student-administrator interaction. For Black school leaders, the ability to work with White students and parents can be difficult. This is a limitation for Black school leaders if they, unlike Jeanette, are not aware that such prejudices still exist. Jeanette suggests surrounding yourself with an administrative team that can complement you and can be called on as needed.

**Implication two: build trust.** As a self-aware school leader, the next step is to use one's knowledge of themselves and the world around them to help the school community build trust. By knowing your own strengths and weaknesses, you can assess what is needed in the school and the best way to meet those needs. Jeanette discusses the need for meeting the needs of all of her students. She said,

My school is culturally diverse and I know that but they're all my children. I don't see them...I'm not gonna say color-blind, that's not what I'm saying at all. I fully recognize their various needs and struggle sometimes to make sure that I have the resources to meet them.

Chris, a white male, went a step further and described his interaction and advice with a Black female assistant principal when dealing with a culturally diverse student population.

Something I've talked to her about is [that] she as an African American female who has a strong interest in equity for African Americans, which I appreciate that, but she has to be aware that there's still 30% of the population that's White at Tyner high school. And by...and in leadership roles, you can't ignore any group. And that's the one thing I would say if you're a principal, no matter what the diversity is there, every group has value and has feelings and thoughts and you can't ignore any group. Because if you ignore one group, it plants a seed that you're not what they need. And if one group feels that way, and then something happens with another group even if you have their support then that seed begins to grow, and in this case, fester and that could create other issues for you.

As seen through Chris' advice to other administrators, recognizing all cultural groups present within the school makes a huge impact on the culture of the school itself.

Administrators have direct control over the school's culture in this way. However, the ideal of creating voice and identity as well as acknowledging all cultural groups is easier said than done. Participants suggested two major ways to accomplish this task. They suggested that if an administrator leads in a consistent way and is a good listener, the cultural groups represented would feel valued.

Being consistent is difficult for some school leaders. After all, many are taught to consider each student and circumstance according to their individual needs. Nonetheless, participants in this study recognized the need to remain consistent. Betty, a Black female, commented on this and defined what consistency looks like in day-to-day leadership and she says:

I've tried to treat the parent and students the same on both ends. You know, our counties have rules and regulations and if we go by those and don't let one slide here but then when another child comes in that doesn't look like that child, we let them slide and let them off, then we're asking for trouble and I don't care what color we are or they are.

Betty recognizes that allowing one student or parent to be treated differently, even when giving negative consequences, can create problems. She refers school leaders to their school system's policies as a foundation for daily consistent and reliable decision making. However, because school leadership does include aspects of empathy, it is recognized that some circumstances require individualized attention. Josephine, a White female, discussed the need to provide equitable resources, which may not be the same for all students at all times. She says,

I need kids to feel happy. I need them to be happy about where they are. But leading, I just think you just have to be fair, whatever that word might mean in that moment. Fair is not the same. And just be grounded in what your beliefs are and stand by them. And it's tough because you will be challenged. I think the real you will shine through. My two jobs are to keep my children safe and to make sure they learn something every day. Those are my two jobs and I guess that's how I try to make the decisions that I have here and I just try to respect people for who they are. I try to see things in different ways.

In order to find out the needs of various cultural populations, a culturally proficient school leader needs to be a good listener. Both Anthony and Chris, White males, discussed exactly how this is done, as seen in Table 4. Both principals give applicable ideas for what to do when actively listening to anyone, not just to a student from a different culture from their own.

**Table 4. Participants' Advice About Listening**

<p><b>Anthony:</b>          “It’s doing a lot of listening, a lot of deliberate probing of parents and kids to tell me more about this...’tell me why you’re upset. How do you feel about this school? How do you feel the teachers treat you here? I just put it right out there and I’ve found that people love to be asked.”</p>	<p><b>Chris:</b>          You gotta talk to people, you gotta make time for them, you gotta make them feel like you’re listening to them. One of the things I do when any parent comes in, if they have a concern...one of the things I do is reach in my drawer and pull out a pad and I take notes. And it lets them see, you know, one that I’m serious about it. Always ask for a number that I can reach them at. And I always follow up and call em back. And it just, it just proves to them that, you know, he listened. And I can’t always solve problems but at least he listened and at least he followed up with me. And I think things like that matter and I think it matters regardless as to whether it’s a race issue or not.</p>
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*The use of key communicators.* Candace also talks about building trust within the school community by “relying on some of your key communicators”. These key communicators are people on a staff that have direct ties to the school community. In Candace’s case, these people included classified staff, such as the cafeteria manager, data manager, and lead custodian. All of these were older Black women who had lived and worked in the school’s community for several years. They knew many of the students as well as their families and could serve as a liaison between Candace and the population she serves. In many instances, this is more helpful than anything Candace herself as a White female could do. Trust has already been established between the key communicators and the community, which gives the communicators an advantage that Candace is benefiting from.

