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A Road Less Traveled: Learning With And From Contemporary Black Secondary School Leaders

Demetricia L. Hodges

ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, A ROAD LESS TRAVELED: LEARNING WITH AND FROM CONTEMPORARY BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERS, by DEMETRICIA L. HODGES, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

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A ROAD LESS TRAVELED:

LEARNING WITH AND FROM CONTEMPORARY BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

by

DEMETRICIA L. HODGES

Under the Direction of Janice B. Fournillier, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Effective school leadership is at the center of educational reform in urban environments. Constituents expect school leaders to transform under-performing schools. However, the educational leadership field relies on traditional ideologies that largely ignore Black principals' experiences and exclude their voices from politically engaged conversations on leadership. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore four contemporary Black school leaders' perspectives of their practices in urban environments. Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Distributed Leadership Theory informed the multiple case study. I employed ethnographic data collection methods of prolonged engagement, interviews (formal and informal), shadowing, documents and artifacts, on-line discussions, field and reflexive journals, and memos, which allowed for crystallization of the data. I adopted and adapted grounded theory and analytic induction to interpret and re-present the Black school leaders' educational philosophical beliefs, perspectives of tradi-

tional preparation, and conceptualizations of leadership that influenced their practices. The findings revealed that the four contemporary Black school leaders from middle and high schools held belief systems that challenged traditional structures and differed from White majority leaders' beliefs, which aligned with white supremacy and deficit ideologies. The participants thought differently about the purpose of education for all students, especially marginalized groups. These thoughts helped shape their conceptualizations of effective school leadership as an alternative to traditional canons. Their leadership 'model' afforded them the ethical latitude to challenge the political sociocultural structure of 'minimum competency' standards to afford their students 'high performance' school communities. The findings also highlighted traditional leadership programs as ineffective and irrelevant for preparing aspirants to affect substantive changes in contextualized school environments, particularly when the classroom discourse obfuscates issues of equity, race, class, and cultural diversity. Furthermore, the findings revealed participants' practices, undergirded with moral imperative, humanism, and social justice perspectives, were strategically implemented to dismantle unjust structures. In so doing, they were able to provide students equitable school conditions that allowed them to learn to their highest capacities. Indeed there is the urgent need to include race, ethnic, class, and culturally diverse perspectives in program preparations, policies, and theoretical paradigms to help shape how we think and thus practice school leadership.

INDEX WORDS: Black school leadership, Effective school leadership, Educational policy, Educational leadership preparation, Equity and diversity issues, School conditions and practices, School reform, Urban education

A ROAD LESS TRAVELED: LEARNING FROM AND WITH CONTEMPORARY BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

by

DEMETRICIA L. HODGES

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DEDICATION

"I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. …[I]t is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me. …That invisibility to which I refer occurs because of a peculiar disposition of the eyes of those with whom I come in contact. A matter of construction of their inner eyes, those eyes with which they look through their physical eyes upon reality."

--Ralph Waldo Ellison, (1952), Invisible Man

This dissertation is dedicated to my maternal grandmother, Lou Ella Brownlee; parents, James and Ruth Hodges; eldest uncle, Willie Herman Lofton; brothers, Michael Sr. and Earl Tavares; nephew Michael Jr.; niece, Nia Ruth, and my own family promised and purposed by God; as well as my extended family. I pray that my work inspire you and others in substantial ways that help make your lives greater.

"Change the way people think and things will never be the same."

-- Steven Biko, South African Civil Rights Martyr

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is no place in educational leadership for puzzled leaders.

(Hilliard, 2003, p. 165)

I am an African American woman who has a heart for ensuring that *all* children, especially traditionally marginalized groups, receive quality educational services that affords them lifelong opportunities. Dr. Asa G. Hilliard, III (1995) established a solid platform for educating Black children. He believed a supportive educational framework led by 'gap closers' was paramount for Black children to excel beyond mediocrity in public schools (2003). Dr. Hilliard believed that educational frameworks should focus foremost on closing what he considered the 'real gap' in Black students' academic experiences in public schools. This gap represents the difference between Black students' standard achievement and their inherent capacity for academic excellence (Hilliard, 2003). In the South, traditional Black school leaders were 'gap closers'. Educating Black students was not a mystery. They *believed* in the educability of Black students. Black school leaders toiled faithfully to close gaps—quality of educational services, structural opportunities and innate achievement capacities. They cultivated a consortium of effective teachers and future administrators who preserved and fulfilled the educational objective of Black communities throughout the southern region of the United States. Collectively they pieced the puzzle together. They set and maintained high standards; academic and social goals; culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogical strategies; and professional learning cultures. However, despite the presence of Black student exemplars in public schools throughout the United States, policymakers and mainstream America continue to approach educational improvements for marginalized students from deficit thinking and human incapacity frameworks substantially influ-

enced by a 'Bell Curve ideology' (Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Hilliard, 2003; Tillman, 2008). It is for this reason Dr. Hilliard (1995) argued that African Americans, not public school systems, must control the educational services of Black youth in the United States. Dr. Hilliard (2003) believed educational improvements should begin by questioning the 'savage inequalities' (Kozol, 1991) of educational services afforded to marginalized students, not manufactured student deficits.

Traditional Black school leaders embodied the notion of closing gaps. They not only served the staff and students, but the community at-large in an effort to improve the standard of living. They branded their leadership as a community-minded activity. Dr. Hilliard (2003) asserted that there have always been 'gap closers' in the education of Black students in the United States, but that today they are seemingly invisible. Dr. Hilliard (2003) believed asking the right question leads researchers to the invisible that is more typical than unique. Thus, Dr. Hilliard (2003) explained, in schools with caring educators,

> The uniqueness is in the quality of the implementation of good instructional practices. Respecting prior knowledge, valuing and creating human bonds, studying for deeper knowledge, respecting students, respecting parents, [and] respecting communities are all accepted by many professionals, at a verbal level [and importantly at all classroom levels and throughout the schools]. (p. 154)

Therefore, my dissertation research focused on contemporary Black school leaders' conceptualizations of leadership and perspectives of their practices in urban city communities[1]. I

[1] Urban city community is a term that emerged from the data. It best describes how the research participants collectively defined the environment(s) in which they work. They discussed characteristics associated with urban-ness and inner city to describe their school and consistently discussed the later context as geographical proximity to city buildings, concrete, and mass public transportation.

posed this question with the hope of expanding understandings of the role of race, ethnic, and cultural diversity in the field of educational leadership and administration.

The purpose of this study was to explore school leadership in urban city communities from the perspectives of contemporary Black school leaders. For the past two decades, dialogue about the role of diversity in the field has been promising. However, the field continues to rely predominately on traditional ideologues, paradigms and practices. This overreliance on traditional canons has rendered the field deeply entrenched in a rhetoric of diversity (Gosetti & Rusch, 1995; Rusch, 2002; Tillman, 2002). This overreliance is perplexing. I questioned whether stakeholders could reform the field without critically challenging the relevance of educational leadership theories, policies, and practices firmly instituted in our public schools. Our knowledge of leadership, Gosetti and Rusch (1995) confirmed, "comes from an embedded privileged perspective which largely ignores issues of status, gender, and race and insidiously perpetuates a view of leadership that discourages diversity and equity" (p. 12). This privileged perspective perpetuates a field that continues to resist theories and practices constructed by 'nonmainstream' leaders. This perspective makes relevant reform elusive, particularly in urban city communities. If our overarching objective is to improve *all* students' academic achievement, especially those marginalized, then the educational community needs to relinquish this prevailing 'privileged perspective'. Instead, I argue the educational leadership and administration community needs to include racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse educational leadership perspectives and practices (Dantley, 2005; Dillard, 1995; Hilliard, 2003; Tillman, 2003). Irrespective of one's race/ethnicity we all must commit to developing a greater understanding of how best to educate all children, particularly those consistently marginalized. Therefore, I chose to reach back into history, culture, and the Black community to ask: What can we learn from our contemporary Black princi-

pals about leading schools in urban city communities that could help others and potentially (re)stimulate Blacks entry in the field? Moreover, in this first chapter of the dissertation I introduce the context, significance, research problem, theoretical perspective, and research questions for the study.

The Context

United States

In the United States, constituents often think of education as the panacea for improving sociocultural, political, economic, and legal problems. Moreover, education reform functions as the medium for redressing, assimilating, and instituting societal changes. Reforms like common schools, compulsory education, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), *Elementary and Secondary Education* Act (1965), A *Nation at Risk* (1983), and *No Child Left Behind* (2002) changed aspects of the education process. The federal mandate of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) ushered in "the most sweeping change in education policy in three decades" (Malico & Langan, 2002, p.1). It intended to improve academic outcomes for *all* students through increasing accountability and high stakes testing. Stakeholders continue to build the nation's democratic ideals on the promises embedded in education reforms. Although these reforms have been negligent in fulfilling promises to traditionally marginalized students, they remain the popular choice to change education processes in Pre-K-12 public schools in the hope that they become more efficient and effective. Political and educational communities' current response to the endemic underachievement in Pre-K-12 public schools is reform. Reforms are especially prevalent in urban city communities with high concentrations of Black, Brown, and poor students. School leaders continue to face challenging demands to aggressively transform schools in urban city communities (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Cooper & Jordan, 2003; Loeb, Kalogrides & Horng, 2010;

Tillman, 2004). Schools located in traditionally underserviced communities reported that children are consistently *being left behind*. According to the report published by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), in 2013 Blacks (7.3%) dropped out of school at a rate of roughly one and a quarter times Whites (5.1%), whereas the gap between Hispanics (11.7%) and Whites was two times greater (Kena, Aud, Johnson, Wang, Zhang, Rathbun, Wilkinson-Flicker, & Kristapovich, 2014). These statistics represent an incremental decline. However, they also represent the failure of public schools to equitably and excellently meet all students educational needs, particularly persistently marginalized groups (e.g., 19% dropout rate) in concentrated 'low performing' school communities. The individual and collective statistics are alarming. They question the relevance of traditional reforms in urban city communities. I argue that we too should question their appropriateness in nontraditional contexts? Dr. Hilliard's (2003) assertion that "popular public policy proposals are pitiful as a means to change things in substantial and positive ways for the masses of our children, and for African children in general" (p. 160-161) confirmed the need to question the relevance of traditional reforms.

Mainstream ideologies persist by depicting nontraditional elements as deficient. Urban city communities are historically distressed spaces marked by characteristics that undoubtedly create challenges for the neighborhoods and residents. Predominately Black, Brown, immigrant, bilingual, working class, and poor families inhabit these troubled spaces. In these communities, residents contend daily with poverty, unemployment, racism, economic depression, and political, and malignant educational neglect (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Tillman, 2004). Mainstream deficit perspectives undervalue and often inhibit progress in these spaces in the same way they stain the schools and position the educators and students on the margins of social order. Schools serve as cornerstones in every community. They extend the vision of the

community and democracy at-large. Yet, mainstream America's strategic implementation of school integration, as the final strategy to resist Black communities' democratic ideologies, continue to plague education in urban city communities (Karpinski, 2006; McCray, Wright & Beachum, 2007; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2003). Therefore, to expand an understanding of the role of race, ethnic, and cultural diversity in educational leadership and administration in urban city communities, I begin by looking at the historical context in which Black school leadership was prevalent. The historical contextual background helped provide a rationale for understanding the current context that foreshadows impending future contexts of schools in urban city communities.

Historical South

A hue, ranging from unlawfulness and resistance to separateness and resilience, has meticulously painted the historical landscape of Black education in the United States. At the height of de jure segregation, why would Black students dare to envision more equitable opportunities let alone an egalitarian society? Mainstream society perceived Blacks as inferior, unintelligent, and uneducable, thereby establishing low expectations. Sowell (1976) noted that mainstream's discussion on quality education 'prerequisites' for Black children "proceed as if educational excellence were only a remote possibility, to be reached by futuristic experimental methods—indeed, as if black children were a special breed who could be 'reached' only on special wave lengths" (p. 27). Mainstream did not expect Black students to envision a different life beyond their segregated communities. However, Black school leaders inspired them to dare—dare to envision and achieve. Pre-*Brown* urban city communities were characteristically diverse in socioeconomics and educational statuses. Black middle-and-working-class and poor families struggled collectively to improve the quality of life for all Americans. In the midst of racial segregation,

Black families cultivated productive communities of educational, economic, political, and social excellence to sustain the historic African American cultural tradition of excellence (Anderson, 1988; Sowell, 1976; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2009). Black school leaders built schools that instilled and preserved the Black culture.

Black school leaders led all-Black communities, staff, and students to envision access to greater structural opportunities. Their educational philosophies aligned with Black communities' ethos—quality education accesses freedom and first-class citizenry (Anderson, 1988; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2009). Sowell (1976) underscored Black school leaders as the nexus of high-quality Black education. According to Sowell, all Blacks did not necessarily want quality education, "but that there was an important nucleus that understood what was needed, and that the others recognized and respected good education when it appeared" (1976, p. 58). Black school leaders cultivated and sustained a high-quality Black education paradigm. They transformed dilapidated schools into intellectual learning places infused with caring, supportive adults who maintained high standards. Black school leaders attained academic excellence by revolutionizing the concept 'do more with less' (Savage, 2001; 2009; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2000, 2009). Yet, Black education and school leadership value to the community at-large was undermined by desegregation. The *Brown* decision promised more equitable educational services and opportunities for Black students. Ideally, *Brown* would also have promised "a more equitable context for Black principals to continue the important work of educating Black children" (Tillman, 2004, p. 110). Mainstream Americans contended that Black school leaders were ineffective, thus less capable than their White counterparts to provide *all* students quality educational services. McCray et al. (2007) argued that 50 years after *Brown*, mainstream's perception of a Black school leadership deficit lingers and contributes to the invisibility of Blacks as principals in majority White mid-

dle-class suburban schools. Black school leaders were victims of widespread displacement from integrated schools. White men with middle-class cultural values filled their positions. Yeakey et al. (1986) confirmed that the racial history of the South would not permit Blacks to supervise Whites in any capacity. In some cases Blacks were able to retain their positions in communities with majority Black student and teaching populations (McCray, et al., 2007; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2009). Mainstream education traditions systematically replaced Black education. These education reform strategies failed to embody the principles of *Brown* and thereby placed Black students back on the margins of academic and social achievement (Anderson, 2004; Hilliard, 2003; Karpinski, 2006; McCray et al., 2007).

Contemporary Urban South

Contemporary urban city communities differ vastly from their historic contexts that prevailed structurally despite de jure segregation. These contemporary environments have been unable to sustain structurally stable communities. Once urban sanctuaries of Black progress, they now loom of characteristics of a deep depression—economically, politically, socially, legally, psychologically, and academically. These contemporary contexts are now void of the diverse socioeconomic and educational statuses that once sustained the value and vitality of urban city communities. Crime, violence, drugs, and decay occupy spaces in communities with public schools that "once boasted high test scores, numerous academic awards, service to the Black community, and the development of Black professionals" (Tillman, 2004, p. 115). Urban city communities are spaces increasingly complicated by race and class issues (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). The neighborhoods are resegregated browner spaces of low-socioeconomics and seemingly irreversible poverty that bleeds hopelessness (Dantley, 2005; Kozol, 2005). These brown spaces reflect the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of our democratic society. Yeo and Kanpol

(1999) refer to them as 'minority enclaves'. They argued that "they are maintained by a set of institutions, attitudes, and practices that are deeply embedded in the structure of U.S. life" (p. 3), which dramatically influence the quality of education and opportunities of students in these closed communities.

Schools in contemporary urban city communities are fraught with structural inadequacies and inequities that inevitably *leave students behind*. Mainstream society underfunds, under-resources, and undervalues schools that are overly populated with minority students who under-perform (Buendía, 2011; Noguera, 2004; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) in 2011–2012, Whites occupied approximately 80% of the principalships (Bitterman, Goldring & Gray, 2013). Whereas, Blacks (10.1%) and Hispanics (6.8%), together held less than 20% of all leadership positions in K – 12 public schools (Bitterman, et al., 2013). These statistics point to dramatic structural challenges of school leadership in the current context. Loeb et al. (2010) found that majority principals stated preferences and behaviors "demonstrate an aversion to leading schools with many poor, minority, and/or low-achieving students" (p. 227). Their finding presents implications not only for policymakers, but also for suburban school communities. Urban characteristics and challenges are no longer the sole burden of inner cities. The suburbs are growing increasingly more diversified. The 2000 U.S. Census reveals that approximately 49% of America's poor citizens not only live in traditional urban areas, but that the same proportion now resides in suburbia (Freemen, 2010). The shifting landscape of poverty to the suburbs will undoubtedly affect the quality of educational services afforded traditionally marginalized students. Black educators, unlike their White counterparts, are more likely to self-select challenging school sites with high populations of racially minority and poor students (Loeb et al., 2010). However, the statistics of racial and cultural di-

versity in school leadership are bleak without much hope of reversal anytime soon. Research on contemporary Black school leadership is imperative. Research that explores effective leadership practices could offer alternative practices to traditional school leaders facing overwhelmingly new challenges to lead increasingly browner and poor student populations. In this study I defined effective school leadership as concerted conscious activities that function to cultivate and sustain egalitarian learning environments in which *all* stakeholders experience consistent academic improvements and equitable access to structural opportunities. The educational community could benefit from knowing how they have implemented leadership practices to uphold the egalitarian rather than the utopian ideals of *No Child Left Behind*. In an environment rife with professional accountability and reprisal, there is the need to question what sustains contemporary Black school leaders. Indeed, how did they fit the pieces of their leadership puzzle together in ways that helped cultivate and sustain effective schools in urban city communities where Black, other racial minorities, and poor students excel academically and socially?

Beloit County[2]

> It is important to respect the context and culture in which the study takes place. If researchers understand the context, they can locate the actions and perceptions of individuals and grasp the meanings that they communicate. In a broader sense, the context includes the economic, political and cultural framework (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002, p. 11).

Multiple contexts—historical, cultural, social, economic, and political framed this qualitative research study. As discussed in the Background and Context sections, I believe that to expand an understanding of the role of race, ethnic, and cultural diversity in school leadership and administration, I needed to begin by looking at the historical context, undergirded by sociocul-

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[2] All proper names, including names of the cities, counties, school district, individual schools, organizations, educational institutions, residential communities, research participants, and community members, are pseudonyms.

tural, politics, and economics, that foreshadowed the contemporary contexts in which Black school leadership was centered in this study.

This research took place in Beloit County, a sprawling geographic landscape inclusive of rural, suburban, urban, and inner city contexts. The City of Montpelier is the center hub for the county government, economic development, politics, social engagements, and historical and contemporary activism. This medium sized city is located in a former confederate southeastern state. It is home to a diverse population that, for the most part, continues to be (re)segregated by race, ethnicity, class, culture, railroad tracks, and bodies of water. Its residential pattern mirrors most cities and counties in the United States. The north end of the county is home to majority White, middle class families and the south end is populated by majority Black, Hispanic, and poor families. Public education follows this demographic pattern as well.

Public education was once systematically segregated by city and county systems. The City of Montpelier School System educated majority Black, poor, urban city students whereas Beloit County School System provided educational services to predominately White, middle class, suburban students. The geographically segregated school systems operated as separate districts until consolidating in the late 1990s as a new district to provide equal, equitable, and quality educational services to an unprecedented diversified (i.e., race, ethnic, socioeconomics, and culture) student population. The consolidation efforts were fraught with resistance and tensions that rivaled those of the post-*Brown* era throughout the southeastern region of the United States. Black and White parents both feared and held high expectations of integrating the racially and culturally diverse school systems for the best interest of their children, communities, and the nation at-large. The city's constituents believed that consolidation was in the best interest of the children. Their belief was shaped by: the social and economic impact the school system was ex-

periencing due to loss of public funds through a double taxation system of county and city taxes; middle class flight to the suburbs and private schools; and lagging academic performances. At the same time, the county constituency believed that consolidating with an inferior school system would bruise their children's academic and social development and thus the district's reputation of achievement. The vast majority county residents did not believe that the consolidation referendum would pass. They believed that the Black city constituency wanted to leave their school system intact and continue to operate as racially separate districts. It was a close vote. However, city parents and stakeholders wanted a more substantial education for their children similar to their White middle class suburban counterparts. The vote began the consolidation of the two districts to create a new district that would effectively meet the learning needs of a vastly diverse student population. City parents expressed concern about whether their children would be treated fairly with academic diversity, services, rigor, and discipline approaches. County parents worried about the potential loss of academic rigor, high standards and test scores, and whether their children would be bused or rezoned out of their ideal neighborhood schools to places publicly zoned for violence and failure. The parents' concerns were coupled with city and county interest groups competing for political and economic power. Each group's concerns were undergirded with fear, mistrust, race, cultural, and class issues thereby creating a publicly divisive atmosphere that seemingly today has quietly (re)settled back into private homes instead of public spaces.

Today, Beloit County School System provides public education for students from diverse contexts—rural, suburban, urban, and inner city. The State Department of Education and district constituents view it as a large urban school district. One of the major aims of the new system was to afford all students equal and equitable access to quality educational services, opportunities, and outcomes. However, there seems to be mixed reviews of whether the new county school sys-

tem is truly affording urban city students an equitable education. A national educational media source documented a private citizen, who has an invested interest in the academic success of the new system, proclaiming emphatically that both systems had been unable to properly educate socioeconomically disadvantaged students. I questioned why? Mr. Vertner, one of my research participants, answered my question when making a similar statement while discussing overcoming barriers in the school system as a leader of an urban city school. Mr. Vertner explained,

> [T]here were a few other barriers we had to deal with. In my opinion, Central Office *did not give us true support at this school*. Not because necessarily they didn't want to, but because *they didn't know how to*. This school was at a 24% graduation rate. That's *not really solely the fault of the people* in the building, but it's the fault of the district that runs the school. Beloit County had never been in the inner city school business. And then with the merger in '97, Murray becomes a Beloit County School instead of a Montpelier Public City School. So what happens is, '97 hits, everything slides downhill. Then people start monitoring, *"Well where are we?"* Here comes the accountability and due to the accountability piece the first year, they realized, *"Ooh oh, Murray's at a 19% grad rate"* and our test scores that first year were single digits. The district didn't really know *how to* support the school. If they knew how to support the school, the school would not have been so low and at the bottom of the state. I think that barrier was really overcome by having *a superintendent who knew the mindset of inner city* and knew how to deal with inner city[1].

A subsequent article documented a school board member reporting residents' expressing concern about expecting *all* students being able to attain the same level of standards. The board member suggested to the committee to change their stance from a level of expectation to a *degree of equal opportunity* for students to attain the same standards. Therefore, I was compelled to further question, *if* this is the paradigm that the new school district planned to operate from within, a paradigm of deficit ideology, how will the four contemporary Black school leaders change that paradigm in their school communities? This is a question that I respond to in detail as I present the findings in chapter four and offer a discussion of the findings in chapter five. Simultaneously the new superintendent, from outside of the state hired by the elected board, developed a strategic reform agenda and budget to close existing equity gaps between the former county and

city school systems. The superintendent worked to close teacher wage gaps, related arts gaps, textbook gaps, and racially and cultural diverse gaps in teacher representations, specifically Black. The superintendent and school district received substantial support from state grants and local philanthropy to help ensure successful integration of county and city and the implementation of equity and equality in the new school district. The process, although met with staunch resistance, has produced a new school system that is benefiting the vast majority, White students of a middle class culture. The majority students were learning more. Meanwhile, a minority group of students were not fully benefiting from the district's educational systemic structures. This minority group of students was Black, Brown, and poor. They attended schools predominately in urban city communities. Black school leaders primarily led the urban city schools in this study. These school leaders faced the daily challenge of enacting an educational plan that addresses persistent issues of inequalities and inequities firmly entrenched in the fabric of their urban city school communities. The work of improving urban city schools in this district for the four contemporary Black school leaders has only just begun.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the experiences of contemporary Black school leaders in secondary schools in urban city communities. The following research questions served as a guide for my study:

1. How do contemporary Black secondary school leaders' conceptualizations of leadership contribute to their practices?
2. What are contemporary Black secondary school leaders' perspectives of their leadership practices?

3. How, for contemporary Black secondary school leaders, do the practices represent an alternative to educational leadership that contributed to their effectiveness?

Purpose

Recycled reforms, uncritically analyzed, undoubtedly produce similar outcomes. During a time when education is in need of relevant reforms that will effectively respond to marginalized students' needs for equity and excellence in educational services, the field of educational leadership, a majority White structure, sanctions traditional canons in response to implementation of reform programs. Similarly, mainstream mandates aggressive reforms for urban city communities seemingly without acknowledging the visible racial, cultural, and socioeconomic shifts in population demographic and geographic patterns in the United States (Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Freeman, 2010). Whereas, research studies (i.e., conceptual and empirical) emphasize the critical role racial and ethnic diversity and cultural and historical knowledge plays in constructing educational processes to improve structural outcomes for marginalized students (Dantley, 2005; Dillard, 1995; Hilliard, 2003; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2009; Ward Randolph, 2009). In the field of educational leadership, Black school leadership is an underrepresented phenomenon that is increasingly a topic of diversity discourse and research given the visible browning of Pre-K-12 public schools in the United States (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Dantley, 2005; Tillman, 2005a, 2003). The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of effective contemporary Black principals in secondary schools in urban city communities that had a significant racial minority and poor student populations.

Significance of the Study

Effective school leadership is at the center of education reform in the United States, especially in urban city communities. There is an overwhelming consensus that principals' *leadership*

is the most significant factor in creating and sustaining cohesive school cultures that afford all students equitable access to high quality educational services, opportunities, and outcomes (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Dantley, 2005; Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Hilliard, 2003; Loeb et al., 2010; Spillane, 2006; Tillman, 2008). However, the field has come to very little consensus of what that leadership should entail and more importantly how effective leadership practices are enacted, especially in urban city communities. School leaders in urban city communities face dramatically different expectations from policymakers, mainstream America, and community stakeholders than their suburban counterparts. They face challenging demands to aggressively transform underperforming schools that are under-resourced, undervalued, and overpopulated with Black, Brown, and poor students (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Cooley & Shen, 2000; Cooper & Jordan, 2009). The leadership in urban city communities puzzles policymakers, researchers, and even practitioners. Majority school leaders flee urban city communities to work in the sacred suburbs where professional and personal accountability is low, less demanding, stress-free, and apparently puzzle-free. What do we know about effective school leaders, specifically Black principals, who choose to work in urban city communities? For the most part, very little because mainstream research fails to acknowledge their exemplar leadership in schools and communities often forgotten and neglected by insular policies (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Hilliard, 2003; Tillman, 2005b; Walker, 2000). Thus, the focus of this dissertation study was effective school leadership in urban city communities from the perspectives and experiences of contemporary Black school leaders. Providing a platform for Black principals' perspectives of how they practice effective leadership could prove to be the most invaluable response to the educational leadership crisis inherent of schools in urban city

communities. In the following paragraphs I discuss five areas of significance that this research study could impact.

First, exploring their leadership perspectives could improve our understanding of how best to help schools in urban city communities flourish, thereby *leaving no child behind* — academically or socially. As noted by Dr. Hilliard (2003), 'gap closers' have always existed, especially in Black communities. However, as researchers and practitioners we have failed to make visible their experiences for others to model. Thus, it was significantly important that this study documented what it meant to be an effective school leader in urban city communities from Black principals' perspectives. Although at this time, their leadership does not warrant implementation of a new theory or policy, it does however, provide a model of effective leadership for current and aspiring principals of urban city communities. However, it does not suggest that Black principals can only lead same race affiliated students and only in urban city communities. Actually, their effectiveness in sociocultural and political contexts prepared them to successful implement equitable structural changes in all education contexts to afford all students quality educational services, opportunities, and outcomes.

Second, conducting this study contributes to existing literature that explores Black principals' capacities to effectively lead diverse staffs in urban city communities. Today, Black principals most likely lead racially and culturally diverse staff with a majority White teacher population. According to the 2013 NCES report, the White teacher population (81.9%) far exceeds both the Black (6.4%) and Hispanic (7.8%) teacher populations by three-fourths (Bitterman, et al., 2013). This study will diminish assumptions lingering around Black principals' leadership capacities. Moreover, exploring their leadership did indeed shed light on how they sustained committed diverse teaching staffs in urban city communities.

Third, their perspectives are important not only for those in traditional urban city communities (i.e., inner cities), but also those leading suburban schools undergoing dramatic transformations shifting towards an embodiment of urban characteristics. This study provides a platform that increases Blacks school leaders' visibility. Their increased visibility might encourage Blacks and other racial minorities to (re)consider the field of education as a promising career endeavor. Moreover, providing an empirical forum that centered Black principals' voices might improve their access to engage in pivotal policymaking discussions, particularly those at the district level that pertain to transforming educational structures and processes for marginalized students.

Fourth, this research extends current literature discussions around the role of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in the field of educational leadership. This study centered Black school leaders in a professional field and research area that largely ignores, silences, and excludes their presences, voices, and experiences.

Fifth, this study built on the invaluable work of other Black scholars (Anderson, 1988; Dillard, 1995; Hilliard, 2003; Lomotey, 1989; Rodgers, 1975; Savage, 2001; Sowell, 1976; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 2009; Ward Randolph, 2009) to tell stories of effective contemporary Black school leadership in public schools throughout the United States. I did not pretend to know the experiences that would help tell their stories of leading in urban city communities. Thus, I believed their leadership would be typical of historical Black school leadership. It would be typical to those of us who experienced and thereby became exemplary products of the arduous work of Black leaders in urban city communities. However, others might experience the contemporary Black principals' leadership as novel and unique, because until this research they might not have had exposure opportunities to effective Black educators of successful Black, Brown, and poor

students in purported 'dry places'. Moreover, I contend this research is important to the field of education in general, and specifically to the field of educational leadership, urban education, and educational policy.

Assumptions and Limitations

In this section, I discuss the philosophical underpinnings of this qualitative research study. I acknowledge assumptions and limitations within the constructionist paradigm[3] employed to explore the phenomenon, contemporary Black secondary school leadership in urban city school communities. Crotty (1998) explains,

> Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspective. It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it, [and what ethics guide it]. What kind of knowledge do we believe will be attained by our research? …And why should our readers take these outcomes seriously? (p. 2)

The aforementioned questions align with Guba and Lincoln's (2005) four basic belief systems that helped define the paradigm that supported this study. The four basic beliefs include axiology, ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Mertens, 2010). They provide a foundational understanding of the worldview a researcher employs for a study. For this study, I employed a constructionist paradigm because it aligned most closely with my

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[3] Mertens (2010) explains, a paradigm is "a way of looking at the world. It is composed of certain philosophical assumptions that guide and direct thinking and action" (p. 7).

worldview. Thus, several assumptions undergirded how I thought, approached, carried out, interpreted, and re-presented the findings of this study.

From a constructionist epistemological perspective, my first assumption was that participants socially constructed knowledge through interactions within their contextualized world (Crotty, 1998). Thus, I believed that the participants, through multiple and diverse interactions, socially constructed meaningful reality about their lived experiences as effective contemporary Black school leaders within impoverished urban city school communities. In this regard, I assumed the participants actively interacted within their social world(s) and consistently engaged in practice(s) of making sense of it and that I could develop an informed understanding of this complex phenomenon directly from their perspectives.

However, as Crotty (1998) cautions, "while humans may be described, in constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if it is not set in a genuinely historical and social perspective" (p. 54). Crotty's (1998) aforementioned statement supported my second paradigmatic assumption, the role of culture in developing an understanding of how participants construct meaning of the phenomenon. Andrade (2009) confirms, "[r]esearchers' beliefs and worldviews lie behind their theoretical perspective (p. 43). Thus, I believed knowledge of culture was valuable for constructing an understanding of the phenomenon (Spradley, 1979). Therefore, I derived Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) from my own personal theory of educational leadership, specifically the history of education and leadership in predominantly Black school communities in the rural South and inner cities of the Midwest. CHAT allows researchers to develop an exploratory understanding of collective human activity through social interactions within sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts. I integrated Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT) to further represent my personal theory of leadership as a

sociostructural and sociopolitical collective endeavor that is mediated through participants' diverse social interactions with stakeholders in contexts[4]. Both theories bind individuals to their contextualized contexts: sociocultural, sociohistorical, sociostructural, and sociopolitical. Given that I sought to understand another perspective, a possible alternative to the traditional canons, of effective school leadership from the participants multiple voicedness, I employed an ethnographic multiple case research methodology (Spradley, 1979, 1980). I immersed myself into four field sites within one school district to learn through continuous firsthand interactions intimate details and subtle nuances about my participants' beliefs, motivations, artifacts/tools, and behaviors. I believed that full immersion through extended engagement would help me develop deeper insights into their worlds to construct a credible narrative that responsively retells their perspectives and experiences through applicable stories. Malinowski (1932) refers to ethnography[2] as the 'scientific field-work' of recording the phenomenon to "give a full and adequate picture of native culture" (p. 22). In order to richly capture this 'native culture', Malinowski (1932) explains,

> Besides the firm outline of tribal constitution and crystallised culture items which form the skeleton, besides the data of daily life and ordinary behavior…there is still to be recorded the spirit—the natives' views and opinions and utterances. …A [wo/]man who submits to various customary obligations, who follows a traditional course of action, does

[4] The contexts are multiple and they are always in motion through social interactions. For instance, the Black school leaders predominately operate in their individual schools, the school district, and neighboring communities. However, given the political climate of educational reform, contemporary Black school leaders, not unlike their predecessors, seek in-kind support from businesses (private and non-profit) to support their educational agenda. For example, Mr. Earl Rutherford, a Black retired business executive and community activist elder mentor, is affectionately referred to as the 'god-father' of Murray school community because he has an affinity for the success of Black kids in urban city communities. Mr. Rutherford spearheads at least one major citywide fundraiser for Murray School every year. During the year this study was conduct, this devout community activist and supporter raised over $10,000 for the school in monies for band uniforms and music instruments. Importantly, his campaign brought individuals, majority White middle-and-upper class populace, out of their mainstream context(s) into a traditionally socially constructed decontextualized space that is often privately and even publicly racialized as deficient. `

> it impelled by certain motives, to the accompaniment of certain feelings, guided by certain ideas. These ideas, feelings, and impulses are moulded and conditioned by the culture in which we find them, and are therefore, an ethnic peculiarity of the given society. An attempt must be made therefore, to study and record them. p. 22

Indeed, I attempted to carefully study and record them, all meaningful knowledge, through methods like: multiple unstructured in-depth ethnographic interviews; informal daily dialogues; intensive and systematic shadowing[5] that was fluid and dynamic along the participant observation continuum; document gathering and analyzing; and detailed reflection and reflexivity journals. Importantly, I carefully studied and recorded all meaning knowledge of the phenomenon so that in the end I could offer a rigorous narrative report of 'cultural inferences' applicable for similar school community contexts (Spradley, 1979).

My third assumption was that of multiple social constructions of reality rather than an objective worldview. I embraced the ontological idea that "multiple mental constructions [could] be apprehended, some of which [might] be in conflict with each other, and [that] perceptions of reality [might] change throughout the process of the study" (Mertens, 2010, p. 18). Thus, through the paradigmatic framework of this study, I further embraced the qualitative validity of participants' social constructions of multiple perspectives of their lived realities of experiencing the principalship in urban city school communities. In doing so, I privileged the four participants' multiple voices, conceptualizations, and perspectives of school leadership. Moreover, I collected multiple sources of data; employed *in vivo* codes to capture emerging concepts, themes, and categories; and re-presented their individual and collective meanings of effective school leadership in urban

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[5] Shadowing is both an embodied perspective and qualitative research method of systematic data collection (Czarniawska, 2014). I provided a definition and an extended discussion of how I employed this method in chapter three.

city school communities. In assuming the notion of multiple socially constructed meanings of the phenomenon, I thereby accepted a forth assumption. The assumption was that the final qualitative narrative report would be inductive, particularistic, descriptive, and thus transferrable into similar contexts rather than generalizable to broader populations. Therefore, when discussing the implications of the study, I argue that the four contemporary Black school leaders' narrative accounts provide thick descriptive understandings of instructive practices that can be adopted and adapted by other school leaders of urban city schools in impoverished communities.

Moreover, I accepted a fifth assumption, axiological, through this paradigmatic framework. I was afforded the philosophical latitude to acknowledge the axiological assumptions inherent of my researcher's subjectivities and standpoint(s) of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity and equity issues in education. Guba and Lincoln (1994) confirm that it is not possible, nor acceptable, for constructionist researchers to attempt to conduct value-free research. They explain, "[t]o do so would be inimical to the interests of the powerless and of 'at-risk' audiences, whose original (emic) constructions deserve equal consideration with those of other, more powerful audiences and of the inquirer (etic)" (1994, p. 114). Therefore, I cultivated a 'researcher-researched relationship' with ethical practices supported by trustworthy and authenticity criteria (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, 1994). For instance, I ensured the intersection of rigor and ethics through processes of critical reflexivity; meticulous collection and transformation the multiple sources of data; intentional demarcation of participants' perspectives from my interpretations of the phenomenon; and importantly, presenting a balanced perspective of participants' voices and experiences in the final narrative report (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2010). Equally important, I abided by the ethical guidelines of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), thereby consistently employing professional responsibility to "safeguard [my participants'] rights, their

interests, and even their sensitivities" (Spradley, 1980, p. 21) to unforeseen consequences beyond the completion of the study and future publications of manuscripts.

I have acknowledged several assumptions and now I discuss the limitation(s) of this qualitative research study. My limitation was the logic of sampling participants and sites through a purposive selection strategy. As Schwandt (2001) explains, purposive "units are chosen not for their representativeness [of a broader population like a statistical strategy,] but for their relevance to the research question, analytic framework, and explanation or account being developed in the research" (p. 232). Thus, I acknowledge that the notion of relevance posed limitations to the study due to a high probability of: researcher and informant biases; lack of negative case(s) analysis potential; and non-statistical generalizability of the sample units to the larger population (Bailey, 2007; Mason, 2002; Schwandt, 2001). However, I believe that this could be viewed less as methodological limitation(s) given that the participants and sites were selected based on a specific criteria to improve the theoretical sampling logic (Schwandt, 2001). I believed that the revised participant selection criteria would yield potential negative case(s) given the range in principals' experiences, different secondary grade levels, and genders. For instance, Mr. Vertner was entering his fifth year as the high school principal of the same school. Whereas Mr. Biko, a former principal for two years in another state, was entering his first year as a high school principal in the district. Moreover, in chapter 3, I explain the specific theoretical sampling logic with systematic and descriptive details. Mason (2002) discusses improving the sampling strategy through employing "a relevant range [of units] in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent it directly" (p. 124) to improve 'cross-contextual comparison'. Therefore, in hindsight, I believe that I should have qualified relevant elementary schools given the feeder pattern present in my study in order to further support the development of a holistic understanding of the phenomenon

from multiple school level contexts (i.e., elementary, middle, and high). Doing so might have resulted in different findings of the phenomenon, especially given that the testing stakes are lower at the elementary level than the high school level. Elementary school leaders are able to document greater academic achievement success through the social promotion of cohorts of students as long as they pass classes despite failing to pass low stakes standardized tests. Whereas, secondary school leaders must ensure that their cohorts of students pass high stakes standardized tests to be promoted to successive levels academically and socially. Importantly, the secondary high stakes standardized tests are viewed as exit exams rather than promotion exams, which is why I chose to focus my study specifically on the secondary school levels (i.e., middle and high). Again, in hindsight I now believe that qualifying feeder elementary schools might have afforded different theoretical outcomes, which in many ways Mason (2002) alludes to the possibility. Mason (2002) asserts,

> If we sample strategically across a range of contexts, we increase our changes of being able to use the very detail not only to understand how things work in specific contexts, but also how things work differently or similarly in other relevant contexts. p. 125

Moreover, the absence of elementary Black principals' multiple voicedness, perspectives, conceptualizations, and experiences creates a gap in developing a holistic understanding of the contemporary Black school leadership in impoverished urban city school communities. Their stories might have helped to fill a gap of understanding how they address the initial academic and social 'lags' their students come with into the elementary educational system[3]. Thus, the limitation(s) of this study paves the way for additional research of feeder schools from the elementary to high school levels located in impoverished urban city school communities. Nonetheless, this study

was about secondary school leaders and it provides rich descriptive narratives about contemporary Black school leadership from the perspectives of four principals.

Conceptual Framework

> *All reality, as meaningful reality, is socially constructed. We have to reckon with the social origin of meaning and the social character with which it is inevitably stamped (Crotty, 1998, p. 54; 52).*

In this section of the chapter I discuss the epistemological orientation and theoretical perspectives that informed the exploration of Black school leaders' perceptions of their leadership practice in urban city communities. I provide a detailed explanation of the epistemology, assumptions and theoretical perspectives that informed the exploration of contemporary Black principals' perspectives of their leadership practices in urban city communities. I provide a detailed explanation of the theoretical perspectives that informed this study and importantly constituted the conceptual framework.