*Working with Hispanic students.* For current and future school leaders, being a good listener is vital to the awareness of the groups represented in a culturally diverse

school, even if the administrator is of the same ethnic background as the population they serve. It should be mentioned that both Betty and Jeanette, Black women, stated that the population they wish to learn more about is the Hispanic student population. They both discussed how, as Black women, they were able to relate to the African American population. They were also able to relate fairly well to their White populations because of their experience with Whiteness as a dominant culture. However, because of the lack of interaction with the Hispanic population as well as the language barrier, neither school leader felt she had sufficiently met the needs of their Hispanic student and parent populations. It is important to note that both women are going through the active listening process to determine the best way to meet the needs of this group.

**Implication three: share your vision.** Once you've taken stock of yourself as well as the needs of the school community, your vision must reflect high expectations for all of the cultural groups represented there. Sometimes this means that needs for these groups have to be met in order for them to reach the high expectations, as indicated in the previous section. However, creating an environment of excellence begins with a vision of excellence. Vision, according to Jeanette, is a plan for meeting the needs of various groups of students and lays out what you want those groups of students to accomplish. Jeanette said,

Your job is to provide the vision and to make sure that all stake holders are staying to that vision. You've got to manage those things and if you don't understand how all those things play into your vision and you don't work to put things in place so that all those entities understand that vision and what they're role is in making that vision a reality. Meeting the needs

of those various stakeholder groups when they sometimes have the same needs and sometimes have different needs is so, uh, complex.

Perhaps one of the toughest aspects of the principalship is managing stakeholders, as Jeanette discusses. What makes this job so difficult is either not having a clear vision for the school community or not being clear about each stakeholder's role in realizing that vision. The stakeholders in a school include but are not limited to students, parents, school board members, superintendents, elected officials, and other community members. As a principal, one must have a purposeful design that lays out how all of these stakeholders will take part in the teaching and learning process as outlined by the vision. All of these groups must know what their contributions are expected to be and must be held accountable for making those contributions.

Anthony, who fought for his school to be renamed a Title I school because of its diverse makeup and the extra resources available, discussed his school's vision and mission statement. He discussed how both needed to be in kid-friendly terms and built on qualities already in existence within the cultures and neighborhoods represented in the school. He shared his experience as a school leader needing to re-purpose the vision of the instructional program serving his neighborhood students, who were mostly Black. Anthony said,

What we needed way to do that was to celebrate them and celebrate this community. So what we did is we created a theme for them and we call it our "Neighborhood leadership program", where we want them to see themselves as leaders and this is a historic neighborhood, it's been a huge part of the Civil Rights movement. First organized African American Neighborhood, nobody in this school knows that. And so we thought what

a better way for our kids to feel a sense of pride and belonging than to help them identify with all these great to do was help them discover their identity here and we felt like the best leaders that grew out of this community. And so that's what we've worked really hard to do, is to promote that idea of leadership but we're rooting it in examples from the community.

Anthony relied heavily the school community's natural leaders and leadership characteristics to create a vision for his students that was kid-friendly and based on the lifestyle they lead outside of school. This showed the school community that Anthony had made a conscious effort to learn about where his students and their families resided and worked to bring the history of the community into the school's vision of excellence in student leadership.

Communicating this vision with stakeholders, including all students, parents, and teachers, can also be a challenge for some administrators. Betty shared how collaboration with these groups helped her "get her vision out there".

The first thing is to get that vision out there, to all stakeholders. The biggest stakeholder group was my parents, they are my parents. And this year for open house, when I was going through and doing dress code, we had a slide that says "no pajamas. And then I stopped and then said 'And mamas, don't you wear your pajamas in this school either'. And they roared. They laughed because they know that they wear their pajamas out. Get that vision out there and let em know where you stand. I think it's good with teachers. You have to let them know what your vision is, but informally talk and let them talk about what *their* vision is. And somewhere along the line those visions are going to cross, if they're in it for the right reasons and you're in it for the right reasons... somewhere along the lines you're going to start talking about students. That's what we're all here for.

Betty considered, through her responses, what it took to get teachers and parents on board with her vision statement. With the teachers at her school, it seemed a given that they were in the field of education and, more specifically, teaching at Tyner Middle School to make a difference in lives of students. On the other hand, what is an administrator to do when the success of students is not the first priority of staff members? Reginald, a Black male, discussed this in his comments.

I would take it personally if students did not succeed. And I know I'm busting my hump trying to teach them and I know what I'm giving them all I've got. I would take it personally if they didn't succeed. But, you know, unfortunately we don't have staff that, a lot of staff, who has that vested interest and so...you do what you can and you try to get people all on the same bus going in the same direction. But sometimes, you gotta make a stop and let some folks off and bring some folks on that are trying to go where you're trying to go.

Getting the right staff members in the school is a hardship for many principals simply because they are unsure of when a staff member is to find some other place to work. Reginald puts it simply by suggesting that if teachers don't have "that vested interest" in the students they serve, they shouldn't be teaching. This is a strong statement for educators to hear. However, just like administrators, teachers of culturally diverse students must be very well aware of themselves and maintain a vision of high expectations for students. It is the school leader's obligation to give teachers the support needed to align themselves with the school's vision. This support can come in a variety of ways and should be dependent upon both teacher need and exactly what the leader's

vision reflects. Once ample support is given to teachers, it can be determined whether or not the school is a good fit for them.

### **Advice to School Leadership Preparation Programs**

The next two implications are relevant to school leadership preparation programs. During the interviews, participants revealed what they thought school leadership programs could do to help better prepare principals to lead in culturally diverse schools. Their ideas were put into two categories. The first category concerns the creation of a safe time and place where graduate students can become aware of their cultural selves. The second category deals with the need for a more intense and purposeful internship component to school administration programs.

**Implication four: create a safe zone for cultural awareness.** According to participants in this study, school leadership preparation programs must include a component where school leaders have a safe opportunity to become culturally aware of themselves and what they privilege. For all school leaders, this could include but should not be limited to exploration of the ideals of whiteness and White privilege as well as critical race theory and how these ideals affect day-to-day leadership. Candace described her needs as a White female. She revealed,

I have been a part of so many diversity programs that were completely ineffective and all they did was kind of glorify the differences instead of talking about what the root of...the institution of racism and how poverty was tied to it.

Chris also discussed what helped him most in his school leadership preparation program, which included a deepened look at critical race theory.

I've taken a couple of courses centered around some race issues but it's really glanced at things like critical race theory. I think that school programs need to make that a big part, especially if you're training administrators for minority schools, because that's a reality. There, you know, there's a lot of validity to that theory as well, that there's such power in every structure and organization, um, that, you know, it does impact and hinder potential and growth of minorities and I think that's something that as a white male, as I said before, there's stuff I will never experience... prejudices that I'll never experience and issues that I'll never experience just because I'm a male and because I'm white.

It is important to reiterate that both of these participants are White, since becoming aware of their whiteness and White privilege was most likely a life-altering experience for them. Anthony even recognized that he benefited from such opportunities and saw them as a chance for other White educators to step outside of their comfort zones, especially if all they had ever interacted with was other Whites. He discusses his experiences in a graduate school administration program.

I don't even know how to describe it but it did open my mind a lot to issues of class. Just, you know, reading books that identify where's injustices, social injustice is really important because I think having those discussions... I think there are a lot of people going into administration that have grown up in their little track and they haven't gone outside of it, you know.

While it may seem a necessity for White school leaders to explore cultural awareness and their own biases, the Black school leaders in this study also noted the need to have opportunities where school leaders could discuss their cultural awareness openly with

colleagues. Jeanette began with suggesting an addition to an already existing practice in many school leader preparation programs. She said,

[They need to] create, having a focus on cultural identities and cultural awareness. Create those vignettes and add the diversity piece to it, because those things are critical, nobody says that those vignettes and those things we said aren't critical but there was not the diversity picture. And talking through the diversity piece, we never really had those conversations. We acknowledged it. 'Yeah it's over here' but you never talked about how it's going to affect what you do.

In her comments, Jeanette proposes that leadership programs include scenarios for discussion that contain racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic hardships that administrators may actually face. She notes that this is a part that was missing from her own leadership preparation program.

Aside from having conversations in class, Reginald mentions the need for professional conversations to occur with principals who currently lead in diverse school settings. He said,

Allow them to be able to have conversations like this with people who have done those kinds of things. Basically, real people. You need to hear somebody say 'There are some days I don't want to be a principal.'