Cultural Historical Activity Theory

Cultural Historical Activity Theory is a theoretical perspective designed to help us "understand human activity situated in a collective context" (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007, p. 453). It is, as argued by Engeström (2000a), "an original and potentially powerful approach to the social construction of knowledge" (p. 301) as meaningful knowledge is constructed from a "temporal and development perspective on one hand, and a systemic and collective perspective on the other hand" (p. 307). Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is the conceptualization of Russian psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky (1978). In the 1920s and 1930s Vygotsky conceived CHAT with the help of two of his students, Aleksei N. Leont'ev and Aleksandr R. Luria. Vygotsky set out to create psychological theories that would unite the mind (i.e., consciousness) with the social world. The goal for creating such theories and methodologies was to develop better understandings of hu-

man development as a social process. The social process, shaped by cultural tools and artifacts, mediates human behavior and interaction with the world (Daniels, 2008). Mediation is crucial. It is the central concept within the Vygotskian theory, because it mediates the unit of analysis of the object-oriented action. As Engeström (2001) explains, "the individual could no longer be understood without his or her cultural means; and the society could no longer be understood without the agency of individuals who use and produce artifacts…the object-orientedness of action become the key to understanding human psyche" (p. 134). Therefore, cultural tools are heuristic devices. Researchers explore how individuals (i.e., un/consciously) use them to change the world and thus are transformed or constrained by the mediating artifacts. Vygotsky (1978) provided the foundational structure for the first generation of CHAT. This generation of theorizing still focused predominately on the individual, his/her actions and behaviors. The developmental phase of activity theory did not include a consideration of interactions and influences of others, only the subject, object and mediating cultural artifact (Figure 1).

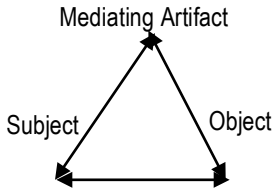

Figure 1. Vygotsky's Model of Mediated Action

CHAT is an international and multidisciplinary theory and research approach. It helps researchers transcend pervasive dichotomies and develop a deeper understanding of current social transformations (Engeström, 1999, 2000a). The position taken in this research inquiry was that the school leadership of contemporary Black principals, not unlike pre-and-post *Brown* (1954) Black principalship, is a highly organized social process and practice mediated within sociocultural contexts. Traditional Black school leadership practice was distributed within and between national, regional, district, local site, and community levels. As Spillane (2006) points out, "leadership practice typically involves more than one person—if not by design, then by default

and by necessity" (p. 26). Therefore, I used Spillane's (2005, 2006) notion of distributed leadership to help frame how I thought about contemporary Black school leadership in urban city communities. A distributed leadership theoretical perspective, like CHAT, transcends a focus of an individual separated from the context. A distributed leadership perspective foregrounds leadership practice and assumes that it is "constructed in the interactions between leaders, followers, and their situations" (Spillane, 2006, p. 26). I later provide a more detailed discussion of how I used distributed leadership to help frame my understanding of leadership practice. Moreover, similar to Engeström (1999), I see the construction and reformation of the object of effective school leadership as related to the 'creative potential' of the activity. An activity is a collective system in which all components are interrelated (Figure 2). CHAT positions an activity as the unit of analysis instead of an individual, group or entity. This position coincides with the distributed perspective of focusing on the interactions of the collective activity of leadership (Spillane, 2006). Therefore, Black school leadership serves as the activity system for this study. Moreover, CHAT provides researchers with a theoretical approach to examine the process of how individuals reciprocally transform an activity with the aid of culturally mediated tools (i.e., produced or reproduced) and thereby change themselves.

CHAT binds the individual to his/her sociohistorical context. By doing so, CHAT integrates multiple perspectives and multi-voicedness into the activity system. These diverse voices, Daniels (2008) indicates, "carry their own diverse histories and the activity system itself carries multiple layers and strands of history engraved in its artefacts, rules and conventions. It is both a source of tension and innovation; demanding actions of translation and negotiation" (p. 124). Roth and Lee (2007) argue that contradictions are often overlooked and unexamined as an accumulation of historical contradictions. For instance, 'leadership', 'school reform', 'minimum

competencies', and 'schooling and education' are concepts a part of our daily activity systems that we often overlook and fail to critically analyze to notice the embedded contradictions with their structures that help sustain inequities. Fortunately, contradictions are "the primary driving forces that bring about change and development within and between activity systems (Roth & Lee, 2007, p. 203). However, consciousness of contradictions is essential to enact substantive changes in an activity system. Conscious individuals tend to enact creative activities to resolve contradictions that perpetuate discrepancies between their current and envisioned realities (Engeström, 1999; Fritz, R., 1989; Roth & Lee, 2007). Contradiction is the essence of CHAT (Engeström, 1999). Therefore, I believed that CHAT allowed for a more critical approach to the study of contemporary Black school leadership. This approach helped me, the primary research instrument, to remain conscious of tensions and contradictions as inherent of the system as well as my own subjectivities that would inform this entire research process. The theoretical perspective of CHAT also helped me to conceptually explore and graphically depict contradictions within and between the activity systems of contemporary Black school leadership in urban city communities (Figure 3).

Leont'ev (1978, 1981) continued Vygotsky's (1978) work, but in a different direction. His differentiation between action and activity paved the way for the second generation of activity theory. He capitalized on Marx's concept of division of labor in order to emphasize that the focus, unit of analysis, should be collective human activity and not solely individual actions mediated by cultural tools. Leont'ev's (1978, 1981) theoretical expansion of transforming the focus from individual action to collectivity provided the foundational framework for researchers to situate inquiries that focused on collective activity like this multiple case study of four Black

school leaders in urban city communities. Leont'ev (1978, 1981) distinguished between the concept of activity and action through the inclusion of the individual's community.

Expansion of the original model captured a holistically complex process of individual or group interactions as embedded in a collective activity system (Engeström, 2001). Leont'ev (1978, 1981) identified three levels of interaction within and between the system elements: Activity, actions, and operations. He fleshed out the three levels to clearly demarcate individual actions from collective activities. Leont'ev (1978, 1981) explained that individual actions are short-term goals motivated by the long-term object-oriented activity of the collective system in which sociocultural conditions exist that influence the operations (i.e., routinized procedures and methods of how action is performed) of the activity. The processes (i.e., operations) undergird the individual's action and mediate the motive of the collective activity system. The sense of the individual's action as Tolman (1999) explains "lies not in the action itself but in his relation to other members in the group" (p. 73). Leont'ev (1978, 1981) reconceptualized Vygotsky's (1978) model of human activity to recognize and integrate the existence of collective meaning making for an activity.

Leont'ev (1978, 1981) did not construct a second-generation visual to depict the expansion of Vygotsky's (1978) classic meditational triangle (Figure 1) into the collective human activity system. However, in 1987 Engeström developed a graphic model to display the mediation of relationships between the six components of an activity system (Figure 2). The six components consist of subject, object, instruments (i.e., tools/artifacts), community, division of labor, and rules. The six components are interrelated.

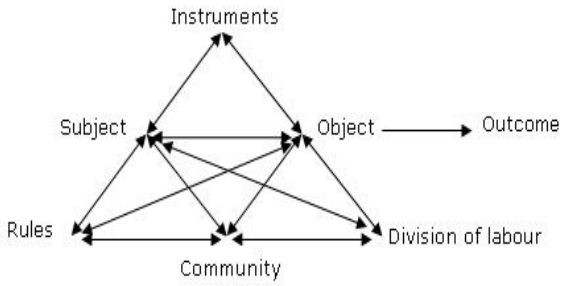

Figure 2. Engeström's Activity Theory (1987)

They are in constant interaction with one another through the mediation of instruments, rules, and division of labor. Among and within their interrelationships and interactions abound contradictions that create opportunities of learning, development, and transformation. Contradictions are structural tensions of opposing forces that eventual motivate participants to (re)construct, (re)conceptualize, and (re)structure (i.e., transform) the activity system and related structures. Moreover, I used Engeström's (1987) activity system model to explore the experiences of contemporary Black principals in urban city communities.

Each system component was invaluable to understanding the activity of contemporary Black school leadership in urban city communities (Figure 3). Thus, Black principals were par-

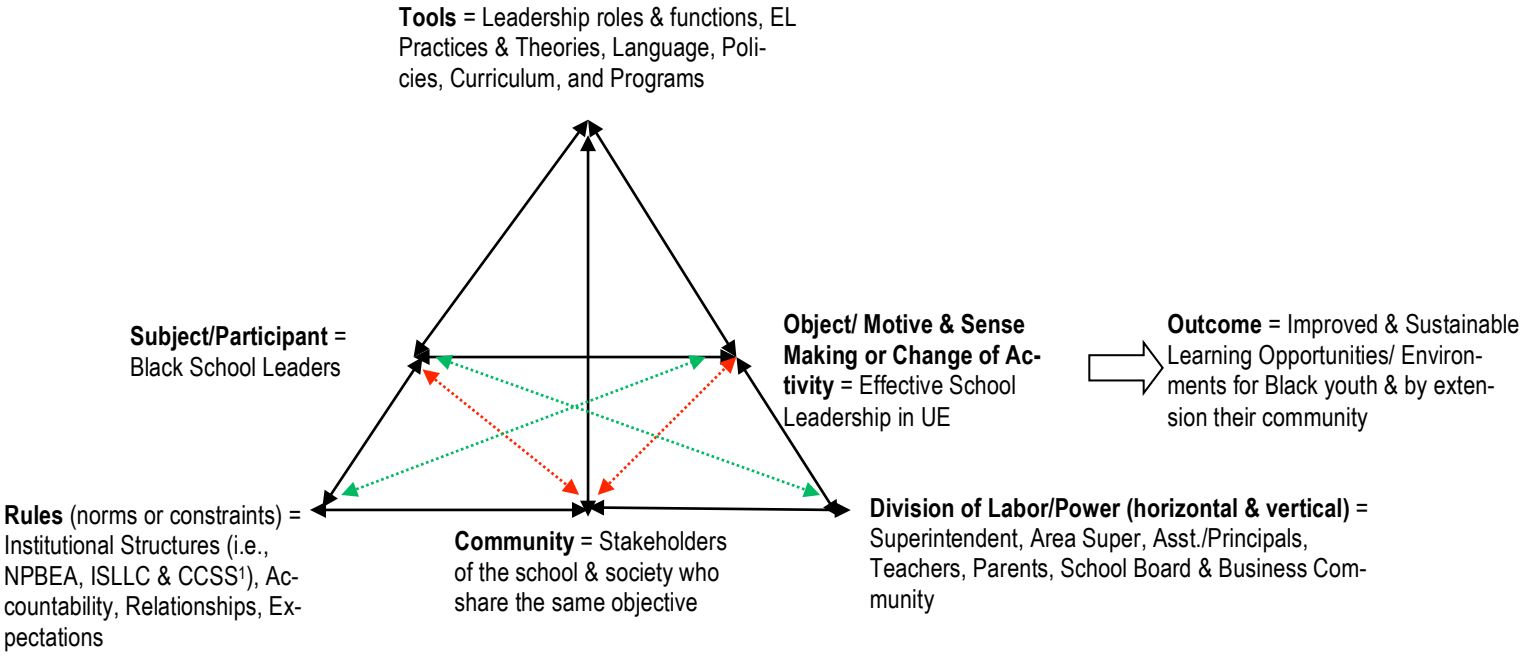

Figure 3: Black School Leaders in Urban City Communities Activity System

ticipant subjects whose activity of school leadership functioned as the unit of analysis. The object was the long-term, envisioned objective towards which the participant was motivated to act(ion) in order to fulfill a systemic collective activity need. It is "the 'raw material' or 'problem space' at which the activity is directed and which is molded and transformed into outcomes with

the help of physical and symbolic, external and internal mediating instruments, including both tools and signs" (Roth & Tobin, 2002, p. 113). In this study, the object was effective school leadership in urban city communities. The long-term objective was to improve and create sustainable high performance learning cultures in urban city communities for marginalized students. The instruments (i.e., language, gestures, culture, ideology, belief systems, roles, practices, and materials) are (re)constructed and manipulated in the process of mediating relationships between the participant and object towards realizing the outcome. For instance, mediating instruments and artifacts in this system consisted of leadership roles, functions, beliefs, perspectives, conceptualizations, practices, theories, culture(s), language(s), policies, curriculums, programs, and mentoring. The last three elements represent the socio-cultural-and-historical perspectives of the system, which are the collective meaning embedded in an activity. Community comprises all of the individuals and groups who identify and envision the fruition of the object-related activity with the participant subject. Four schools in urban city communities were involved in this study. The four communities comprised of families, staff, business stakeholders, community elders and mentors who shared the object-oriented vision of effective school leadership that helped improve educational and social outcomes in urban city communities. The division of labor designates how tasks are distributed (e.g., shared) among members of the community. Distribution distinguishes between horizontally assigned responsibilities and associated hierarchical structures of status and power. This mediating component in the activity system influenced the professional career track for those involved with the activity systems. For example, effective school leaders in urban city communities were more apt to retain a highly qualified teaching staff that commits to sustaining the object-oriented outcome (Tillman, 2005a). The rules, formal and informal, are standardized norms, procedures and expectations established to govern actions and interactions within the ac-

tivity system. The rules mediated the instruments that participants used in the activity system. Some of the shared rules of this activity included institutional structures, accountability measures, relationships, and historical cultural beliefs and expectations. These rules functioned to empower and/or constrain the activity of attaining effective school leadership in urban city communities.

Engeström (1999) launched the third generation. He "maintains that it is important to extend beyond the singular activity system and to examine and work towards transformation of networks of activity" (Daniels, 2008, p. 122). As Roth and Lee (2007) explain, this level of conceptualizing human behavior and development recognizes the fact that activity systems do not produce nor reproduce in isolation, but as "part of a network of activity systems that in its totality constitutes human society" (p. 201). This generation of CHAT explores joint activity as the unit of analysis with emphasis on social transformation, undergirded by internal contradiction and tension inherent of the whole activity system (Daniels, 2008). I situated this research study within the third generation. CHAT third generation provided the framework for developing a deeper and collective understanding of effective Black secondary principals in urban city communities. The five core principles of CHAT outlined by Engeström (1999) supported the theoretical orientation of this study.

The principles include (1) an organized, collective, artifact-mediated and object-oriented activity system as the unit of analysis; (2) multi-voicedness; (3) historicity; (4) contradictions; and (5) expansive transformations. These foundational tenets constructed the platform upon which the six components of the CHAT human development model (Figure 2) was used to explore the contradictions and tensions that influenced (i.e., empower or constrain) the object-

oriented outcome of the collective activity system of effective school leadership in urban city communities.

The expanded version of CHAT focuses on the critical role of contradictions. Exploring contradictions, such as the touted philosophical belief that 'all kids can learn', helped broaden my understanding of (1) Black principals' perspectives of how they practice leadership and are motivated; (2) the sociohistorical structures and urban communities in which they worked, governing belief systems and role distributions; and (3) the cultural tools/artifacts used to achieve collective object-oriented outcomes. Moreover, CHAT as part of this conceptual framework helped to inform my exploration of contradictions that affected the activity system depicted in Figure 3.

Distributed Leadership Theory

But of a good leader, who talks little, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will all say, 'we did this ourselves' (Walker, 2009, p. 1).

Distributed leadership theory is an alternative to traditional leadership theories that "equate leadership with the gallant acts or one of more leaders in an organization" (Spillane, 2006, p. 2). This leadership theory moves beyond the 'what' to understand the 'how' of school leadership. The field of educational leadership has conducted extensive research to identify and understand what school leadership practice entails. However, researchers in this field have neglected to generate an in-depth body of empirical knowledge that helps us to understand the *how* of school leadership practice (Spillane, 2005, 2006; Spillane & Diamond, 2007). Understanding leadership practice from a 'how' perspective is "imperative if research is to generate usable knowledge about and for school leadership" (Spillane, 2005, p. 143). Therefore, Spillane (2005) conceptualized a distributed leadership theory from The Distributed Leadership Study of 2004 he conducted in elementary schools throughout Chicago, Illinois. A distributed leadership perspec-

tive frames our understanding of leadership as "a system of practice comprised of a collection of interacting components: leaders, followers, and situation" (Spillane, 2005, p. 150).

Social constructionism informs this theory of school leadership. This theory is an approach to understanding, analyzing and explaining school leadership as a system through the interdependency and interactions of human beings and their context (Figure 4). Interestingly, Spillane (2005, 2006) depicts the interactive system as triangles much like Engeström's (1987) activity system model (Figure 2). Akin to CHAT, distributed leadership theory binds individuals to their contexts. This approach recognizes the context (i.e., situation, culture, history, and tools) as a mediating and defining element of how multiple people collectively practice leadership within and between systems. The interactions ultimately construct leadership practice. However, interactions are least explored. Thus, it was essential to view the practice of leadership as an activity that was 'stretched' over multiple people within their context (Spillane, 2005, 2006). Spillane (2006) explains that "it is only when we analyze the collective leadership practice that we can see how the practice takes shape in the interactions as distinct from the actions of individuals" (p. 56). This view coincides with that of CHAT. CHAT views the process of individual or group (inter)actions as embedded in a collective activity system (Engeström, 2001). This distributed leadership theory also recognizes contradictions as inherent of the activity system. The system elements can enable, constrain, and transform leadership practice. Understanding how effective Black school leadership was constructed in interactions and situations embedded with contradictions undergirded my research. I used this distributed perspective to shape my understanding of

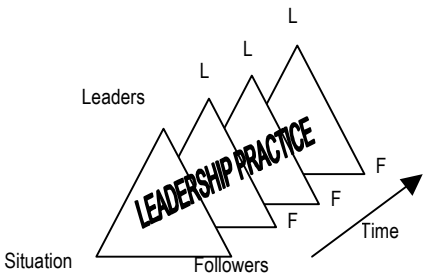

Figure 4: Spillane's Distributed Leadership Perspective

school leadership in this study. Moreover, this theoretical approach "is about leadership practice, not simply roles and positions" (Spillane, 2006, p. 4). The three core principles of distributed leadership theory outlined by Spillane (2005, 2006) supported the theoretical orientation of this study. The principles include (1) leadership practice; (2) interactions of the collective; and (3) attentiveness to the defining nature of the context. These guiding tenets provided me with a conceptual way to understanding leadership practice as the crux of effective school leadership.

I believed that utilizing CHAT and distributed leadership theory afforded me the methodological latitude to construct a culturally responsive and sensitive sociocultural leadership theory that centered Black school leadership within a collective context. I attempted to choose and present two theories that were "related to one another rather than merely set side by side as comparable" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). I placed the distributed leadership theory inside of the CHAT activity system to visually illustrate how I conceptualized their interactional relationship in this study (Figure 5). Black school leaders' practice was the object of this activity system, which supports the notion of a distributed (e.g., shared) practice. These two theoretical perspectives aligned with my choice of case study methodology, my methods of data collection, and the proposed research questions. I believed that the guiding research questions helped me explore the complex system of leadership and the systemic contradictions that influenced how contemporary Black school leaders collectively made meaning of their principalship in urban city communities.

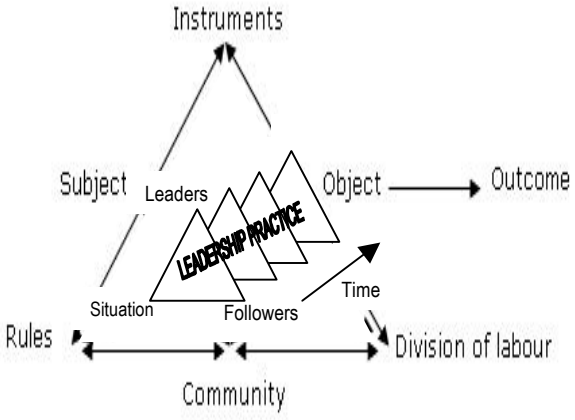

Figure 5: Black School Leadership: A Sociocultural Conceptual Framework (Hodges, 2012)

Overview of the Study

In chapter one, I set the tone for the study with a discussion of: why this research is important to me; the contexts critical to cultivate an understanding of historical and contemporary Black school leadership as it relates to this study; and the research questions. Also in chapter one, I presented: purpose; significance; assumptions and limitations; and the conceptual framework. In chapter two, I present a succinct review of relevant literature. In chapter three, I discuss the methodology that I used in my exploration of the phenomenon, contemporary Black school leadership. In chapter four, I use rich thick descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of the transformed data to present the findings. In chapter five, I discuss how the contemporary Black school leaders addressed three prevalent educational issues while simultaneously integrating a methodological discussion of methods employed. Then, I present implications. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

History is often used as a signpost to begin developing a deeper, more layered, understanding of the process of growth, transformation, stagnation, or even decimation of a phenomenon like contemporary Black school leadership and administration. This review is an attempt to better understand the current layer of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity in educational leadership. I dialogue with the literature of scholars who too seek to contribute another layer that expands our understanding of the role of diversity in the field. In an era rife with increasing educational demands; need for equity and accountability; professional ethics and fidelity; and student diversity, is it not our responsibility to challenge the status quo of the field? I believe the works I include in this review beckons us to conduct empirical research that offers alternative perspectives of educational leadership. The review begins with a discussion on the historical role of professional associations on leadership development (Walker, 2009) and principals' varied roles in all-Black school communities (Rodgers, 1975). Then, I review Black principals' leadership style (Lomotey, 1989, 1994; Sowell, 1976), leadership capacity (Jones, 2002) and race impact on relationships and practices (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). Finally, I look at a Black principal's efforts to build community (Brown & Beckett, 2007), reform responsiveness and implementation (Cooper & Jordan, 2009), mentor perceptions (Tillman, 2005) and countering competing ideologies (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dillard, 1995). A historical context of the development of Black school leadership is required to begin marking the path to a broader understanding of how race/ethnicity and sociohistorical elements currently influence the educational leadership field and Pre-K-12 public schools throughout the United States. I have found recurring themes (i.e., culture, history, community, high expectations, and kinship) from traditional Black school lead-

ership emerge in the contemporary literature of Black principals. These themes point to ways in which members of the research community have conceptualized, studied and reported on the issue of effective school leadership in urban city communities. The review of literature allowed me to see how I could situate my work in the spaces left by these scholars.

Walker's *Hello Professor* (2009) provides an in-depth historiography of the systemic structures that influenced the professional leadership development of Black principals in a closed educational system. Walker (2009) examines the professional leadership development of one Black principal, Professor Ulysses Byas, through the network of professional and community activities in which he participated from 1957 through 1968. This perspective of Black school leadership is powerfully invaluable to my understanding of the mediating role history, race, culture, and community play in cultivating Black school leadership. In this ethnographic case, the Black principal is the 'professor'. The title, 'professor' has historical, racial and culturally divergent meanings that influence the structure of educational leadership within this socio-political closed system in the United States. According to Walker (2009), in the White community, 'professor' is a subordinate subtitle that seeks to depower and devalue the status and role of the Black principalship in the field of education. Whereas, in the Black community the 'professor' is herald and reverenced as a legitimate authoritative power within private and public institutional structures and communities that extend beyond education. In the chapter, *Playing Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Walker (2009) illustrates how Black school leaders like Byas employed their socio-political knowledge, intelligence and ingenuity to undermine White superintendents' limited educational goals for Black youth. The Black school leaders consistently played this game of psychological warfare to advance the universal Black educational agenda—racial uplift through quality educational services. Her narrative of Professor Byas' principalship is beneficial in ex-

plaining how the collective systems support 'the game' and influence the transformation of the appointed position as school administrator into what became a collective leadership of agency for all students and citizens, particularly those traditionally underserved in an espoused democratic society. In subsequent chapters like, *In Georgia Where I Am Free to Express* Myself, she pays special attention to highlight how Black principals' active membership in professional educational associations mediates their leadership philosophies, practices and community activities towards building a vision of equity and diversity through inclusion in democratic institutions like the public education system. The passing of *Brown* (1954), however, undermined their efforts to diversify education, particularly in educational leadership. However, Walker's (2009) focus on Professor Byas' professional leadership activities before the racial integration of schools heightened my level of understanding the important role community, rules, division of labor, and cultural tools has in mediating human agency. Walker's (2009) historical account of the transformation of the Black professorship underscores the complex activity as "part of a larger organizational network that used a common language and embraced similar practices regarding ways to develop impoverished black communities" (p. 237), which cultivated a community ethos throughout the country. Walker's (2009) work led me to question how do contemporary Black principals perceive and thus experience their school leadership in urban city communities.

Rodgers' (1975) examination of *The Black High School and Its Community* in North Carolina from 1963-1964 is yet another historical documentation analysis of the same community ethos Walker (2009) identify as distinctive of Black school leadership. Whereas Walker (2009) notes the principal revered as the 'professor' in Georgia, Rodgers explains the school leader reverenced as 'Black mayor' in North Carolina. Although the titles differ, they mean the same in the Black community. Rodgers (1975) illustrates that both titles underscore the profes-

sional and personal accountability inherent of the diverse roles the Black school leader possessed in the educational and political communities. He details the multiplicity of roles, which include superintendent, school administrator, supervisor, family counselor, financial advisor, community leader, employer, and politician. Rodgers' (1975) detailed explanations of Black principals' diverse leadership affords me a historical perspective of how they conceptualized their roles and functions in school communities with high concentrations of traditionally marginalized students. Rodgers (1975) notes that the prominent role of the Black school leader was as the Black community's linking agent, to the White community and more importantly to an envisioned egalitarian nation. In 1963-1964 the collective agency of Black principals, professional network associations and communities resulted in a 66% enrollment of Black students attending colleges in North Carolina. I argue that the number of Black students attending colleges during this turbulent time was due in part to a collective commitment to a historic community ethos that spanned the entire state and nation at-large. I further contend increasing accountability mandates requires the educational community to develop similar community ethos of expanding our understanding of the role of diversity in the educational leadership field.

The lack of racial and ethnic diversity in educational leadership, theory and practice undermines the national educational mandate, *Leave No Child Behind*, especially when there is a consistent pattern in the United States of leaving behind ethnically, culturally, racially, economically, and linguistically diverse children. Lomotey's (1989) research seeks to begin filling the gap in research concerning the impact school leaders' race has on leadership practices and the academic achievement of same race/ethnic affiliate students. Despite the dire need to include diversity in educational leadership, prior to Lomotey's (1989) study, no other scholar of race relations had conducted research of public elementary school leadership in the United States. In a

multiple case study, Lomotey (1989) focuses on identifying the leadership style(s) of three African American principals of academically successful African American public elementary schools in California. He constructs an integrated framework using Chester I. Barnard (1947) and Phillip Selznick (1957) three major roles of organizational leaders with the role of instructional management. Lomotey's (1989) conceptual framework consisted of four areas under investigation: development of goals, energy harnessing, communication facilitation, and instructional management. He added instructional management to the organizational leadership roles, because the literature indicates that it is an integral aspect of principals leading high achievement schools. I found it interesting that Lomotey (1989) chose to use a business model of organizational leadership to frame his exploration of African American principals' leadership style(s) when working with same race/ethnic student populations, because it seemingly perpetuates the ideology of the ideal leader—White, middle-class male. In a later study, Lomotey (1994) identified the four organizational leadership roles as characteristic of a bureaucrat/administrator role identity. This educational leadership role reproduces and sustains the United States' socialization function of schooling—sorting, stratifying, and credentialing (1994). However, the most intriguing finding of his study is that the three principals possess common leadership qualities that significantly influenced their leadership style (1989). All three principals embodied a (1) commitment to the education of African American children; (2) compassion for and understanding of African American children and their communities; and (3) confidence in the educability of African-American children. These qualities exemplify the school leader's ethno-humanist role identity (Lomotey, 1994). In his second case, the African American principals identify culturally and ethnically with their same race/ethnic student population to advance the collective cultural goals of the community (1994). The findings from this subsequent study of two African American elementary prin-

cipals in Buffalo New York Public Schools illustrate that there is constant tension between the two competing roles, bureaucratic and ethno-humanist. Principals must recognize the existence of competing ideologies to effectively strike a balance that affords all students, particularly those marginalized by traditional institutional structures, quality educational services. The suburbs are becoming increasingly characteristic of urban city communities. Simultaneously, the educational pipeline of racially and culturally diverse school leaders continues to shrink and remains seemingly invisible, especially in suburbia. I argue that given the historic inequities embedded in institutional structures that the educational community should be ethically compelled to include traditionally silenced voices. Culturally inclusive practices and theories could improve educational leadership preparation programs.

Sanders (1999) asserts, regardless of principals' race or ethnicity, they "must have a comprehensive understanding of the culture that exists within the urban community" (p. 117). I would add, school leaders also need to develop a keen understanding of the community, its history, rules and expectations. Their understanding of the school community should be underscored by their capacity to effectively transfer sociohistorical knowledge to diverse workforces, thereby building a community ethos. In his case study, Jones (2002) used Chemer's model of integrative leadership to examine the perceptions Black and White teachers had about their Black principal's capacity to lead successful urban schools. The model indicates that leaders of ethnically diverse work environments must possess the functions of image management, relationship development and team coordination and deployment. Of significant importance to my research study is that although the two groups conceptualized the leadership functions differently, the overall results indicate both Black and White teachers believe that their Black school leaders exhibit the capacity to successfully cultivate inclusive, diverse work environments in urban city communities.

Their differences are also significant as they appear to be culturally grounded and value-laden, which could impede the continuity of quality educational services for underserved students if not appropriately addressed by educational researchers, professors and practitioners. For instance, Jones (2002) points out that Black teachers value the unspoken kinship they experience with same race/ethnic school leaders. They view themselves as committed 'parts of a whole'. Their perspectives of educating Black students parallel that of Black professors, like principal Byas. Walker (2009) explains, "they forged collectives that bound them in advancing mutual interests and relied upon the strength of the whole to advance each individual part" (p. 238). Whereas, White counterparts value individual merits; they seek validation to continue their commitment to 'prove' themselves. Jones' (2002) study provides a platform for me to explore how contemporary managed race relations among colleague. It is important that educational leaders of diverse workforces identify racial, cultural, and class differences that could impede successfully fulfilling the educational objectives of school organizations.

Race is often the elephant in the room. A related study investigating the influence race and diverse relationships have on school leaders' practice also indicate the value of understanding how race influences cultural norms, values, beliefs and ultimately interracial relationships in the workplace (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). The researchers use an anthropological approach, moiety, which "allows a culture to be conceived of and described as two distinct subcultures" (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007, p. 758). In this study, moiety helped the researchers analyze a community of school leaders by dividing the principals into two distinct leadership sub-cultures on the basis of racial descent—Black and White. Over the course of two academic school terms, Brooks and Jean-Marie interviewed, observed, and collected document analysis to identify how the moiety racial sub-cultures interact within four domains: antithesis, rivalry, reciprocity, and

complementarily. The findings indicated that this level of leadership activity is even more complex and highly influenced by tensions mediated by sociohistorical elements. White school leaders exhibited behaviors and attitudes that aligned with respect for a traditional patriarchal, male-dominated vision of leadership; meritocracy; and victim blaming. In contrast, Black school leaders' actions embodied traditional Black cultural values that sustain an allegiance to a historic community ethos of service and education. They also embodied the tradition of mistrusting Whites' agenda for educating Black youth. They feared that the White school leaders lacked a commitment to educate Black students beyond mediocrity. These results indicate the need to foster trusting collegial relationships. We can begin by expanding our understanding and appreciation of racial/ethnic and cultural differences. How do contemporary Black school leaders create sustainable culturally responsive learning environments in urban areas? Walker (2009) explains that on the cusp of desegregation Professor Byas developed a mentoring program to help socialize White teachers to the Black culture's educational structure. Professor Byas' brazen leadership cultivated a 'whole' school community of diverse allies who addressed the elephant through pointed cultural dialogue. It is here that I also situated my qualitative study of contemporary Black school leaders. I believe by exploring the perceptions of their leadership that we can develop an understanding of how they socialize mainstream educators to educational processes established for Black youth in urban city communities. School leaders irrespective of racial and/or cultural affiliation must implement systems that build diverse collegial alliances. Alliances must function as sustaining agents of community ethos committed to deconstructing elephants (i.e., race, ethnicity, culture, and class) that inhibit educators from ethically dismantling barriers to implement improved education processes for *all* students. Students deserve an education community that functions as a whole with all parts working cohesively rather than indifferently.

Alliances help build sustainable bridges over troubled waters in communities. One contemporary Black school leader effectively illustrates the invaluableness of sociohistorical knowledge when addressing competing needs of diverse cultural groups in a segregated community (Brown & Beckett, 2007). This case study exemplifies how a Black school leader overcame cultural and social class communication barriers to build community alliance in an urban environment. Principal Brown formed a community alliance between the disadvantaged Black community and White middle-class stakeholders. The alliance sought to collectively implement systems that would improve the behavior and academic achievement of all elementary and middle school students. He modeled his leadership after the Black 'professors'. Brown faced a similar charge—to creatively mediate competing social and political interests. Race and socioeconomics are inextricably linked in the United States. I believe that it is essential for educational leaders to understand the role each play in mediating community cultural rules, norms, goals, and actions. Sociohistorical knowledge will become an increasingly important mediating tool for principals irrespective of race and culture. However, I question whether the majority school leadership has the capacity to build a substantive sociohistorical knowledge base of urban city communities that supersede deficit ideology. Approximately 80% of public school principals are White (Bitterman, et al., 2013) with increasing culturally and ethnically diverse students from disadvantaged households. These disadvantaged households no longer have only inner-city zip codes. Freeman (2010) says the "realization that a plurality of poor Americans now live in the suburbs turns upside down any previous notions of poverty as a phenomenon primarily confined to the urban core" (p. 676). Inner cities no longer have a monopoly on urban characteristics and challenges. This warns us that although their addresses have changed, systemic structures that perpetuate their plight have not changed. Although the context of this study was a traditional urban envi-

ronment, impending implications suggest the importance of acknowledging the need to look beyond 'privileged perspective'. Principal Brown employed alternative leadership strategies to ensure that Black youth labeled at-risk received quality educational services in an alternative environment that supported their academic, social and psychological needs. Brown possessed the sociohistorical capital required to move between the two competing interests groups to build cohesive alliances regarding how best to educate Black youth. As educational researchers, policymakers and practitioners accountable to all students we must become forward thinkers and astute leaders. We need to recognize that demographic and geographic changes will continue to challenge our educational efforts if we continue to resist investing in '*others'* sociohistorical knowledge. These changes affect and challenge my efforts to sustain high standards for my students. Colleagues quip that 'the school was not always like this, we had students, White, who came to learn'. I respond that our students are here to learn, but we may have to attend to their social and psychological needs to stimulate their intellect. The reality is that as disadvantaged families change zip codes they pack up urban challenges along with their possessions (Freeman, 2010). Is it because economists, policymakers, and educators have hijacked their expectations for conditions of poverty to change in the United States? Freeman (2010) states that, "the poor and low-income children attending suburban schools will struggle to escape the poverty and inequity that has marked the lives of their parents" (p. 676). Does that have to be their fate? I voice a resounding no. Pre-*Brown* Black school leadership fostered an egalitarian paradigm for educating all students, not just Black youth. It is of interest to me how contemporary Black principals' leadership emulates facets of their predecessors' practices in vastly different urban contexts. Nonetheless, we must encourage and support school leaders to embody practices that respect

students' history and culture; thereby committing to help marginalized students see themselves and their communities in the educational paradigm.

School leadership is consistently heralded as a critical element of education reform in urban city communities. In their case study, Cooper and Jordan (2009) examined five aspiring African American school leaders' perspectives on NCLB 'best practices' reform models (i.e., Success for All, America's Choice, High Schools that Work, and Smaller Learning Communities) commonly implemented in urban city communities. Cooper and Jordan's work with African Americans underscore the sparse literature concerning reforms impact on school leadership from culturally and racially diverse perspectives. Their research paves the way for my own inquiries regarding how contemporary Black school leaders perceive their practice in urban city communities. These leaders experienced a higher degree of accountability for improving school processes. These prospective principals functioned to cultivate school cultures conducive to implementing comprehensive reform models that laude 'best practices' for educating students in urban city communities. Scholarly research point to early prescriptive reforms experiencing initial success but has since transformed learning spaces into testing drill sites (Cooper & Jordan, 2009). How school leaders respond to challenges inherent of externally imposed reform models is increasingly important in urban areas where racial minority students continue to underperform. What role do external reform(s) play in how Black school leaders perceive and thus practice their principalship? Cooper and Jordan (2009) sought to unearth prospective principals' reform responsiveness; perspectives on school improvement for Black youth; and how ideology challenges successful reform implementation. The researchers employed a micropolitical framework for this study. Micropolitics are about individuals and groups' strategies to wield power, self-protective, contend with competing interests, build alliances, and covet ideological thoughts. Individuals and

groups employ these strategies to attain school organizational goals. Macropolitics tend to focus on how external entities sustain and exert power over organizational educational objectives. Researchers often focus on one aspect of politics in educational organizations. Given the persistent complexity and contradictory nature of educational processes, I contend that we need to recognize and research the coexistence of micro and macro politics in the educational activity system. I believe that my proposed framework provides a lens that views both political aspects as inherent of the activity system of Black school leadership. The micropolitics frame afforded Cooper and Jordan (2009) an insightfully different lens to logically investigate and analyze issues within prospective African American school leaders' social systems. They narrowed their focus to rarely explored issues of power, conflicting interests and alliances to better understand reform implementation and academic improvement impact. Cooper and Jordan (2009) provide an awareness of micropolitical tensions I believe exist in every social system. However, scholars rarely examine these micro-level tensions especially from perspectives of Black school leaders. By doing so, these researchers highlight the importance of interrogating the relationship between 'self-contained' ideologies and standardized strategies to improve education processes for Black youth. The researchers discovered that Black school leaders would readily implement reforms aligned with existing practices and cultural ideologies of educating racially marginalized students. This degree of implementation requires deep commitment that supersedes individual goals. These educators are highly motivated through community rather than individual ownership. However creating community ownership within an espoused depoliticized terrain is fraught with tensions and contradictions (Dantley, 2005). Cooper and Jordan classified three predominate challenges of micropolitical leadership. The challenges include balancing ideological tensions, purposeful leadership and capacity to sustain a culturally diverse and sensitive staff. The

aspiring school leaders expressed deep commitment to affording Black youth a holistic education that incorporates sociopolitical discourse.

This vein of education is contrary to mainstream reform mandates for depoliticized curriculum standards. Contemporary Black educators find themselves at crossroads in urban spaces with little to no power or support to integrate standardized curriculums with culturally relevant content. This finding was paramount for my study as I sought to understand how contemporary Black school leaders offered alternative perspectives of effective leadership in urban city communities. What motivates them to pick the road less traveled, if they do at all? Historically Black school leaders' sociopolitical systems, particularly in the South, were supported by Black-lead professional organizations and networks (see Walker, 2009; Karpinski, 2006). This led me to question what meditational structures existed to prepare and support contemporary Black school leaders' efforts to balance competing ideologies while transforming schooling processes that focus on sustaining equitable, culturally sensitive and socially just learning environments for Black, other racial minorities and poor students. Majority White middle-class principals now lead racially diverse schools in urban city communities. Although it goes beyond the scope of my study, I would be remiss if I failed to question how these leaders are prepared, encouraged and supported to implement reforms in ways that challenge status quo boundaries and mainstream deficit ideologies to build on students' social capital. What can we learn from contemporary Black school leaders to enhance majority mainstream principals' capacity in urban city communities? Cooper and Jordan's (2009) study further illustrate the importance of scholars conducting research that centers Black school leaders' voices and sociohistorical contexts in reform dialogue. Moreover, as ethical researchers we are responsible for capturing Black school leaders voices to imprint their experiential knowledge in mainstream literature.