With this comment, Reginald brings out that, while many school leadership preparation programs make leadership sound pleasurable and entertaining, potential principals need to know that every day will not be an enjoyable one. However, since there will undoubtedly be days that are less enjoyable than others, through conversing with other school leaders, one can learn how to navigate the more tedious issues. Difficulty

navigating race and culture can surely be counted as a tedious issue. Reginald suggests that the experiences of other principals can inform new school administrators as they lead their schools.

**Implication five: Experience is key.** All participants stated that future school leaders in culturally diverse school settings should get real-life experience in these types of schools. Both Jeanette and Betty shared why they thought the experience of leading in a culturally diverse school was so important. Both participants felt that the limitations of textbooks and graduate classes was not sufficient in preparing school leaders for what they would encounter in a culturally diverse school. Jeanette says,

In our programs, we hear a lot about what you're gonna have to do but you need to be exposed to what it's like to be in a diverse setting because if you've never seen it, you can't understand it.

Betty says,

Lemme tell you something, I get on the job training every day. There is something new every day and there is absolutely no textbook that can prepare you for it.

Perhaps the most powerful finding in this section was the acknowledgement of very similar experiences in leadership from Anthony (White male) and Reginald (Black male). Table 5 displays what both men expressed in their responses. Commonalities shared between the two responses were the need to experience being treated negatively because of one's race and using those experiences to inform leadership. Both Anthony and Reginald talked about how they had personally been ridiculed by parents of the

opposite race. They also shared how those potentially harmful experiences contributed to their ability to identify with others, making them a stronger school leader.

**Table 5. Participants' Comments About Race and Personal Treatment**

<b>Anthony</b>	<b>Reginald</b>
<p>So what I think needs to happen in leadership preparation programs is there has got to be...you learn best through a practitioner, you learn best by being with principals in settings. They've gotta do a better job of getting future administrators into more internship programs. And so I think there need to paid internships. I think they [future school leaders] need to be pulled out of the classroom. You need to get out and you need to experience. You've gotta read those books that expose these issues and you gotta get in it. And you gotta experience it, you gotta feel the discomfort if you're never ever been a racial minority in any place. You've gotta feel that and you've gotta experience it. If you've never tried to have a difficult conversation with a parent whose just not trusting you because of the color of your skin, you've gotta do it. I mean, I've had parents just call me all kinds of racial slurs. I need to hear that, because if I don't hear people speaking to me that way, then I'm not gonna be able to understand the person who feels like they're being treated that way. You don't take it personal but, you know, I know how bad I felt when somebody was attacking me for my race. Well, how can I relate and have empathy for people if I've never been through it.</p>	<p>First and foremost, they need to work in a diverse situation. Send them to an impacted school. Let them see what it feels like. Let them have a parent who comes in and calls them a racist MFer. Let them feel that. Let them...because that's exactly what's going to happen at some point. At some point in their career they're gonna experience that and they've gotta be...without having that experience it's difficult. That's why some administrators crumble up and shrivel up and buckle under that pressure because they've not experienced it before. They may have taught in a non-diverse school. Where, you know, 85-90% of your students may look just like you, from a similar background as you and all these different things. Let them work in a school that has some significant challenges, even if it's just for maybe a month. Give folks an opportunity to do that.</p>

## **Conclusion**

Cultural proficiency has to do with being aware of oneself and one's own cultural being. It also deals with holding others accountable for equitably serving students and families from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Within this section, participants in this study have provided very concrete implications for both school leaders and school leadership preparation programs. They have revealed through their own practices that school leaders in culturally diverse settings need to be aware of themselves, aware of the needs and context of the community they serve, and be able to create and communicate a vision for all stakeholders that meets the needs of everyone involved.

School leadership preparation programs should provide future school leaders with the opportunity to explore their own cultural beings as well as experience leadership in culturally diverse educational settings. Educators in all settings can benefit from the suggestions of these principals, since they can be directly applied to daily leadership.

## **What's the Big Idea?: The Researcher's Commentary**

After all was said and done with this research study, reflection on the essence of what was learned was imperative. As an African American female administrator, my work became my practice. I took participants' and their quotes with me as I lead my teachers and students. I now ask myself "So what?" What does it all mean? After much pondering I realized the following.

**Race is BIG in leadership. Relationship is BIGGER.** I began this study with the goal of trying to find out how school leaders lead in schools that contain a myriad of cultural backgrounds. I honestly thought that both Black and White principals had

struggles that could potentially lead them to failure. As a Black school leader, I wondered if others contended with the same day-to-day conflicts that I was learning to manage. I also wondered how White leaders related to students of color, particularly Black and Hispanic students. Before I became a school leader, it seemed to me that it would be easier for an African American school leader, like myself, to lead in a school of color, since many of the students could identify with their leader in this instance. Nothing was further from the truth. Both Black and White school leaders have their own struggles, and being a school leader of color does not make leading a school with students of color any easier. In contrast, I learned that perhaps being a White school leader in a school of color has a major benefit. As a Black school leader, it was easy for me to take my privilege as a Black person for granted. Many times, it is automatically assumed that I can identify with families of color without much effort. Not so. White school leaders who realize that they represent a different population that may have obstacles to overcome that Whites may not experience are further ahead than we Black school leaders who think we can make a difference in the lives of Black children simply because we are Black.

The race of the school leaders does matter. However, at some point we as school leaders must step out of the box created by solely considering race as an affective influence in people's lives. The consideration of race alone is naïve, since the communities that we serve come with a plethora of additional characteristics. All of these defining characteristics, race, socioeconomic status, and gender to name a few, can both stimulate and stifle teaching and learning. It is very easy for us to compartmentalize ourselves, our biases, and the lens that is used to evaluate the teaching and learning

process for diverse populations. Nonetheless, in order to achieve culturally responsive leadership, school leaders must accept the fact that when single factors, like race, are considered in isolation they yield a false picture of the needs and perspectives of others. Even I, as both a researcher and school leader, have to de-compartmentalize my reflections of others and include ALL affective characteristics of people. I also have to recognize that this further diversifies the teaching and learning process. A disclaimer must be revealed in this as well. I learned throughout this process that once you begin to see others as compilations of affective influences, it feels as if a veil has been lifted. It is also very difficult to reposition yourself once you begin to look at additional affective factors..

While race matters immensely, it is imperative that principals facilitate meaningful relationships with others, taking into account all of these affective factors. As learned through participants in this study, what is most important in educational leadership is *how* you facilitate meaningful relationships with others. Sincerity and integrity were major character traits found in all participants. All believed in what they were doing and felt a social obligation to be the best school leader they could be. Also found in participants was a purposeful effort in building trust and making a connection with those they serve, regardless of the participant's race. To help with this, it is important to have an "equity is not equal" state of mind. By this, I mean that the needs of one group may not be the same as the needs of another group but as the principal, you have to show progress in meeting the needs of both groups of people.

**Effective Schools Research is only the half of it.** At least 30 years of research has gone into Effective Schools Research (ESR). At its core are the beliefs in rigorous instruction and high student achievement. I chose to include this research as a part of the study because I wanted to have a rubric of sorts to use when examining both the schools and their leaders. While I used the ESR to create the observation protocol, this was merely a starting point. It gave me a structure to use when observing each school's environment. However, it is most important to note that the work of a culturally proficient school leader goes far beyond what is captured in the ESR correlates. Effective Schools Research told me *what* to look for but not *how* to create the characteristics of the effective schools. I used the observation guide upon my first acquaintance with the schools and their leaders but did not refer to it a great deal beyond that. As stated, it helped to provide a very general description of each school environment. More importantly, the interviews and observations helped me to see *how* each school leader had created the environment that I observed. Every school and school leader was different, and while neither is perfect, the leadership works to create a cohesive and constructive teaching and learning environment.