Mentoring is a historic 'tried and true' strategy of all-Black schools. Embodying diverse roles was preeminent of Black school leaders. The leaders cultivated a lucrative pipeline of qualified educators as teachers and ultimately school leaders through proactive mentorship activities. Tillman (2005) presents a case study exploring a triad mentoring relationship. The triad includes a novice and veteran teacher and a high school principal. The two teachers were African American females whereas the principal was a White male. This study is significant for all school leaders. The context is urban. Yet, we must be mindful that urban characteristics are rapidly browning suburban landscapes (Dantley, 2005; Freeman, 2010; Kneebone, 2009). White middle-class educators fulfill the majority teaching (82.9%) and principalships (82.4%) in public schools throughout the United States (Bitterman, et al., 2013). White principals are increasingly accountable for retaining highly qualified teaching staffs to help improve academic achievement of majority Black, other racially marginalized and poor student populations. Black teachers' absences in the field, more specifically urban city communities, compounds school leaders' capacity to cultivate sustainable teaching and learning environments. Scholars contend Black role models and culturally relevant pedagogical strategies are critical for improving Black youth life chances (Dantley, 2005; Hilliard, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, it is imperative that school leaders implement a 'tried and true' strategy to help reverse the current trend of Black teachers 'flight' from the field. Tillman (2005) identifies mentoring as an integral tool for transformational school leadership in urban city communities. She notes substantive literature exists on teacher mentor roles, but it is rather unclear on principal mentorship. Should they embody passive or proactive roles? Formally trained veteran teachers generally function as teacher mentors. However, contemporary urban city communities pose challenges frequently inadequately addressed in majority education preparation programs (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Therefore, it is critical for

principals to function proactively to fill gaps left by preparation programs and personal socio-cultural experiences. In this study, Tillman (2005) seeks to identify and understand school leaders' role-in the mentoring process of Black novice educators. Principals as mentors are increasingly paramount to novice teachers' success and by extension students. She frames this study with themes from the literature and emergent data. Her framework recommends principals view mentoring as a tool to (a) improve teacher professional and personal competence, (b) socialize teacher into school environment and simultaneously (c) cultivate self-transformative leadership practices. Tillman's (2005) framework for principals as mentors of change strengthens my understanding of how school leaders espouse conceptual philosophies and practices yet seemingly have implementation difficulty. Her study foregrounds the notion of tensions and contradictions inherent of educational processes that often remain invisible and thus unexplored. In what ways were gender, race/ethnicity, perceived kinship, cultural values and even division of labor significant factors in how this principal's practice enacted a passive mentorship? It is of great importance that I pose a question similarly explored by Jones (2002). What are diverse staff perceptions of White principals' capacity to successfully lead racially/ethnically diverse staffs in urban city communities? The Black novice teacher's voice represented all 27 new teachers. These Black teachers unanimously believed their principal was unconcerned about their professional and personal struggles. This teacher's perception leads me to ask what role, if any, did same-race affiliation assumptions contribute to this White principal's hands-off approach to actively socializing Black novice teachers into the school culture. My question is not to insinuate that only Blacks can successfully lead in urban city communities. The question merely serves to underscore the inherent value of sociohistorical knowledge. Moreover, how do school leaders bridge gaps between their conceptualized and actualized leadership? In this case, the principal's use of

reflective journals and group interviews helped him realize that his embodied passive stance perpetuated gaps between his espoused and actual leadership practice as a mentor. Furthermore, it appears that class status may displace cultural kinship. The principal's persistent passive stance contributed significantly to these majority middle-class Black novice teachers 'flight' from the urban field. Most importantly, Tillman's (2005) study forced me to prepare for a process of 'pulling back' many conceptual layers to derive multiple understandings of contemporary Black principalship.

School leaders often recognize the need to alter traditional standards in urban city communities to affect substantive change for marginalized students. Therefore, I was interested in exploring how Black principal' conceptualization of leadership offer an alternative perspective to effective leadership in communities challenged by sociopolitical issues (i.e., racism, homelessness, unemployment, violence, poverty, drug usage and crime). As discussed in Cooper and Jordan's (2009) study, contemporary Black school leaders found it difficult to align social systems that willingly supported their decisions to implement politically astute policies and practices for educating Black youth. Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) study's subtitle, *Realities, (Re)constructions, and Resolutions*, provides visible hope for principals struggling to balance competing leadership ideologies. Their subtitle provides credence to the power of sociohistorical knowledge as a useful mediating tool for leading in urban city communities rampant with increasing accountability. As I observed from the three African American women principals' lived stories, their individual and collective journeys were burdened with tensions seemingly inevitable of Black principalships in the United States. In highly contestable political terrains, these women cultivated effective leaderships visible only within urban communities. Their leaderships, as Bloom and Erlandson (2003) note, were mediated by a "collective consciousness of identity"

(p. 352), words affirming value of a "rootedness" in Black culture and urban communities (p. 360) and a "spiritual ethic" (p. 362). Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) findings underscore the capacity of contemporary Black school leaders to transform inequitable educational processes. These principals built their leadership practices on collective consciousness. These principals "used their awareness of the bureaucratic culture and the political processes embedded in educational organizations to market a vision for their school" (p. 363) that eclipsed systemically imposed visions (p. 363). Bloom and Erlandson (2003) confirm for scholars like me the inherent value of conducting research in urban city communities from insiders' perspectives. They argued convincingly that these participants' epistemological construction, undergirded by their realities, reconstructions and resolutions, "should be positioned as a legitimate form of knowledge, embodying and conveying meaning about leading, teaching, and understanding what goes on at urban schools" (2003, p. 364). The field's visible recognition and appreciation of these Black principals' voices contributes to pushing us beyond a recurring rhetoric of diversity discourse in educational leadership. We must continue to push until multiple perspectives of racially and ethnically diverse leaders permeate the field. The *words* they learned as children "powerfully communicated directions for living a substantive life" (2003, p. 360). Their childhood social systems' words provided them with authority and power to lead differently in order to affect substantial academic and social improvements for students in urban city communities. Bloom and Erlandson's (2003) study illustrates how sociohistorical tools (i.e., childhood words and stories) are preserved and transcend time and space that help to transform lives. Their findings reinforced my use of CHAT and distributed leadership theory to conceptually frame my study. Moreover, it was encouraging to know that principals committed to affording marginalized students quality

educational services could balance competing ideologies, but more importantly construct alternative practices in lieu of the traditional leadership canons.

Dillard (1995) used critical feminist and interpretive theories to conduct a qualitative case study of a Black female high school principal in an urban environment. Like my proposed argument, Dillard argued that the educational leadership field needs to (re)consider the inclusion of diverse leadership theories and practices. She challenged the educational community to conceptualize alternative leadership perspectives. Dillard (1995) stated,

> [I]f we assume an alternative perspective towards schools, that is, that not everyone desires to participate in schools, schooling, and leadership activities as they have traditionally been conceptualized, then we might also realize that there are persons actively engaged in reconstructive and transformative activities on behalf of themselves and traditionally marginalized groups within schools. (p. 542)

Her critical feminist perspective highlighted three prevailing assumptions of effective leadership and schools that significantly inform my proposed conceptual framework. The assumptions underscored the faulty notions of (1) effective leadership as a systematic technical-rational practice; (2) effective schools as depoliticized; and (3) decontextualized sociocultural environments. Dillard's findings illustrated how cultural tools and sociohistorical knowledge mediated the principal's (re)interpretation of effective leadership, personally and professionally. She explained that the ways the principal "felt, thought, and acted were not random but arose from the way she grew up, the stories and lesson of youth and community, and her own schooling experiences" (1995, p. 558). This principal, unlike Cooper and Jordan's (2009) prospective school leaders, utilized meditational tools to construct and sustain micro and macro political structures required to (re)interpret effective leadership for marginalized stakeholders in her urban

environment. In doing so, Dillard's (1995) principal enacted an alternative leadership practice that countered dominate deficit ideologies of schooling Black, Brown and poor students. Of paramount importance, Dillard's (1995) findings suggested viewing effective leadership from a conceptual framework of transformative and political paradigms to define and ascertain what the practice entails. Her study provided a foundation upon which I built my study of contemporary Black school leaders. Dillard's (1995) study focused on the 'what' of effective leadership, whereas, I focused on the underexplored 'how' of effective school leadership, particularly in urban city communities. Moreover, her work confirmed, "we have much to learn from the voice of those engaged in such work" (Dillard, 1995, p. 542).

Summary

The review of literature highlighted topics of significant importance to how I approached my study and it pointed to the need to prepare principals for the challenges of effectively leading in an increasingly racially and socioeconomically diverse society. Effective school leadership is at the center of current reform programs ushered in by the federal mandate *No Child Left Behind* to adequately address the persistent underachievement of Black, other racial minority and poor students (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005; Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Loeb et al., 2010). Yet, there seemingly is only marginal dialogue around expanding our understanding of the role of racial and ethnic diversity in the field of educational leadership. The study and exploration of racial/ethnic and culturally diverse principals is paramount to the educational processes of schooling Black youth (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Dillard, 1995; Lomotey, 1989, 1994; Tillman, 2003, 2004, 2005b).

Black principals tend to lead differently than their White counterparts. What factors contribute to mediating and sustaining those differences? The literature reviewed overwhelmingly

addressed topics that underscore history, culture and community as mediating factors. However, the researchers did not use these factors to frame their studies when exploring Black principals' perceptions of leading in urban city communities. Therefore, I used CHAT and distributed leadership theory to frame my qualitative research study. I believed that using CHAT and distributed leadership helped to explore the systemic tensions that influenced how they make meaning of their principalship in urban city communities. Tillman (2004) notes, "research by and about African Americans in school leadership positions has not become a dominant strand in the scholarship on educational leadership, leaving gaps in terms of an African American perspective" (p. 171). Moreover, I hope privileging Black principals' voices will expand our understanding of their critical role in transforming educational processes.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In chapter 3, I discuss the implementation of this qualitative multiple case study of contemporary Black school leadership. I begin with discussing the methodological framework. I provide a descriptive detailed discussion of the underlining philosophy, methodology, and methods[4] that framed this qualitative ethnographic multiple case study. Within the middle of this methodological discourse, I provide a discussion that entails a guiding definition; rationale for using analytic induction methodology and constructivist grounded theory methods; and importantly the guidelines that shaped my data collection and analysis. I end the methodological chapter with an explanation of my researcher roles and ethics and data management protocol.

Methodology

Schwandt (2001) explains that a "methodology is a particular social scientific discourse (a way of acting, thinking, and speaking) that occupies a middle ground between discussions of method and discussions of issues in philosophy of social science" (p. 161). The methodological discussions between epistemology, methodology and methods are bi-directional, inherently philosophical, iterative, and fluid with the aim of demonstrating internal consistency between the three qualitative research elements throughout the research process of planning, implementing, reporting, and re-presenting (Carter & Lewis, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2001). Moreover, methodology is a research theory with philosophical underpinnings that provide researchers with justifications, assumptions, and guidance for methods to conduct the study to produce and present trustworthy knowledge (Carter & Little, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Schwandt, 2001). Ethnography case study methodologies occupied the middle ground in this qualitative research study. I selected ethnography and case study to help mediate ongoing discussions between my philosophical

perspectives of knowledge as socially constructed and the multiple methods I employed to gather, describe, analyze, interpret, and report the data findings for this qualitative dissertation research study. Cultural context was important to the nature of this study. Culture, Geetz (1973) describes, "as interworked systems of construable signs" (p. 14). He explains, "[C]ulture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be usually attributed; it is the context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is—thickly described (Geetz, 1973, p. 14).

Philosophy

Qualitative ethnography case study methodology has philosophical underpinnings of (social) constructionism. Constructionism is the philosophical view that "all knowledge, and therefore, all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). This philosophical perspective occupies the middle ground between objectivism and subjectivism on the epistemological paradigm spectrum. The constructionism philosophical perspective claims that human beings through intentional social interactions subject/construct meanings to objects within their world (Crotty, 1998). At the same time, "while humans may be described, in constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if it is not set in a genuinely historical and social perspective" (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). These philosophical assumptions of meaningful knowledge as constructed by human beings within a social context, multiple and temporal, provided the framework for the ongoing methodological decision-making and discussions throughout this qualitative ethnographic multiple case study.

Ethnography

Ethnography is a distinctive qualitative methodology research strategy that has its roots in anthropology and has since branched out into other disciplines like education (Spradley, 1979, 1980; Schwandt, 2001). The heighten interdisciplinary appreciation for ethnography was due to social science and applied researchers' long overdue realization of the need to develop understandings of multiple and diverse 'ways of life' from participants' viewpoints rather than persistently through ethnocentric lenses (Spradley, 1979, 1980; Wolcott, 1997). Therefore, ethnography, a methodology for studying cultures, has become a fundamental heuristic strategy employed to potentially improve humankind through socially just changes (Spradley, 1979, 1980).

Ethnography, Spradley (1979) explains, "consists of a body of knowledge that includes research techniques, ethnographic theory, and hundreds of cultural descriptions. [Importantly,] it seeks to build a systematic understanding of all human cultures from the perspective of those who have learned them" (p. 9-10). Therefore, ethnography was a rational strategy to employ to help construct a holistic understanding of the phenomenon, contemporary Black school leadership in urban city communities. It was the most rational methodology, because it afforded me a theory to help systematically guide the research process of 'doing fieldwork' to construct a thick descriptive narrative account of the social phenomenon within a cultural context (Wax, 1971; Wax & Wax, 1974; Wolcott, 1997). Thus, ethnography is both a qualitative research process and product (Wolcott, 1997; Schwandt, 2001). However, as Wolcott (1997) asserts, it is through the meticulously written descriptive account (i.e., the product) rather than the process (i.e., fieldwork) that trustworthy ethnography of human social and cultural behavior is produced. Wolcott (1997) explains,

> What human beings do and say is not psychological, sociological, [and] anthropological… Those disciplinary dimensions come from the structures we impose on what we see and understand. It is in the ethnographer's pulling together of the whole fieldwork experience, an activity informed by the observations and writings of other anthropologists, that the material takes ethnographic shape as both description of what is going on among a particular social group and a cultural interpretation of how that behavior 'makes sense' to those involved. (p. 164)

Therefore, like traditional anthropologists, I immersed myself in the field for an extended period of time, one year. During the year I was the primary research instrument, which afforded me unfettered access and opportunities to learn what to observe while shadowing as well as what questions to ask in/formally. Hence, I collected multiple sources of data through employing multiple methods "for finding out, for cross-checking, [and] for ferreting out varying perspectives on complex issues and events" (Wolcott, 1997, p. 158). However, also like traditional anthropologists, I spent concerted time writing up the final ethnographic account in the hope of producing four cases that were representative of one another and importantly similar to contemporary Black school leadership in like contexts. Thus, I unknowingly took Wax's (1971) advice of spending a bit more time analyzing and writing up the account than I did conducting fieldwork. Wax (1971) advices, "The sensible researcher [to] allow as much free time to write up [her/]his report as [s/]he spent in the field" (p. 45). She goes on to say, "If [s/]he is really astute and can get away with it, [s/]he will allow [her/]himself more" (p. 45). I allowed myself more time, one and a half year, to organize, describe, analyze, interpret, and re-present the findings into a trustworthy ethnographic account of the phenomenon explored. Moreover, I believe that ethnography was the most appropriate methodological strategy to help explore four cases and then produce a thick de-

scriptive narrative account of "the world from the viewpoint of other human beings who live by different meaning systems" (Spradley, 1980, p. viii).

Multiple Case Study

Case study is a comprehensive research methodology strategy. I consciously selected a methodology strategy that is generally naturalistic, descriptive, process-oriented, meaning making focused, and inductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Crotty, 1998; Yin, 2009). I needed a methodology, like case study, that would help me to manage developing four rich descriptive cases to portray cultural understandings of a contemporary social phenomenon that is indistinguishable from its context, such as contemporary Black school leadership in urban city environments (Yin, 1993; 2009). Importantly, this research methodology "allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 1994, p. 3). It is the preferred research strategy when the researcher asks 'what' or 'how' questions. This strategy was also an appropriate approach for this study. I hoped that the 'what' and 'how' questions would help to explain 'why' nontraditional educational leadership practices tended to be more effective than traditional leadership canons in urban city environments. Case study methodology has become a commonplace design in educational research. Dillard (1995), Lightfoot (1983), Lomotey (1989), and Tillman (2005) are among the numerous educational researchers that used a case study approach to produce important findings and ideas that advanced educational research, theory building, policy, and practice (Yin, 1993). My goal was to design a rigorous ethnographic multiple case study that could contribute to the body of knowledge on educational leadership and might facilitate the improvement of urban education.

The research strategy was an ethnographic multiple case study. Although skeptics criticize qualitative case study methodology as lacking the precision of quantitative designs, re-

searchers from diverse disciplines (i.e., anthropology, education, history, organizational management, psychology, and sociology) have firmly embraced this research tool (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009). Yin (1993) argues that case study allows investigators to define inquiries both broadly and narrowly; treat a contemporary phenomenon and its context as one; and use multiple collection methods and sources of evidence to design rigorous empirical studies. Additionally, the design of a multiple case study as a research strategy has increased over the years. A multiple case study contains more than a single case in the research design. The researcher selects and bounds single cases together because they share potentially similar or dissimilar profile characteristics for the phenomenon under investigation. Multiple case study designs generally result in a higher volume of multiple sources of evidence collected from each single case. The converged evidence from each case is reported separately. It is then used to find similar (i.e., literal replication) and/or dissimilar (i.e., theoretical replication) cross-case findings. The design typically produces compelling evidence that helps to recognize case study in general and multiple case specifically as a rigorous research methodology (Yin, 1994). A multiple case study was the most appropriate methodological approach to help conduct an ethnographic study to explore four contemporary Black school leaders' perspectives of their practices in urban city environments.

Bounding the Ethnographic Multiple Case Study

In this ethnographic multiple case study there were four cases. A case is "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014, p. 28). In this study, the phenomenon that I explored was contemporary Black school leadership. The phenomenon was bound by context, sampling protocols, and time. The phenomenon of contemporary Black school leadership was explored within secondary urban city school communities that are a

part of a large urban school district situated in a medium sized city in a former confederate southeastern state during the 2012-2013 academic school year.

For this study, it was important to understand how the community's history and culture influenced the participants' leadership in urban city environments. Each principal in the study self-labeled and described their school community as urban, inner city, and/or consisting of demographics, psychographics, and physical infrastructures endemic of both socio-geographic spaces. The principals discussed changing their respective school's culture and climate as the first priority to afford their stakeholders opportunities for academic and social successes as community and global productive citizens. They each inherited school communities that mainstream dominant discourse and sub-cultures transformed into publically 'uncomfortable' spaces for effective teaching, learning, and constructing productive citizens. The spaces for educating future productive citizens had become spaces for sub-cultures of gangs, fighting, low expectations, survival, and publicly invisible thus invaluable to the larger community. Mr. Arthur K. Vertner's, principal of *The* Murray School, description of his first day and year as principal of an urban city school scheduled for state takeover underscores the importance of exploring a phenomenon within its context(s) to develop a holistic and multi-layered understanding:

> At the school level, the culture of the school, Matthew told you about our first day here? That was the first day and every day the first year and part of that second year. [O]ne day we had a day where a kid threw like 4 or 5 fights here. And I got on the horn and said, 'Folks, we are not going back to Murray of 2007. Adults get a grip. Kids get a grip. We are not having this'. And I sent a bunch of kids to jail and made public examples. Told them, "Cuff them back here and do the perp walk all the way down the hall so everybody sees what happens if we try to go back to fighting here at Murray School. Not going to happen". And I didn't know that Mrs. Igou was here that day and she told Dr. Jones, "I remember those days, when the culture of this school was gangsters and whatever else gang banging"…and everything else you could imagine was right here in this school. …The culture of the community was the culture of the school. I believe we've adjusted the culture (Lines 1435 – 1449)[5].

This excerpt helps to provide an understanding of this one principal's lived experiences of transforming his school's culture and climate. This principal's experience is not unlike his colleagues in this study. They individually, yet collectively, consistently work to offer their school community stakeholders an alternative[6] paradigm, a counternarrative of survival through education[7] as community and global minded citizens rather than citizens of gang subcultures.

In this study, school leaders consisted of secondary principals. Participant sampling selection was based on the principals' racial/ethnic self-classification as Black, African American, and/or African of the Diaspora. Principals self-identified Black, African American and/or African of the Diaspora descendent as their racial ethnic affiliation. The principal sample for this study consisted of two Black female middle school principals and two Black male high school principals. The principal selection will be discussed in descriptive details in a subsequent section. Therefore, in this study I defined a case as a contemporary Black school leader of a secondary school in an urban city environment.

Time bound the cases in this ethnographic multiple case study. The time boundary for this multiple case study was between fall 2012 through summer 2013, an academic school year, which resulted in approximately 38 weeks of fieldwork. Conducting a multiple case study required extensive time, resources, and energy (i.e., physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional). Thus, akin to a traditional ethnographer, I fully immersed myself into the culture and everyday life of my research participants (Spradley, 1979) as an outsider who quickly became

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[6] Webster defines *alternative* as "expressing a choice; not usual, conventional or traditional; existing outside of the established society, culture, social and economic systems". Thus, in this case *alternative* means creating a worldview that simultaneously counters sub-culture narratives and the mainstream dominate narratives about Black,

[7] Both Ms. Daily & Ms. Stevens talked explicitly about preparing their students with the skills, knowledge, and agency to go beyond surviving, but excelling the current conditions of their communities through education in order to reach back and significantly contribute to a collective transforming of their neighborhoods. In the same spirit, Mr. Biko spoke about preparing community and globally active citizens when discussing the need to teach students how to 'flip & flop' their language, demeanors and attire based on situational awareness in order to not solely survival, but intellectually thrive beyond the culture of street life.

viewed as an 'honorary' insider by the school communities and district at-large. Importantly, I believed that immersing myself into the four school communities as a learner through shadowing for a prolonged period afforded me the time to develop trusting relationships to learn rich, in-depth, descriptive, and multi-layered details about the contemporary Black principalship from my participants and people who are a part of their worlds. Time availed me the opportunity to "grasp the native's point of view, his[/her] relation to life, to realise his[/her] vision of his[/her] world" (Malinowski, 1932, p. 25) for this ethnographic multiple case study.

Unit of Analysis

Four cases bind this ethnographic multiple case study and each case represents a unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is a contemporary Black school leader in an urban city environment. Engeström's (1987) expansive triangle model graphically depicts each unit of analysis. This study focused on the activity of becoming/being an effective school leader through exploring their leadership experiences in urban city environments. And although the principals worked for the same school district, they each conducted their actions and activities within different activity systems (Figure 6). Therefore, it was important to explore each principal's activities and interactions separately and then collectively as cases within this multiple case research study.

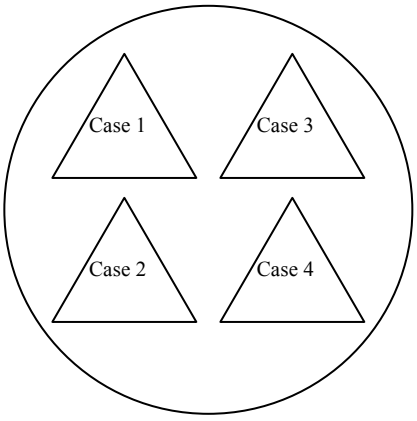

Figure 6: Ethnographic Multiple Case Study of Contemporary Black Secondary School Leaders in Urban City Communities

Site Selection

I believe the research sites selected me. I was invited to conduct my research study in the Beloit County School System by Mrs. Faith Igou[6], my expert field informant. I met Mrs. Igou spring 2011 when traveling with three female colleagues back home from a conference in Cin-

cinnati, OH. We stopped to visit with Mrs. Igou, who talked with each of us about our impending dissertation research topics. I shared with Mrs. Igou my research topic and ideal research study sites. I explained that I planned to conduct a multiple case study at three different secondary school sites in the same school district of a southeastern state.

Mrs. Igou, a former urban city educator, expressed a keen interest in my study. She offered to help me gain access in the district she had recently retired from as a high school principal. I was excited about her interest in my topic and the unsolicited offer to help me identify an urban city school district in which to conduct my study. However, I was also unsure if conducting my research in the City of Montpelier would be economically feasible since I was a full-time doctoral student and lived in a neighboring state. Importantly though, I was aware of my prevailing bias towards Black school leadership in the metropolitan area school districts in the state where I resided. I had worked ten years in an urban secondary school under the leadership of three different Black principals and three different Black superintendents. The local media also influenced my bias and perception of local Black school leaders[7]. I knew that I needed a new context, an alternative context, in which to conduct the study of contemporary Black school leaders in urban city schools. Therefore, during summer 2011, I returned to the City of Montpelier to accept Mrs. Igou's site selection assistance.

The formal site selection assistance began and continued with open lines of communication between myself, Mrs. Igou, and Mr. Mike James the Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education and High Schools. After an in-depth telephone conversation with Mrs. Igou about the nature of my research and the process of gaining access to field sites, I emailed her four documents[8] for her review. I believed that it was important that Mrs. Igou have a good understanding

of my dissertation research project, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process, and her role as my expert field informant.

I was anxious to find out if Mrs. Igou, after reviewing the emailed documents, was still interested in being my field mentor. I sent Mrs. Igou an email on June 28th to make sure she received the documents, to address questions and concerns, and to find out if Mr. Mike James was open to the possibility of the district being a research site. My fears were eased with a July 5th email response from Mrs. Igou. Mr. Mike James was receptive to the idea of the study and consented to speak with me. He gave Mrs. Igou his personal cell phone number for me to contact him to talk further about the nature of the study. After my telephone conversation with Mr. James, I sent him a follow-up email. I attached my IRB Application Proposal[9] to the email for his review and feedback regarding the feasibility of Beloit County School System being an ideal research site. The following email to Mr. James helps to chronicle the site selection process:

> Demetricia Hodges
> Thu 7/7/2011 2:47 PM
> Sent Items
> To: James Mike<james_m@BCSS.EDU>;
> 1 attachment
> Chell—IRB Application Proposal—July 2011.docx
>
> July 7, 2011
> Good Afternoon Mr. James,
>
> It was a pleasure to speak with you this morning. I am excited about the possibility of working with you, Mrs. Igou, and administrators in your school district on my research--Black School Leaders in Urban Environments.
> As we discussed, I have attached my IRB Application for your information and review to find out whether it will be feasible for me to conduct this study in your school district? If so, will I need district IRB Approval? If yes, what is the process?
> As you read over it, should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call (cell--678-699-1107) or email me.
>
> Many Thanks,
> Demetricia L. Hodges
> (c) 678-699-1107
> (h) 678-475-7955
> dhodges3@student.gsu.edu

I constructed an ideal site and participant selection profile for this study. The profile included the following 6 criterions:

1. Self-identify as Black, African American, or as an African Diasporan person;
2. Principal of a secondary school located in an urban environment;
3. Leader of same school for a minimum of four years;
4. Secondary school has at least an 80% Black student population;
5. School is classified as a Title I school; and
6. Graduation/promotion rate is 80% or higher.

However, I (re)constructed a more realistic site and participant selection profile after receiving feedback from Mr. Mike James. In a July 27th email correspondence Mr. James stated, *"Demetricia, No problem with the general direction of your study. However, it would be difficult for you to find your sample in Beloit County based on your current criteria*[10]*"* due to changes in principal reassignments. In the same email he asked, *"How flexible are you with this and how many principals are you needing from our district?"* He indicated that the district had only 2 high school and 2 middle school Black principals in an urban city environment. There was only one Black high school principal with a minimum of 4 years of leadership experience in the same school community. And the district did not have any urban city schools with a graduation and/or promotion rate of 80% or higher. I refused to become discouraged, because I fervently believed that this field site expressively selected me. I reviewed relevant literature, reread my research purpose statement and questions, critically examined the school district website. Then I reconstructed my site and participant criteria to prevent compromising the integrity of the study. The reconstructed site selection and participant profile included,

1. Self-identify as Black, African American, or as an African Diasporan person;
2. School leaders/principals (3-4) of a secondary school located in an urban environment;
3. School leader for at least 3 years and demonstrates a commitment to the school and community;

I explained my rationale for criterion number 3 to Mr. Mike James with empirical literature[11]. I wrote, *"The research indicates that most principals who work in urban environments tend to flee after 'paying their dues', which is typically after 3 years and that is why I selected 4 years at the same school, but if they have been in the district working with the same population of students for at least 3 years or longer that would be ideal as well.*[12]*"*

4. School leader is demonstrating success working with high population of Black students, 80% or greater;
5. School is classified as a Title I school; and
6. School is demonstrating annual incremental improvements towards meeting academic and social goals under principal's leadership.

I believed that criterion number 6, as I wrote to Mr. Mike James, *"demonstrates a mark of effective leadership towards improving the quality of educational services the students are receiving in the community now under that individual's leadership.*[13]*"* I had thoughtfully reconstructed the site and participant profile. I ended my email correspondence to Mr. Mike James, asking, *"What do you think?*[14]*"* I eagerly pressed the email send icon and patiently awaited his reply. It was Saturday, August 6, 2011 that I receive a supportive email from Mr. James with an attached letter of approval for me to conduct my study in the Beloit County School System during the 2012-2013 school year.

When I received the school system's letter of support, I began the initial site selection process. The process began with a set of formal and informal meetings. I believed that it was critically important to develop a physical, emotional, and spiritual understanding and connection with the context(s) in which I would be conducting my study. Therefore, I began planning a day trip to visit what would become my new home for almost a year. The goals for the trip were trifold. I planned to visit and tour the urban city school communities in the district with Mrs. Igou, formally meet and thank Mr. Mike James for his support of my future dissertation research in the

school district, and meet informally with Mr. Arthur K. Vertner, the principal of *The* Murray School and potential research participant. I sent the following emails to set up meetings with the three individuals who helped me to gain access to the four sites that ultimately became a part of my ethnographic multiple case research study.

> **Except from Email Correspondence—Tuesday, August 2, 2011**
> **From:** Demetricia Hodges
> **Sent:** Tuesday, August 02, 201 3:39 PM
> **To:** James Mike <james_m@BCSS.EDU>;
> **Subject:** Hodges--IRB Application Information
> August 2, 2011
> Greetings Mr. James,
> …
> Mr. James, please let me know what you think about the above...give me your feedback as I respect and need it in order to go forward with submitting an accurate IRB Application.
> Even if things do not work out, I plan to visit with Mrs. Igou the third week in August...so it would be nice to meet you also if you are available.
> If you could respond to this email at your earliest convenience I would greatly appreciate it as I will need to know if I should begin identifying another school district to potentially conduct my study.
> Many Thanks...Have a great first week of school!
> Demetricia
>
> **Except from Email Correspondence—Wednesday, August 17, 2011**
> Hodges--IRB Application Information
> Demetricia Hodges
> Wed 8/17/2011 1:23 PM
> Sent Items
> To: faithigou@comcast.net;
>
> August 17, 2011
> Mrs. Igou,
> …
> Also, I did call and leave Mr. Vertner a voice message on the cell phone number that you had given me. I indicated that I was planning to come to Montpelier next Friday, August 27th for a visit in hopes of having an informal meeting with him, because you had spoken highly of his leadership skills in the school and community. I asked him to please return my call to let me know if Friday or exactly what day would be good for him.
> Once I speak with Mr. Vertner, I will either email or text you to let you know the outcome of the conversation.
> Talk with you soon Mrs. Igou...Have a Wonderful Wednesday, Demetricia

The preceding two email excerpts chronicle the beginnings of the co-construction of this research process with site selections.

The site selection visit was successful. I traveled to the City of Montpelier on Friday, August 27, 2011 and conducted a community drive with Mr. Igou. We drove slowly and method-

ically through each of the school communities. *The* Murray School was our first stop. The campus grounds looked impeccably landscaped and maintained around this large-scale brick school building with a beautifully inviting rotunda entrance into the school. Murray is *the* oldest high school in the city built to educate an all-Black student populace[15]. Today, *The* Murray School continues to educate a majority Black student population (90.9%) as a Title I high school. The school once served levels 6^{th} – 12^{th} grades, but now operates solely as a high school of grades 9^{th} – 12^{th} with 605 students. The students live in single residential homes, large multi-generational housing projects[16], and community group homes. The vast majority of students live in economically disadvantaged households (83.8%). However, despite the socioeconomic status of the households, this community is richly advantaged with pride for its Black sociocultural history. This high school is located within approximately one mile of the city's center, an emerging socio-economically revitalized downtown.

The surrounding scenery of urban gentrification did not strike me as unusual. It resembled a renewal and displacement process of residential and local business constituents that I had unfortunately become accustomed while living near a large metropolitan city. The city renewal efforts, I later learned, included an attempt to relocate *The* Murray School to a fourth location so that the highway could be extended through the neighborhood into the south side of downtown as part of the city's urban economic development[17]. We parked on the east side of the school near the football stadium. As I looked around the school's adjacent neighborhood, it was easy to observe that there was a lack of significant urban renewal and revitalizing occurring south of the city. However, after my hour-long conversation with Mr. Vertner, I was encouraged that there was a different kind of renewal and revitalizing occurring throughout this urban city school community. I left Mr. Vertner's office to meet Mrs. Igou, who waited for me in the Ninth Grade

Academy wing of the school building. As we drove out of the school's parking lot my inner spiritual being confirmed to my physical research being that *The* Murray School would be my first case site in this ethnographic multiple case study. The community drive continued with turns and stops within and in-between several urban city school community sites through and around the City of Montpelier.

The LaVaughn Academy was a stop on our community drive. It became the second case site in this study. It was a zoned neighborhood middle school with a built-in choice component for students interested in learning through a fine arts curriculum. This middle school academy serves approximately 429 students. This school had a slightly more racial and ethnically diverse student body compared to the other case sites. This school, a majority Black student population (79%), had more White students (2%) and a growing Hispanic student population (19%)[18]. However, this urban city school, like the other case sites, serves students from low income households (95%) who also live in similar housing structures with the vast majority residing in rental property since the city closed many of the housing projects[19] in this community. The school is a fairly new two-story structure. It is as beautifully pleasant on the outside as inside of the building. There are newly planted tree saplings in front of the well-manicured school grounds. The stakes are still in the ground to help support the trees to grow upright. The backside of the school spills over onto a neighborhood park that teachers often use to facilitate various outside activities with their students, especially the physical education teachers. This school is located on a railroad line in a former bustling industrial and warehouse area approximately four miles from the city's center core.

The Seeds of Hope Academy was the third case site. The site was located approximately two miles northeast of the city's urban development center. This case site was an expansive re-

zoned multi-neighborhood urban city school community. We stopped several times during the community drive to note the district closed schools in neighborhoods that became a part of the Seeds of Hope Academy community[20]. The school is an older building that sits on a nicely landscaped and quiet lot. This middle school serves 325 students. It has a majority Black student population (92.4%) who also live in economically disadvantaged households (95%). The families in this community live in an urban city food injustice area. The community's access to grocery stores with quality products is non-existent. However, there is an area food bank within less than two miles of this school community and a food truck that periodically come into the neighborhoods to sell fresh produce[21]. There is public transportation for this urban school community. Therefore, residents without personal transportation tend to rely on public transportation to access shopping venues outside of this retail and food injustice urban city community.

Hails High School urban city community became the last stop and fourth case site. Hails High School is located approximately six miles east of the city in a suburban neighborhood with urban conditions and characteristics. The school is a large one-story building. It sits adjacent to several tennis courts, a country club golf course, and public park with a walking path. This high school serves 568 students. The student population is majority Black (97%) and economically disadvantaged (81.6%). The students are bused into this school community from outside neighborhoods because the district closed their neighborhood high school(s). The students catch the city public bus to and from school when they miss their school bus. The public bus stop was placed strategically in front of the school for this student population. Thus, Hails High School has seemingly ceased to be a neighborhood school for those who live in the residential community. However, the school leader is encouraged of the residents' future reinvestment into the school as the pride of the community.

The urban city school community drive with Mrs. Igou was invaluable. Mrs. Igou helped me to identify four sites that became a part of this ethnographic multiple case study. I selected all four sites because I learned from Mrs. Igou that the two middle schools were the feeder schools for the two high schools. The middle school feeder pattern was not an initial aspect of my site selection criteria. I did not think about feeder patterns as being a potentially important criterion. It was only during the community drive with Mrs. Igou that I realized the inherent value of learning from the four contemporary Black school leaders of how they work individually and collectively with each other to prepare their students for each successive level in academia and life beyond their respective school community sites. I left Beloit County School System that evening with a potential research participant, Mr. Vertner, and four identified case sites (Table 1). Now I just had to wait for IRB approval to begin the snowballing process of selecting participants.

Table 1. Multiple Case Sites in Urban City School Communities

Cases	School Name	Secondary School Grade Levels	Title I Status/ Economic Disadvantage Rate	Black Student Population	(Re)Segregated Black School Community	School Label/ Characterization (By School Leader)	Proximity to City Core
1	*The* Murray School	$9^{th} – 12^{th}$	83.8%	90.9%	Yes	Inner City	<1 Miles
2	LaVaughn Academy	$6^{th} – 8^{th}$	99.8%	79.0%	Yes	Urban	4 Miles
3	Seeds of Hope Academy	$6^{th} – 8^{th}$	>95%	92.4%	Yes	Urban	<2 Miles
4	Hails High School	$9^{th} – 12^{th}$	81.6%	97%	No[8]	Urban with Inner City Structures & Conditions	6 Miles

[8] The Hails High School community is mixed racially and socioeconomically. However, the students' neighborhoods are predominately Black and poor. The vast majority of students do not live within the neighborhoods that make up the immediate school community. The students are bused into this school community.

Less than a year later on July 31, 2012, I received an email notification from the Georgia State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approving my dissertation research study. And two days later, August 2, 2012, I entered the field, a new but familiar space, which had selected me to become an honorary resident from August 2, 2012 through July 9, 2013.

Participant Selection

The participant selection overlapped with the site selection process. There were four participants who met the reconstructed demographic criteria 1-3 (see Table 2). They worked in one of the four school communities that I had identified during the August 27, 2011 community drive with Mrs. Igou as sites meeting the reconstructed context characteristics and conditions criteria 4-6,

(1). Self-identified as Black, African American, or as an African Diasporan person;
(2). School leader/principal of a secondary school located in an urban environment;
(3). School leader for at least 3 years and demonstrates a commitment to the school and community;
(4). School leader is demonstrating success working with high population of Black students; 80% or greater;
(5). School is classified as a Title I school; and
(6). School is demonstrating annual incremental improvements towards meeting academic and social goals under principal's leadership.

Table 2. Demographics of Participants

Cases	School Leader*	Gender	Racial/ Ethnic Self-Identify	Age	Type of School	Self-Label of School Community	Years of School Leadership in Urban City School Communities
1	Arthur Kinkle Vertner	Male	Black with Caribbean Heritage	Early 40s	Neighborhood zoned high school	Inner City	• 3 years, teacher at urban high school • 1 year, assistant principal trainee at urban middle school • 5 years, principal of inner city high school
2	Frances Stevens	Female	Black	Mid 30s	Neighborhood zoned fine arts middle school with a built-in a choice selection	Urban	• 1 year, assistant principal of inner city middle school • 1 year, assistant principal of urban high school (9th Grade Academy)

					for a small percentage (less than 5%) of out-of-zone students interested in pursuing a fine arts curriculum		• 1 year, assistant principal of urban middle school • 1 year, principal of urban middle (magnet) school
3	Unique Daily	Female	Black	Late 30s	Neighborhood zoned middle school	Urban	• 3 years, teacher (leader) at urban elementary school • 1 year, assistant principal of urban elementary school • 1 year, assistant principal of urban middle school • 2 years, assistant principal of urban high school • 2 years, principal of urban middle school
4	Steve Biko	Male	Black	Early 40s	Neighborhood zoned high school	Sprawling urban community with inner city structures	• 3 years, assistant principal of sub/urban high school • 2 year, principal of urban high school • Less than 1 year as principal of current urban city school in suburban community

****Each of the participants selected pseudonyms for their personal names and school**.

Once in the field, I relied on both Mrs. Igou and Mr. Vertner to help me gain access into each subsequent case site through the referral sampling method.

Snowball Sampling

I used chain referral sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling, to recruit participants. Chain referral is snowball sampling. It begins by asking expert informants to recommend ideal participants from their social and/or professional associated networks who they believe would be willing to participant in the study (Patton, 2002). I relied on Mrs. Igou, my expert field informant, to begin the initial referral process. Mrs. Igou, is a well-respected Black educator of teachers and school leaders in the Beloit County School System. She recently retired from the large urban school district after serving 35 years of which 15 years were as a school leader in urban city environments. She still possesses social capital in this school district. Her social networks with district office administrators and school leaders helped me to secure the school dis-

trict as a field site and gain access to school community sites and participants. I believed that chain referral was the best method given Mrs. Igou's multiple insider statuses and my intentional centeredness as an outsider within the state, city, county, school district, and communities[9].

The chain referral process began and ended with my first research participant, Mr. Arthur K. Vertner. He was referred to me by Mrs. Igou to begin the process. He was the senior Black school leader of secondary schools in the district. He has personal and professional relationships with all of the school leaders in the district, especially those leading secondary schools. He assured me that the Black school leaders would be willing to participant in this study, especially given that both he and Mrs. Igou were a part of the project[22]. Mr. Vertner and Mrs. Igou are both held in high esteem by their colleagues throughout the district for their educational leadership knowledge and experiences, particularly by those working in urban city school communities.

Mr. Vertner introduced me to his school district colleagues. He received permission from Mr. Mike James to allow me to attend their first Principal's Meeting of the school year. The Principal's Meeting proved to be the prime opportunity for me to meet as many of the district's administrators, directors and school leaders, particularly those directing and leading schools in urban city communities. I scanned the room and took notes of those visibly present in the room. I wondered which school leaders, besides Mr. Vertner, would become a part of my study. I followed the referrals of Mr. Vertner and Mrs. Igou. I valued their insider standpoints[23], expert knowledge, and direct access to their colleagues in the district.