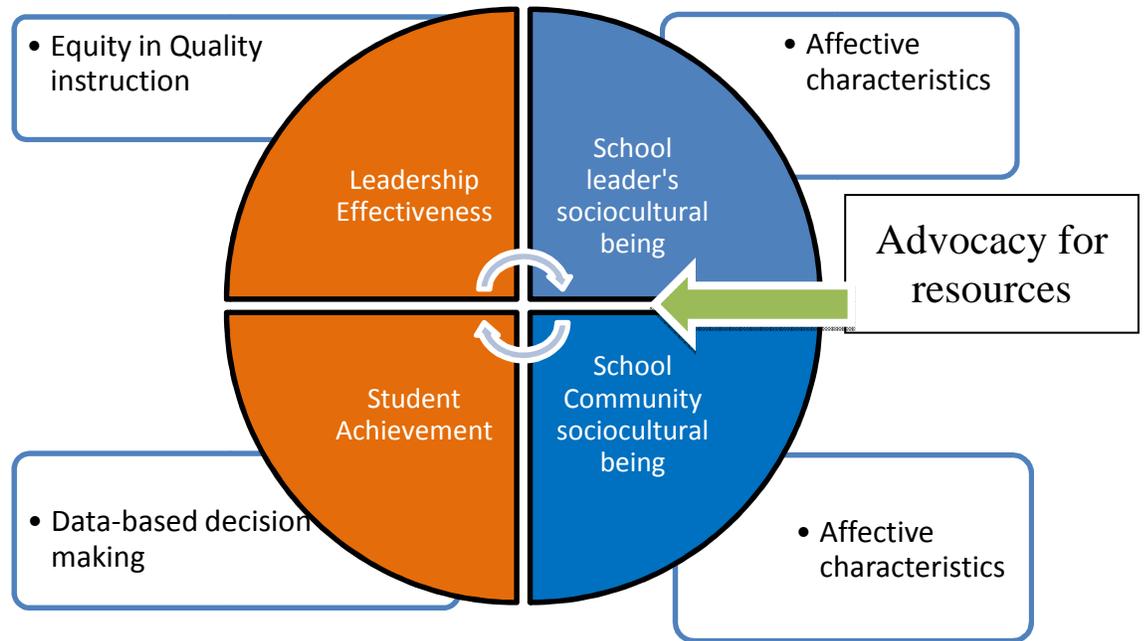
A major limitation of ESR is the utilization of a diverse school setting to make generalizations about the implementation of the correlates. As mentioned in Chapter 1, others have found that this is a major shortfall of ESR (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993; Janson, 1995; Levine, 1990; Sizemore, 1985). The fact of the matter is that race is constantly on the minds of school leaders. Data collected in this study shows this. School leaders who participated talk openly about race. They also discuss how it is a continuous

and persistent process for them to reexamine what they privilege as well as the layers of privilege that their parents, students, and teachers navigate. This is an ongoing cycle for principals to take part in if they wish to be effective in culturally diverse schools.

Findings from this study reveal that conceptual frameworks like ESR cannot simply discount affective factors, such as race, that students and teachers bring to the teaching and learning process when evaluating the effectiveness of a school's leadership.

Figure 6 shows the daily considerations of school leaders, as found in this study and through my personal experiences. The left side of the circle graph shows factors that I, as well as the participants in this study, think about on a daily basis. ESR and other concepts which focus on student achievement make up about half of daily reflections (left half). Included in this 50% is student achievement as indicated by standardized test scores as well as leadership effectiveness. This portion of the graph represents very little of a principal's work and often is a result of the characteristics portrayed on the right side of the graph. The right side of the graph represents the other 50% of a principal's daily reflections, which have to do with the cultural aspect of school leadership. This is the portion that illustrates a leader's self-awareness and reflection on their own cultural layers as well as the sociocultural layers of the population they serve. The last portion of this half represents the resources that school leaders must seek out on a daily basis to meet the needs of the population they serve. Much like the participants in the study discussed, I sometimes have to bridge the gap between the needs of my school community and what I *perceive* them to need.

**Figure 6.** Daily Reflections of a School Leader



This understanding led me to believe even more in leading out of who we are as people. The ESR correlates can, as any instructional tool, be used to inform leadership. Through the use of the observation protocol in my own work, I was able to identify strengths and weaknesses that I might not have seen otherwise. However, identifying strengths and weaknesses in my own leadership left me with more questions than answers. Taking my own self-awareness into account, how could I strengthen the areas that needed work? How could I further enhance the areas that, according to ESR, were indicative of effective teaching and learning? I was able to take what I saw in my observations of other schools, what I heard in my interviews with principals who lead in a similar environment, and what current research says about being a culturally proficient leader to create another layer of myself. This layer uses all of the resources provided

combined with my own cultural background to make the best decisions for all who are impacted by my leadership.

**School improvement takes time.** The final big idea came as an effect of everything you've read thus far. During this study, my role as an African American assistant principal served as a lens through which I interpreted what I saw and heard. In addition to what I brought to the table as the researcher, the fact that my school, Rose Elementary School, is a low performing school also played a big part in my interpretation of all data collected. Because our test scores in reading and math are below where they need to be, much of my day-to-day work is scrutinized. How to overcome any barriers to the teaching and learning process for my students is constantly at the forefront of my mind, in an effort to see as much academic growth from my teachers and students as possible in a short period of time. Fortunately for Candace and I, we work well together and, as a team, have labored to give our school's instructional and professional culture a major overhaul.