As diverse[10] colleagues stopped at our table located near the top of the stairs in the back of the auditorium to talk with Mr. Vertner, he introduced me as graduate student from Georgia

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[9] There are multiple communities within this study that Mrs. Igou and the research participants helped me gain access, knowledge, and experience. The communities consisted of, but were not limited to teachers, school leaders, political leaders, religious leaders, neighborhoods, and social organizations.

State University who would be interning with him for several weeks. He mentioned that I would be shadowing him during my internship to learn more about his leadership throughout the school community. I appreciated him setting the tone to help maintain the ethical standards and expectations that I and the other research participants would maintain keeping in the spirit of the IRB Consent documents[24] for this project to ensure the protection of all involved and associated with the study. Before the end of the meeting, I had met all of his colleagues. Importantly, Mr. Vertner had introduced me to school leaders who would become integral parts of the whole study. His personal introduction of me to the school leaders was the beginning of his role in the snowball sampling process.

His role continued by formally inviting colleagues to participate. He sent emails and had personal conversations that were integral in helping me gain direct access to participants and their school communities. Mr. Vertner sent this email to a Black male colleague who was willing to participate, but whose school community did not met the context criterion for this study.

Excerpt from Email Correspondence – Tuesday, September 25, 2012

FW: Invitation to Participate in Research Study
Vertner Arthur <vertern_ak@bcss.edu>
Tue 9/25/2012 8:30 AM
To: Whitehead Earl <whitehead_e@BCSS.EDU>;
Cc: Demetricia Hodges <dhodges3@student.gsu.edu>;
2 attachments (145 KB)
Adult Consent Form Approved---Hodges Study--2012.pdf; School Leader Consent Form Approved---Hodges Study--2012.pdf;

Earl,

Below (and attached) is the study that we discussed at our Principals' meeting last week. I have included Ms. D. Hodges in the CC so you two can connect.

AKV

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[10] The colleagues were diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, age, experiences, school levels (i.e., elementary, middle, high school) and district office administrators. Majority of those attending the Principal's Meeting were White men and women. Black men were a minority race and gender at this administrative meeting.

His referral recommendations and Mrs. Igou's[25] ongoing role in the snowballing process helped me to readily gain access to my second case site and research participant, Ms. Frances Stevens at LaVaughn Academy. Ms. Stevens began her career as an assistant principal working within and in-between the new school leadership paradigm that Mr. Vertner was constructing with the mentorship of Mrs. Igou during his early years as principal of Murray's middle and high schools. Ms. Stevens continued the snowballing process. She worked with my third research participant as her assistant principal. She took me to a middle school basketball tournament to informally meet Ms. Unique Daily[26], school leader of Seeds of Hope Academy. We stood together in a semi-circle talking in the concession stand area. We talked openly and causally in between frequent moments of laughter. Ms. Daily smiled confidently as she told me, *"You're family! Anyone who is a part of Mrs. Igou's family is a part of our family. When would you like to come to the best middle school in the city?"*[27] In that statement, she excitedly agreed to participate and welcomed me to conduct my research study in her school community at the beginning of second semester. While in the field at the third research site, I attended a Principal's Meeting as Ms. Daily's intern shadow. I joined the contemporary Black principals who work in urban city school communities for lunch, a monthly traditional gathering for 'table talk',[11] away from the larger traditional community of principals when a working lunch is not provided by the district. I also secured my forth participant with the help of Mr. Vertner. He had a personal conversation with Mr. Steve Biko, principal of Hails High School, in the restaurant parking lot as we prepared to

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[11] I am defining 'table talk' in this context as a mediating cultural artifact used by contemporary Black community leaders in which they meet around a table (i.e., public and private) to strategically talk about how to move the local Black agenda forward in their communities, which is intricately tied to the national Black agenda for the improvement of life for all human beings in the United States. It is an insider meeting around a table with diverse leaders, who too are working to advance the (un)spoken educational agenda of educating Black, Brown, and poor students for '*purposeful citizenship*' through an educational paradigm intentionally constructed to amply prepare their students as future community and global leaders in entrepreneurship, business and economics, government and politics, social, legal and human justice.

return to the Principal's Meeting. Mr. Vertner asked me to join the two of them. He explained to Mr. Biko that we were working together on my dissertation research project and that it was a great opportunity for him to be reflective about the work of school leadership in urban city communities. Mr. Biko smiled at me and said, *"You know that I already invited you to come to my school. I'll be happy to help you with your research. When would you like to come?"* Mr. Vertner quickly explained, *"Well, I dropped the ball. I forgot to ask you earlier. She had to wait for me or another school leader to refer you as a participant. Brother, she's a good sister. She's family! My Dean of Students, Mr. Broadwater, adores her spirit and professionalism*[28]*."* I smiled and thanked Mr. Vertner for his referral and Mr. Biko for agreeing to meet with me to talk more in-depth about my study and his role as a voluntary participant[29]. I got into the passenger side of Ms. Daily' car. I closed my eyes and quietly thanked God for those who had become integral and multiple parts of making this research process whole, especially Mrs. Igou and Mr. Vertner for their roles of beginning and ending the sampling process. Thus, I created a network (Figure 7) that visually depicts the participant selection process. Just as importantly, the network illustrates the sociocultural interconnectedness of the participants. The sociocultural interconnectedness accounted for their similar thinking and behaviors as contemporary Black school leaders in urban city communities. It also accounted for the absence of an identifiable negative case(s) based on differences in the areas of gender, education, school level, and practices, which I re-presented with

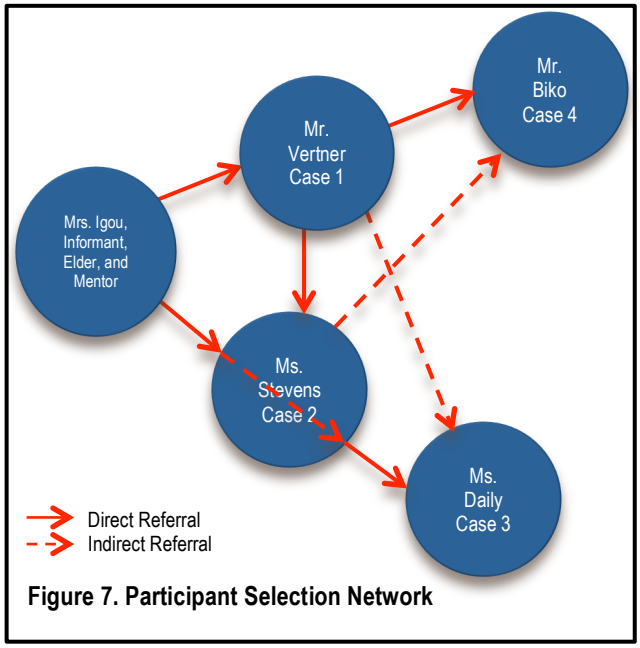

Figure 7. Participant Selection Network

thick descriptions, analyses, and interpretations in chapter four and then discussed in chapter five.

Methods of Data Collection

Ethnographic case study methodology employs multiple measurement techniques. These techniques, Crotty (1998) explains, are the methods or "procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question" (p. 3). Multiple methods strengthen ethnographic case study research design. As Wolcott (1997) speaks to the power and value of employing multiple data collection methods, he states,

> The anthropologist's trade secret…is that he or she would never for a minute rely solely on a single observation, a single instrument, a single approach. The strength of fieldwork lies in its…[crystallization], obtaining information in many ways rather than relying solely on one. (p. 158)

Thus, ethnographers understand that the strength of employing multiple methods is to obtain multiple sources of data from the participants' viewpoints to construct a thick descriptive account of the cultural phenomenon, which is 'doing ethnography' (Spradley, 1979, 1980; Wolcott, 1997; Schwandt, 2001). Multiple methods also underscore the data analysis methodologies of analytic induction and constructivist grounded theory methods. The data collection methods used for this multiple research design included interviews, shadowing, fieldnotes, reflection and reflexive journals, memos, online discussion forum, document analysis, and digital still shots. I selected each method with the hope of addressing the following research questions for this study.

1. How do contemporary Black secondary school leaders' conceptualizations of leadership contribute to their practices?

2. What are contemporary Black secondary school leaders' perspectives of their leadership practices?
3. How, for contemporary Black secondary school leaders, do the practices represent an alternative to educational leadership that contributed to their effectiveness?

I compiled multiple sources of evidence. I employed a multiple analysis methodological approach of analytic induction and constructivist grounded theory method. I employed this multiple approach to help organize, describe, analyze, interpret, and re-present the data findings in different genres to underscore the invaluableness of four Black principals' lived experiences (Ellingson, 2009). There were four separate cases for this study. I conducted each case separately to reduce stress and potentially confusing the data sources from each case. I spent an average of eight weeks learning and collecting data from each participant.

Shadowed Observations

Shadowing is both an embodied perspective and qualitative research method of systematic data collection (Czarniawska, 2014). McDonald (2005) describes shadowing as "a research technique which involves a researcher closely following a member of an organization over an extended period of time" (p. 456). Shadowing allowed me to move seamlessly across the participant observation spectrum of diverse roles. Thus, while in the field shadowing the participants, depending on the situation, I employed a range of participant observation roles that Gold (1958) identified: complete participant, participant-as-observer, observer-as-participant, and complete observer. Gold (1958) explains,

> While a field worker cannot be all things to all [wo/]men, [s/]he routinely tries to fix [her/]himself into as many roles as [s/]he can, so long as playing them helps to develop

relationships with informants in [her/]his master role (i.e., participant-as-observer, etc.) (p. 219).

I conducted shadowed observations an average of three days per week for approximately eight weeks. I spent the entire day observing each participant's actions and interactions. Shadowed observations afford me the opportunity to establish professional and personal rapports with the participants and stakeholders; become familiar with the context; and learn what questions to ask during interviews. Just as important, shadowing afforded me opportunities to attend professional meetings and personal gatherings with participants' permission. Attending meetings with the participants throughout their school communities helped to increase my understanding of how they work to become effective school leaders in urban city communities. I took copious notes, which were thick descriptions that included diagrams, digital stills, and in the moment thoughts and questions. The notes documented participants' social (inter)actions throughout their workday as well as their perspectives of aspects of the work that I captured through informal conversations throughout the course of the day and then through more formal conversations that we dubbed as 'end of the day debriefings'. The work of becoming an effective school leader begins in their imagination and is actively distributed across multiple leaders. The work is mediated and shaped by their belief system(s), which they model and share with multiple leaders. The multiple leaders also imagine alternative educational paradigms that prepare students as inclusive productive citizens of community and global spaces. Thus, the school leaders in this study work daily to shape and provide opportunities for students' success as productive citizens.

Interviews

I conducted three semi-structured ethnographic interview sessions with each participant. The interview sessions were organized by topics with relevant semi-structured interview ques-

tions (see Appendix A-Interview Protocol). The first interview session topic focused on gathering Introductory and Background data about their educational experiences and path into the field of education. The subsequent interview sessions focused on learning about their Leadership Practices and their perspectives of Effective Leadership in Urban Environments. Each session consisted of ten semi-structured questions. The semi-structured interviews allowed me the flexibility and fluidity to explore unexpected topics and themes important to research participants as they shared stories about their daily lived experiences (Mason, 2002). Therefore, I asked additional, probing, questions beyond the ten semi-structured ones. I asked probing questions in the hope of collecting data that would construct a holistic understanding of each contemporary school leader's perspective of their leadership practices in urban city communities. Interview sessions varied according to the participants' desired interview location, availability, preparedness, and comfort level of sharing 'on the record' and 'private pauses' to learn from their perspectives about the contemporary Black principalship. I conducted the interviews in private locations that had minimal distractions. Most interviews were conducted in the school leaders' office or conference room. Although these were private spaces, closed doors did not minimize distractions because the participants in this study have an 'open door policy' for all of their stakeholders. A couple interviews were conducted in locations outside of the school site. For instance, Mr. Biko and I conducted the second interview at a university's library because it was a convenient space and time for him. Our third interview was conducted at a local restaurant because Hails High School was under construction for the summer and Mr. Biko and his staff were still in the process of relocating to a temporary school site during the building construction.

I respected the school leaders' time and set up interviews according to their availability. I was always flexible and mindful of their professional and personal commitments. For instance,

on the morning of Tuesday, June 4, 2013, I drove to the City of Montpelier to conduct the second part of the first interview with Ms. Stevens. The interview was planned to begin at 9:00 AM but did not begin until 4:59 PM after we returned from a four-hour road trip to meet her mother at the Social Security Administration Office. The more flexible I was, the more they reciprocated with affording me more of their time and stories.

The interviews, scheduled to last ninety minutes or less, spanned from a minimum of one hour to four hours depending on the topic, leadership knowledge, and experience (see Table 3).

Table 3. Interview Schedule of Contemporary Black School Leaders

Interviews	**Arthur K. Vertner** ***The* Murray School** **Case 1**	**Frances Stevens** **LaVaughn Academy** **Case 2**	**Unique Daily** **Knotting Hill MS** **Case 3**	**Steve Biko** **Hails High School** **Case 4**
I-1	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Tues. Oct. 30, 2012 *Start* Time: 3:19 PM *Duration:* 2hr 10min 26sec	*Place:* Office Conference Room *Dates:* Thurs. Dec. 20, 2012 Tues. June 4, 2013 *Start* Times: 3:19 PM 4:59 PM *Duration:* 2hr 27min 27sec	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Tues. March 19, 2013 *Start* Time: 9:18 AM *Duration:* 1hr 10min 24sec	*Place:* Principal's Office *Dates:* Tues. March 19, 2013 Tues. May 7, 2013 *Start* Times: 1:37 PM–2:29 PM 4:27 PM *Duration:* 2hr 24min 08sec
I-2	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Wed. Dec. 26, 2012 *Start* Time: 12:50 PM *Duration:* 1hr 2min 32sec	*Place:* Office Conference Room *Date:* Thurs. June 13, 2013 *Start* Time: 4:29 PM *Duration:* 1hr 11min 18sec	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Mon. June 3, 2013 *Start* Time: 9:42 AM *Duration:* 1hr 47min 51sec	*Place:* University Library *Date:* Sun. June 2, 2013 *Start* Time: 6:43 PM *Duration:* 1hr 12min 14sec
I-3	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Thurs. May 23, 2013 *Time:* 8:14 AM – 3:04 PM *Duration:* 4hr 00min 39sec	*Place:* Front Office Admin. Assistant's Desk *Date:* Thurs. June 13, 2013 *Start* Time: 6:55 PM *Duration:* 1hr 18min 40sec	*Place:* Principal's Office *Date:* Mon. June 3, 2013 *Start* Time: 3:37 PM *Duration:* 2hr 11min 35sec	*Place:* Restaurant *Date:* Fri. June 14, 2013 *Start* Time: 12:36 PM *Duration:* 2hr 37min 04sec

I noticed that during the first interview with Ms. Stevens, who was in the first months of her first principalship, that at times she seemed to ponder at length over certain questions. Prior to our second interview, she asked me to email her the interview questions. I emailed the interview questions for sessions two and three, which we scheduled to conduct in the morning and late afternoon of June 13, 2013 respectively. I believed that she wanted to be prepared for the interview sessions. I too wanted to be prepared for the interview sessions. Prior to the first inter-

view sessions, I reviewed the questions, practiced using the digital recorder, and packed extra batteries for the recorder. After each interview session, I began transcribing the interviews and when done I emailed participants' their transcript. In the emails I asked the participants to prepare for the next interview by reviewing the transcript to ensure they were satisfied with their responses. I also asked them to think about the highlighted responses and be prepared to respond to the follow-up questions I had typed in the transcript to discuss at the beginning of our next interview.

I digitally recorded the interview sessions with participant's permission. However, there were moments during the interviews with Mr. Vertner when I paused the digital recorder at his request. During those 'off the record' pauses, or private pauses[30]', he felt comfortable sharing his innermost private and personal thoughts about aspects of his principalship in the school district. We developed a trusting relationship that afforded him, all of the school leaders, the private space to share their personal perspectives of school leadership both on-and-off records—digital, written, and typed. During those 'private pauses' I listened intently because I believed that the participants were helping me to construct a multilayered understanding of contemporary Black school leadership in urban city contexts. After each interview session, I sat in my vehicle, jotted notes of ideas and thoughts from the interview, and I was conscious not to jot notes on the 'private pauses' learning moments.

Journal(s)

I maintained a field journal. Bailey (2007) recommends delineating sections in the field journal for 'detailed descriptions', 'things forgotten', 'analytic ideas and inferences', 'personal feelings', 'things to do', and 'reflexive thoughts'. I included all of the recommended sections in my field journals. I wrote field notes in actual journal books[31] when I initially entered the field.

At the end of each day in the field I expanded my observational jot notes and when time permitted, which was rare, I began transcribing the field notes. Later, instead of taking notes in journal notebooks I took an Apple iPad into the field and took notes using Evernote software. I also used the Evernote software to help organize and store my field notes, which include typed text, digital voice recordings, and digital still shots. I used different software to help me manage research processes in this study. I used Atlas.ti, qualitative data analysis software, to write, organize, and store memos about 'analytic ideas and inferences' (Bailey, 2007).

Online Discussion Forum

I facilitated a professional on-line discussion forum for the contemporary Black school leaders in this study. I organized the Wikispaces discussion forum to emulate the safe 'carpooling' space experienced by their predecessors of all-Black schools. In *Hello* Professor (2009), professor Byas revealed that he felt most 'free to express himself' when he actively engaged in professional collaborations with colleagues who were motivated to attain the same objective—quality educational services for *all* children, especially Black youth. Carpooling to and from professional Association meetings provided an informal forum for the school leaders to collaborate. Walker (2009) notes, "carpooling created an environment in which the professors could begin to respond informally to ideas they had heard in the national settings and to speak frankly with one another about the possibilities and complications of implementing them in local settings" (p. 127). To further encourage the participants to 'speak frankly' while carpooling in the Wikispaces online vehicle, I requested that they all select and use pseudonyms. I facilitated three discussion sessions in two-week intervals. The 'carpooling discussion sessions' focused on the purpose of the study, developing an understanding of the contemporary Black principalship in urban city communities (see Appendix B-Online Discussion Protocol). The participants responded to the

initial discussion questions and to their colleagues' responses during each of the posting timeframes. It was my hope that the discussion forum would become a virtual focus group. I anticipated the challenges of attempting to facilitate a focus group, which is why I chose the online discussion forum. I believed that this method would be more amenable to their schedules given that they could participate at anytime from anywhere. However, this data collection method was fraught with unexpected challenges. I faced the challenges of getting the participants to set up their account and then log on during each session's timeframe to participate in the discussion. I realized that asking them to participate in an online discussion was similar to requesting them to complete an online survey instrument, which has a low response rate. I initially experienced a similar low response rate. I later observed an increased response rate after sending the participants a thoughtful handwritten card thanking them for their ongoing participation in this study and inserted a revised discussion session posting schedule, which I believe helped to greatly improve the response rate.

Data Management and Recording

I created an inventory of the entire data set. Yin (1994) recommends maintaining a database separate from the final case study report to preserve the original raw data source evidence for future review. I created four separate electronic databases with the data coded to maintain the privacy of my research participants. I maintained the separate databases on my (1) home personal desktop computer; (2) personal laptop; (3) two separate external drives—one was always on my person and the other locked in a file cabinet in my home; and (4) web-based storage file (i.e., Dropbox). Each of these electronic mediums has a secured password that only I possess. I organized the hard copies of collected data sources by participant (i.e., case and/or unit of analysis) into color-coded file folders. The folders are stored in a locked file cabinet located in my private

residence. I kept the file cabinet locked at all times. I believed implementing this data management system (i.e., audit trail) increased the dependability and confirmability audits of this research study.

Data Analysis Methods

> *Whether viewed as science or art, analysis in qualitative inquiry is recursive and begins almost at the outset of generating data (Schwandt, 2001, p. 7).*

I needed a generative methodological approach that would help facilitate the processes of discovery, analysis, description, interpretation, and importantly development of an understanding of a social phenomenon occurring in naturalistic settings to produce research results accessible to practitioners and policymakers (Goetz & LeCompte, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 1994). However, to produce trustworthy results that would tell counternarratives of marginalized groups; social processes; social interactions; and situations from a multilayered cultural and historical perspective, I employed three analytic methods. Goetz, LeCompte (1981) and others encourage the use of multiple methods of analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006). Researchers, Goetz and LeCompte (1981) confirm, "generally use a variety of overlapping techniques rather than relying on a single approach" (p. 56) to increase the rigor and qualitative validity of the research results. Ellingson (2009) further explains, "[i]ncorporating differing forms of analysis and genres enables researchers to cover more ground, incorporating the researchers' positionality, contrasting or conflicting points of view, patterns, and exceptions" (p. 11). Importantly, "[m]ultiple analysis are brought together to develop a coherent understanding of the experience" (Gallo-Fox, 2015, p. 83), which is what I sought to accomplish. More than necessarily develop a substantive theory, I sought to develop a local sociocultural theory and/or a holistic understanding of an alternative framework of effective school leadership that similar school

community and district contexts could adopt and adapt. Therefore, I integrated three analytic methods: modified analytic induction, constructivist ground theory and context analysis. Although the three analytic methods differed in approaches to analyzing data, a methodological relationship existed. A methodological relationship existed through nine overlapping orientations toward the processes of collecting and analyzing qualitative data. The orientations consisted of: constructionist perspective; phenomenon focused; emphasize development of descriptive understandings (i.e., theoretical understandings) through identifying patterns of behaviors, perceptions, and interactions; coding and categorizing large volumes of data; emergence of concepts/themes throughout research process; iterative/recursive process; flexible and systematic strategies; inductive and interpretive; and researcher reflexivity to increase rigor and qualitative validity (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Denzin, 2007; Gilgun, 1995; Goetz & LeCompte, 1981; Hammersley, 2010; Julien, 2008; Katz, 2001; Preissle, 2008; and Schwandt, 2001).

The use of multiple methods allowed for a rigorous approach to collect and analyze the data. Each analytic approach was employed for a specific methodological purpose. I employed modified analytic induction methodological approaches to simultaneously collect and analyze the data while in the field. I entered the first field site, *The Murray School*, interested in effective school leadership in urban city communities. I believed contemporary Black school leaders who self-select to work in socio-politically contested environments lead differently, like their pre-*Brown* predecessors, than the majority others and thereby were more effective in transforming the trajectory of blighted urban city school communities. However, this was my subjective belief about contemporary Black school leadership. Therefore, I needed to develop an empirical understanding of 'why' and 'how' it did/not manifest in blighted urban city school communities. Thus, with this as the focus of my research, I immersed myself in the first field site, surrounding com-

munities, and my participant's shadow. Shadowing, as discussed in the Methods of Data Collection section, helped me develop an initial understanding of why and how the participants work to become effective school leaders in urban city communities. Importantly, extensive and intensive shadowing helped to inform and shape informal collegial discussions, conversations, debriefings, and reflections; formal interviews; collection of documents and artifacts; and participant referrals. Thus, the aforementioned multiple ethnographic data collection methods helped me to begin developing an initial theory of contemporary Black school leadership. Initially it consisted of concepts like 'turning point(s)'; 'I had that label'; 'learning that can make a difference'; 'changing our existence'; 'family and community architects'; and 'putting Br'er Rabbit back in briar patch' as categories that helped to frame a contextual understanding of why and how the participant(s) were able to ultimately construct an alternative framework of effective school leadership in urban city communities. Moreover, after spending approximately six weeks with Mr. Vertner, I entered subsequent field sites believing that the referred participants would increasingly help facilitate the development of a descriptive understanding of the phenomenon. Of interest, I was unsure of how Mr. Biko, a new school leader in the district, would fit in the process of developing this emerging understanding of effective school leadership. However, I was reminded by my field mentor, Mrs. Igou, that it was important for me to learn a multiplicity of perspectives and facets of school leadership and that Mr. Biko could add another layer to developing a holistic understanding. I followed her advice of purposeful sampling. Mrs. Igou's methodological advice aligned with the classic analytic induction strategy of identifying negative/contradictory cases that could help to further develop analytic ideas; descriptive understanding of the phenomenon; and qualitative validity and credibility (Hammersley, 2010; Katz, 2001; Mason, 2002; Presissle, 2008). Moreover, it is important to note that while I was immersed in one field site, I maintained

ongoing communications and interactions with the other participants in their field sites and throughout the school district and greater community. I believed that this data collection and analysis method helped me to intentionally focus on the phenomenon. This method also helped me to critically think about how best to work with the voluminous multiple data sources to deepen my level of understanding about the phenomenon. Furthermore, modified analytic induction afforded me the flexibility to rigorously collect and analyze data through processes of sustained immersion and iterative interaction within and across field sites and datasets. The use of constructivist grounded theory methods and content analysis helped to further my analytic process. I used constructivist grounded theory methods predominately to support a systematic process of coding the data (Charmaz, 2000; 2006). I used content analysis similarly. I used it as a flexible method to systematically synthesize a wide range of data sources to identify "both conscious and unconscious messages communicated by text (i.e., what is stated explicitly as well as what is implied or revealed by the manner in which context is expressed)" (Julien, 2008, p. 120). In the paragraphs that follow, I documented how I employed the multiple analytic methods.

I systematically approached the data, coding it line-by-line, to determine what was going on. The line-by-line coding process is a built-in check mechanism. This process functioned to ensure that I pursued a holistic understanding of the data that superseded the conceptual ideas I brought into the field about contemporary Black principals, school leadership, and urban city communities. I performed two rounds of initial coding of the data. I began the line-by-line coding of raw data by hand while in the field. I handwrote process and in-vivo codes to capture the activity of each data line in the left-hand margin of my expanded field notes. Charmaz (2000) warns that the initial codes "help us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in unforeseen directions" (p. 515). Saldaña (2009) concurs

that initial coding affords researchers an opportunity "to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of [their] data and to begin taking ownership of them" (p. 81). Therefore, once I left the field I spent approximately 5 months transcribing field notes and interviews verbatim. Then, I revisited the data using Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software tool. Atlas.ti assisted me with organizing, managing and recording the 'intellectual work' of this ethnographic multiple case study. Charmaz (2004) confirms that "rather than merely describing action, [qualitative methodologists] seek to identify its phases, preconditions, properties, and purposes" (p. 442). My goal was to explore the 'what' that according to the four contemporary Black school leaders shaped their perspectives of 'how' to effectively lead in urban city communities. Therefore, Atlas.ti became increasingly helpful in conducting a second round of (re)coding the data. I scrutinized, categorized, and compared each piece of data from multiple participants in various situations to generate a holistic interpretive understanding of the phenomenon. Revisiting the data throughout the analytic process is typical of methodologists. Julien (2008) confirms, "the researcher spends time revisiting [codes and] categories identified previously and combining or dividing them, resolving contractions, as the text is analyzed over and over (p. 120). Indeed it is an iterative process.

Focused codes, "provide analytic tools for handling large amounts of data; reevaluating earlier data for implicit meanings, statements, and actions; and, subsequently, generating categories in the emerging theory" (Charmaz, 2004, p. 443). In this phase, I kept the most frequent and prevalent initial codes in mind as I sought to analytically (re)immerse myself in the datasets by employing dual strategies of moving from case-to-case as well as across the whole dataset. I intentionally read the data closely and coded from case-to-case and subsequently across the dataset. In doing so, I deviated from the grounded theory methods and integrated content analysis methodo-

logical strategies. Julien (2008) explains, "When analyzing qualitative data such as transcribed fieldnotes, [interviews and documents,] analyses across the whole set of data typically produce clusters or codes that translate into 'themes' (p. 120). Content analysis results, Julien (2008) asserts, could "reveal recurrent instances of 'items' or themes, or they may reveal boarder discourses" (p. 120). Therefore, I focused on generating pattern codes by identifying, capturing, and sorting data chucks into smaller units of analysis to answer the constructivist grounded theory question of 'what is happening' to the phenomenon as I moved from case-to-case and across the whole dataset in this study (Charmaz, 2004; Miles, et al., 2014). I created matrix and network displays of the pattern codes to visually map out how components fit together. While creating the displays, I simultaneously wrote memos. The memos provided me with the space to question and write responses to the data, participants and myself, in order to identify and fill analytic gaps. The memos also served as the space to describe the emerging themes, properties, commonalities, and dissonances from case-to-case and across the whole dataset. This phase of constant comparison functions to assess the compatibility and transferability of the data findings to increase the trustworthiness of the study (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). As presented earlier, constructivist grounded theory, modified analytic induction, and content analysis are interpretive analytic methods supported by the notion of socially constructed emergent knowledge (Charmaz, 2004; Goetz & LeCompte, 1981; Julien, 2008; Preissle, 2008). Therefore, to keep participants' lived reality the central focus of my inquiry, I used their voices often to create categories that best captured the phenomenon of contemporary Black school leadership in urban city communities. The strategy of applying participants' words to label categories/themes, Julien (2008) confirms, is a practice "related to the need to remain true to the source of the text. …[and] the results of a content analysis should make sense and resonate accurately with the producers of that text" (p. 121).

I continued to compare and analyze data until I "constructed codes and developed them into categories that crystallize[d] participants' [individual and collective] experience[s]" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54). Thus, employing multiple methods of analysis allowed for the construction of innovative ways to rigorously collect, analyze and crystallize a wide range of data sources. Crystallization allowed me to 'richly describe' the findings in chapter four (Ellingson, 2009).

Qualitative Validity Issues

Trustworthiness and authenticity are at the crux for establishing rigorous qualitative research projects (Lincoln & Gub, 1985, 1994). Naturalistic researchers begin the process by addressing basic issues confounding use of trustworthiness as criteria to ensure rigor. Guba and Lincoln (1985) assure researchers that the basic issues are simple. They say we need to ask, "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of" (1985, p. 290)? They invoked persuasive criteria for establishing trustworthiness—credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (1985), which is the crux of addressing issues of validity in qualitative research.

Credibility is the most critical measure of firmly establishing trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 2005). It is the process of ensuring that the findings are congruent with the participants' perspectives of their lived multi-realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). I used Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested strategies in the hope that as diverse audiences read this final manuscript they will nod affirming its credibility. The strategies were prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, member checks, reflexivity, and crystallization.

Researchers improve the transferability of qualitative research findings to other contexts by providing thick, detailed descriptions. Qualitative researchers strive to illustrate the unit of analysis as typical rather than unique and thus applicable to other contexts (Wolcott, 2005). It is

through the researcher's re-presentation of thick, rich, and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon and related context that enable audiences to judge the potentiality of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Wolcott (2005) asserts that 'well-contextualized' studies provide opportunities to learn more about a phenomenon and thus contribute to a larger body of knowledge. Therefore, researchers are encouraged to use purposeful sampling to ensure a broad range of data collection (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wolcott, 2005). I used chain referral sampling, a type of purposive sampling. This selection method helped me to better understand and to richly describe, "to what extent is the one in some important ways like the many" contemporary Black principals who predominately self-select to lead schools in urban city communities (Wolcott, 2005, p. 166). The conditions, in this multiple case study, for effectively leading in highly sociopolitical and economically disadvantaged contexts overlap and the rich descriptions produced from this research can be transferrable to school leaders who believe 'the work' of education in urban city communities is about affording persistently marginalized individuals and communities justice. For instance, the four school leaders stated that the focus of their principalship is to provide their school community stakeholders with a different paradigm for socioeconomic mobility through education. The two interview excerpts that follow are examples of the four Black school leaders' commitment to shifting the paradigm of expectation for Black, Brown, and poor students in their respective school communities and in dominate discourses.

> **Excerpt 1**[32]
> **Mr. Vertner:** …when I started getting kids who were graduating from our…middle school promotion to high school**,** jam packed with parents, grandmas, aunties, uncles and I'm like man all these folks come out to an 8th grade promotion ceremony in the middle of the day? And one of my, Mr. Eddie Johnson said, *'Look Arthur, for a lot of these parents they're thinking this is gonna be their last graduation cause most these kids won't make it through high school'*. I'm like really man? They're all here because they think that this is it? This is the last time their kid is going to be promoted? They don't see their kid walking across the stage in high school? And I made up my mind right then and there

> we're going to change that paradigm. If we don't change that paradigm I'm in the wrong business. …in my mind I just felt I had to change that and make a difference (609-621).
>
> **Excerpt 2**[33]
> **Ms. Stevens:** Success rate goals, the state of course gives us our goals.
>
> **Demetricia:** Do you think that the goals that they set for a school like yours, do you feel like those goals are equitable goals, equitable markers?
>
> **Ms. Stevens:** I think they're moving targets. I believe that the goals that they give us are too low. …[H]ow you gone give me a goal for 32.1% of my students to be proficient or advanced in language arts? I'm not sure if that's the exact goal, but that's low.
>
> **Demetricia:** Thirty-two percent (32%) of your students? So basically say you have 100 students in 6th grade, then they are only expecting 32% of those students to be proficient?
>
> **Ms. Stevens:** That's why I said, I think they're low. I mean that's crazy to me. …if you've seen my M&M's® in there in the jar, and that was because, I think people [teachers] have a loss of what it is. When we're having conversations it's, *"Oh, we can't make that goal. How do they expect us to make that goal?"* …That's just unacceptable to me.
>
> It's crazy to me. I'm used to teaching where I'm trying to move…numbers from 86% or so to 94%. …No, I don't think it's fair, equitable, any of that. It's just an injustice. We're doing a disservice, an injustice to our community, to our students, to our country, to all…
>
> And then I understand that the playing field is not fair. However, it's not unattainable… And that starts with relationships and expectations[12] (1385-1438).

As a qualitative researcher, Wolcott's (2005) confirming words allayed some of my anxieties and importantly, the words, actions, and interactions of my participants. And I have since come to learn that "every case is, in certain aspects, like all other cases, like some other cases, and like no other case" (Wolcott, 2005, p. 167).

Dependability is akin to credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) contend researchers establish dependability once participants and stakeholders agree that the findings are credible. Qualitative researchers conduct inquiries in natural settings. These natural contexts are like rivers, fluid, dynamic, and in constant flux. As qualitative researchers, we do not control nor manipulate

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[12] Relationships and high expectations are historical cultural norms in the Black community.

events to produce replicable studies. Instead, we maintain detailed descriptions of the research process, which helps to create an audit trail. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate an audit trail includes (a) raw data, (b) data analyses, (c) themes and interpretation constructions, (d) research process notes, (f) reflexivity notes, and (g) research instruments. An internal audit of the final product confirms the corroboration the researcher attains throughout the research process by engaging peer debriefers, member checks, and reflexivity. Moreover, the steps taken by the researcher and inquiry audit greatly improve dependability and confirmability of qualitative research projects.

Conducting research in naturalistic settings subjects trustworthiness to a continuum of persuasion to acceptance. Despite researchers' arduous efforts to convince readers to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative inquiries, Lincoln and Guba (1985) remind us that at best our findings can help persuade readers to move across the continuum closer to acceptance. Acceptance is on the continuum, therefore, I employed each of the measurement strategies discussed in the hope that readers will accept my work as ethical, rigorous, authentic, and trustworthy.

Researcher Role and Ethics

Scholar's self-awareness is paramount to carrying out rigorous ethical research in natural settings. I was the primary research instrument collecting, organizing, describing, analyzing, interpreting, and re-presenting data findings. Symonette (2009) warned that I must cultivate 'self as a responsive instrument'. She states "we do violence to others' truths when we fail to develop and refine the self as an open, diversity-conscious and expansively learning-centered, responsive instrument" (Symonette, 2009, pp. 279-280). Thus, the participants functioned as co-constructors. They possess insider knowledge of contemporary Black school leadership that I sought to understand as a non-practitioner and outsider in the field. I recognized their authority

as leaders in their school communities. However, it was just as important that I acknowledged my positionality and inherent power as research scholar. If I failed to acknowledge my privileged standpoint as an academic scholar, I too would be guilty, similar to the dominate communities, if I failed to "look but still do not see, listen but do not hear, touch but do not feel" (Symonette, 2009, p. 279) *their multiple truths* of leading effectively in urban city communities.

My researcher positionality links inextricably to my subjectivity. I am a Black, working-middle class, woman, pursuing a Ph.D. in a field persistently dominated by White, middle-class men. My lived experiences growing up in the Midwest, spending summers in a deep southern cotton state, and the blending of sociocultural, historical, economic, and political contexts influenced my position. Questioning positionality heightened my awareness of its interdependent and intersectional relationship within and in-between contexts and fields of discipline. I consistently question(ed) how I positioned others and myself and how mainstream's structures positioned others and me. My positionality (e.g., self-defined and imposed) influenced my researcher subjectivity. Subjectivity functions as researcher's bias and assumption. Thus, researcher's subjectivity is often viewed as problematic. It can contaminate research processes if not presented explicitly to "provide meaning and focus to the study" (Wolcott, 2005, p. 156). Peshkin (1988) presents subjectivity "as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (p. 18). My educational experiences as student and staff in varying contexts (i.e., social, cultural, economic and political) helped to shape the research focus and design for this study. Importantly, the field experiences shaped how I collected, organized, described, analyzed, interpreted, and re-presented the data findings. Wolcott (2005) confirms that I needed these experiences to help inform and support my research inquiry. He contends, "the process of forming

links between ideas in the observer's mind and what one has observed is dialectical: Ideas inform observations and observations inform ideas" (2005, p. 155). I followed Wolcott's advice to covet my subjective perspective, be transparent, question how it gave purpose to my research, and illustrate how it enhances the trustworthiness and authenticity of this study. Therefore, I embraced Lincoln and Guba's (1985, 1994) alternative criteria of establishing trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative work instead of traditional positivistic canons of measuring objectivity and truth (i.e., internal and external validity and reliability).

Summary

I designed an ethnographic multiple case research study employing multiple methods that centered the voices of those historically marginalized, ignored, and even silenced from substantive participation in the fields of educational leadership and administration and policy. I constructed a conceptual framework with cultural historical activity theory and distributed leadership theory to further emphasize the sociocultural perspectives and experiences of contemporary Black school leaders as the central focus of this research. I used the following ethnographic methods: prolonged engagement in the culture as an active member participant; extensively detailed fieldnotes; intensive hours of shadowing; access to 'off-the-record' knowledge through trusting relationships and extended kinship; rich data collected through hours of semi-structured interviews; digital stills that captured in-the-moment social interactions and historical cultural artifacts; diverse document analyses; and personal reflection and reflexivity journals. The aforementioned methods helped me to ensure the findings were congruent with my participants' perspectives of their lived multi-realities; transferable to other contexts by providing rich, thick descriptions; and rigorous to increase the trustworthy acceptability by diverse audiences. Moreover, throughout the entire research process, I was intentionally mindful to position myself and con-

ceptual framework on the margins and center the contemporary Black school leaders' voices in an effort develop an empirical study that will help to inform the corpus of educational leadership and administration of alternative effective school leadership frameworks, particularly for urban city school communities.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In the previous chapters, I have presented a discussion on Black school leadership in environments with predominately Black, brown, and poor populace and the execution of this study. In this chapter, I use the participants' multiple voices to re-present the most significant findings of contemporary Black school leadership in urban city school communities. Within this complex activity system of contemporary Black school leadership mediating tools help to facilitate change processes. The mediating tools are undergirded with sociocultural and historical knowledge. The mediating tools range from practices and interactions along a spectrum of perspectives and philosophies. Exploring contemporary Black school leaders' conceptualizations of their leadership and practices can expand our understandings of the role of cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity in the field of educational leadership and administration.

I have organized this chapter into three sections, which directly aligns with the research questions for this study. In the first section, I provide a contemporary perspective of Black school leaders' philosophical beliefs about education, present findings of how they view their role in shifting the educational paradigm for predominately Black and brown families in improvised communities, and importantly re-presentations of their conceptualizations of leadership, particularly in the context of urban city school communities. In the second section, I re-present the contemporary Black school leaders' perspectives of six of their most prevalent practices and a reflective discussion of the effectiveness of the practices. In the third section, I provide findings from their standpoints of the irrelevancy of traditional educational leadership and administration perspectives (i.e., ideologies), programs, theories, and practices for effectively preparing urban city school leaders. This third section ends with the contemporary Black school leaders' perspec-

tives of the relevant role of cultural and race/ethnic diversity in preparing educators with practices that can substantively affect change in urban city school communities.

Philosophy of Education

The four Black school leaders' philosophies of education were germane and most important to their conceptualization of their perspectives on leadership practices in urban city school communities. In this first section of chapter four, I explore the themes that were grounded in the data on their philosophies of education. Indeed, the school leaders all articulated a belief in the construction of educational structures to education students for participation as global citizens in an inclusive democratic society. Mr. Vertner, based on his experiences, believes their perspectives of education can be a theory for effective urban city school leadership. He explained,

> To be an effective school leader means that you're churning out productive citizens and or kids who leave this campus with the right thing on their mind, at least that's been my experience. …[T]o this day I have kids who I've taught years ago or who left these offices who are saying, "I've done this well, I've done that well." Some kids are still reaching out for help and…to be an effective school leader your reach doesn't stop once the kids leave your doors. And your inflow definitely doesn't stop once the kids leave your doors. …In some ways it sounds like theory, but I've seen it, I've lived it (Lines 1030 – 1039)[1].

Their beliefs about urban city school community, students, leadership, and their capacity as effective school leaders shaped their philosophies of education.

Urban City School Communities

As part of their philosophical belief systems, the school leaders in this study expressed a belief of being called to work in urban city school communities explicitly with Black, brown, and poor students (Hilliard, 2003).

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I'm committed to the urban school setting, because I want to see those students who look like me successful. And I want to give them everything I possibly can. And I know their struggles are different. And if we don't take the opportunity to get them educated now, we run the risk of them eliminating themselves and that's a sad

sight in terms of where our future is going and where our students are going to be left if they aren't educated early (Lines 494 – 501)[34].

Mr. Steve Biko: I love working with the type of kids that the inner city can produce… Although I've been in other schools that don't have any, sometimes it's a lot less stressful, …I'm more passionate and get more out of dealing with inner city kids. So I think that's where the need is and of course they are the underdogs, …(Lines 642-655)[35].

Ms. Frances Stevens: If you're a human, you're responsible for educating another human. Isn't that what we're here for? Teach? What did Maya Angelou say, "You learn, you teach!" (Lines 956 – 958)[36].

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: I wanted to come to Murray. I want to be in the inner city. I want to work with my folks here.

Mr. Steve Biko: I think it's a calling to be an administrator. …It's a lot a hard work with no praise or appreciation at the end of the day, so you're really doing it because you care. …I care…I want to make a difference (Lines 365 – 368)[37].

Ms. Unique Daily: I think it's absolutely a calling…I knew that [education] was part of my upbringing, that's just who I am…I look forward to coming to work every day, …knowing that we're changing lives (Lines 176 – 185)[38].

Students

Of even greater significance are the four contemporary Black school leaders' beliefs that all children can learn and the importance of meeting the students where they are at and where they come from in the quest to produce community and global minded productive citizens. In many respects, the school leaders embody an ethno-humanist role identity (Lomotey, 1994). However, I assert that their philosophical standpoints of their children extend beyond them merely being educable students, but becoming the change that their communities and the world at-large need in the quest of living in a truly diverse egalitarian society. They believe that their students will become community and globally minded productive citizens, much like themselves.

Ms. Unique Daily: I still believe to this day that every child can learn. And every child deserves an opportunity to learn in an environment where they're supported where they're encouraged, where they're motivated, and where they're challenged (Lines 454 – 457)[39].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I think my philosophy is just…kids can learn…you have to meet them where they are…and I think that kids got to have some type of educational foundation or they won't make it …I mean what you do education wise affects how they're going operate in life. Where will they be financially? How will they be able to take care of themselves? The better prepared they are for the world, the more productive citizens they are, the more things we can accomplish. That's my philosophy (Lines 1471-1478)[40].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I just think it's to produce productive citizens overall (Line 1344).

> **Mr. Arthur Vertner:** [To] produce citizens that are going to give back and reach back and help others to walk across the next stage of life (Lines 1219 – 1220)[41].

Three of the school leaders shared experiences of disenfranchisement during their early educational experiences. I disclose Ms. Stevens' experience to substantially underscore the school leaders' belief that 'all children can learn' especially if they are 'taught and pushed' to their 'highest capacity'. She shared,

> I think I could have been, pushed a lot further, not saying I'm not happy where I am, but I don't think I was pushed to my capacity…by any means just because of being a minority and where I'm from, where I live. I wasn't encouraged to go into engineering. I didn't know all the opportunities that were out there. It just so happen that my family was able to afford certain things. Then, also I just happen to be good at math…a Black female…a great athlete, so I didn't get in trouble. So, I was able to make. It wasn't that they picked me to…go to the math competition. I just happen to outscore everybody. And so now they got to send this Black girl to the math competition. I didn't know what it was. I didn't know they gave a test. So it wasn't like I was pushed. …I didn't know how to study. I didn't know anything. So had I been taught and pushed, I probably could have excelled in it (Lines 1219 – 1233).

The school leaders regardless of level or gender shared understandings of race, culture, and class discrimination that seem to help them relate to the plight of their students' life experiences. They acknowledged the coexistence of micro and macro politics (Cooper & Jordan, 2009) within their educational activity system of school reform. Thus, they described their students as intelligent, street smart, hilarious, but never as 'standard'. They seemingly embodied a different perspective of their students, which allowed them to practice differently. In the following excerpt, Mr. Vertner spoke about the kids as 'non-standardized students', whom they refuse to al-

low testing mandates reduce to numeric status, but instead purposed an education to elevate them to human status as productive citizens. He declared,

> We have to understand that we're preparing kids for standardized tests. We have to look back at the kids and realize that we don't have standardized kids… Well our approach to our non-standardized kids can't be a cookie-cutter approach. We have to approach each child and help each educator to make sure that each kid has an Individualize Education Program to get that kid ready for this test. …And I don't think it's true accountability based on a standardized test that we have, because our kids are so much more than a standardized test. However, it's where we are. So my philosophy of education is that we have a moral imperative to do whatever it takes to graduate productive citizens (Lines 1221-1233)[42].

Mr. Vertner pointed out that they have learned to successfully balance competing education ideologies through an embodied purposeful leadership and alternative practices, especially in the highly contestable political terrain that has become typical of urban city school communities.

Leadership.

Another important aspect of their philosophy was their beliefs about leadership in urban city school communities. Principals at both grade levels believe that as leaders they are to provide academic and social development, emotional nurturing, advocacy for justice and equity, more with less resources, and courageous decisions often viewed as unpopular to do what is 'right[13] and best for your students'[43].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I take a great deal of pride of working in an urban school setting. Although I've been in other settings and I appreciate those experiences. …I find myself more comfortable in an urban school setting, because at the end of the day, when I see students who look like me, who need that type of development, who need that type of nurturing, I want to be that for them (Lines 457 – 478)[44].

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[13] The phrase and/or concept, *'right and best'* for students, school, and community means to ensure the affordance of justice and equity to people and places that are consistently marginalized from equal access to opportunity (infra) structures and systems in a purported egalitarian society. The concept, *'right and best'*, helps to frame their embodied purposeful leadership from a social justice perspective of affording all students access to an excellent and equitable education that supports them reaching their *'highest capacity'*.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** My philosophy is the big bang, getting more bang for my buck in what I'm trying to do, because I'm constantly dealing with kids that have to learn more and do more. …I think that if you are in an education business and you don't think kids are capable of learning, you're in the wrong business. So, my philosophy is to find the most flexible people that will do the most irate, craziest things to get the best results, and to try to think out of the box (Lines 1457 – 1463)[45].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** To me a school district is only as strong as its weakest school. A school district has responsibility to make sure that all the schools are on a level playing field. Equality is not as important as equity. And making sure that our stakeholders know that what our students get…here is equitable to what kids get at say a Green Acres, Hilltop, Overlook, Valley High, Sun Rise, Rainbow, or another school. And just because we're an inner city school doesn't mean that we have to fall short on anything (Lines 568 – 575)[46].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** You have to show people that you're not afraid to make decisions. Everyone's not going to agree with what you do. …You make decisions in any school, but especially in an inner city school that's in the best interest of children. When I look at any decision we make as an administrative staff, as a faculty and staff, the first thing I say is, "How does it affect student achievement?" "Well how is this in the best interest of the kids?" "What would the kids get out of it?" And if those three things have to govern how you make your decisions, you'll be fine. Or even when it's unpopular decisions, if you stick to what's in the best interest of kids, nine times out of ten, you'll be on the right track (Lines 798 – 808)[47].

The participants declared and demonstrated consistency in their courageous decision making approaches to overcome systemic educational contradictions undergirded by macropolitics. Despite prevailing mainstream ideologies, they espoused the belief that their students also deserve access to equitable educational services and life outcomes.

School Leader Capacity

Critically essential to their educational philosophy are their beliefs that they have the capacity to effectively lead in all schools, not just urban city schools. The principals in this study have successfully worked in non-urban city school communities and lead inclusive diverse work environments. However, they believe that there is an urgent need for effective school leadership in urban city schools, because the schools are consistently levied with inequitable resources, expectations, opportunities, and outcomes. Ms. Daily described urban city school as a "[P]lace

where it's not a popular job choice [and] a place where often times they receive the leftovers or the bottom of the barrel" (Lines 477 – 478)[48]. Embodying a social justice perspective, she elaborated that, "Often times your best and brightest leaders aren't looking for jobs in these types of settings. They're not looking for opportunities to see minority students excel. The reality is those students deserve it just like any other student deserves it" (Lines 484 – 486)[49]. They believe that they are the 'best and brightest leaders' called to lead change in urban city schools. Thus, the principals chose to lead in urban city school communities to demystify lingering capacity stereotypes (Jones, 2002; McCray, et al., 2007); teach community purposeful agency; and model positive self-identities as human beings who are Black, productive professionals, and citizens in mainstream America who reach back to bring 'those that look like them' forward.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I think that it's still hard for maybe other races to see how we are or what our skill level is. …I think the higher you go up there's this phobia about us not being smart enough, not being savvy enough, not having the business pedagogy. …So I think a lot of it is stereotypes sometimes and it's just our job to break [them] down. …Like we can run a school, we can get our scores up. We can do things that people don't think that we can. And I have to remember that sometimes when you get frustrated about the politics of being an administrator in education, that's the way it is. A lot of it, that fuels me back, is to just show them that we can do it. Show the kids that we can do it. That's a part of what we're doing, a part of who we are, and what we're about (Lines 469 – 496)[50].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [T]o make sure that folks know that Murray and its leaders and students are visible, we're intelligent, we're articulate, and we're able to come in and give a four year plan and carry it out (Lines 479 – 481)[51].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** In anything, one must see the worth or relevance, and believe in himself that he deserves better. The community that I serve has yet to identify its own worth. Therefore as a whole, it has not decided to take the steps together to build a better community. As a leader, I must educate, expose, and empower the stakeholders to value, [and to] focus on strengthening their access to more opportunities through education (2013)[52].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** Being able to know and believe that I'm a strong leader and I'm excited about being here, I think sends a message to the students who are in the building and that makes a difference that they know that I'm proud of who I am as a person, and I

> believe in my abilities as a leader, and I still want to be here with them because I believe in them as students and want to see them successful (Lines 478 – 482)[53].

In discussing their philosophies of education, the school leaders focused consistently on shifting the paradigm of expectations for marginalized places, people, and practices. They espoused belief systems that align with a collective humanistic perspective and movement, which is not unlike their pre-Brown (1954) predecessors. Importantly, they have stated in their own words that change must begin within and in between people, places, perceptions, and practices. They embodied a contemporary community ethos (Walker, 2009). Thus, through their multiple voices, it seemed clear that they are committed to changing urban city school communities.

Changing Urban City School Communities

The four contemporary school leaders positioned themselves and their leadership practices as central in urban city school communities. Indeed, they believe that they are a part of those who are 'changing the face of urban education[54]'. In an online discussion, they shared that they believed a shift in perspectives and priorities contributes to the current structure of education in Black communities like the ones in which they serve. They discussed a shift in mindset away from education and community uplift. Sharing her thoughts about the challenges of (re)conceptualizing education in urban city communities with predominately Black populace, Ms. Unique Daily posted,

> In general, the values and structure of the black community have changed. There was a time historically when education was so highly valued. Even if parents were not educated, they knew their children needed to be educated and made the necessary sacrifices to provide the best educational opportunities. …The focus somehow shifted from education to increased possessions. Possessions could be acquired without education, but that acquisition came with a price…increased divorce/separation rate, increased amount of time away from the family, increased incarceration rate, which has gradually deteriorated the structure of the black community (2013)[55].

The school leaders voiced concerns about this inward shift towards an adopted individualistic perspective of 'mind your own', which focuses on attaining possessions that uplift one's own self. Mr. Arthur K. Vertner noted that this contemporary mindset has eradicated the 'surrogate neighborhood families' who took pride in 'monitoring' the academic and social development of the neighborhood kids[56]. The school leaders pointed out that this contemporary individualistic mindset dramatically impacts schools, because schools often are mirror reflections of the neighborhoods. The schools in this study were located in highly impoverished neighborhoods. The neighborhoods exude the "effects of racial isolation and chronic economic subordination" (Wilson, 2011, p. 11). Every day principals work to implement practices to help support their urban city school communities' families and potentially eradicate the "problems associated with poverty…joblessness, crime, delinquency, drug trafficking, broken families, and dysfunctional schools" (Wilson, 2011, p. 11). Mr. Steve Biko shared his experience and perspective of how the contemporary mindset impacts his school, students, and leadership practice. He wrote,

> I believe that the Black community no longer supports the school(s) in the same way that they once did, particularly when it comes to ensuring that the building was well maintained, adequate/up-to-date instructional materials for students (i.e., technology software and reading materials). …Many of the major decisions of a school…are presented at PTA meetings, Title I meetings, Community meetings, Outreach Programs, and Honors Programs, but quite often the key stakeholders are rarely present. It appears that there is generally less than 1% of stakeholders that show up to such key decision making meetings that impact their students' academic future. …Therefore, I have had to change my leadership style by coming up with creative ways to attract more parental and community involvement. I have even considered hosting barbeques or fish fry and live entertainment in order to attract more parents and community members to participate with the school (2013)[57].

Mr. Biko and colleagues have more than a mere surficial understanding of the contemporary cultures within their urban city school communities. Indeed the contemporary Black school leaders demonstrated an engaged understanding of "how the larger forces in society—including segregation, discrimination, a lack of economic opportunity, and failing schools—adversely af-

fect the inner city poor" (Wilson, 2011, p. 10). They each discussed being creative and innovative in their leadership practices to shift the focus back towards education for collective community uplift. Their leadership goals, couched in a contemporary community ethos, appear to extend those of their pre-Brown (1954) predecessors, who "sought to elevate the needs of the [human] race through education" (Walker, 2009, p. 8). Their posted responses convey a belief that, "the schools must affect the neighborhood by partnering with neighborhood entities and those from outside of the neighborhood" (Vertner, 2013)[58] in order to change "the perceptions that the stakeholders have about their school and being educated"(Stevens, 2013)[59]. Thus, it seems that the four school leaders constructed a conceptualization of leadership in urban city schools to alter the mindset of stakeholders in the hopes of changing the 'school-neighborhood mirror[60]'. It appears that the contemporary Black principals are constructing their schools as contemporary 'surrogate neighborhood families' for their stakeholders. Mr. Vertner explained that, "The surrogate neighborhood families...took pride in looking after all neighborhood children. …A young person being talked to and somewhat monitored from door-to-door until the street light came on" (2013)[61]. Ms. Stevens confirmed the emerging role of these contemporary urban city schools as 'surrogate neighborhood families'. She proclaimed, "I see the community as…an extension of the school. …We're helping to build productive citizens, so they can go out and help their community in any way possible (Lines 40 – 42)[62]. Ms. Unique Daily has the largest urban city school community zone, which consists of rival gangs[14]. She noted that despite competing neighborhood tensions, "When we all get together…we're existing as a family. It's great" (Lines 899 –

[14] Ms. Daily described her school zone and commitment to educating students, Black and poor students. She stated, "Statistically it's not the safest neighborhood. It's like one of the most unsafe neighborhood and that's just the reality, that is documented through the police department and through research here within the city, but it doesn't change that those are our students that we're serving" (Personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013, Lines 1296 – 1299).

900)[63]. It is important to note that the school leaders invested insurmountable time on the frontend to develop relevant and responsive sociocultural perspectives of their school communities and stakeholders. Ms. Stevens explained that at the crux of developing responsive sociocultural perspectives is "understanding the culture that you serve and making sure that you keep that at the forefront" (Lines 259 – 260)[64].

The contemporary school leaders took ownership of improving their schools and neighborhoods. They spoke incessantly of data as an invaluable decision making tool for academic and social improvements. Upon learning of her placement as principal of LaVaughn Academy, Ms. Stevens stressed, "You have to know the history of the neighborhood and the school" (Lines 594 – 595)[65]. Therefore, she immediately began collecting secondary and primary data. She admitted, "Not only did I contact the current principal, but also the principal who opened up the school…to know the background" (Lines 595 – 597)[66]. She expressed her commitment to developing a responsive sociocultural perspective of the school community. She confided, "I had to know my zone. I did ride around the neighborhood to know my zone…the police officers…where the kids hang out, all the hotspots for everything. [I drove] different routes every time I would come [to school] that summer" (Lines 602 – 605)[67]. Mr. Biko confirmed the invaluableness of sociocultural and historical data in making relevant and responsive decisions in the best interest of their stakeholders. He corroborated, "You have to know your clientele. You have to know your kids and what they're going through and what they need" (Lines 538 - 539)[68]. He advised, "Understand their streets…lingo…what kids are dealing with, things that they may be seeing[15] that other people don't see. …[So] you can relate when the kids say, 'I got to go home

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[15] In a subsequent interview, June 14, 2013, Mr. Biko spoke at length about the things that his students may see within and in-between the spaces of their home and school. He explained, *"They're in the concrete jungle, so they're dealing with a lot more of the street elements: selling drugs on the street corner…the pimps, the prostitutes,*

to watch my little sister cause my momma working two jobs'" (Lines 525 – 528)[69]. Intentionally taking the time to develop an understanding of their school communities' culture(s), socioeconomic and political histories, and students' backstories seem to have helped the principals embody sociocultural responsive and empathic standpoints. They disclosed that one too many of their students,

> Deal with a lot of adult issues, …living by themselves…group homes…state custody. It's just sad [that] some of our kids have been exposed to a side of life that's not good. And sometimes school is the best thing they have going. (S. Biko, June 2, 2013)[70].

I purport that their outlook for the purpose of transforming their schools align with Mr. Vertner's perspective of the inherent power of schools as an institution of 'purposeful citizenship' that can affect positive changes throughout neighboring communities. He asserted,

> There are bad examples everywhere, but in the inner city you see them with more frequency and more intensity and that comes to school. And school is a reflection of the community, but the school has the sole purpose of being the positive force in the community, because so many, including sometimes the police force, are not (A. K. Vertner, May 23, 2013)[71].

They used multiple sources of data to help transform their schools into safe and supportive spaces purposed for academic and social development. Thus, I claim they embodied a sociocultural perspective of conceptualizing leadership through practices that (re)centers an education paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanness through the production of highly competitive productive citizens. They collectively expressed being motivated through a reimagined community ethos of education's mediating role in producing 'purposeful citizens' for an inclusive democratic society, which I contend continues the work of their predecessors. However, unlike their pre-Brown (1954) predecessors, the contemporary school leaders used both the lan-

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the drug dealers…" (Lines 943 – 949). He continued by warning urban city school leaders that if *"There's an area that's highly affected and the kids come from that neighborhood, you better know that street and know who those guys are and know who those kids are… You better know what you're dealing with and what's coming in and out of your building from an educational standpoint"* (Lines 961 – 964).

guage of education and citizenship as they discussed their leadership plans to substantively improve life outcomes and experiences for their stakeholders (Walker, 2009). But much like their predecessors, the school leaders often refused to openly discuss their perspectives of politics and education as they too work in a predominately White-led educational system. And yet, they seemingly espoused a similar political agenda to elevate the needs of their Black, brown, and poor constituents through education (Walker, 2009). They articulated strong beliefs that all kids should experience educational equity and equality, but more importantly, equity to level the playing field for those traditionally marginalized. Ms. Daily shared her thoughts of leading to level the playing field in her resegregated economically impoverished school community. She stated,

> I think our educational setting is a reflection of our society and our surroundings in general. It, [equity and equality] exists in some places …progressive cities. …Rarely do you hear conversations of Black versus White…you do see more of a balance of equity and equality because they recognize needs and they respect needs and they've done the work to balance the playing field of sorts. …I don't know if the dynamic has been addressed in this city at a level that will bring it to the school level, because we're still discussing some rather aged issues of Black versus White.

The school leaders recognized that the roots of persistent racism, poverty, and classism in their urban city school communities are linked to larger macro-systems (e.g., sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and sociostructural) that are firmly woven into the fabric of their city at-large (Liu, et al., 2006). Therefore, they described conceptualizing a leadership that allow them to effectively practice within and in-between the macro-systems to substantively address their constituents' needs. They realized that progressive change has to begin with their leadership and through their schools as institutions of 'purposeful citizenship', which I assert continues to work of their predecessors. In the next part of this first section, I re-present significant themes that emerged from their multiple voices[72] of how their conceptualization of leadership contributes to their practices.

Conceptualizing Their Leadership[73]

The school leaders in this study constructed a conceptualization of leadership in urban city school communities. Their philosophical beliefs about education, especially in urban city school communities, undergird their conceptualization of leadership. Their conceptualization of leadership as they discussed ensures Black, brown, and poor students are afforded equitable educational services and opportunities that prepare them for participation as productive citizens. Mr. Vertner explained,

> There's a great need for an effective school leader, because for the kids who are stakeholders here, the stakes are high. The kids who leave this campus for the last time with papers in their hands, it's either going to be a diploma or expulsion papers. …The need here is for us to be efficacious, for us to deliver instruction with fidelity, and for us to have developed with them a plan for their future and a plan B. If kids leave with a mentality that I'm going to be a productive citizen, somehow then that need is close to being met (Lines 1007 – 1020)[74].

The principals were intentionally mindful of the nature and purpose of their school leadership. They described their most meaningful ideas of leadership in the context of urban city school communities. Their conceptualization of leadership is tied to concepts of being a role model (i.e., lead by example), sociopolitical[16] advocate, courageous decision maker, and morally responsible visionary servant of citizenship. The concepts are not completely discrete, but overlapping. They underpin their conceptualization of leadership and thus frame their practices in urban city school communities. I re-present how they make meaning of the concepts in this section. However, I later re-present the concepts as dimensions and indicators of their six practices.

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[16] Sociopolitical issues that the four participants contended with through their practices as school leaders of urban city communities included but were not limited to racism, homelessness, hungry, unemployment, poverty, violence, drug usage, crime, and mental health issues.

The concepts become the thread used to frame and thus bind the fabric pieces[17] together to present a quilted re-presentation of their practices as contemporary Black school leaders.

Of great significance, they discussed conceptualizations of leadership that encompassed perspectives and practices as effective tools to mediate substantive changes in the lived daily experiences of their communities' constituents.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I think being a school leader for me is being able to shape a generation. Being able to… guide a school and a community into a place where education is at the forefront. …So a lot of being a school leader to me is being a role model for teachers and for students to show students what life can be like when you have an education. But also to show teachers how to do the work that they do, and to do it comfortably, and to do it well. So you have to be able to do both (Lines 382 – 398)[75].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I think school leader, visionary, not just for the student but for the staff too as a whole. …[The community], it's the extension of it, [the vision]. It just broadens the vision, because we serve the community. [O]ur motto, 'To produce productive citizens', …because, , if we don't produce the quality of productive citizens…then the community's never going to change. Our students are most likely going to come back and live in their communities. If we can change their outlook, their vision, their wants, their aspirations, then the community will change. So I'm just a vehicle to allow the kids to see where they need to go. I just feel like I'm obligated to try to expose them or help them become productive citizens in the best way we can (Lines 1199 – 1212)[76].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]e have to think out of the box, because we're dealing with a clientele of maybe parents or student that don't have the money or don't have the resources. So we have to think out of the box. Sometimes the rules and regulations and the procedures or proper protocols[18], they just don't apply when you deal with inner city, [low] social economic [demographics] (Lines 64 – 90)[77].

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[17] Fabric pieces (i.e., quilting blocks) are the excerpts. I meticulously arranged the fabric pieces to help re-tell the stories of their individual and collective journeys of effectively leading in urban city school communities, *'The road less traveled'*. A quilt, as you will come to see, feel and hear, is constructed of multiple layers. Thus, it is not flat, but a meticulously complex, thick, and in-depth construct.

[18] I assert that governing rules in our purported democratic society are not 'just' or 'equitable' for all citizens, especially in public education. I further assert that governing rules are generally established by those who possess and wield power to author agendas to maintain societal status quos. Thus, governing rules most often are made void of racial, ethnic, and socially diverse multivoice perspectives and yet they are constructed for these 'absent voices', who as the emerging majority-minority populations may inevitably reshape public systems and institutions like public education, workforce, and politics in the United States. For example, Mr. Biko when discussing his experiences of working in an IBS and then transitioning to work in an UCS, he stated, *"I could see the difference. …When you get a perspective of being in one of the top schools and then going to some of what they would consider the 'Needs to Improve' or lower level functioning schools, you can see how policies or how support can affect them"* (S. Biko, personal communication, Interview 1_April 19, 2013, Lines 662 – 666). In many respects it appears that policies create equity issues, particular when they are made from mono-perspectives.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [W]e have a moral imperative to do what we do and we have a moral imperative to be here. …These kids are going to contribute to society in one-way or another when they leave these doors. It's up to us to make sure that we have equipped them to walk into that bank with a withdrawal slip as opposed to going into that bank with a withdrawal clip[19]. So, I just think that as a school leader, my job is to set the vision and set the tone (Lines 1000 – 1008)[78].

The participants recognized their positional power as school leaders in their urban city communities. They expressed that at the core of their leadership is a moral responsibility to 'set the vision and tone', one of social responsibility and mobility through equitable educational services and economic opportunities in an inclusive democratic society.

> **Steve Biko:** I think being a school leader is excessive responsibility. [I]t's like you're the rock that's being thrown in the ocean, the ripple effect. I mean the decisions I make have tons of outcomes. …[W]hat I do could save a kid, can help a kid graduate, can get a kid to learn. …I mean, so the decisions you make and the things you do can affect lives for a very long time, so they impact people. I think to be a leader is knowing that you're decisions and the things that you do, affect and impact lives tremendously. I understand the sense of responsibility and power that I have as a leader and I don't take that for granted. I think just keeping that sense of what I'm doing here is important and I'm making important decisions that people are affected by everyday (Lines 1443 – 1455)[79].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I could use it, [investment in neighborhood store], to offer jobs to students…to help build the community. It wasn't going to be about making money by any means. It would be more of another way to show the students how to work, cause my parents were about working. [M]y dad was going to be down here to run the store. …He was a teacher. He always believed in teaching people how to work and to make a living and so I thought that would be a good avenue [for the community]. …[T]he students would be able to work there or even parents would be able to work (Lines 625 – 647)[80].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I realized the power of being a school leader, leader of this school anyway. People, some people, will hang on your every word" (Lines 1081 – 1082)[81].

Like their predecessors, contemporary Black school leaders seem to willingly assume central positions and multiple leadership roles in their urban city school communities (Rodgers, 1975). Ms. Daily explained, "An effective school leader in an urban environment is one who has

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[19] In impoverished urban city communities, the street vernacular for gun is referred to as a 'withdrawal clip'.

those characteristics supported by the community, respected by the community, [and] who can lead the changes necessary" (U. Daily, 2013, Lines 518 – 526)[82]. However, being an effective school leader in this resegregated context is not as simple as assuming roles. Effective leadership in urban city environments requires the community to embrace the school leader, because they trust that the leader embodies a community ethos of 'doing what is right and best'. They earned the respect, trust, and support of their community stakeholders, who often refer to them as 'Doc', and 'Chief' similarly to 'Professor' and 'Black Mayor' (Rodgers, 1975; Walker, 2009). Theirs is a complex and multi-layered activity system inherent of tensions and contradictions.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** You have to be a community liaison for your school. You have to be the school chaplain sometimes, …cause I pray for this place. …The weight of the world is on your shoulders. …You can't be a punk leader. You have to have humility, but at the same time you can't be a coward and run away from stuff. …Change happens because you make it happen. And things get resolved because you see to it that they get resolved (Lines 1125 – 1135)[83].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [B]eing an advocate for your school, for your students, for your teachers, and for your community, and not accepting the road less traveled simply because it might be easier or it might be less of a conflict. Being able to stand up for what you believe is right and best for your school, because if you're willing to accept politically what's going on…you might miss out on opportunities for your school. So being courageous in that leadership and knowing that it might not be the most popular opinion. But if you do it, know that it's right and best for your students, right and best for your community (Lines 382-405)[84].

The four contemporary school leaders spoke with passion and conviction as they discussed their conceptualizations of leadership in schools, particularly in urban city communities. They all described their leadership as a mediating tool engaged to serve their respective school communities. In the second section of this chapter, I re-present their passionate discussions about practices.

Conceptualizing Practices for Urban City School Communities[20]

The contemporary Black schools leaders in this study conceptualized leadership in urban city school communities through their practices. They shared philosophical beliefs about education that undergird their conceptualizations of leadership. Their conceptualizations allow them to implement practices that support and sustain their philosophy of education and thus create a new paradigm of education in urban city school communities. The most significant practices that they discussed and performed consistently throughout this study included: changing culture and climate; sharing leadership; modeling expectations; restructuring school; changing communities'[21] perceptions; hiring and professional development; and assessing and reflecting on the outcomes of the work. The practices are paramount to their conceptualizations of leadership for urban city school communities. They implemented the practices differently, but experienced similar outcomes of incremental improvements in shifting the educational paradigm of student academic and social success.

Changing Culture And Climate

The school leaders expressed a firm belief that school culture and climate is paramount to paving the way for urban city students to experience academic and social success. They articulated a belief of changing school culture and climate that differs from theories of educational researchers and policymakers. Ms. Daily elaborated, "In most of the leadership classes they will tell you coming in changing the culture and climate is not the first thing you do. They tell you, you should be observing and learning" (Lines 742 – 756) [85]. Like her colleagues, she knew that

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[20] Research Question 2: What are contemporary Black school leaders' perspectives of their leadership practices? The discussion of findings entails six practices that represent the 'why', 'what', and 'how' of their individual and collective perspectives of effective leadership practices in urban city school communities.

[21] There were multiple communities that held negative perceptions of the urban city schools. Those communities were neighborhood families, educators, school district officials, business constituents, media, and the state department of education.

observing rather than intentionally implementing changes would prolong their goal of improving teaching and learning experiences in their school communities. Ms. Daily explained, [I]f I would have observed, I would have been under water within the first half of the year. This place needed drastic changes in perception, culture, climate, and positive energy. It had to happen right then, that took precedent" (Lines 742 – 756) [86]. Therefore, as part of their leadership in urban city schools, they have implemented an intentional practice of changing the school culture and climate during their first years. The contemporary Black school leaders believe that making school culture and climate a priority of their leadership practice helped to change stakeholders[22]' perceptions of their urban city schools. Their decision to readily implement change was fraught with external contradictions. As Seeds of Hope Academy and Hails High School were working on their School Improvement Grant (SIG), they were told "the state really isn't concerned about culture and climate…and how positive the environment is" (U. Daily, March 19, 2013, Lines 651 – 658)[87]. Ms. Daily argued, "What they're not accepting is…if the culture and climate doesn't change, it doesn't matter how dynamic the lessons… [W]e had to take time to eliminate the chaos, get students to…where they were open to accepting instruction at this level (Lines 651 – 658)[88]. They talked differently about the practice of changing their school culture and climate within and in-between their school spaces[23]. However, they shared experiences of similar needs and outcomes—cultivating sustainable teaching and learning environments, which created spaces

[22] Mr. Vertner defined stakeholders as the current and future students, teachers, community folks, alumni, and others who have a vested interest in the success of their school communities (personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2013, Lines 569-570).

[23] Spaces included but were not limited to the following: neighborhoods surrounding the school, campus, hallways, teacher/student interactions, personal body, classrooms, external partnerships, school district, department of education, and students' minds being receptive to learning beyond the conditioned state of mediocrity in order to close the gap between the pervasive imposed minimum capacity levels and their inherent capacity to excel intellectually.

and time for their primary stakeholders to embody academic and social identities as students and future productive citizens.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [Ou]r pledge is about creating a positive environment and having positive interactions. Having more students here to even say the pledge, to even start to embody those characteristics becomes part of the work. Reminding students every single day that it's a new day. That there is a clean slate each day and helping them to understand how respecting our school building also is a show of respect for yourself (Lines 555 – 559)[89].
>
> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [A]s the principal and with the administrative team…, we have to put emphasis on learning and education here, and there hasn't been one, and we've been trying, but it is going to take a lot. [T]he culture and climate here is totally different than where we need it to be. Agencies coming in, people coming in the door don't respect education. [S]tudents are our business, we're having school here, respect the sanctity of what we're doing as far as we are educating kids (Lines 1340 – 1346)[90].
>
> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I remember the first day, kids, they were everywhere. It was foreign to me. The bell ring, they still kickin' it in the hallway. …I was like, 'Who does this?!" This is not school. So it was foreign to me. …But then, parents were coming in cussin' you out because Montpelier Middle closed. [T]hose parents and students were not aware that they would not be going back to Montpelier Middle. So when they came over to Murray Middle, you put all these different [housing] projects in one [school building]. …[I]t was crazy. …So of course morale was down, because the kids just were off the chain. And so my sole task then at that point [as an Assistant Principal] was to, "Somebody gettin' in a classroom somewhere". You're going in the classroom. So finally it's working. By the end of the first semester at least we had students in the classrooms (Lines 913 – 931)[91].
>
> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I remember when I first got here as principal, the very first registration day and having parents and students in tears because they were so distraught that they would have to come into this building. They were literally hurt. And after I talked with them, and I laughed with them, and told them what I was committed to doing, it at least eased that up a little bit. Changing this environment, changing the perception was number one priority. [A]s much as you want student achievement and student growth to be number one, for us it was building up a positive environment that kind of took priority. Because you had to make it a place where people number one wanted to be in, they didn't feel afraid, or threaten to be in. So that took a lot of work. Making the hallways look pleasant. Making teachers understand how their interactions and their attitudes towards students make a difference. And showing them that you can address behaviors, you can be a disciplinarian without being cruel and hurtful (Lines 688 – 698)[92].
>
> **Mr. Steve Biko:** That's why every day you get on there [on the school intercom], you say, "Students is our business, where we say it, model it, organize it, protect it and reward it. We're on a quest to be the best and we expect success." After about three (3) months

> all the kids in the school can say that verbatim. They understood and I heard it on the radio. I started seeing them draw it. So I could tell the culture and climate was starting to change…when they're hiding and they're not public. Within three months they were running…down the hall before the bell rings (Lines 650 – 668)[93].
>
> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [We] give them the tools to be able to be successful, because a lot of them won't try, because it is harder than what they've experienced before. And they don't want to appear to be failures. They don't want to be unsuccessful. So we still have to equip them with the right tools. They haven't been in a place where they were required to study or required to be organized and to maintain their materials. So those lessons have to be taught. We can't just assume that they know how to do that naturally. And that's taken a lot of time. It took about a year. And yet we can see we're to a place where kids like coming to school. They want to be at school. They much rather be at school than to be at home, because a lot of them are choosing other alternatives to discipline than to be sent home. They want to be here. And as long as they are here, it's our responsibility to get them educated (Lines 658 – 673)[94].

Their leadership practice of intentionally changing the school culture and climate has improved their stakeholders' perception of education in their urban city schools. They talked about how students are increasingly more inclined to attend school, arrive to class on time, expect to learn at higher levels, and choose alternative discipline[24] to remain in school (Walker, 2009). [25] The school leaders enacted this practice in tandem with the practice of sharing leadership and restructuring their schools to meet the needs of their primary stakeholders—urban city kids.

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[24] Alternative discipline meant accepting three paddles instead of being sent home for 1-3 days to serve an out-of-school suspension consequence. The parents have already signed a form granting the school leader(s) their expressed permission to paddle their child instead of assigning out-of-school suspension. However, the school leader(s) always contacts the parent/guardian in the student's presence to openly discuss the student's infraction and consequence(s). Importantly, the school leader(s), parent/guardian, and student collectively identify alternative course of actions that the student agrees to employ to negate future discipline consequence(s). This is a prime example of relational community building between the school, parent/guardian, and community. The trusting cohesive relationships work to cultivate alternative forms of parental involvement; transform students' perspectives of the role of education in their lives; and create a sustainable culture and climate conducive of rigorous teaching and learning for improved equitable outcomes.

[25] The students' perspectives of their schools in both contexts (i.e., historical and contemporary) changed under their respective school leaders. In the case of the contemporary context, students' improved attendance and preference to be in school rather than at home proves to be trustworthy evidence of their contemporary Black school leaders' effective practices. The students' shifting perspectives of their neighborhood schools and education was visible through their increased daily physical presence in school similar to the pre-Brown students whose shifting perceptives of their schools was published in community's daily newspaper. The articles captured "some of the collective sentiment among students that the school was becoming a place where studying was expected to be taken serious" (Walker, 2009, p. 210).

Practice of Leadership—We Work At It[95]

The principals in this study practice a leadership that aligns with their philosophy and conceptualizations of effective school leadership. They organized and shared leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability across multiple levels of individuals. They revealed that being able to share some of their roles and responsibilities with trusted colleagues affords them opportunities to extend their reach beyond the traditional roles of operations, management, and discipline. Ms. Daily declared, "I think when you have strong teachers in classrooms…you allow your administrators to focus on the administrative aspect[26] of leading a school, because they're not consumed with the discipline and the management of the building." Thus, they 'work at' building a culture of strong teachers and learners by consistently being visible in the hallways and classrooms as instructional leaders to teachers and students. In this section, I re-tell 'thick descriptive[96]' accounts of how they practice a shared leadership.

Leadership—Organized Our Way

The principals organized diverse leadership teams and staffs within their schools. They described the organizational structure of their leadership teams differently. Importantly, they voiced similar statements about the value of being able to share leadership responsibilities across multiple people, who they trust and work with to develop, implement, monitor, and assess the fidelity of their school's goals, programs, practices, and expectations. Here, I re-present the school leaders' descriptions of their organized leadership teams.

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[26] In a follow-up interview, Ms. Daily explained what she meant by the 'administrative aspect' of leading. She stated, *"the instructional elements"*, include (1). Planning with teachers, (2). Observing classes, (3). Listening intently for specific types of questioning, (4). Scripting teachers' questions to use for feedback, teaching, and improving practitioner practices, (5). Being knowledgeable of diverse sources of data, (6). Understanding flexible groups, and (7). Being present in classes to help improve management of discipline issues. (Personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013).

Mr. Steve Biko: As a leader in a school building I'm the principal, but of course we break school down into three (3) major components: curriculum and instruction, student achievement and testing, and then school safety and discipline. …I have an administrator over those three branches. And under them, they have instructional coaches, and then department chairs and so forth. So I just think you have to have an organizational chart…a way of people knowing how to report things…so that everyone knows the expectations through those people, but they also know where to go to get help, because as a principal…you just can't do it all. (Lines 41 – 54)[97].

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: I didn't have a Dean of Students position when I first started. ...He's more like the person who monitors the kids' behaviors. Administrators, …put out fires all day with me. They do observations as well. I have one administrator who is an instructional leader to the core and then I have another administrator who's a floor manager. So we have to use both of those based on their strengths (Lines 201 – 211)[98].

Ms. Frances Stevens: My leadership team…consist of the guidance counselor, the curriculum coaches, assistant principal, magnet facilitator, of course…the office, [which] is probably the biggest key. Because if the office is running smooth…then usually the rest of the day goes smooth, because…it's the hub of everything. [I]t's the central go-to-place for teachers, students, and outside stakeholders. And so if those things are running smoothly, then everything else tends to run a lot smoother (Lines 239 – 246)[99].

Ms. Unique Daily: Everybody certainly has a role, an important role, in transforming our school. I think our Executive Team, that core group, keeps a pulse on everything going on in the building. And I don't know that our Executive Team looks like others. [I]t's myself, my assistant principal, our Family Partnership Specialist, our Media Specialist, our Guidance Counselor, our School Resource Officer and our Bookkeeper make up our Executive Team. …[T]hose are some key individuals and they make this work a lot easier [Lines 717 – 749][100].