Realizing that we are not alone in our quest for school improvement as shown in standardized test scores, it dawned on me that what the principals in this study discuss cannot be done overnight. All discussed creating a culture for the school community where teaching and learning are top priority and a sense of belonging and collective identity is established. These accomplishments are not fulfilled in just a year's time. Knowing this, I question state and national organizations that pressure school principals to bring a school from low performing to proficient in a short period of time. From the data collected, it is clear that effective schools are a result of a culture that is built, over

time, through the dedication, endurance, and stability of those that are a part of it. Therefore, short term solutions, such as completely replacing administration or a teaching staff, can be ineffective unless a culture is created with the expectation that, no matter what, excellent teaching and learning takes place in a way that encourages shared leadership.

### **Summary**

**What was done.** The changing student demographics of American schools have been described extensively throughout this study. The lack of educator diversity was also discussed, with the acknowledgement that most educators continue to be white. Taking both of these into account, providing equitable and effective educational opportunities to students of color must be a priority of all school leaders. However, for the purpose of this study, an explanation of *effective* school leadership was further investigated. Lezotte's Effective Schools Research correlates (Lezotte, 1985; Lezotte, 1991; Lezotte, 2008) were utilized throughout this study as a basis for describing effective school leadership. In order for school leadership to be effective, principals must hold a "learning for all" philosophy (equity in quality) as well as use assessment data to determine the success of teaching and learning in their schools (data-driven decision-making).

While ESR provides tangible characteristics of effective leadership that can easily be observed in school settings, that is just half of the discussion school leaders should be having when reflecting on the effectiveness of their leadership in diverse schools. Questions still remained concerning *how* those characteristics are executed in diverse school settings. A major purpose of this study was to better understand the work of

principals who lead in culturally diverse schools, taking the ESR correlates into consideration as observable qualities. Additionally, I intended to better understand the role that race played in leading a culturally diverse school, as school leaders strive to create *effective* teaching and learning environments. A major accomplishment of this study was the merging of Effective Schools Research with the culturally diverse school setting. Not only were the most prevalent ESR correlates identified, but participants' interviews and observations contributed to a deeper understanding of what the existing correlates look like in actual diverse schools.

Both the literature review and findings in the study reveal the need for all school leaders to move beyond cultural proficiency and become culturally *responsive*. In achieving culturally responsive leadership, principals must be aware of their own racial and cultural biases and preconceived notions. They must then use that knowledge to challenge inequities within their schools. Another goal of this study was to provide current and future school leaders with insight on how to navigate the confluences of their own background experiences and beliefs while facilitating effective teaching and learning for students of color. The principals in this study exposed how race affected their personal backgrounds and their leadership. They also acknowledged the importance of utilizing those background experiences to advocate for students of color, displaying cultural responsiveness.

### **Looking Forward**

Principals and other school leaders can practically apply each part of this study to their leadership. Use of the ESR correlates is encouraged to determine existing

characteristics of school leadership. School leaders can also use this information to determine which correlates are administrative strengths and weaknesses. Once these have been identified, principals can see the areas that need improvement. The examples in literature as well as actions and comments from participants can then be used as ideas for next steps towards effectiveness.

### **Limitations**

While this study gave practical, real-life examples of school leaders in culturally diverse schools, the duration of the study was short-term. Further research should be conducted on a long-term basis, focusing not just on *implementing* the ESR correlates but *sustaining* them in culturally diverse schools. Longitudinal data could also be collected on the academic effectiveness of participating schools, as characterized by standardized test scores. This would give a more holistic view on the effect of each participant's leadership on the academic achievement of students. At the time of this study, state assessment data had not been released for participating schools for the 2012-2013 academic year, making it difficult to make any generalizations about the effects of participants' cultural responsiveness on student achievement.

Additionally, race was the only affective characteristic explored in this study. It is important to reiterate that other characteristics should also be taken into consideration when leading in diverse schools. These factors can include but are not limited to socioeconomic status, gender, and religion. Further research should be conducted on how these factors influence school leadership.

## **Challenges to School Leaders**

While self-reflection is a necessity for culturally responsive leadership, it should be recognized that principals must initiate the process of becoming culturally responsive for themselves. The process of becoming a culturally responsive leader begins with a search and exploration of the self in order to discover where to start. Therefore, a challenge is issued to all school leaders, especially those leading in culturally diverse schools. This challenge involves considering of perspectives different from their own, acknowledging the experiences of others, and questioning the status quo. The action part of the process involves creating an inclusive teaching and learning environment where everyone involved feels empowered and valued. It is with a sense of urgency that the call for effective culturally responsive principals is issued. The challenge for school leaders continues with the encouragement to *act*, moving beyond cultural proficiency to cultural responsiveness.