Leadership—Sharing Responsibilities And Accountability

The principals readily admitted that effectively leading schools, especially in urban city environments, requires sharing the work across multiple levels of individuals with diverse strengths and skillsets[27]. During our conversations, they espoused a belief of sharing responsibili-

[27] The four contemporary school leaders did not have a formal national organizational network like the 'Association' (Walker, 2009). However, they cultivated a local organizational network within and in-between their school communities, which consisted of individuals vested in the success of the school community. Thus, there were professional and lay individuals who were a part of their local organizational networks. Importantly, at the helm of their local organizational networks were their elders. The organized network of elders included historical Black school leaders and neighborhood community members like Mrs. Faye Ison, Mr. Lee Henry, Mr. Ellis Broadwater, and Mr. Raymond Grady.

ties of the work. Mr. Vertner explained, "School leadership is not ever a one person deal. Real school leaders have to glean from other leaders" (Lines 557 – 558). They also shared mixed feelings of when to do so. Mr. Biko discussed creating a shared leadership team of individuals who are self-initiators, which is critically important in often understaffed and underdeveloped school environments. He remarked, "I'm trying to create assistants that can take the initiative to get things done without having to wait on a principal to tell them. 'If you see something that needs to be done constructively, instructionally, or safety,…go head…implement that'" (S. Biko, June 3, Lines 396 – 399)[101].

It was through multiple interviews that I learned what, why, how and who they practice a shared leadership. They explained what it means to share the excessive responsibilities of transforming low performing schools during an era of heighten public scrutiny and accountability. They seemingly practice a shared leadership through multi-layers of interactions for heighten situational awareness and engagement throughout the school and within the community. Their practice is done with the help of trusted individuals committed to the successful improvement of their schools and communities at-large.

What

The school leaders in this study shared leadership roles, responsibilities, and accountability with trusted others. In describing school leadership, Ms. Stevens encapsulated their collective belief, which entailed a shared practice. She stated, "[S]chool leadership, it's not individual. I think school leadership is at all levels. [I]t happens at all levels, in all departments, and it's a team effort with one shared vision and goal" (F. Stevens, June 13, 2013, Lines 247 – 249)[102]. I found that although they discuss this practice differently, they believe that transforming their schools is beyond them as one leader, but rather the responsibility of the collective many.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I'm just grateful to be in a position where my Assistant Principal and I work extremely well together. We don't have a problem pulling each other's coattail saying, "You know what? You need to think about this, or you need to think about that, or this is great let's move forward." And we've spent enough time in our school environment and away from our school environment to know each other personally, to know our philosophies of leadership, and to know what's important to each other. So when you understand that, and you know that, you can operate in it a lot better (Lines 444 – 449)[103].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** Shared leadership is where it is because you can do more with many. [I]t's the same old adage, …one man standing alone can't do it, but if the collective has the plan and know what the plan is…everyone's going to be invested. If you're just doing it yourself and saying, "Go do this, go do that", and you don't have buy-in and input of other people, then it won't last long cause it's all your ideas. …If you share with the leaders, then they're going to bring you back good feedback…good advice, they're going to be invested because some of the ideas are theirs (Lines 421 – 430)[104].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I love working with that team of people because they're all highly intelligent individuals and they don't have a problem questioning or asking or providing a different perspective. But at the same time when we leave out the door we leave with a united front and I think that sends a great message to our students and staff. It's one of those things that we laugh about all the time. A lot of time teachers might ask me something and I detail it out, they go right back in there and ask Mr. Winans the exact same thing, and he'll say the exact same thing and we never will have talked to each other. But know each other's style and know what's right and best and know that we've decided as a team that pretty much dictates our response (Lines 740 – 749)[105].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I hate when people say, "It's just all about the principal and the principal should share the idea and the principal should be the only one to display what's going to go on in their school." …[I]t was all about the power, people knowing they're the principal. …[W]hen you're the principal you don't have to show people... Showing people what you do and who you are comes by how you carry yourself… [T]hey will see it from the people in the process that are around you… (Lines 373 – 381)[106].

Why

They believe that sharing with the collective many creates buy-in at multi-levels, minimizes micromanaging, and provides resources to 'go beyond' solely meeting academic needs. I too recognized that the collective buy-in afforded the principals' diverse human capital, capacities, and opportunities to reach beyond their traditional leadership roles within their schools, but into neighboring communities as well.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I believe in shared leadership. …So my philosophy is shared leadership, though I believe you have to have buy-in from your assistant principals,

> …instructional coaches, …department chairs to your teachers to even your student leaders in the building and your community leaders. It's all one big function. I think schools operate when you have the different divisions come in as one whole. They all know the plan. You deliver the plan…and the people that you bring in go out and deliver that plan… (Lines 680 – 694)[107].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I said, "Look I need someone who is as instructionally savvy or more instructionally savvy than I. And I need somebody who can go down there, [9th Grade Academy], and can manage that thing". Who I can say, "Here are your marching orders, go" and I don't have to micromanage. …[B]rought Betty Douglas from West Point Arts & Science Academy…and she has been marvelous putting the team together around her leadership style (Lines 248 – 259)[108].

The contemporary Black school leaders recognized the importance of working with a team who believes in the educability of traditionally marginalized students. The following two excerpts shared by Ms. Daily depict the caliber of educators currently needed in urban city school communities as contemporary 'surrogate neighborhood families', who fulfill families' basic needs through an education paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanism.

> [W]hen you're sitting in the dark, and we got to the house, and it was still springtime, but you could tell it was hot. How can you think about doing homework and getting yourself dressed and being in the right uniform, and having a positive attitude when I'm hot and I'm bothered and I'm taking a cold shower? And they aren't the only ones. …I might not have had food or if I did it wasn't something that's going to be nutritious or sustain me for a period of time. So those are the just a lot of the challenges that our families face and we have to be willing to go beyond and meet those needs if we expect our children to grow (Lines 1234 – 1241)[109].

> We got from the Food Bank…but without hesitation that was just what we did and didn't think much about it other than this is one of our families in need and we can't allow our student to be without power and utilities for two weeks, any longer. It had already been two weeks. That was long enough. And I think that's just a testament to the team that we've established. …[O]ur Executive Team is just a model of that type of work (Lines 1219 – 1227)[110].

How

Although they believe in shared leadership, they disclosed that it is challenging to align followers for 'the cause' and thus release responsibilities. They spoke about taking time to build trusting relationships with existing and new staff members. The time provided opportunities to

learn each other's strengths, capacities, philosophies, work ethics, and develop collegial cohesion of followers who take the initiative to 'do'.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [P]eople can respect you and do what you ask or people can respect you and follow you. …[H]ow do you get people to follow your lead? …How do I get Ms. Hodges to say, "I want to help him, I don't work here, I don't get paid, I'm just a person shadowing Mr. Biko, but I'll deal with four of these issues over here for him just because I see his mission, I see his passion, I can tell the cause." So you always want to create a revolution, [which] can start with one person (Lines 1047 – 1056)[111].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [I]t's good when you can surround yourself with people who you've influenced and…they pretty much know your heart [and] your work ethic (Lines 541 – 543)[112].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I think as school leaders, a principal and assistant principals, they need to complement each other well. And sometimes when school leaders are just dropped down in a building and they don't take the time to work at that and learn each other, then they miss out on a lot of opportunities, because everyone seems to work in isolation or you don't ever get an opportunity where you're able to build that trust and build that confidence in the other individual's work or have that individual to be confident in your work, because if you don't know each other, you don't trust each. And it's hard to release responsibilities to someone you don't know and don't trust, but you have to work at it. So if you're not willing to work at building that relationship, if it's not important to your work as a leader, then you're going to miss out on opportunities (Lines 435 – 444)[113].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** So it's identifying leaders and key people with the same philosophy… I had assistant principals this week that were off that picked up kids and brought them to summer school. I had Instructional Coaches that did not get paid that worked summer school and an Educational Assistant that didn't get paid. …[S]ee, it matters. So you have to find people that's willing to…do whatever in times where they [can]…[I]t's that attitude of I want you to succeed and do well (Lines 1253 – 1262)[114].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I try to foster that, [leadership], as much as possible. …Encouraging them, send them to professional development, webinars, giving them more things to do, challenging them, not micromanaging. So just giving them freedom to create and develop the way they see fit (Lines 255 -259)[115].

Who

They conversed with me about being able to reach beyond their traditional leadership roles to accomplish more in their schools when sharing roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities with multi-levels of invested stakeholders and followers. Mr. Biko explained, "[Y]ou want to

have flexibility from teachers, parents, students, community representatives, and business partners. [H]ave a format where you bring all those people together, share your plan, and then get ideas from them, and go from there (Lines 261 – 272)[116]. The followers are internal and external stakeholders. They believe in 'the cause' and can provide relevant insight on the work.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [Y]ou can't do this work on your own. So I try my best to include as many relevant individuals in the work as possible. I try to really involve my school board member, …my directors to ask questions and to be a part of the decision making process as well as our administrators and staff members here at school, because it requires a lot of buy-in on everyone's part to really move this building in the direction that people expect. So I try to collaborate with as many as possible who understand the work that we do and who value that work and can provide insight on that work (Lines 534 – 540)[117].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [I]f you're sitting out trying to prove to everyone, "Hey, look I'm the principal. I'm doing this", it's counter-effective. The best leaders have people…that want to work with them and want to help make the process or the kids succeed rather than I have to do it because he's the principal and he's the boss. I'd rather folks want to follow me than have to follow me. You're going to get more out of people if they're doing it because that's the way they feel and it's their heart, it's their flight, it's their mission, than it's my job, they're paying me, and he'll get me fired (383 – 391)[118].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [W]hen we got there, [student's house], and talked to mom…we didn't want to say, "Look she told us your power's off", but we explained the situation…and just wanted to come over and check on her, "Was there anything that they needed?" …[F]inally, Ms. Adams said, "Look mom, I'm a single mother myself, I've been here. I understand. We are here. We are family. What can we do for you?" And so finally she said, "If there was any way to pay a utility bill that would really be of help." And so we were like, "Whew, I'm finally glad you said that!" …I pulled Mr. Winans, I think our SRO and our Numeracy Coach, just again those key players in the building who in a bind I know where to go. I know as a principal where I can count on individuals to step up in any way and they did. …[E]verybody at the table said, "Well, I can put 50 in, I can put 50 in" …and paid the bill without a moment's notice. That's just what we decided to do (Lines 1187 – 1200)[119].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** Jerry, he's from the community. He's a Murray graduate. … He helps me recruit kids because he's really in the streets. …He keeps his ear close to the pavement. Whenever he hears something, he'll come in…have a private conversation with me or he'll bring a kid to me and say, "Hey, look who I found." And so this kid here, I'm going to get his classes together first before I put him on that basketball court. I want to make sure academically he's on point, because…if he can't get to the next level because of academics, that's a problem (Lines 548 – 556)[120].

Instructional Leadership

The school leaders in this study are principals of academically low performing schools. Their schools are a part of the state's 'Needs Improving Watch List'. Their schools receive federal funding through State Improvement Grants (SIG) with the sole purpose of vastly transforming low performing schools into high achieving schools. They addressed the importance of using non-SIG Funds to hire and sustain human capital and capacity beyond the three-year grant. Ms. Daily hired a Dean of Students for "added support with discipline and administrative duties, so that we were freed as principal and assistant principal to be in classrooms and doing the instructional work" (Lines 999 – 1001).[121] She converted the recently vacated Curriculum Facilitator position that was based on enrollment rather than funding. She explained, "I was very cautious of putting positions [into the SIG Grant]. Other schools have put as many as six positions into that SIG Grant. When it's gone you've lost six people just like that" (Lines 991 – 993)[122]. The consistently low achievement performances of the schools have seemingly created a need for principals to become instructional leaders in the classrooms (Lomotey, 1989). Ms. Stevens stated,

> The role of a principal is changing. It used to be building manager, operational, but now we're strictly supposed to be instructional. And so [teaching is] the way to try to really get in on the instructional piece, because they sometimes still see us as the building manager[123].

The principals who participated in this research spoke at length about their role as an instructional leader. They uttered words and phrases of excitement, confidence, and hope of being effective principals who are more than building mangers, but instructional leaders. The principals chatted with me about what the role means to them and how they arranged their school day to be visible in the hallways and classrooms for students and teachers to lead their schools from low to high performing through diverse methods of instructional support.

Self—I'm An Instructional Leader

The principals embody the role of instructional leader with proclamations of explicit and implicit statements. They voiced the importance of using data to inform their interactions with teachers and students as instructional leaders in the quest to improve the teaching and learning processes in their schools.

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** My role is a principal and on top of that an instructional leader. …I see myself as an instructional leader. I like data, so I started with my comfort zone in data and started talking about data and instructional strategies (Lines 220 – 227)[124].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [L]ooking then specifically to the instructional elements, because if my overall goal and my success as a school leader is being measured by how much my students grow or their knowledge, then that's where my attention needs to be. So I need to be planning with teachers. I need to be observing classrooms regularly. I need to be focused on even the types of questions that are being asked. …I need to be knowledgeable of the data that I have available in terms of attendance, in terms of growth from week-to-week…[and] quarter-to-quarter... A lot of time if you are consumed with discipline then you miss out on opportunities to participate in those things, and I think my presence during those times impacts that discipline as well, because if teachers…[and] students see principals in and out of classrooms they rise to the occasion, that attitude and behavior just changes (Lines 702 – 713)[125].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [I]n my practice I try to make sure I'm fluid in data. I'm able to talk data and I'm able to help teachers work through data for the sake of kids (Lines 150 – 151)[126].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I've assigned myself the role of monitoring what is being taught and how it's being taught in the building. And making sure I can identify good quality teaching and teaching that's not so good. And then preparing a way to support the teachers, either help them and they get with the program or find teachers that will. And so that's the number one role (Lines 178 – 182)[127].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I try my very best to be an instructional leader, because at the root of it that's probably what I love the most, is the actual instruction of what we do. Working with kids, they're cool, but I love the instruction. I love the strategies. I love the teaching components that make those light bulbs go off. I love to see students engaged and I love to see teachers excited about what they're teaching. So I try to lead with that in mind of enhancing those aspects of what we do (Lines 451 – 457)[128].

Visible Instruction—In Hallways And Classrooms

The principals, I noted, dressed in professional attire and wore stylish but comfortable shoes.

> **Field Notes: Tuesday, September 4, 2012; 9:45 AM**.
> We walk back into his office. Mr. Vertner grabs his iPad and walkie. We begin walking down the hall. He turns to me, looks at my shoes and says, "You have on comfortable shoes?" "Yes, I do." I noticed the first time that I walked down the hall with him that he walks extremely fast (Lines 75 – 77)[129].

They each confided in me that they believe they should be visible in the halls and classrooms interacting with students and teachers. Their interactions are always purposeful. The interactions are mediating tools that help support and sustain high expectations for students' academic and social improvements. Therefore, they have chosen sensible and comfortable shoes that allow them to seamlessly move in step with students and teachers throughout their schools all day.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I try not to schedule any meetings or interviews or things like that during the school day, because I think my attention needs to be on students and teaching and learning and visible in hallways and classrooms versus behind closed doors… (Lines 563 – 566)[130].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [Y]ou deal with management and a lot of things by being visible and being there, not sitting in your office, being preventive about things and so that's what I do. …I'm in here to support the teachers, you know, to see and talk with the students (Lines 97 – 114)[131].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** The first thing I like to do is go roam either the lunchroom or the auditorium. Those are the only two places our kids can be [in the morning]. And I'm usually in there looking for dress code, looking for attitudes. I want to shake the kids hands, say "Hello", "Good Morning", "Have a great day." …[E]very day you want to do that before the bell rings (Lines 247 – 251)[132].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** My business hours are from 6:30 AM to roughly 8:30 AM. …After that, 8:30 AM the kids go to the cafeteria or gym, I hit the floor. I'm out there with the kids and that's basically what I do, monitor and just see what's going on with the kids. …[W]hen the 8:50 AM bell rings, I'm out in the hallway with the kids. I'm cajoling them, making sure that they're there and making sure that they get to class on time and just in the hallway with my administrative team (Lines 104 – 115).[133]

Teachers, I'm Here To Support Instructional Improvements.

The school leaders spoke at length about their role of instructionally supporting faculty to become strong teachers in their classrooms and professional vocation (Lomotey 1989). In essence, they became interactively engaged mentors to their teachers unlike principals who were ineffective in implement the professed mediating practice (Tillman, 2005). They expressed a belief that changing the principal-teacher-student dynamics through the expanded role of instructional leader helps cultivate a culture of high expectations, data conversations, and heighten accountability among all stakeholders. For the principals, it means being actively present and engaged in classrooms daily. Much like his middle and high school colleagues, Mr. Biko avowed, "My number one goal, always, no matter what my agenda says, is to walk into the classrooms and have the teachers…and the students…see that I'm observing and that what they're doing in the classroom matters…and it's important" (Lines 132 – 135) [134]. Here, I re-present their perspectives of being an instructional leader in classrooms as opportunities to observe, support, model teaching, critically question, and encourage instructional risk taking, creativity, and practitioner reflection.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** My number one role is to ensure there is education going on in this school building. So observing those classes, whether it's an informal, formal, whether it's walk-thrus, is making sure between myself and the administrative staff, we're going in classrooms every day. And it's the hardest thing to do…so many things that do not affect student achievement can get in your way. I think trying to observe teachers teaching and ensure that they are teaching and then giving them support is the number one thing that we try to do (Lines 160 – 166)[135].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [S]ometimes I think they, [teachers], feel that we're on the other side and that we've forgotten what it's like in the classroom. …"I'm not going to ask you to do anything that I won't try myself…I like to take risks, but I'm not going to ask you to take a risk and not support you." (Lines 185 – 192)[136].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]hat they're doing in the classroom matters to me and it's important. And I think that the teachers know and the kids know that you're going to come in there,

> then you're going to create a culture of accountability and expectations that everyone should be on point doing what they're expected to do (Lines 128 – 137)[137].
>
> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I like it when teachers say, "Can you come observe me at such-a-such block? I want you to come to my class and see me teach." I love that because that lets me know that the expectations are there. When I don't ask for teachers to cc me your lesson plans but they do it anyway, I like giving the feedback on the lesson plans they have, "I like this idea. I want to come see this happen. "Have you thought of doing this?" I like giving feedback (Lines 1140 – 1144)[138].
>
> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** We have to talk about it's our professional responsibility number one and we have to not take it personal. So we got to talk about data and we learn how to talk to each other using data and facts versus feelings and not make it personal. Then we will…be able to hold each other better accountable for our actions (Lines 318 – 326)[139].
>
> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [V]isiting classrooms just about all day, and observing teachers, giving teachers feedback on what I see, and asking critical questions of them, and make them think about their practice (Lines 104 – 115)[140].

Students, It's My Responsibility To Prepare You For Academic And Social Successes

The school leaders, through words and actions, communicated a belief of being responsible for their students' academic and social growth (Hilliard, 2003). While in the field, I observed numerous interactions between the school leaders and their students. The interactions were always couched in emotions of care, love, humor, sternness, and high expectations for their life outcomes. Mr. Vertner's conversation with a senior Black female student provides a small, but significant, descriptive glimpse into their daily interactions with students.

> **Field Notes: Tuesday, September 4, 2012; 3:18 PM**
> Before the meeting begins in his office, Mr. Vertner sits his wooden paddle down on his desk. Mr. Vertner sits in his chair across from the student and Ms. Bordes, Senior Counselor. I sit at the round conference table to observe their interaction. He says, "We haven't talked since senior breakfast because you wore a hot pink shirt to school." She was not allowed to participate in the senior breakfast because she was out of dress code. She had to spend the day in ISS for the infraction. He asks, "What is your GIG?" He coined the phrase and acronym to help get the students focused on graduation. It is posted on the left wall outside of the main office door, which is the door that everyone has to enter when coming into the main office. He goes on to tell her as he looks at her transcript on the computer monitor that she currently has 24 ½ credits, no ACT scores, and 2 vouchers

> remaining. …Mr. Vertner outlines for the female student his expectations and plans to help ensure that she graduates in May. He tells her that she will take the ACT in October and get the right classes to graduate on time. He points out that it is the 4th week of school and she has missed several days, 2 failing classes, and getting into trouble because of the cell phone. As he talks to her, he leans forward towards the student, gives her eye contact, his undivided attention as if no one else is in the room except her and her issues. He then questions her about her behavior and attitude within the school and in the neighborhood. He questions her about her drug activity and whether her mother knows that she gets high, fight, etc.? He tells the student that they are putting her on a contract. Says, "There will be negotiable and non-negotiables. We need to start our contract now." He asks her, "Is there anything you need from me and/or Ms. Bordes?" She says, "No." He tells her to "Stay out of drama" and that the "Next thing I'm going to do is call your mom." She says, "We're not talking."…Mr. Vertner says, "I'm going to call you mom. I won't tell her I know you two are not talking, but I'm going to ask her about conversations the two of you are having about graduation." The student leaves. Then Mr. Vertner and Ms. Bordes talk further about the student. He says that he is concerned that her hanging out with a new girl and crowd has caused the change in her behavior and attitude (Lines 578 – 618).

Each principal engaged in similar interactions. The principals explained the interactions as opportunities to provide multi-layers of instructing knowledge to support the academic and social development of their foremost stakeholders as kids, students, and future productive citizens. As part of this practice, the principals consciously serve their students as contemporary 'surrogate neighborhood families', who monitor, train, empower, and teach topics beyond the core curriculum.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I love this work and the students. …They're trying to find themselves, who they are, who should be their friends, …they're crying and fighting and they have absolutely no idea why… [T]hey need people who can support them through that rollercoaster. A lot of times they'll get written off because it's a behavior problem, but it's not as much a behavior problem, it's just a lack of training and understanding the ability to think through [changes and]…how to cycle themselves out of those mistakes (Lines 781 – 794)[141].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** It was for them to share with parents, but it was for them to know that I'm monitoring. …[I]t was the *first step* in them being responsible and looking at their grades, 'what does this mean to me?' …I asked the teachers to know the students in three ways. …Also the students need to know themselves at home, at school and on paper… A lot of us are surprised, what we look like on paper doesn't match who we think we are…And so that's my way, at this level, showing the kids so when they get in high school, they see the transcripts is a reflection of who they are on paper. And then they get beyond school and their credit score is a reflection of who they are (Lines 803 – 816)[142].

Mr. Biko hosted a Town Hall Meeting during the school day in the auditorium for the senior students. During the meeting, the students viewed and discussed selected clips from the documentary, Eyes on the Prize: American's Civil Rights Movement. In the following excerpt, Mr. Biko expounded during an interview why he believed it was important to utilize instructional time for the meeting. He explained that is was to provide students with foundational knowledge of the historical plight of Blacks quest for access to equal and equitable education in the United States.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [M]any of them will be entering the real world and I wanted them to have a sense of what the world was like. I mean you don't know where you're going if you don't know where you come from. …[M]any of our kids of this era seem very detached from that movement, [e.g., Civil Rights], and that time and history. I just think that it's good for our kids in education to just see, especially when you're in a school where it's 98% African American…[and] know what history is about, …what people have done to fight for them to go out to live their lives and have opportunities. And some of them take it for granted because they just don't know. And it's our job as educators to expose them to that (Lines 816 – 825)[143].

Role Model—Leading By Example

The school leaders identified role modeling as their most prevalent practice (Tillman, 2005). Ms. Stevens quickly quipped, "My leadership practices, model the expectations number one", when I asked about her leadership practices in the school (Line 36)[144]. Mr. Vertner similarly responded, "In this school, I try to lead by example" (Line 34)[145], which Ms. Daily echoed, "I try my best to lead by example first and foremost" (Line 442)[146]. They each spoke about the importance of modeling authentic examples of positive behaviors, activities, expectations, practices, and interactions at all times, especially in times of frustrations of which there are often many

in their 'low performing[28]' school communities. Therefore, like their colleague Ms. Daily, they embodied a positive standpoint towards effectively leading to transform 'unpopular places' into coveted spaces in which to live, work, learn, and play. She explained her belief of "Being ambitious with your expectations but also keeping that in perspective with where you are, what you're trying to do, and the realities of moving forward. ...[and to] lead in a positive manner" (Lines 478 – 480)[147]. Mr. Vertner explained that this practice it is not a process, but "that it is a model" (Line 83). I assert that the school leaders' personal standpoints significantly undergird their professional perspectives and thus practices (Dillard, 1995). I noticed that they spoke about modeling expectations across a spectrum. The spectrum ranged from their intimate, personal selves and families across spaces within their communities into interactional spaces throughout their schools with school leaders, teachers, staff, and students.

Myself, My Family, And My Community

The school leaders, throughout their daily interactions, seem to display an allegiance to their families' mores (Dillard, 1995). They revealed that even in moments of publicly frustrating and challenging interactions, they are mindful of their families' models of expectations. However, they admitted seeking private spaces to vent their frustrations. Thus, I believe modeling to others that they too are human, but have learned more appropriate ways to handle their frustrations is critically important to how they work to shift the educational paradigm in urban city school communities. I contend that the school leaders in this study have significantly transformed their schools by consistently modeling and upholding high expectations of themselves and stakeholders.

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[28] Ms. Daily described the neighborhoods that make up her school community saying, [T]he reality is that in most of those neighborhoods where we're pulling students, those are also low performing neighborhoods. Those are also low performing socioeconomic neighborhoods. Those are also rival gang neighborhood. And they all converge right here in the middle school" (personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2015, Lines 900 – 903)

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I try to show a mutual level of respect... I try not to allow the behaviors of others to impact, who I am as a person. I try to keep in mind being able to sleep at night knowing that I was respectful [and that] I don't have anything that my parents would be embarrassed about. I don't have anything that would be an embarrassment to my school or to myself. So I think about those things even in the midst of adversity, even in the midst of frustrations, because they do exist, but try to find a way out of the spotlight to express those things (Lines 422 – 430)[148].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [H]e nor momma, they never told me, "No, don't try it." …[T]hey never would discourage me. …I see now more of how and why I do what I do, because…that's the way my parents are (Lines 651 – 680)[149].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I try to lead in a positive manner. …But for the most part people know that if I'm not smiling it's something serious going on, so I try to keep that positive attitude and look for the best in every situation, because I think so much of it is if you get bogged down in so much negativity, in what can't happen and what can't be done and what's not right, then you never take the time to see what actually has occurred and what actually is going on and to get the most out of it. I think it's easier to get defeated if you only focus on those negative things. I try my best to stay as positive as possible and hopefully people see that as an example and would do the same (Lines 479 – 491)[150].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [A] servant leader models. …[I]t's not what you tell people. It's what you show people. And so I think a good servant leader is going to model what he expects out of his people and he holds standards high (Lines 710 – 713)[151].

Faculty and Staff

The principals expressed their personal commitment to their vocation as educational leaders of change. They professed change begins within their practice of modeling expectations. They spoke consistently about modeling expectations that go above and beyond 'the standard', commitment to one's own professional development, data fluency in practice, collegial classroom support, and resiliency.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I often make the statement, "It's rare that I'm going to ask anyone to do anything that I'm not willing or able to do myself." I hope that teachers know that I don't look to misuse them or do anything that would be against their contract, but knowing that it takes a little bit more work that can be detailed out in your standard day (Lines 442 – 451)[152].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I try to support my teachers when they have professional development and in-service, because they are giving up their summer to go to these things. So

> I try to go and learn with them…again modeling the expectation. …I was the only principal there (Lines 52 – 55)[153].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I try to model for teachers the instruction that I like. At the beginning of the year and at the middle of the year in January I'll do the PD. I'll lead the PD session. …I try to go over data and I try to keep data ever before people and I like for my teachers to hear me with data, so not only am I speaking about, here's what the data say, but also try to model for teachers, "Here's what we do based on the data" (Lines 145 – 149)[154].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I can't be in a place where I'm unhappy all day every day. If that's my attitude about it, I don't need to be here. If that's your attitude about it, you don't need to be here. This is not a place where you can come and be humdrum and depressed and low in spirit. They, [the students], have enough of that all day every day in their own lives. So you have to be able to put on that happy face and keep moving through…either correct it or change it. And that's what I pushed teachers to do (Lines 717 – 723)[155].

Students

The school leaders voiced concern about students' apparent infrequent interactions with positive, productive, and progressive role models in their homes and neighborhoods. They understand "there are certain norms and mores in inner city" (Lines 583)[156] that are integral to the students' home culture, but deemed inferior to mainstream culture. Therefore, I assert that as effective educational leaders, they model expectations of how to best prepare well-rounded students for a productive citizenship that affords them street and social capital to seamlessly navigate within and in-between all spaces of the world. They spoke of modeling dress[29] and decorum for diverse situations, academic conversations to impress its inherent value, and appropriate

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[29] Contemporary Black school leaders, much like their predecessors, recognized the importance of modeling professional dress attire for their students. Like Byas, Agee "expected from himself and for them that they would come to school 'looking the part,' which he maintains is equally important as 'playing the part'" (Walker, 2009, p. 178). However, unlike Byas, the four school leaders found that in their contemporary contexts they needed to expressively set dress code expectations in addition to modeling appropriate professional dress for their teachers. Therefore, dress attire was an expressed formal part of the urban city schools' dress code. The students wore uniforms. For instance, *The* Murray students, boys and girls, were expected to wear a tie everyday so that they would be prepared for social interactions (i.e., job, internship, and scholarship interviews) in the larger community.

problem-solving behaviors to sustain character of integrity (Dantley, 2005; Hilliard, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Walker, 2009).

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** Our kids don't have enough African Americans in leadership positions to look up to, model, [and] see. I wear a suit and tie everyday not because I want to be a professional in the business workforce. I want our kids to see what society sees as successful…not because it really says who they are, but just because you will be stereotyped walking through the door. And I hate that. Like I would love to tell the kids go as yourselves, but that's just not how it works. So I want to model what I want them to do…[and] to dress for the job you want not the job you have. Our kids don't understand that (Lines 426 – 438)[157].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [O]ne thing I like is to model the type of conversations to have with students, not just about what's going on in the streets, but genuine conversations about a student's growth or student achievement. And the only way that I can have those conversations is if I'm in the classroom with them while they're learning, so when I do see them in the hallway I can ask them, "Okay, how did that experiment end up? What was the outcome of that math problem? Did that answer work? Did you try another strategy?" So to have those conversations versus you know who's talking about who conversations (Lines 97 – 114)[158].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** You don't have to fight your own battles. That could have been disastrous for me and it could have been humiliating and embarrassing for the school had I gone in [the judge's] chambers… [T]hat would of ruined my witness and ruined my testimony as someone who…tries to do right. That would have been very wrong of me and that would of been no kind of example for my kids to see or hear their principal going in there and beating up a man (Lines 990 – 997)[159].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [T]here are good days, there are great days, there are bad days and there are worst days. That's just the reality of the work that we do. I try to remain calm, cool and collected, because when… [I am] the people around me are calm, cool and collected. …[B]ecause even in the midst of bad situations you can still have a positive outcome. Even when students are misbehaving, you can still address those without derogatory comments or profanity or frustration and you can still get your point across (Lines 414 – 422)[160].

I assert that the school leaders' modeling examples of positive personal and professional characteristics of integrity is a fluid and dynamic practice. Thus, it is important to note that although I re-presented role modeling as a distinct practice, it is a conceptual practice that is consistently modeled within and in-between their collective body of practices. In the next part of this

second section, through their voices, I re-present the practice of restructuring school, which includes the work of many.

Restructuring School

Mr. Biko, principal of Hails High School, pointed out that their teachers were seemingly unprepared to manage and teach all students at high levels, especially now that they were attending class. He said, "We're getting them in class, but now they're in class, and some of the one's that were issues, that would never be in class, are in, and teachers are having to deal with [them]" (Lines 1697 – 1699)[161]. This principal's high school level colleague, Mr. Vertner, echoed similar findings of low expectations from teachers, administrators, district and state officials as being a part of the school community's sociocultural systematic structure for urban city communities. He revealed, "The expectations are so low. And I found that the problem is not setting the expectation very high and barely missing it, the problem is setting the expectation very low and hitting it every time cause you think you're doing something with low expectations" (Lines 617 – 620)[162]. Their middle school colleague, Ms. Daily, also recognized this pattern of low expectations and deficit thinking[163] (i.e., class and cultural) within the district (Cooper & Jordan, 2009; Hilliard, 2003; Tillman, 2008). She shared,

> It was interesting, we went to a principal's workshop last week and they had the statistics from Southern[30] of the percentage of adults who can't read beyond the 8th grade level. And one of the principals made a comment in terms of education, "A lot of that comes from desire. Kids have to want to be educated." And to a certain extent that's true, but if I'm growing up in a household where none of the adults, who are responsible for me can read beyond the 6th or 7th grade level, then how am I expected to learn how to read. And is it important at that point? And that's the vast majority of the students who we serve. Their circumstances and the variables that impact their day, on any given day, are so unbelievable sometimes that math, language arts, science, and social studies are the least of their concerns. Surviving is a greater concern. And so, we have to show them that part of that survival is being educated (Lines 871 – 885)[164].

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[30] Southern is pseudonym for the state where this reach was conducted.

Ms. Stevens spoke with frustration and passion as she told me about her jar experiment. She used a jar of M&M's® as a visual tool to help shift teachers' mindsets about their collective capacity to help their sixth grade cohort excel beyond the state's low success rate goal of 32.1% to be proficient in core academics. She said, "I think people have a loss of what is [acceptable]. We're having conversations. It's, 'Oh, we can't make that goal. How do they expect us to make that goal?' …What? That's unacceptable to me" (Lines 1409 – 1414)[165]. Mr. Biko passionately expressed similar frustrations when he spoke about the lack of academic conversations he had with stakeholders since becoming principal of Hails High School this year. He revealed, "My academic conversations been less than 20 or 15 percent of all the things I dealt with all year…lowest percentage of things that's ever been brought to my attention. Building needs, structural needs, but no one coming to say academically," we need these changes to help improve student achievement and social development (Lines 1288 – 1292)[166]. Like his colleagues, he believes that a culture of low expectations permeates the climate. The school leaders seem to be aware of the multiple structural inequities that contribute to their students' daily struggle to survive within their urban city school communities.

As I shadowed the principals and listened to their stories, I believe that they courageously take the road less traveled to redress structural inequities in their schools. Mr. Vertner shared a situation of potential subordination with me[167][168]. He defied district office administrators when he internally promoted from the classroom a highly qualified English teacher to become an instructional coach. The district officials believed that doing so would result in a decrease in test scores. The Murray School did experience a slight dip in test scores that first year, but importantly the students' academic performance significantly increased the second year. He reported, "That second year 22 percentage points gain in math, 11 percentage points gain in English"

(Lines 760 – 761)[169]. Mr. Vertner believed that he was doing what was in the best interest of the stakeholders. He explained, "I just had to ask for forgiveness for not doing what I was told to do. …You have to take a calculated risk…when big changes happen, go ahead…do what you to have to, level the playing field" (Lines 763 – 767)[170]. The school leaders have committed to shifting the educational paradigm for their stakeholders in the hope of leveling the playing field. Ms. Daily expressed sentiments of restructuring school experiences shared by her colleagues. She declared,

> We can't continue to make excuses based on the fact that we are a Title I school or based on the fact our school is in a low socioeconomic environment or setting. When they're here, what they experience ought to be different. And we ought to be able to educate those students as long as they're here… (Lines 680 – 684)[171].

Thus, they espoused a belief that their leadership practice of restructuring their schools necessitated providing alternative, not 'cookie cutter', structures to shift the prevailing educational paradigm towards a sustaining focus of academic and social success. As they explained each structural change, they often expounded on expectations they held of themselves and stakeholders to help ensure fidelity of implementation and sustainability of their restructured school communities. They discussed restructuring various aspects of their schools: philosophy of school, goals, schedules, curriculum and instruction, discipline, and family support systems. They restructured their schools to exceed federal educational reform mandates and most importantly to meet their communities' needs through an educational paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanness. The school leaders believe that their restructured schools provide the framework and foundation to support their students' academic and social success. As their 'best

practices[31]' were intentionally selected and purposefully implemented to meet their diverse learners academic and social needs (Cooper & Jordan, 2009).

Philosophy of School – A Pledge to Self and the Collective Community.

The school leaders discussed the need to reframe and personalize education for their urban city school stakeholders. In doing so, they implemented a practice of reciting pledges to cultivate and foster self-identities as invaluable human beings, students, and lifelong learners. They believe the guided practice helps to create a revolution within and among adults and students towards shifting and strengthening their educational standpoints as innately intelligent human beings.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [T]he school has a pledge and you never say it. …And there was always taking the time to do a Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. There's so many religious views and diversity and everyone couldn't participate in that, but I have yet see a parent regardless of their religious views that oppose to saying the pledge for the school, because that was more personal on growth and development as an individual... It's your belief in yourself and in your school. And when you're attending that school, you got to believe in it regardless what your religious views might be. …So we had to be able to stand for something together and I think that pledge sort of brought us together a lot. And taking the time to acknowledge a moment of silence for you to gain clarity as an individual, but also to bring us together as a school body. Saying the same thing, believing in the same thing is what's pushing us towards a more cohesive unit as a school (Lines 586 – 598)[172].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [Y]ou want to create a revolution inside the building like what we doing. What we're doing is important. It matters and it makes a difference. So we 'Say it, Model it, Organize it, Protect it, and Reward it'. [Y]ou got to have a catchphrase. [Y]ou got to have something people can believe in. And if people don't believe in it, you have to find people that do (Lines 1053 – 1059)[173].

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[31] Traditional school reform programs of such programs as 'best practices' consist of Success for All, America's Choice, High Schools That Work, and Smaller Learning Communities. The school leaders in this study fused together diverse programs and strategies that best meet their diverse learners needs, individually and collectively as learners. They do not believe that 'one size fits all'.

Setting Goals—We Can All Buy-In.

The school leaders articulated clear goals. The goals centered on meeting the academic and social developmental needs of students with high expectations, equity, and excellence. They stated that with the help of their staff, they set ambitious yet realistic goals that everyone can easily commit to consistently work towards attaining. Because "regardless of new staff members who come in, they recognize immediately why those…things are so important and why we're focusing there…those are the…things that will change our existence as a low performing school and move us into a higher proficiency" (U. Daily, Lines 548 – 551, March 19, 2013).

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** When I came in, as a staff, we kind of identified three major areas that we would focus on. And those have become our three main goals and what we worked towards on the past year and a half, almost two years. Number one being student achievement and student growth because we recognize where our students are. …[W]e recognize immediately that we are indeed a low performing school, in the bottom five percent and our main focus has to be improving the academic success of our students. Number two was increasing our attendance rate because the reality is that we can't have students to grow, we can't improve them academically, if they're not here. So we had to find ways to get students here in school working. And number three was building positive relationships throughout the school community. We knew that our school had a perception that was uncomfortable and the reality was a lot of people in the building did not want to be here. Students, parents, teachers, they just didn't want to be here. So we had to build those relationships that were positive and we worked tremendously on creating positive interactions among all stakeholders. And that's just been the driving force for us (Lines 526 – 539)[174].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [O]ur goals are number one to improve the grad rate every year. Number two to improve student achievement every year. In the state of Southern, high schools are measured first by grad rate. If you don't make the graduation rate in the state of Southern, don't matter what you're student achievement is cause the grad rate [is]…the stratum for student achievement. So we have to look at our grad rate first and then shoot to get your student achievement right (Lines 1242 – 1247)[175].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** The state of course gives us our goals. [O]ur goal is for all students to be proficient and or advanced. …I believe that the goals that they, [the state], give us are too low. (Lines 1385 – 1401)[176].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** We want to see three to ten percent increase in everything we do. …I want kids to learn how to progress. …The kids can tell you, "At Hails High, 'Students are

our business'." Then I'll get into saying', What do I want to see you do? "You just want to see us do better than what we've done before, just increase" (Lines 1570 – 1639)[177].

Structuring Academic Focused And Personalized Schedules.

The school leaders talked about the different ways that they intentionally restructured the academic focus in their schools. They discussed restructuring practices, programs, people, and times throughout the school day to provide personalized and student centered instructions and assessments to improve academic and social development.

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: [T]ried to make sure that when I came in to structure the time spent so we could have bell-to-bell instruction. Now the bell-to-bell instruction still depends on the fidelity of the instruction that's delivered by the teachers. So we're still working on that (Lines 399 – 401)[178].

Mr. Steve Biko: The first 20 minutes and the last 20 minutes you want no passes out, no interruptions. Now if you do that you ensure yourself an 85 minute block. Forty minutes of instructional time. And the teachers that did it told me they stuck to it that they really saw a significance in what was going on with the kids because it's uninterrupted. …We don't want to micro-manage, but we're trying to get every teacher to understand we want to do like a 10 to 15 minute independent reading,…a bell ringer or some type of brainteaser. And we want to get into our opening. And then our work session or work period, group time, and then a closing. That's kind of our standard-based classroom of how we're doing it at Hails High School. And it works pretty good…(Lines 360 – 373)[179].

Ms. Unique Daily: The time for it [job-embedded professional development] was already in place. The focus for it somewhat changed. Typically it was just a time to plan. …But we did have to become a lot more intentional in that focus of the time. My first year, although we did have Target Tuesdays, looking at data primarily was on a quarterly basis whereas this year we went to a weekly basis. And it was more intentional in that teachers actually had a cohort of students they were looking at as well. So they got that information and they could speak to those individual students and track those students and their progress throughout the year. But also we added our Weekly Mini-Assessments, which gave us a lot of conversations around what specific goals and objectives were to be met that week and whether teachers and students were able to meet those goals and what action steps would be put into place to make certain that we can go back and reteach and reassess those goals (Lines 983 – 993)[180].

Ms. Frances Stevens: [O]ur After School Enrichment Program, we target the 6th grade students. And we organize it for the students to take a math, language arts, social science class along with an enrichment class such as Boy's Scouts, Girl's Scouts, Healthy Kids, On Point, cooking class, those things. [W]hat we based it off of was those students we could easily move from one level to the next. So like basic to proficient and proficient to

> advance. [A]t the same time we recognize that the students are not going to stay here for an extra 2 ½ hours if we don't feed them and give them some kind of enrichment... (Lines 538 – 544)[181].
>
> **Mr. Steve Biko:** The first two parts of what our vision is…'You Say It, Model It' and then 'You Organize It'. So we're going to organize the school to be successful where we do Lab Nation. We're going to have a math lab, an English lab, a Credit Recovery, Virtual School Lab, robotics class, a science lab, a social studies lab. In those labs we have modules set-up where kids can do extra work. We're going to hire interventionists to come in and work with the kids one-on-one, Afterschool programs, whatever it take (Lines 1017 – 1022)[182].
>
> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I have one at each grade level, so each counselor is basically a specialist in that grade level. I don't believe in looping counselors with a group of kids all the way up, here anyways. It might work somewhere else, but not here. Here you need somebody who's grade level specific. …[W]e have created as a team what we call Long-sheets. Long-sheets are every piece of data that can possibly fit on an 8 ½ by 14 about a kid… [T]he counselors, they work so well with mending bridges. …[S]ometimes they're the liaison between kids and adults in this building. And they sometimes have to be the voice of kids. And they sometimes just have to listen. But each of them reports back to me and we kind of develop plans each kid. And they help me personalize the Individualize Education Program for each kid (Lines 243 – 254)[183].

Classrooms, Curriculum & Instruction, And Celebrations.

The school leaders shared how they restructured the internal operations of their schools to ensure that meaningful teaching and learning takes place throughout each class. The language arts teachers at LaVaughn Academy incorporated the Readers/Writers curriculum as part of their classroom instruction. Ms. Stevens explained, "Every student reading level is assessed. And so the concept is that they pick 'Just Right' books…that are complimentary to their reading level" (F. Stevens, June 13, 2013, Lines 545 – 565)[184]. Ms. Stevens implemented a similar curricular program, Habits of Minds and Habits of Interactions, for both science and math. They each talked about taking time to structure their schools to afford all students equitable access to academic and social successes with appropriate teaching and learning tools. In fact, time is a mediating tool that the school leaders utilized to ensure stakeholders implemented the educational processes with efficacy and fidelity. In some cases, as Mr. Vertner explained to his teachers, it may

require extending the teaching and learning time beyond state standards. He argued, "It's not the kids faulty if twenty out of twenty-five don't get it. …It may be that you have to tell the State Department or...bosses in your districts that these kids need a third semester of this class" (A. K. Vertner, October 30, 2012, Lines 1289 – 1295)[185]. Thus, they explained that they prioritize their stakeholders by using timely data to consistently center their changing needs and frequently celebrate their incremental successes of embodying an 'I can do it' mindset.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** Created a School-Within-A-School, [the Success Academy][186]. I have two retired educators who are the best of the best. …They deal with the hardest of the hard population. So instead of kicking kids out and just saying, 'Hey, you all', what did they say on Lean On Me? Did he say explicated from the school system? …And so just trying to develop ways to keep kids in school put them where they best fit in this building. It's the largest campus in Beloit County School System. Surely there is some place where somebody can fit. So we made sure we don't lose kids unless we just absolutely cannot keep them... (Lines 400 – 421)[187].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]e've already started [our 9th Grade Academy]. We've identified a series of teachers that we feel like will do good with the 9th grade. It takes someone special. …So we have them in a section of the building that's their own. …And then also doing those programs like Jostens Renaissance… That's the commitment to graduate program where they sign a banner, and it hangs down there [to remind them] that they committed to graduate. We're going to take a cap and gown [photo of them]…so they can see themselves, "That's you in four years". So if someone acts up I can say, "Come here, find your picture, that's you in four years, how you gone do that if you're not coming to school, if you're acting up? And you committed? Where did you sign your name?" [They will] carry a little commitment card (Lines 675 – 690)[188].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [O]ne of the formulas is identifying kids faster. I think that when you do data on kids one of the biggest mistakes people do with data is they don't do anything with it. …[E]very two weeks we do Benchmark Common Assessments…[W]e're going to have the Interventionists come in and pull those kids that are struggling in those particular standards… [Y]ou have to have timely intervention when kids are struggling. [If]a kid has more than two 'F's on anything we're pulling them into Recovery Lab out of either that particular class for 45 minutes or out of an Elective that they're doing good…and recover the 'F's before they become a failing grade. So one of our things is…timely intervention, effective instruction, making sure we're teaching effectively using the best practices, and [knowing] what do they look like (Lines 604 – 621)[189].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I just talked with a parent, she said, "We never have homework." Yes they do. They have homework every single night. It's a requirement from administration that homework be assigned every night and we go in and we're looking for it.

> We're looking to see where it was assigned. We're looking to see where students wrote it in their notebooks. … They have to get it done and be held accountable for it. … Something to reinforce what was done, but it might not necessarily be overwhelming. So if students go to a GEAR-UP Program or an after-school program it is possible that they've gotten their homework done prior to getting home. …But that change is a part of what we're doing with our students (Lines 828 – 847)[190].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** You're learning target should be so personal that when your kids read it they know 'I can'. So to me a learning target should start off with 'I can', 'I will', one of those two. Then the long-term learning target should be 'I will be' or 'I am able to or 'will be able to'. …But the learning target, the kids, 'here's what I can know' and 'here's what I will know when I leave this classroom today' (Lines 685 – 692)[191].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [W]e're piloting the [summer school] program[32] from Montpelier State. I picked out the units for the students to work on based on the clusters of Common Core coming up and things they would need to know… There were six units for them to work on (Lines 369 – 371)[192].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** We changed the way we had staff meetings. It became a celebration. We took the time to celebrate those great things that were going on in the building. We took the time to acknowledge the great work that was going on because often times in environments like this where you are low performing, you get the bad news all the time. And for our building we had to even celebrate the small steps, the small successes. And take time to acknowledge those and to see them…students and teachers, because it is hard work. And there are a lot of variables that we have no control over that impact what we do (Lines 724 – 730)[193].

Alternative Discipline Interventions—Keeps Me In School Learning.

The contemporary Black school leaders conveyed the importance of creating opportunities to help keep their urban city kids in school learning. They described the alternative discipline consequences that they offer to students and parents to help support the collective academic and social expectations of their students. Although they voiced concern about the presence of a paradigm of low expectations, the principals recognized that the vast majority of their parents desire a quality education for their children. Therefore, as a part of shifting the paradigm, they explained the alternative discipline policies that they have in place to help keep kids in school

[32] Ms. Stevens explained to me that the group of students were mandated to take summer school with the hope that they would master the necessary curriculum standards to be placed in their next grade level for the 2013-2014 school year otherwise they would be retained in the same grade, 6th grade, next year (Field notes, June 12, 2013).

learning. Importantly, shared accountability for student learning is at the crux of their alternative discipline practice and policies, which I purport support the cultivation of their schools as 'surrogate neighborhood families'.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [W]e do have a variety of interventions and ways to address inappropriate behaviors that don't take students out of school and out of class. So we're trying to find some unique opportunities to give students a consequence without removing them from the school setting unless it's major. And we've been able to avoid a lot of those major incidences (Lines 625 – 629)[194].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** We do have paddling or corporal punishment, but we ask that parents give that consent. So they either opt to give consent or take an out-of-school suspension (Lines 1163 – 1166)[195].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I changed the way we're doing ISS. I'm giving the ownership back to the teachers where basically we don't assign [ISS]…unless it's a zero tolerance. …Hold them accountable for students being out of the classroom. For example, one, we're not relocating students to other people's classroom. It does no good. There's no data that supports that it's doing any good. So they will be relocated to ISS. However, the teacher will be responsible for going on their planning period to teach that student one-on-one. …And then the teacher will have the option that they can just be out the rest of that class period or if they want to assign them to ISS for another two days…for their class period only. …However, soon as you have planning, everybody's first step is to the ISS room to pick up their student for that one-on-one instruction or that small group instruction…give them the instruction [and] their work (Lines 469 – 490)[196].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [T]he kids know that we love them otherwise it would be difficult for me to truly discipline kids and them not take that as just, "Okay this is the enemy here". …The previous school principals here, they had a time on their hands because it was difficult figuring out this situation and figuring out this population of kids. …I paddle kids. I know kids back-stories. I've picked kids up from wherever. I've gotten kids out of jail. But we just do what we have to do for the kids within reason and it's legal. If it's legal we can do it (Lines 432 – 438)[197].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [W]e used to do suspensions. First fight was ten (10) days out of school. I monitor…issues. Parents coming up most of the time when we make a phone call home and say, "Hey, your kid is suspended for ten (10) days". …So you give longer periods of ISS, but the student still getting instruction…because really they just want their child in school. …It's taking a risk, but we'll see how it works (Lines 552 – 565).

Responding To Families' Needs – Supports Our Vision, Expectations, And Goals.

The urban city school leaders communicated that they recognized the need to intentionally provide opportunities to support their parents through their leadership practice of restructuring their schools. In many cases, extended family members are raising their students. Ms. Stevens mentioned, "[G]reat-grandmothers and the grandmothers that are raising their great-grandchildren or grandchildren do come in [to volunteer] because they're often times seeking help for their student (Lines 782 – 784)[198]. As they talked about addressing parents' needs by equipping them with critical knowledge, tools and resources, they explained that this practice ultimately positioned parents and guardians to better support student's social and academic achievement needs. They took time to identify parents' needs and provide structures to support their personal development and potential social mobility. Ms. Daily emphatically stated, "We just understand that when you make parents comfortable and when parents have their needs met, they're more likely and able to meet the needs of the students and ultimately we need our students needs met" (Lines 1230 – 1232)[199].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [We were] more intentional about it, [parental involvement]. We did two (2) surveys. …I asked their interests, not necessarily dealing with academics, but "Would you be interested in technology class, GED, exercise, health classes, how to do a budget, how to do your taxes, all different kinds of classes". And they responded. …I had my Magnet Facilitator and my Family Partnership Specialist follow-up with a personal phone call to the parents letting them know we received your survey, we're going to work on some classes, and contact you when we get those classes. …And then, so we started growing and getting a lot of parents here for those things (Lines 451 – 461)[200].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [O]ur charge as an administrative staff moving forward is to get more parents engaged. I'm thinking about paying for a Title I bus to pick parents up on PTA, Title I Nights. I'm just trying to come up with different, creative ways to do it and if they can't get here, …I'm thinking about picking them up, feeding all the parents, putting [them] on the bus and taking them on home. Get them there. It works. So, 'no' means find another way. And that's something we talk about in our administrative meetings. …I

just think that we do have some parents that need some help and some push (Lines 544 – 555)[201].

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: [S]ome of the parents who come in…a lot of them don't understand how to support their kid. …[S]chool can be an intimidating place especially if your child is the first child in your family to graduate from high school or potentially…to go to college. …They just want to know what's the bottom line. And so we try to educate our parents at Parent Nights. We have breakout sessions for parents and try to let them know what it is that we do, what are our expectations, and if our expectations are realistic. We try to make sure they set realistic expectations for themselves, for their child, and for us (Lines 340 – 354).

Ms. Frances Stevens: [W]e ended up doing a SCAT[33] Class, which we had probably about 35 parents here just to talk to them about SCAT. … We took them through a mock-SCAT session and it was very eye opening. …We read the directions as if we were in a testing setting. We pulled their book if they were talking. …So they understood when we said, "We need your kids on time, no disturbing..." … Also one parent didn't have their glasses and was like, "I can't read. I can't see this. Can you tell me?" We were like, "No." We took the book. …It was just overall a good experience for us as well as for them. And they had a better understanding of our expectations and …the importance of that [being prepared] (Lines 464 – 502)[202].

Ms. Unique Daily: Number one, realistically Seeds of Hope Academy is probably the school in the district with the greatest need if you're looking economically, academically, and in terms of parental involvement. So it was bazar that we didn't have a Family Partnership Specialist. …[K]nowing the impact that we've, [had], and the difference that was made just with a part-time person, absolutely…we would make the position full-time. And that way we could almost double the work we were doing and the impact we were having with the community and with parents and really structuring programs that didn't necessarily lay on the shoulders of me as a principal or on our administrative team. …If you really want to do it well…you need someone in place who can manage that beyond the principal (Lines 1104 – 1124)[203].

Ms. Frances Stevens: Our Hispanic [population] is growing rapidly and we want the community to feel that they're able to come in here and learn also. [W]e're going to be an ESOL/ELL school. So we already have that, [an Adult ESL Program] in place. So that, [Adult ESL Program], was just a jumpstart on that, [ESOL/ELL program at our school] (Lines 589 – 595)[204].

In the practice of restructuring their schools, the contemporary Black school leaders consistently centered and prioritized students. They discussed taking time to identify places, practic-

[33] SCAT is Southern Comprehensive Assessment Test, which is a pseudonym for the actual state test in this study.

es, programs, and people to help ensure kids succeed as students and future productive citizens. As they talked about varying dimensions of this practice, it became clear to me that this fourth practice provided significant support towards changing lingering negative perceptions about urban city education. In the ensuring discussion, I re-tell their stories of working to sustain positive perceptions of the progressive educational changings occurring in their urban city schools.

Changing Perceptions

Mainstream constituents historically have viewed schools in urban city communities with predominately Black, brown, and poor populace as inferior. Today is no different. The contemporary school leaders in this study reported inheriting low performing urban city schools saddled with negative public perceptions. Ms. Unique Daily stated, "We are a Title I school, so the vast majority of our 99% of students are on free or reduced lunch. And we are also a low performing school and I think that's part of the perception issue" (Lines 799 – 801)[205]. However, they espoused a belief that their schools' demographic labels and academic status should not be perceived synonymous with inferiority, failure, and chaos. Mr. Arthur K. Vertner asserted, "Just because we're an inner city school doesn't mean that we have to fall short on anything (Lines 574 – 575)[206]. They identified non-stakeholders and the media as major contributors of their stakeholders and potential community supporters' lingering negative perceptions of their schools. "A lot of the most vocal individuals in the community have never stepped foot into our building. And they talk a lot about what's going on and the chaos…and they've never see it themselves and they've never experienced it" (U. Daily, June 3, 2013, Lines 428 – 431)[207]. Thus, it appears that for the contemporary school leaders, changing culture and climate was an interactional practice of changing public perceptions. I learned that the internal culture and climate changes were essential to their practice of undertaking negative public perceptions. They discussed various activities

that they implemented and engaged to build trusting relationships with stakeholders, potential community supporters, and the media in the hope of changing popular public perceptions of their internal school culture and climate through positive interactions. They discussed multiple activities of building personal relationships, welcoming the public back to school, intentionally presenting positive messages publicly, creating new funding partnerships, and successfully receiving public and private support to continue transforming their school communities into positive and progressing learning spaces.

Building Trusting Relationships—Begins With Knowing My Name

The school leaders took ownership of the practice of building trusting relationships with students, parents, residential neighbors, community church officials, and public servants (Walker, 2009). They discussed the inherent social value that each relationship potentially contributes to changing the perception of their urban city school.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I took a lot of ownership of really contacting parents. … In that first year I could call the majority of the students in this building by name, knew their parents. …[T]hat was a priority to me, because I can't expect you to trust me if I don't know you. And our students don't trust easily. …[T]hey had to know that even knowing their name was important, whereas in the past it hadn't been. …A student should not be coming to you every day and you still don't know their name. That says a lot about what you think of them as individuals. …So that was important to me, to learn those names, to learn those parents, to try to get in touch with them for something other than discipline…get them involved even before anything happen and that just took time just to develop (Lines 701 – 717)[208].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I had some questionnaire sheets… I asked the community folks [during my community walk], "What do you think about Hails High School?" …I just kind of went back and compiled a list of some things. And it was more like they talked about the parking lot was bad…some of the kids would skip…it was shootings around the school that wasn't really associated with the school. …[A] lot of it was the media portrayed things that weren't as bad. …A lot of it was a lack of involvement. Like perceptions of what you hear, but don't really know. …I just used that [community walk] as kind of like just to start a dialogue. It was pretty good (Lines 782 – 797)[209].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I always…made relationships with people in the community, particularly church leaders, police, and then different ones who are community activists

> and organizers…[T]o make sure that folks know that Murray and its leaders and students are visible. We're intelligent. We're articulate. And we're able to come in and give a four-year plan and carry it out (Lines 476 – 481)[210].

Welcome, We're Open – Come Learn What's Really Going On

The school leaders implemented an open door policy as part of their practice of changing perceptions of education in their urban city schools. They explained that the rationale for opening their doors to spokespersons with social capital is to help dispel lingering negative perceptions about their schools lacking academic focus and rigor. They voiced hope that guests would learn that 'what's really going on' in their schools are positive interactions and academic progress.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [T]he past couple of years almost having a revolving door of Educational Leadership Interns, Leaders of Montpelier, District Office Staff, everyone's welcome. And you see what you see. Most people are now able to say, "No that's not the case". So they're seeing it for themselves that the things that have been talked about in the past just aren't going on anymore. And so hopefully that negative perception will continue to decline (Lines 431 – 435)[211].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [T]he media, society, I mean, I think politicians. I think sometimes even Central Office level folks, who are maybe so far removed from the actual touching of kids. So I think the higher up you go or the more away you are from [schools and students], the more you have ideas that are probably not close to what is actually going on…And the best thing to do is to bring some politicians or the media, bring them around and let them see what's really going on in a school or what's happening (Lines 683 – 689)[212].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I've found that it is important to have people who are spokespersons for Murray, who are not employees of mine. But whenever you have someone, …who you're allowing to be the spokesperson. It's good to have them, but it's better when you put the words in their mouth to say. So, we try to do that. Try to strategically let people come around and see what we're doing (Lines 298 – 302)[213].

Being Intentional—Presenting Positive And Progressive Messages To The Public

The Black contemporary school leaders in this study shared the practice of carefully vetting community agencies and media prior to allowing them to interact with their stakeholders. I

asked Ms. Daily whether she had a process or strategy in place for the practice of leading in the community, she replied, "I don't know that I have a defined process per se in place. What typically happens is that I take any type of engagement and interaction and almost prioritize them" (Lines 671 – 672). As I shadowed and interviewed the school leaders, I quickly learned that in their own way they unanimously spoke of being intentional and selective of those that they invite into their schools. The school leaders realized the high stakes educational reform policy is embedded with contradictions, which substantively contributed to tensions inherent of urban city school communities. They explained that their intentional selective strategy is in place to protect stakeholders, academic and social progress, the integrity of their work, and to garner positive feedback and publicity about their schools' academic and sociocultural transformations.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [C]ommunity people who have an interest in Murray…I try to gauge them to see what kind of interest they have and what's in it for them. We've had people write grants, we had no clue about it. They wrote a grant for their program, paid themselves out of their grant and then show up and say, "Oh, I've written a grant for Murray". …And so when I first got here there were about thirty (30) or so organizations in here tripping over each other and I had my…Family Partnership Specialist to make sense of all of that and we put everyone out. And everybody had to apply to come back in (lines 307 – 314)[214].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [W]e have to be selective about what we put in front of our students. So a lot of times, a lot of programs that don't have the details, that don't have the background and the research, …it doesn't necessarily meet a goal or a purpose that's already defined …aligns with our goals and objectives as a school. …. When I'm interacting with individuals I'm listening for the language that they're using. If they're grammatically correct, if they're dressed appropriately, because I want to make sure anytime I put individuals in front of our students, they're setting the best examples. …I just can't put those individuals in front of our students, because I don't feel comfortable with them sending the right message…being able to maintain…the standard that we would expect. And a lot of times people look at us as "Oh we're low performing, we're struggling, we ought to be open to everybody coming in and doing whatever they want to do", and that's just not the case. You can't make progress in that manner. You still have to be selective and intentional about who's interacting with your student body and with your staff and still prioritize those things and put it into perspective as to what's going to get you the results that you need (Lines 676 – 709)[215].

Creating New Perceptions On 'The Green' For 'The Good'

The leaders have implemented the practice of reaching out to for-profit and non-profit entities to create supportive relationships for their schools, neighborhoods, and the community at-large. They functioned as contemporary linking agents of impoverished communities to mainstream communities, and more importantly to an envisioned inclusive and realized democracy.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** When I first got to this building, even before I walked through the door, I knew that the media was not friendly towards Murray. …Murray had always been the stepchild of the district. I think since '78 it's been on a steady decline. And the media just saw Murray as its whipping post. They'd come in, anything happen[34]. One time, my first year, there was a fight at Westside High School, which is way on the other side of the county. Well, Channel 89 sets up tripods in front of Murray with Murray's name back there talking about a fight at Westside. But it wasn't clear to the viewers, "Where's this fight again?" "What's going on?" The previous principal had organized a Golf Tournament[35]. …Through that I've been able to make relationships with people and grow that tournament... (Lines 444 – 450)[216].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [O]nce a month I'm meeting with different agencies and foundations at our school in our Bistro to talk about what we're doing. We created a leadership team of students that go out and present what we're doing in the school to the community. [W]e're constantly looking for those avenues to express and to show how we're transforming our school from being a low-performing school to a good school to a great school. And there's a process. We have a Blueprint for Excellence…(Lines 100 – 106)[217].

Receiving External Donations – Supports the Positive Progress

The four school leaders shared their individual stories of receiving external support to help them continue positive progress in their urban city schools. During their sharing, they consciously noted that their external benefactors are the result of their work to change their schools' culture and climate, public perceptions, and academic standing as progressively improving schools.

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[34] I believe that this statement confirms the intensity and frequency of the media's presence at this school, and similar urban city high schools, to document and publicly report negative news about the school and the stakeholders.

[35] Mr. Biko talks about the golf course as an example of a prime mainstream space and cultural artifact/tool were people make business deals. He said, *"A lot of business deals are done on the golf course. A lot of CEO business people, a lot of people with money do things on the golf course"* (S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013, Lines 444 – 446).

Ms. Unique Daily: I think the school's relationship with the community has become more positive than what it was previously. …They recognize the changes that have been made and they want to support that work. So we've been awarded several grants through the community. We've been offered several donations that haven't been in place in the past because people want to support the progress that's being made. …Our Open House Sessions, our Grand Reveal for our Family Resource Center, those things were not only open to our parents and to our teachers and staff, but they were open to the community. So a lot of community members attended simply to support the work that's going on and to see the work that's going on. And they in-turn go out and tell the positive stories (Lines 1054 – 1065)[218].

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: I just met with two symphony people... They're talking about bringing in forty grand ($40,000) worth of stuff. I'm like, "What, money, instruments, what?" "No we want to raise about forty grand in money and we want to give instruments." I'm like, "Really, to the band? That's excellent. That's wonderful". …[T]hey're willing to write checks based on what they perceive from the movie. The outside world thinks that what they saw on the screen is indicative of Murray School. Wonderful… [W]hen you come in I got to tell you, "Well, …just remember, that's Talented Tenth. We have the rest of the kids here and here's why I need your money to reach them. …It's the rest of the kids that need your money." Shoot that went very well. They left the check. [A] guy came in here same scenario, left me ten thousand dollars ($10,000). Another man, after he saw that movie gave me a check fifteen thousand dollars ($15,000)…and said "Use it for how for you need it in the school" (Lines 1169 – 1186).

Mr. Steve Biko: We've aligned ourselves with a group called Community Alliance, which is the Montgomery Foundation here in Montpelier. And they actually have a lot of different agencies that they work with …And they're all for doing community support for the parents, community things for the kids, paying the parents bills, making sure their lights are on, they provide jobs, coming in with teen pregnancy [assistance], …support agencies, counseling. …They ask me what kind of resources I need. They've given me a donation of so many X amount of dollars. I used it toward academics. We bought brand new computers. We bought t-shirts for the kids. We bought door prizes to give away. …They're about supporting academics… (Lines 733 – 745)[219].

Ms. Frances Stevens: I think we have good working relationships. We have a church that supports us in everything. The recreation center is very supportive of us. We're going to start playing our home ball games there with soccer, …football, baseball, softball. The community as a whole is supportive of us (Lines 572 – 577)[220].

The four contemporary Black school leaders in this study expressed an understanding of perception as a mediating tool. They spoke at length about how they 'work at the work[221]' of building relationships that help to sustain and advance a positive perception of their academic progress through supportive public words, deeds, and funding. Although only three of the school

leaders shared experiences of working to overcome negative perceptions perpetuated by the media, they all viewed the media as an invaluable medium that they have learned to strategically use to help change public perception of urban city education (Walker, 2009[36]). Changing public perception, they explained, helped expand their access to multiple support sources and ultimately highly qualified teacher candidates and educators committed to the work of intentionally changing educational experiences and outcomes for urban city students. Mr. Biko's statement underscores the school leaders' practice of changing public perception of urban city education. He stated, "[W]e have to be transparent. We have to publicly talk about what's going good in our school. We have to publicly have venues and different things going on to invite people in. …And I think…as the school does better…you will have more people coming aboard and…wanting to be a part of the change" (S. Biko, June 2, 2013, Lines741 – 748)[222]. They have experienced recruiting new teachers who are committed to being a part of the progressive changes in their urban city schools. In the following re-presentation, I use their words and stories to re-present their practice of hiring and developing teachers for their schools.

Hiring And Professional Development

Ms. Daily shared an email conversation she had with her mentor. They talked about how effective school leaders recognize good teaching when teachers and students speak a different language. They both agreed that,

> Good teaching is good teaching. You can still see the expressions on faces. You can still see the light bulbs go off regardless of the language and those are the indicators. You can

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[36] The four contemporary Black school leaders, like Byas, "use the newspaper…to create particular perceptions about the school among the parents [and the larger mainstream community]. As a result, [they] believed that the school newspaper was a way of getting good publicity for the school in the community" (Walker, 2009, p. 209). Today, diverse public mediums and forums are used to help mediate the school leaders' efforts to transform the public image of their respective schools. Some of the public mediums used were print, radio, news, and web. Showcases of clubs and organizations, parent nights, and open house are examples of public forums utilized by the four contemporary school leaders.

> still see, even if you don't recognize the language, how happy people are to be in an environment, how excited they are to work with one another… You can couple that with what you are seeing and experiencing. …You're looking for that comfort level (Lines 344 – 350)[223].

All of the school leaders in this study have expressed similar perspectives towards being able to identify and observe good teaching in their schools. Therefore, similar to their colleague, they have discussed their practices of making their schools places "where people are comfortable and excited about teaching and learning," which has been fraught with challenges and obstacles but successes as well (Lines 352 – 535)[224]. The school leaders shared experiences of inheriting underdeveloped professional teaching staffs and the challenges of hiring highly qualified teachers committed to improving education in urban city schools. Mr. Biko spoke candidly about the hiring challenges he faced due to socioeconomic and political factors out of his immediate control. He vented,

> It's a hard task to work in an inner city school. You're an African American, you're dealing with low performing scores, Title I, free and reduced lunch, the mindset of changing the culture, and the professional environment. It can be difficult to attract [quality teachers]. And I would say, I'm not the only person in Montpelier…I think there's probably other cities that have…these same types of issues… (Lines 1158 – 1163)[225].

Therefore, they talked about practices of creating time and opportunities to develop trusting collegial relationships to cultivate inclusive diverse cultures of professional learning communities; modeling expectations of being lifelong learners; job-embedded professional development; being a 'model instructional coach'; monitoring and assessing teachers' responsiveness to collegial collaboration and collective accountability; and 'bringing 'em up' from the ranks to become great teacher leaders to ensure the best teaching and learning experiences for all students.

Inheriting Underdeveloped Professional Educators.

The contemporary Black school leaders discussed facing and overcoming the obstacle of inheriting an underdeveloped teaching staff. In this section, the participants voiced their discon-

tentment of retaining teachers who were reluctant to supportive professional development. They believe professional development would improve teachers' vocation as strong educators and shift their belief in the collective capacity to improve the educational expectations and experiences for students. The school leaders spoke at length about finding and developing good teachers into great teachers. They desired working with 'quality teachers' who believe in the educability of all students to learn at high levels despite the standard low expectations set by district and state officials.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** One of the biggest obstacles that I had coming here was our faculty. The staff that I inherited was really not ready…to move the school forward…for whatever reason. Whatever professional development was done here before I was here, they were looking at low standards and setting low expectations and that was Gateway standards. Gateway is a basic minimum skills test… And I think the reason why they were not able to prepare the kids for Gateway at a 90% or better level was because they had set their standards too low. Now those are the standards that were set for them by the state, by the district, and by the LEA, which is the Local Education [Agency] (Lines 61 – 68)[226].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [O]ften times teachers have been placed here rather than being hired to work here so they don't necessarily go into it with the right mindset that our students deserve an opportunity to have the best education and that's changing and so with that change also then changes how students approach the work (Lines 802 – 805)[227].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [H]ow do you replace teachers that don't believe in kids, don't believe in helping, don't believe in assisting? [F]inding teacher quality is the number one variable for student achievement. So finding quality teachers gives you the most bang for your buck. You find me a quality teacher, I'll find you a bunch of kids that are learning, and I'll find you other teachers that are learning from the really good quality teacher, which means you're getting more bang for your buck. [T]he number one objective for a leader is to maximize potential at its highest rate (Lines 1060 – 1066)[228].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I purposely wasn't as…detailed, because I need to know what level we are functioning at as far as when we do peer observations, "Do we know what to look for?" …I talked about being transparent when I go in a classroom, these are the things that I'm looking for even to the point where I put it in the [weekly] Newsletter. I'm focusing on this…"What does it look like? What does it sound like?" …"What is the task? How do you basically differentiate the instruction from one student versus another student?" …[I]f the students are able to articulate to me exactly what the task is of the day and how do they know that they're learning that task, then you've done your job relaying that to the students (Lines 107 – 120)[229].

Hiring Impactful Team Members

The school leaders spoke of the time and effort they exert to identify, hire, and 'craft a team' of 'non-traditional[37]' educators. They sought educators who were committed to the work of going 'above and beyond' the basics to afford all students a holistic educational experience. I learned through observing and participating in multiple interviews with the participants that they spend a great deal of time listening to how candidates respond to pedagogical, disciplinary, and relational queries. They sought to hire team members who understand that public policies[38] often are at the root of inequitable conditions experienced in urban city school communities (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). Therefore, they provided the candidates with scenarios to learn how they would take time to cultivate an informed sociocultural perspective of urban city communities to help improve educational experiences in their classrooms. In conversations, the school leaders communicated the importance of being transparent during interviews and desired qualities of prospective team members who were committed to changing students' lives through impactful holistic learning experiences.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]hoever touches the kids the most can have the greatest impact. I mean I'm not going to disagree and say the leader is not important, because they have to pick the person that's in front of the kids. …America's big on identifying talent. That's why CEOs are so important cause CEOs and great leaders can identify other great leaders. …You can have a teacher, in Southern, with a TAS [Teacher Added Value Score] of five (5) and yet the kids do great, but they don't maximize the kids best potential. You could have a guy that has a four (4) and the kids score better and they're better people…cause they maximized the kids even more, even better. …They're changing minds every day (Lines 1084 – 1104)[230].

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[37] Non-traditional educators are those who are flexible and willing to think outside of the traditional box to ensure all students receive equitable access to quality educational services and opportunity outcomes.

[38] They demonstrated an understanding that public policies are the root causes of socioeconomic conditions like unemployment and poverty, which undermines efforts to improve low performing schools into high achieving learning places. Policy changes laws but rarely sociocultural perspectives, which are the manifestation of accumulated sociohistorical events. Therefore, I assert that we must intentional work to shift mindsets for substantive widespread equitable change.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I want to see this school successful. …I want to see it evolve into that place I know it can be. But it takes time. And it takes crafting a team that's committed to the cause. So we've had a lot of ownership and autonomy in hiring [as we reconstitute]. And pretty much have a team of committed individuals who want to be here in this building doing this work. And we try to be very transparent when we interview. Yes we're smiling, yes we're happy and excited about being here, but don't think for a second this is a piece of cake, because it's not. It's hard work. You have to be able to maintain balance. …We work at it (Lines 733 – 740).

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [F]inding positive people that are flexible and that are willing to change with the times to fix whatever they need to do to be productive. …You can't have people that are scared to think out of the box or scared to try something because it's not traditional. You need to find nontraditional people. That's one of the formulas to me. …You need some traditional to keep a balance, but the more nontraditional people you have in this day and age with inner city schools, the better you are cause you cannot do the basic[39]. You asked about procedures and policies, you can't do it because you're not dealing with those [basic] things. …I have kids that have babies…live on their own. …I got a teacher telling' a kid that's been working till 12 at night cause their parents abandoned them that you can't make up a test, that's stupid. Well you'll have some people say, "Well the rule is after 10 minutes you can't take your exam." …And then Johnny scores a 90 because he's intelligent. He just has an issue. So that's the flexibility that you need as an administrator (Lines 1024 – 1041)[231].

Creating Inclusive Cultures of Professional Collegiality

The school leaders emphasized the importance of prioritizing time to create opportunities to develop their diverse staffs. They discussed the significance of developing and fostering collegial relationships among their staff members in order to cultivate professional learning communities. They expressed the belief that trusting relationships undergirds sustainable learning communities in which teachers are more apt to perceive the work of improving education for all students as collective and shared rather than traditionally independent and isolated. Ms. Daily re-

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[39] The school leaders in the study were in agreement that urban city educators *'cannot do the basic'*, which is the traditional minimum of mediocre educational services afforded to Black, Brown, and poor students who attend most public schools in the used states, especially in urban city communities. The four school leaders have consistently voiced their commitment to do whatever it takes to ensure that their urban city students receive quality educational services that push them to excel to their highest capacity.

flected on her personal experience as a classroom teacher that captured their collective practice of taking time to establish cultures of professional collegiality in their schools. She stated,

> Why would I want to sit here and do all of this by myself when I have all of these resources around the table? We could do our small part and be finished. It also takes a lot of trust, professionally, that you're going to trust that your colleagues are going to perform at that level that you would want to and for the most part we did. …We had the type of work relationship that even if someone wasn't comfortable with my lesson plans because my lessons might be a little more interactive…it was not uncommon for us just to switch places. You go to my room and teach my kids the way you're doing it, I'll come to your room and do that, to make sure students in general were getting the best we had to offer (Lines 301 – 310)[232].

Thus, the school leaders shared stories of how they intentionally invested time to cultivate similar cultures of collegiality that provide their teachers sustaining professional support.

> **Mr. Arthur K. Biko:** [T]his is a hard to staff school. It's hard to get people to come to. Say a first year teacher makes $33,000 and they're going to come over here and teach the hardest, roughest, toughest gangsters in town when they can make the same money and go to any other school and not have to deal with the sheer volume, frequency and intensity that you have over here. If I'm that teacher I'm going to go where I can learn my craft[40] and not have to deal with all of the management issues that come with inner city... So the teachers that we do get, some of them are Labor Day specials. [W]e have to train our teachers. So professional development of folks who needed professional development was kind a hard, but we overcame that by making sure that we had good folks who develop our people (Lines 95 – 107)[233].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** We're going to do a lot with the teachers of the 9th grade cause they go through a lot. So we've ramped up one program for just the [9th grade] teachers, like professional development…sending them on training as a team (Lines 679 – 681)[234].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** Every time we meet it's more like a professional learning community…those teachable moments. I always take the time to teach something. Whether it's an adult or a child…it's ongoing in the building. I believe…once you identify the needs, I believe in finding …something to help support…people in those areas (Lines 1078 – 1091)[235].

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[40] Ms. Daily talked about working in a less challenging environment afforded her the time and opportunity to learn her craft as a strong instructional educator. She stated, *"[A]lthough you might not have the challenges of an urban school setting in terms of environment and parental involvement, there were challenges no doubt. But it was an opportunity to really learn the role of the assistant principal. I was able to learn how to be an educational leader, because I wasn't consumed with discipline"* (Personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013, Lines 465 – 469).

Dynamic Practitioners—Being A Model of Lifelong Learning

In many respects, the school leaders identified themselves as professional models of life-long learning (Walker, 2009[41]). They recognized school leadership as a dynamic and evolving practice. Thus, they consistently talked about participating in opportunities to enhance their own knowledge, skills, and practices. Just as important, they articulated their beliefs about actively modeling instructional expectations to support teachers in their development of becoming strong classroom teachers. As they shared how they model their expectations of lifelong learning, they talked about sharing new knowledge and skills to be practiced by others beyond the principal-ship; immediately implementing new knowledge to close the professional learning and applica-tion gaps for self and stakeholders; purposefully using data to inform and improve teaching and learning; and intentionally integrating technology to help support and cultivate a culture of re-flective practice.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I'm trying to get up the nerve to get myself back in school and get involved in a doctoral program, because that just seems like a natural progression. Once you've got a master's degree and you're working in your career and you plan on sticking with it, that's just the next step. That just seems like the right thing to do because without it you end up kind of existing in…those same old habits and routines (Lines 366 – 371)[236].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** I'm going to sound like a nerd saying this, "I do enjoy learning!" …[W]hen I do learn something I like to go implement it immediately. …I'm okay with learning something, going and trying it, and then figuring it out and cleaning it up… (Lines 132 – 142)[237].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [G]o to trainings, I continuously to go. …Here's one on Strengthening Your People Skills. I'm sending one of my administrators to this with me. We're both go-ing to deal with how to help that administrator learn how to strengthen their people skills in the workplace…building a positive and cooperative team… [R]eading books like Fish. …[L]earning how to be a better leader is learning how to be a better communicator and learning how to be a great follower (Lines 1369 – 1384)[238].

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[41] Walker (2009) notes, "Byas intentionally placed himself in the role of learner, thus modeling that learning could be a lifelong process and was not limitedly merely to the students" (p. 178). I too found that the school leaders in this study also intentionally placed themselves in the role of lifelong learners.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I pride myself on being a lifelong learner. I want to have the most current, the most effective strategies in my toolkit and I want to get that to our teachers as well. I try to make sure that I'm attending those things that are going to have the greatest impact on our building, that benefit me as a leader but also benefit our teachers, because those things can be replicated. They can be shared and utilized beyond just the principal role. (Lines 361 – 365)[239].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** My practices have to change based on…the ever evolving community around us and the community of learners. …And with Common Core coming in we're all going to have to change our practices. …[Now] you have to have a building where all of the teachers become curriculum specialists. …[E]verybody in the building is going to have to become data analysts and understand their data on a daily basis. …[E]verybody's going to have to look at their practices and not just how we teach, but how we assess. …[T]echnology is going to be infused with assessing. We're going to have to do that in our practice (Lines 2122 – 2150)[240].

Embedding Purposeful Professional Development—On the Job Learning

The school leaders intentionally planned time during the school day to embed purposeful professional development for teachers. They couched professional developed within an internally supportive community of emerging lifelong learners. The school leaders explained that the planned purposes of job-embedded professional development was to provide dedicated time and support structures for teachers to collaboratively learn and share how best to use timely data to plan, deliver, assess and reflect on the effectiveness of the teaching processes and strategies employed to meet diverse learners' specific needs (Walker, 2009[42]).

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** I wanted common planning for my teachers. I wanted the whole Math Department…to be able to plan together, same thing for English, …Social Studies, …[and] Science. And then, put those Related Electives with them so that they can plan together…during the second block of the day… [C]reated that Master Schedule so that each one can have a master schedule that says, "You are planning with your colleagues" (Lines 372 – 382)[241].

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[42] The "role of the professor in the development of teachers" (Walker, 2009, p. 162) has transcended time. The objective of the practice remains the same, to substantively build the professional and sociocultural capacity of teachers. However, the time dedicated for professional development has changed. The contemporary school leaders have embedded professional development into the school day. They have restructured their schools to afford teachers diverse forms of professional development through strategic practices of mentoring, instructional modeling, and coaching throughout the school day.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** We have what we call Target Tuesday and Wild Wednesday, which is pretty much job-embedded professional development for teachers. On those Tuesdays we look primarily at data and tracking our data for all of our core content areas. But we also look at strategies that will support teachers in providing the best instruction for students. Our teachers received the Kaplan foldables. …Each week our Instructional Coaches will go through one of those strategies. And the next week teachers will bring back opportunities that they've had to embed those practices and how they worked, how they adjusted or modified to make it work…to support teaching and learning. It's also when we do our training for Teacher Development Group with our Math teachers or Readers/Writers Workshop with our Language Arts teachers. A lot of those strategies are shared and supported during that time each week beyond the beginning of the year PD…or summer PD... (Lines 951 – 963)[242].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [O]ur Blueprint for Excellence is professional learning, collaborative planning, and school-wide monitoring. So just within that curriculum base, you're constantly trying to get the best teachers that have the best practices to teach the kids in the best way. So you have to provide professional learning. You have to have collaboration planning cause all the teachers need to get together to plan the plan [and] to implement your strategies. And then of course school-wide monitoring…whatever you implement you have to go back and see if it's working (Lines 992 – 997)[243].