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APPENDIX A

OBSERVATION GUIDE

Equity in Quality	<p><b>Safe and orderly environment</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Environment is free from physical harm of teachers and students</li> <li>✓ Building and Facilities are clean and well-lit</li> <li>✓ School/Classroom rules are clearly posted</li> <li>✓ Exhibits a collaborative teaching and learning environment</li> <li>✓ Cooperative learning is encouraged among both teachers and students</li> <li>✓ Portrayals of children and adults include several different races and ethnicities.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Climate of High Expectations for Success</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Attitudes and beliefs in student achievement for all are evident (mission statement)</li> <li>✓ Higher level questioning is apparent</li> <li>✓ School/Principal/Teacher responses to when students don't learn</li> <li>✓ Student engagement</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Clear, Focused Mission</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mission statement is in kid-friendly language</li> <li>✓ Clearly visible throughout the school building</li> <li>✓ What/How students will learn is shared and known by all</li> <li>✓ High expectations are held by adults for all students</li> <li>✓ Highly engaging lessons</li> <li>✓ Differentiated instruction within classrooms</li> </ul>

	<p><b>Opportunity to learn and Student Time on Task</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Master Schedule (teacher implementation of such)</li> <li>✓ Student engagement</li> <li>✓ Instructional strategies within the classroom</li> </ul>
Data-Driven Decision Making	<p><b>Instructional Leadership</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Instructional mission is communicate to all stakeholders, including parents and teachers</li> <li>✓ Evidence of a community of shared values</li> <li>✓ Empowered teacher leadership</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Variety of assessment practices</li> <li>✓ Responses to assessments as tools</li> <li>✓ Use of technology in student-monitoring process</li> <li>✓ Students monitor their own progress</li> <li>✓ Use of authentic assessments</li> </ul>
Both	<p><b>Home-School Relations</b> Comments:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Parental involvement is encouraged</li> <li>✓ Parents are contacted regularly</li> <li>✓ Interaction between parents and teachers is frequent</li> </ul>

APPENDIX B  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Principal's experiences**

What experiences have shaped you as a leader?

Has race affected your leadership?

How did you learn to lead in a non-White school?

What adjustments have you had to make (if any) to lead this school?

**Relationships with others**

Does race have an effect on your relationships with others, such as students and teachers of color?

Does race play a role in the lives of your students and/or teachers?

**Implications**

What advice do you have for other principals leading in non-White schools?

What advice do you have for school leadership programs?

## APPENDIX C

### TREND TABLE

<p><b>(Question 1 &amp;2) School leaders begin as teacher leaders.</b></p> <p>Participants all began as teacher or other subordinate leaders in school settings before becoming administrators. All participants, even as classroom teachers, believed in the provision of equitable education to all students, regardless of race or SES. Participants brought their backgrounds with them into their classrooms, which included experiences with people from other races and cultural backgrounds. Two of the participants, Betty and Chris, were not initially in teacher education programs and entered teaching as a second career. Candace began in education as a school counselor. Many participated in MSA cohorts provided by their districts.</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Josephine</u></b></p> <p>"I got to be on the leadership team for planning a new school. You know, it was very interesting to be a part of something new, creating what we're going to be."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Betty</u></b></p> <p>"I believe that it's very important that regardless of your background, regardless of your economic situation, when you walk into a school, you should be able to leave all of that behind you. You should be the richest thing on earth. When you walk into a school, you should be able to leave your cares behind."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Jeanette</u></b></p> <p>"So I went and taught middle school, loved teaching middle school. And then, 5 years there, and became the person at the school, within 2 years I was on the leadership team. I was department head. I was...you name it, I was doing it at my school. I was doing a lot."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Chris</u></b></p> <p>"I would've never ever dreamed of doing that but I just couldn't stand what I was hearing. And I knew it wasn't right and uh, so I stood up. And that was really a defining moment in my life because it showed me that I had the ability to do something I didn't think I could do."</p>
		<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Anthony</u></b></p> <p>"I was named middle school TOY."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Reginald</u></b></p> <p>"While teaching I was leadership team chairperson, department, chairperson, assistant athletic director, etc. etc., doing all those different things. And so began to see a lot of the inner workings of a school and that's where the itch for administration began."</p>