Being the Model Coach of Effective Instructional Strategies

As part of their practice of professional development, the school leaders embodied a 'best schools' instructional coaching model strategy with fidelity. They discussed utilizing the activity of coaching, an instrumental professional growth tool. While observing teachers, they collected data and artifacts to support their verbal and demonstrative feedback sessions with teachers. They engaged the coaching model to help teachers strengthen pedagogical strategies that can improve their students' academic and social development needs (Walker, 2009[43]). They talked about the importance of using data and artifacts to drive instructional coaching sessions (e.g.,

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[43] Like Byas, the four contemporary school leaders utilized an evaluation tool to help objectively mediate teachers' professional development to become strong educators. Walker (2009) reported, "even for his strongest teachers, Byas pointed to areas of suggested improvement, and he utilized the evaluation as a mechanism for always holding high standards for all of the teachers" (p. 286). I found that the four contemporary Black school leaders utilized the diverse professional development strategies and evaluation tool(s) with the same intention, to set and hold high expectations of all educators.

coach ‘em up or coach ‘em out) and publicly sharing visual successes of teaching and learning captured in action with the collective learning community.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** The number one thing is to see how effective the teachers are delivering instructions to the students. You show me a great teacher with great effectiveness when they’re delivering instruction, I’m gone show you a bunch of students that are learning. And in turn it’s just going to be a ripple effect. Show me a terrible teacher that’s not doing well and we’re not supporting them either…then I’m gone show you an ineffective school with low scores. …So I’ve assigned myself the role of monitoring what is being taught and how it’s being taught in the building and making sure I can identify good quality teaching and teaching that’s not so good. And then preparing a way to support the teachers, either help them and they get with the program or find teachers that will (Lines 172 – 182)[244].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [O]ur focus was to either coach teachers up or to coach ‘em out. …So it definitely did exactly what it was supposed to do. Those teachers who were on the right track are becoming better teachers, because they’re looking at their data with a particular goal in mind. And they’re using it for a positive purpose. And those who aren’t interested in doing that didn’t get the results that they needed, but also were just uncomfortable with the practice. And the practice in and of itself is what the best schools do. They follow that data regularly. They have it displayed publicly so that you can actually utilize that information to support teaching and learning. And so regardless of where we are currently, we need to be doing what the best schools are doing so that we can get the best results that we want. That’s just part of the process. …And as long as that coaching…consistently remain the focus, whether you were in or out, became a professional choice (Lines 1022 – 1034)[245].

Perceiving Teachers’ Receptiveness to Collegiality, Collaborations, and Coaching

The school leaders in this study consistently talked about challenging and changing traditional ‘business as usual’ perceptions and expectations of education in urban city communities. They discussed professional development practices employed in the hopes of transforming dominant narratives of education in urban city school communities. Here the school leaders shared with me their perceptions of teachers’ receptiveness to the intentional time dedicated to developing sustaining professional collegial learning communities that foster collective professional collaboration, coaching, transparency, fidelity, and accountability.

Ms. Unique Daily: Some were more receptive than others. But in general teachers respect honest critical feedback and as long as we keep it to actual data, actual observation, and it doesn't become a personal attack. So as long as…you're doing that work with fidelity, whether you like it or you don't like it, is not necessarily relevant. You respect the work because it's truthful and it's honest to the process. And I think that as long as that's in place, those who were open and truly dedicated to enhancing their practice loved it. Those who had ulterior motivates for being in the classroom weren't as comfortable with it and that's part of the process. But maintaining that fidelity to the work keeps you out of that gray area of, "You're only telling me this because you don't like me or because you don't want me to be here." If you keep it directly related to the work at hand, to the instruction, to the practices that were evident, to the data that's available, to the artifacts…, it's harder to argue that (Lines 1037 – 1050)[246].

Mr. Steve Biko: [W]hen you're not bringing some people back and you go in and try to be genuine, they're just not open to it. "You say you want to support me, but you're not bringing me back." But we have to do what we have to do. So that was the roughest thing this year, to try to put a plan in place when there were so many changes that had to occur that it was almost like you almost had to back off…because some of the people were not going to be there next year to help with the plan so they weren't invested in the plan. And I realized that and kind of backed off (Lines 347 – 355)[247].

Mr. Arthur K. Vertner: Mrs. Morgan, [9th Grade English teacher], did two hours of PD. When we did observations, remember we went to Jonathan Flannery's room in the Ninth Grade. [T]he big blocks that the kids were trying to put together, that was one of the stations that Mrs. Morgan had put together. So now you see…a lot of Ninth Grade Team Members, they're doing stations. Stations in high school, how about that, how about that?!? …[T]he PD was so good this time because it was from folks who are current practitioners. And these folks that come up and say … "Here's what I'm doing tomorrow in class" or "here's what I did last week in class", that helps with colleagues and peers. (Lines 931 – 941)[248].

Bringing 'Em Up From the Ranks

The contemporary school leaders explained that it is not only their responsibility to prepare their staff to become great classroom teachers, but also to identify and develop them as leaders. They expressed a belief of cultivating a culture that internally develops human capacity and diverse collegial learning communities with shared responsibility, leadership, and accountability to 'become the best' educators for all kids, even those beyond their urban city school communities.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [G]reat leaders…[are] trying to identify other great leaders and pull people in constantly. And so your day-to-day operations are to identify people that can help you with your day-to-day operations (Lines 122 – 124)[249].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [T]here was a gentleman who I saw in the classroom, his name is Michael James. [W]hen I watched him teach, I said, "I want him to make teachers just like him." And I didn't want to…hire someone from outside to come and say, "Here's going to be your new professional developer". I wanted to bring somebody up from the ranks of teaching… (Lines 697 – 708)[250].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [I'm consistently] looking for opportunities to develop those teacher-leaders and prepare them to move to another level (Lines 365 – 366)[251].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Biko:** [T]he teachers who got the best results here under our leadership plucked out, taken away to other places where the District saw the need. …[T]hey knew where talent was and they knew where the training ground was. This is where we get the best PD. These professional developers from Mrs. Igou, and facilitators, all those folks trained…the okay to become the best. The District knows that…and they pull them right out. …I think in training good leaders whether they're going to be taken or not, it will be good for some kid somewhere, because you poured into them (Lines 628 – 643)[252].

Shifting The Educational Paradigm – Slow, But Progressive Outcomes

Changing Culture And Climate

The school leaders inherited academically struggling and/or failing schools. They were hired to transform the academic trajectory of their schools to prevent state takeovers and potential district closures. They described courageously taking the road less traveled to pave the way for sustainable academic improvement within a highly contestable political terrain of inherent contradictions. The Black school leaders in this study prioritized changing the culture and climate as a pivotal practice to help mediate obstacles impeding opportunities for progressive teaching and learning in urban city schools. The school leaders acknowledged the outcomes of the practice may not result in immediate academic improvements. However, the practice paves the way for change. Ms. Daily shared,

> My first year, there were some drastic differences in discipline data and violent acts and violent crimes in the building that didn't occur last year that had occurred for years previous and yet there weren't any academic changes in terms of data. But I think those cul-

> tural changes in discipline, cultural changes in attendance, getting students here, getting them to a place where they were comfortable within the building and training some of those different behaviors is what then in terms impacted the academic changes we saw this year (Lines 570 – 575)[253].

Leading change with this practice was fraught with internal and external obstacles. As Mr. Biko attested, "A lot of kids really enjoyed us as administrators. [They] saw the change. And there were some that if they could ride us out on a railroad track in a train they'd do it. That's just the way it is" (Lines 488 - 494)[254]. It appears the contemporary school leaders understand that an accumulation of historical socioeconomic and political inequities perpetuate conditions of institutional mistrust that is entrenched in the fabric of urban city communities and can work to undermine genuine efforts to transform low performing schools and neighborhoods. As Ms. Daily explained, "Those things, [cultural and climate changes], had to take place. …[A]lthough the state might not recognize that as effective, because they're looking simply at student achievement, there's so many other factors that we have to consider" (Lines 575 – 582)[255]. The 'many other factors[44]' are obstacles the school leaders work to overcome with practices focused on shifting the educational paradigm for persistently disenfranchised urban city school community stakeholders.

The school leaders demonstrated a knowledgeable understanding of historical structural inequalities that continue to adversely affect contemporary stakeholders. The principals consistently described their students' standpoint from a survival perspective due to daily experiences of

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[44] The many other factors discussed by the four school leaders included, but was not limited to, the decrease in student enrollment through transfer hardship, and private school options; negative public perceptions and stigma as unsafe and failing schools; lack of highly qualified teachers; lack of rigorous academic programming; lack of adequate internal and external funding; and inequitable facilities and resources. These many other factors adversely affect students' physical and mental wellbeing. The school leaders in this study were acutely aware of the vast inequities experienced by Black, Brown, and poor people. They recognized that due to an accumulation of miseducation experiences their students were hurt emotionally and psychologically. Therefore they believed that their students needed to be taught how to better express their frustrations and to become change agents in their immediate communities and the broader society. In essence, the school leaders prepared their students to become the change their neighborhood communities and the world at-large so desperately need.

contemporary oppression and disenfranchisement. Ms. Daily provided an example used during training conducted with teachers to help them effectively support students' transition from 'survival mode' into their 'higher level thinking'. In teacher and student roles, she voice animated, "Good Morning!" "Why you lookin' at me?" She explained,

> Students will just fly off the handle. They're not thinking rationally. How can you when your lights are off and you're getting dressed in the dark and you didn't have anything to eat, you don't know what that noise was, we're they actually shooting on the street? Did one of your friends get shot? That's the reality of what they're living in so a lot of their time is spent in survival mode. And we have to be able to see through that, that it's not personal. Get them to a place where they're thinking rationally and then you can get somewhere with them, but that takes time (Lines 1250 – 1256)[256].

The school leaders in the study are indeed 'getting somewhere'. Mr. Biko expressed an optimistic outlook of the practice's impact on shifting stakeholders' perspectives of education. He exclaimed,

> The way we've been hitting the EOCs I've very optimistic. …[R]eports I had today, kids never took the test this long, we've never had it structured the way it's been structured. It was kind of chaotic throughout the building, but it was like a mouse could run around in a testing environment. So just hearing good news about that, listening to people who have been here for years say, "It's a different feel, the hallways are different, we're seeing some things differently" (Lines 1691 – 1996)[257].

At the end of this school year, the principals reported incremental changes in academics and social milieu. Importantly, they expressed confidence that despite internal and external obstacles, "It'll be better every year" (S. Biko, June 2, 2013).

Leading With Others

The contemporary school leaders organized their schools to share roles, responsibilities, and accountability with others. Their mentors taught them the power of building trusting relationships to share leadership to create buy-in and progressive changes on multiple levels. Similar to his colleagues, Mr. Vertner accredited his mentor, Mrs. Igou, for challenging him to think beyond the fragile knowledge of an assistant principal trainee that he possessed as the 2007-08 in-

coming Principal Director of The Murray Middle and High Schools. After six years of serving with others for others, he decided to resign at the end of the 2012-13 school year. While reflecting on the school's progress he boasted,

> Mrs. Igou taught me how to empower others around me to do. …I don't have to micromanage people. I know for a certainty that if Matthew is here, whether he's the principal or not, Betty's left here, James Whitehead's left here…[and] Faith Igou as an advisor, this school will be okay. This school will be okay (Lines 1954 – 1965)[258].

Their practice of an organized shared leadership seemed to help the principals cultivate environments that supported effective leading, teaching, and learning for school leaders, teachers, and students alike.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]e actually sat down and every duty that we could think of that would run a school, we actually assigned it to an administrator and sent it out to all our faculty and they loved it. They said, they hadn't that and a lot of them never…really experienced having it, [organized shared leadership], that way (Lines 133 – 136)[259].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [T]he more that door can revolve and the more we can be in and out and really focused on instruction the more we can gauge how much of that progress is truly going to be made. When the year ended last year I knew there had been some cultural changes, because you heard people talking about it so much, …"Oh it just seems so different and it's so bright and vibrant and people are happy," but you really can't gauge that in terms of testing, because the test scores were not there. When I ended this year, I felt like I had been a part of that process all year. I could put my fingers on sets of data from a weekly assessment. …So I felt like I was able to be more a part of the instructional process (Lines 729 – 738)[260].

> **Mr. A. K. Vertner:** I hate to quote Drake, but Drake said, "The best started from the bottom, now we're here" …But at the end when you look at that grad rate, all the money that we got for these kids for college… Everyone who I've talked to about graduation…every last one of them said, "This ceremony was the most special ceremony that they'd seen all day." …And you could feel the love in the air…the passion and the energy... [W]e practiced, "Shake with your right, take with your left." …And I would tell them, "Look, don't hug me. Shake, take, shake, take…We'll hug later." Some kids weren't having it. They just come and give me a hug… That's the kind of leadership when you serve, you're really serving people (Lines 707 – 746)[261].

Restructuring School

The school leaders used data to help restructure their schools to best meet the needs of stakeholders. They experienced similar outcomes from this practice. The changes were incremental but significant given their schools' Needs Improvement Statuses. Their reports appear to signal a progressive shifting of the educational paradigm. Ms. Stevens stated, "[M]ore people have taken ownership of their learning. Instead of coming just with problems, they come with problems and solutions. …I think that's the main thing, learning how to make decisions based on your data and coming with solutions (Lines 570 - 575)[262]. Mr. Vertner recounted several years of progress experienced at Murray with the academic support of the school-within-the-school program. He described how the teachers and students took ownership of their own learning in the Success Academy,

> The kids call it the Brownlee Academy because they associated their success with Miss Brownlee. In 2008 she accounted for about 11% of our graduation rate, 2009, 22%, 2010, 25%, 2011, 25%, [and] 2012, 25%. This year she accounted for 10 [percent]. Mrs. West accounted for 26% of our graduation rate. …[T]hose two ladies…are the crux of that [grad rate] conversation [of how best to educate] the most challenging [and] difficult kids… (Lines 195 – 204)[263].

The Murray school has dramatically improved their graduation rates and academic achievement. Therefore, it has come off of the state's watchlist and federal grant support program for schools needing improvement. The Success Academy, school-within-the-school program, significantly contributed to the school's graduation rate improvements. However, Mr. Vertner utilized SIG funding to support the resources for the program, particularly the human capital. Unlike some of his colleagues, he was unable to identify sustaining funds to maintain the positions and thus the program. Therefore, during his exit interview with the school superintendent, he stressed the value added by the program and human capital. He implored, "Don't let those two ladies go or Murray's going to go backwards. I've invested everything and risked eve-

rything and lost everything else for this place, sacrificed everything for this place and I don't want to see it go back" (Lines 210 – 213)[264]. It appears that the contemporary urban city school leaders in this study approach the work differently than their counterparts. They seemingly understand that more rather than less time is required to significantly affect outcomes in their school communities (Walker, 2009[45]). Ms. Daily and Mr. Biko used the TEAS Survey[46] to help gauge teachers' perceptions of their schools as good places to teach and learn (Jones, 2002).

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** We've actually had about 15-20 teachers leave and our TEAS Survey is higher…[in] the most important areas. …I think that last time they got a 40 something and we had a 67, so it jumped 20 something percent in a year that we're reconstituting teachers. So if you get 67% of the teachers saying that and not all of them took it…that's pretty good. …I'm a new principal here with a new administrative staff that's brand new and we still had a 20% increase in positive things that's going on in this school. So to increase, that's the goal (Lines 1702 – 1712)[265].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** We spend a lot of time working on the work just to create this special place and I don't mind. [A]ccording to our [TEAS] survey people might not have been as excited as I might have been, but they did it with great heart and great effort. [W]e've had a great year... And I think it's because a lot of people were willing to go above and beyond what was typically expected to do the work and I think it paid off. But I know that's what's required. There's no way around it. This is not something where you can kind of clock in and clock out (Lines 346 – 352)[266].

The school leaders recognized that the results from the TEAS Survey were not glowing, but remained optimistic about their capacity to significantly affect change. Importantly, they

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[45] The four contemporary Black school leaders dedicated insurmountable time to the principalship. Mr. Vertner spoke openly about his own personal investments and losses, which often times contributes to the high turnover in urban city schools. Prior to accepting the position he talked it over with his wife and explained that the principalship required much more time than necessarily a teacher. Much like Walker (2009), I chose not to focus on the personal sacrifices inherent of urban city educators and their families. However, I believe that it is important to acknowledge that the school community and family are integral parts of the Black school leadership. See Walker (2009, p. 235-236) for her discussion of the role Byas' family played within the Black school leader activity system.

[46] TEAS is a pseudonym for the statewide educators survey, Teacher Educator Assessment of School. Overall, 82% of teachers throughout the state responded to the survey. Individual schools need at least 50% of teachers to complete the survey to recieve assessment scores. The district had 75% of its teachers complete the survey. Hails High School had 32 teachers. The Hails High School teacher respondents (67%) agreed that, overall their school is a good place to teach and learn. Hails along with Seeds of Hope Academy (45%) were among the schools in the district with the lowest overall satisfaction rankings. *The* Murray School (24%) and LaVaughn Academy (39%) did not have enough teachers complete the survey to qualify for participation and thus receive anonymous feedback to help improve their schools.

viewed the feedback as timely data to help inform practices of how best to structure and serve their urban city schools as they prepare for next school year.

Hiring And Professional Development

The principals discussed hiring and preparing professional educators who believe that all students can learn to their highest capacity and deserve access to highly qualified committed teachers. Therefore, they hired individuals who seemingly espouse similar educational philosophies in a concerted effort to produce progressive academic and social outcomes.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** This is one of those years where you can't necessarily gauge teacher retention, because we went through a reconstitution. So in as much as there may have been some teachers who wanted to stay, we were looking for the best. We had an opportunity to get the best and we took advantage of that opportunity. …[N]ow all except maybe two teachers in the building, were hired by me, so I think that makes a difference in terms of your level of loyalty and your understanding of expectations and your understanding of what's required to do this work well. I think looking next year at the retention rate and seeing how many teachers continue on this journey with us would be evidence of effectiveness, but that's one we'll probably have to wait on (Lines 586 – 595)[267].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I have an Educational Assistant that has a whatever it takes attitude, that makes a kid thinks he can recover two classes in the summer because she's like, "I'm going to hold your hand. I'll be right here". And the kid is like, "Ah man, you'll help me the whole time?" "Yes." Now she's gone bring in another person that feels like that. Now I got four or five Educational Assistants or teachers that believe in that and now you have cultivated an atmosphere of we expect success, all students can learn, [and] we're going do whatever it takes (Lines 1246 - 1252)[268].

Academic Achievement

The school leaders recognized that transforming their urban city school communities requires hard work, high expectations, and time. They set ambitious, yet realistic, goals for their schools. Ms. Daily spoke to the importance of reviewing data progress across a spectrum of time. She remarked, "From our Explore data to our attendance rate data to our discipline, everything is showing progress. Even as compared from last year to this year, but over a period of years" (Lines 601 – 606) [269]. They expressed pride in their teachers and students commitment of work-

ing to their highest capacity. However, the school leaders were also modest in their outlook towards their expected outcomes. Ms. Stevens retold me of a data outcome conversation she had with a district administrator. She repeated, "I've heard, 'you're data looks good.' …[I]t may look good, but it's not good to me. We're still a long way away. …[W]e didn't decrease. We maintained" (Lines 296 – 304) [270]. The contemporary school leaders in this study learned to celebrate small success, but importantly maintained high expectations of themselves and others to exceed standardized mediocrity and status quos. In celebrating incremental successes, they excitedly informed me of data reports of attendance, discipline, academics, graduation, and citizenship achievements.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** [A]ttendance rate, that is of course one of our goals: to get our students here and to get them in class and decrease the number of behavioral concerns so that you can actually take the time to educate students. …But looking at our attendance rate from last year to this year, Cycle 1 an increase and Cycle 2 definitely an increase, Cycle 3 a major increase, Cycle 4 a major increase, Cycle 5 a major increase. So the goal for our attendance rate is 95% and we've been above 95% the entire year. That in of itself at least sets the stage for progress (Lines 616 – 625)[271].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** The discipline data…looking month by month at the number of disciplinarian incidences that were reported to the state and it was actually a three year scan going from 178 incidents in one month down to 20. So there's a drastic difference in how students are coming to school…respecting the school environment…looking for ways to solve their problems beyond just fighting and cursing and being irate. They're trusting us as administrators more to intervene. They're trusting their teachers…They're recognizing the school as the neutral territory. And they know that there's going to be a stiff penalty for anything that disrupts teaching and learning (Lines 630 – 640)[272].

While monitoring the progress of the shifting educational paradigm in their schools, the school leaders work to put in place other opportunity structures to afford their students access to equitable educational outcomes.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** [W]e have 14.2% increase in Algebra II. Then we had 6% increase in our US History…7.3% increase in English I. …[Y]ou have to know your data,…you have to be engaged in your numbers, [and] know the weaknesses of your school. I know that we don't have AP Classes and that I have to get teachers AP Certified in our school

> so that we can be able to deliver better instruction and raise our rigor in the classroom (Lines 503 – 514)[273].

> **Mr. Arthur K. Vertner:** [A]nother one of our kids came up with an idea for an In-School Thrift Store. She'd like to do Forever School Thrift in schools locally here and then have that idea proliferate throughout the state and hopefully throughout the country, but it's just about having for kids who need [and] this is a kid of need. …[S]he got funded I think a five hundred dollars ($500.00) or a thousand dollars ($1,000.00) from them, [Entrepreneurship Competition], for start-up money… So those are just good ideas that I think [is] the spirit of what school is about here. This school should be the hub of the community (Lines 614 – 634)[274].

They consistently pointed out that shifting the educational paradigm in urban city school communities is intentional and progressive. They believe in the inherent intelligence of their students. Thus, they strategically planned for teaching and learning successes.

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** In terms of data it's showing progress. …Benchmark Assessments that we give through the district have shown increase. Last year Seed of Hope Academy was last in every single area at every single grade level. And although we might not be leading the pack, we're not last anymore by any means. Actually Third Quarter Benchmark was the first one we've been last in all year and that was only at the 7th Grade level. So we're not running faster than everybody, but we are definitely running faster than others. …[W]e're outperforming four of five different middle schools, which was not the case last year (Lines 641 – 649)[275].

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** I mean it, [Blueprint for Excellence], worked. Our graduation rate went up from 52, unofficially…to around 66%[276], so we had 13.3 increase, which is pretty good. You usually don't get over 10 [percent increase]... We made over 5 to 7% increases in everything completely across the board (Lines 599 - 603)[277].

> **Mr. A. K. Vertner:** [T]he data yesterday that came back was just terrific. And so it pays off when you strategically plan for a group of kids and a group of adults to serve them.
> **Demetricia:** The 9th Grade class that graduated last Saturday, which would have been that first group of students that started the 9th Academy. …[W]hat was their graduation rate?
> **Mr. A. K. Vertner:** Mid-80s[278]. …[A]ll of the kids that we inherited through that process, all except for six (6), are high school graduates (Lines 273 – 282)[279].

The contemporary school leaders are mindful of what the statistical data represents in the age of accountability within mainstream society. However, they also exhibited consistent con-

cern for their students' social development and future productivity as community and global citizens, who will reach back to uplift their urban city neighborhoods.

> **Mr. A. K. Vertner:** [T]est scores aren't everything, [but] they're big. Ours will never be where we want them to be without hard work. None of us can be satisfied and exhale until we're at a 100% on everything. …"Ninety-nine and a half won't do" my grandmother used to say, "You gotta make a hundred." And so we have to look at effectiveness, test scores…, character in kids…, [and] development in adults is a part of that equation… [W]hat productivity do we get out of the kids while they're here and does that productivity payoff later? So when I get another cohort of kids that says, "I finished college or I finished some post-secondary, or I'm doing this, I'm doing that, I'm raising my own kids" and that kind of thing, we'll see. But I think right now it's kind of too early to tell. I want to see long-term when they're thirty (Lines 1101 – 1126)[280].

The contemporary Black school leaders' practices represent an alternative to traditional practices and theories (Dillard, 1995). Their conceptualization of leadership as a tool to shift the educational paradigm in urban city school communities frames their perspectives of effective practices. They espoused a belief that urban city school communities are different environments. They therefore believe different environments require different (i.e., alternative and/or non-traditional) perspectives, preparation, practices, people, and policies. As they discussed practices, they emphasized leading with a responsively engaged cultural perspective, which represents a fundamental difference in how traditional school leadership is practiced. Of significance, they noted and demonstrated an informed understanding of socioeconomic and political factors that contribute to the inequitable conditions that adversely impact their school communities. Thus, in the third section of chapter four, I re-present findings of how they spoke of the need to implement practices from a responsively engaged cultural perspective and thereby reported experiencing effectiveness through their alternative practices.

Perspectives, Preparation And Theories That Represent 'The Tradition'[281]

They voiced a belief that traditional school leadership and administration perspectives, preparation, and theories are irrelevant for leading effectively in persistently politically marginalized communities. Therefore, I was not completely surprised when Mr. Vertner exclaimed,

> Nothing prepared me for Murray, except being here. To me the best professional development was coming to work every day and learning this job on the job. …What I learned in theory I could apply to some suburban…urban…or some rural schools, but the inner city is a different place. And in all my prep it was either urban or suburban and rural. Nobody talked about inner city. …I believe that my professors believed that inner city was urban. I don't think they really discerned the difference between the urban school and the inner city school and there's a huge difference. …[M]y preparation was a lot of theory, but the theory didn't really live up to the practice that needed to be in place (Lines 503 – 514)[282].

Like Mr. Vertner, Mr. Biko and Ms. Stevens expressed being underprepared by traditional systems with traditional people and perspectives. They too learned on the job. Mr. Biko and Ms. Stevens participated in the same educational leadership program. When asked whether the program prepared her to work in urban city school communities, Ms. Stevens replied, "No, in theory probably so but culturally and all that other stuff, no. No it did not" (Lines 800 – 804)[283]. Thus, Mr. Biko's statement encapsulated their collective view and experience of attending a traditional preparation program exclusive of relevant cultural and racial/ethnic diversity perspectives and experiential knowledge of how to right educational inequities precipitated by socioeconomic policies. He asserted,

> [I]n those classes and schools, they don't know how it is in an inner city to tell you a scenario of how to adjust to it, because they've never been in it. Most of my professors were all White. A few have worked in it, but seeing it as an African American, in my eyes, things are different… I was learning a lot of things from a lot of people that had never been in an inner city school, Title I, low performing (Lines 924 – 931)[284].

Interestingly Ms. Daily reported a vastly different leadership preparation experience. She stated, "I was groomed as an administrator in…one of the most progressive urban school districts

in this part of the nation" (Lines 240 – 245)[285]. The university worked in tandem with the large progressive urban school district to amply prepare educators. Her leadership program focused on the practical work of preparing school leaders to create and sustain high performance learning cultures. When reflecting on her program preparation, Ms. Daily shared the following thoughts about how the university prepared her to readily enact effective practices in urban city schools,

> We didn't spend a great deal of time just writing about the work, but actually the application of the work, developing programs, analyzing the results of those programs, seeing whether they were successful or not, adjusting those programs and initiatives, and doing the research behind that. …[W]e were practicing it. So when you get into a situation where you are responding to a scenario, you're thinking about the application of the work, which you've done, not necessarily the theory behind what you've done. The theory has to be there, but they focused on the application of the work…how you would implement change based on the data you have in front of you. …So that was the difference for us (Lines 285 – 306)[286].

The principals expressed experiencing two distinctly different educational leadership and administration preparation programs. As Ms. Daily shared, the program prepared her with relevant practices using timely data from and within urban city schools. During our talks she expressed feeling confident and comfortable as a first year school leader. However, those underprepared confided initially experiencing a high learning curve and uncertainty. They shared that their urban city school mentors helped them overcome the practice gaps created by traditional leadership programs and theories. On several occasions, Mr. Vertner recognized his mentor Mrs. Igou as "the pivotal piece in the success of Murray through the school leader" (Lines 125 – 126)[287]. He admitted, "I came here and I didn't know what I was doing…I need[ed] her to help develop me" (Lines 115 – 120)[288]. Mr. Biko unabashedly disclosed, "I'm not going to lie to you, I can't remember a lot from my classes. What helped me more than anything is Dr. Cora Brown, she was a leadership coach for me" (Lines 1018 – 1047)[289]. Their mentorship mirrors their colleagues' acknowledgements of their mentors' role in developing them to become effective school

leaders, particularly in urban city schools. Their mentors possessed an average of 30 years working in urban city communities. They were a part of the South's segregated and integrated school systems and now a resegregated system. I believe the mentors' experiences significantly influenced their mentorship, thus mediating their mentees' conceptualizations of leadership and practices. In many respects, the mentors reimagined the professional organizational network of the Association through concerted local site mentorship and professional development (Walker, 2009). Thus, based on the two divergent program experiences and similar mentorship, it seems clear that 'different' perspectives, preparation, and theories are needed to conceptualize 'alternative' practices for 'different places' like urban city school communities.

Perspective And Practices That Represent 'The Different'

The school leaders expressed an understanding of the cultural, socioeconomic and political factors that contribute to the underlining conditions that sustain inequitably 'different places'. Mr. Biko highlighted this understanding. He declared, "When you get a perspective of being in one of the top schools and then going to what they would consider the Needs to Improve or lower level functioning schools, you can see how policies and support can affect them (Lines 664 – 666)[290]. Mr. Vertner agreed. He shared,

> [T]he story often said, '*I need resources that are not here and I got to go get them'*. …[T]o finish writing the next chapter of this story, we got to do some things that have never been done before…try our best to put mechanisms in place so that these things can be sustained (Lines 1934 – 1939)[291].

Therefore, they consistently voiced standpoints of implementing practices from the perspective of 'doing what's right and best for kids', especially kids persistently underserved. In doing so, they 'work at the work' to become the educators who are 'changing the face of urban city education'. Similar to their pre-Brown predecessors, Mr. Vertner believed the principalship of feeder schools in impoverished urban city communities should construct a common language of

instruction and practices regarding the best ways to develop kids as students for productive community and global citizenship. They too worked to operate "within a community ethos that expected them to help others in the race" (Walker, 2009, p. 238). Mr. Vertner maintained,

> [W]e're best serving the community by best serving the kids and getting them ready for life after high school early. …But we have to have the options for the kids. Without options we're just a typical high school that inner city kids come to us under-credited, over-aged, and illiterate" (Lines 737 – 743)[292].

They espoused a belief that their practices must 'go above and beyond' the traditional expectations to change the traditional educational paradigm in urban city school communities. Their understandings of communities' needs seemingly led them to contend that traditional school leadership practices must constantly evolve to affect substantive educational changes in contemporary urban city communities. They expressed a sense of urgency perpetuated by resegregation and mounting sociopolitical issues mediated their beliefs. Hence, their conceptualization and implementation of practices that represent a difference (i.e., alternative) in traditional school leadership perspectives. Mr. Biko explained, "There are different gears you're going to change because of the environment. …[A]n average person that can't relate…may not make the right decisions because it may not be in the yellow book…[of] follow these rules and procedures" (Lines 571 – 576)[293]. Ms. Stevens expanded upon Mr. Biko's assertion that effective school leaders, particularly in 'different places', must implement practices that help close inequitable gaps in students' educational experiences and outcomes. She confirmed, "The way you *approach things are different*… [F]or example, parental involvement. It's a lack of parental involvement in urban just like it is in rural [areas], but the surface reasons may be different, but the underlining reasons are not (Lines 269 – 273)[294]. The school leaders implemented practices, as re-presented in the second section of chapter four, to help them change the 'different gears' needed to effectively shift the educational paradigm in urban city schools. They consistently discussed imple-

menting practices undergirded with an engaged knowledge of the school communities' cultural, socioeconomic and political needs. Like her colleagues, Ms. Daily embodied a belief that changing one's perspective and practices could lead to substantively different outcomes. She explained,

> [E]ducation is one of those areas that just constantly changes, and you have to be on top of the things…understanding not only the best strategies, but understanding the environment in which you work and understanding the dynamics of the community. And all of that takes an openness to continuing to learn. …I think a lot of times in education there are individuals who get a certain amount of book knowledge, but the practical application just is not there. And then they get frustrated and defeated because what they're trying to do based on theory is not working as a practice (Lines 371 – 380)[295].

The school leaders demonstrated an understanding of the critical need to practice differently in urban city schools for their 'non-traditional' stakeholders. They spoke cogently about culture as the significant difference to understanding and implementing practices to affect substantive changes and outcomes. Ms. Stevens explained that the essence of school leadership should be the same regardless of geographical location. They each voiced this belief. However, they demonstrated the need to center rather than marginalize culture at the crux of their perspectives of effective practices. Ms. Stevens firmly asserted, "I think the difference is understanding the culture that you serve and making sure that you keep that at the forefront of things" (Lines 254 – 260)[296]. Ms. Daily's discussion of school leadership underscores their belief of culture's central role in practicing effectively in urban city schools. She disclosed,

> I think…there is *an element necessary* to be a successful school leader in an urban school. There is a certain *set of qualities*, …a *certain understanding* of your community[47]

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[47] In this culturally contextualized and sociopolitical complex context, a certain understanding of your community means being knowledgeable of the daily dynamics that affect the neighborhood. Daily dynamics such as how high unemployment contributes to conditions of high rates of crime, violence, substance abuse, depression, hopelessness, anger, and frustration. Ms. Daily mentioned, *"As a school leader, I might not necessarily be able to give you the impact of a shooting yesterday in the neighborhood. It may affect some at a different level than others, but at the end of the day it impacts my results. It impacts the growth we're going to see. …The variables that impact our work look*

> in which you serve and a certain understanding of the *cultural needs* that you have to have to be successful. There's a certain level of…*street credibility* that you have to have to be a successful leader in an urban school setting and a certain level of *confidence within that environment* that you have to have to be successful (Lines 476 – 483)[297].

The school leaders in this study seemingly embodied different perspectives of effective school leadership in urban city school communities. Their different perspectives afforded them the sociocultural intuitiveness necessary to implement practices to experience different academic and social outcomes. As they envisioned the footprints that they would like to leave on their respective school communities, they described implementing sustainable practices that reflect a counter narrative to traditional perspectives, practices, and outcomes.

> **Mr. Steve Biko:** All students can learn. …[T]here is a formula if you work together that will create a…culture of learning and we expect success can be an attitude that we'll never give in and never, never die and that it will always be [a high performing school community] (Lines 980 – 984)[298].

> **Ms. Unique Daily:** I would hope that my footprint would be positive progress… A certain level of positive energy that could exist and be recognizable in terms of perception change, …student accountability, …community engagement. Positive progress that…impacts what we experience and what students do on a regular basis (Lines 1491 – 1496)[299].

> **Ms. Frances Stevens:** [I]t'll take all the stakeholders to do it, but I want…when I go to a student they should…take responsibility and ownership of their own learning. So if the students can articulate that to us I think as a whole all the stakeholders have done their job (Lines 792 – 798) [300].

> **Mr. Arthurs K. Vertner:** I always say this, 'It's important to me now, because it's going to be important to you later'. …[T]hey'll say, "Why?" …"I see further down the road than you. …I see careers, opportunities in your future that don't even exist, haven't even been spoken of yet, or they have been spoken of in somebody's dream or imagination. Thomas Freeman wrote, The World is Flat…and you're going to be competing against kids your age who are in India…Asia…why not develop you so that you can collaborate with them and you all can bring some things together." …An effective school leader has to find a way to mold the kids' dreams and if they can't dream adequately, dream for

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so different than the variables that impact their work" (U. Daily, personal communication, Interview 3, June 3, Lines, 491 – 510).

> them and keep pouring it into them until they can dream for themselves (Lines 1047 – 1093)[301].

The school leaders espoused a belief that 'all children can learn'. However, they contend that researchers, professors, policymakers, and practitioners of educational leadership and administration must consistently prepare educators to 'meet children where they are' and 'where they come from' to help them 'go above and beyond' traditional expectations of mediocrity. Mr. Biko, like his colleagues, impressed to me the need for practices that represent alternatives to the traditional canons. He stated,

> [A] lot of times people make policies and they haven't actually went in and had that experience…or they have been far removed from [schools]. School changes, culture changes, climate changes with the years and school is ever evolving,…so [we need] more ways of doing things, more practices, and more strategies (Lines 689 – 695)[302].

Instead of waiting for others to change perspectives, preparation, practices, and policies, the contemporary school leaders discussed and demonstrated implementing practices from responsively engaged racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse perspectives. In doing so, they reported experiencing incremental success, as re-presented in the second section of Chapter 4, in shifting the educational paradigm in their urban city school communities. Thus, as the inserted photo illustrates, it appears that they are a part of those who are taking the 'road less traveled' to 'change the face of urban education'.

Conclusion

This chapter began with exploring contemporary Black school leaders' philosophical beliefs of education, which mediated their conceptualizations of leadership and practices, and end-

ed with a discussion of how their practices represent an alternative to traditional canons for urban city school communities with predominately Black, brown, and poor populace.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Those for whom the path to success is no mystery must lead us"

(Hilliard, 2003, p. 165)

When I began this research journey, I set out to explore four contemporary Black school leaders' perspectives of leadership, paying particular attention to the social interactions and practices critical to their leadership, an alternative framework of effective school leadership. The purpose of their individual and collective leadership in impoverished urban city school communities was to construct a new educational paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanism within the context of school reform, a paradigm of 'minimum proficiency' standards[48].

Through their multiple voices, I explored three lines of inquiry concerning contemporary school leadership: conceptualizations of leadership, perspectives of practices, and the alternativeness their practices represent to traditional canons that contribute to their effectiveness.

I used cultural historical activity theory and distributed leadership theory as a conceptual framework to center their conceptualizations and perspectives of leadership as potential structures[49] of a strategic implementation process of changing education in urban city communities. I

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[48] The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was enacted to extend the ESEA of 1965 Title I – Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. The purpose of Title I is to "ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state assessments" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004. Retrieved from http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec1003). I assert that the NCLB (2001) policymakers consistently set low standards and expectations for disadvantaged students. The expectations of 'minimum proficiency' perpetuate academic, opportunity, and outcome gaps for traditionally marginalized students. Despite equal access to quality educational services, disadvantaged students will continue to be 'left behind' in this traditional systemic structured paradigm, thus consistently denied equity in our purported egalitarian democratic society.

[49] Here, I am utilizing Dr. Asa G. Hilliard's (1991) description of 'structure', which may be an idea, organizational system, architectural form, economic relationship, political relationship, definitions, and assumptions. He explains, "Structures produce momentum. Structures sustain practice over time, even when the outcomes of such practice are not beneficial and may even be harmful. Therefore, we must look closely at structures to understand equity issues" (p. 201). I submit that the four contemporary school leaders critically examined the traditional systems and struc-

submit that the four contemporary Black school leaders seemingly have a natural embodied 'model' of school leadership, which I contend is an alternative framework of effective school leadership. [50] As discussed in the first section of chapter four, the concepts: role model; sociopolitical advocate; courageous decision maker; and morally responsible visionary servant of citizenship; help to construct this framework that offers an alternative to traditional perspectives of how effective school leadership is enacted, particularly in sociopolitical contexts like urban city school communities. Therefore, their practices as principals are different from those that the traditional canons purpose. In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of what findings contributed to their 'path to success' as school leaders in the contexts of school reform and urban city communities. I discuss how their principalships addressed three prevalent educational issues: effective school leadership, professional preparations, and school conditions. Simultaneously, I integrate a methodological discussion highlighting methods that helped me learn more about the complex activity of contemporary Black school leadership[303]. Then, I present implications for practitioners, academicians, researchers, and policymakers of educational leadership, urban education, and educational policy. Finally, I conclude with recommendations for future research.

Effective School Leadership: You Conceptualize What You Believe

Contemporary Black school leaders' conceptualized leadership as a natural embodied 'model' intended to afford marginalized groups' equal access, equity[51], and quality educational

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tures of their context(s) and subsequently identified and implemented equitable structures as re-presented in chapter four.

[50] I found that the school leaders consistently described their leadership as a 'model'. Therefore, in keeping with their language, an essential mediating cultural tool, I too used the practical concept of 'model' often in the place of theoretical framework, which more aptly explains how and why the four school leaders in this study are able to practice effectively in urban city contexts. This alternative framework is undergirded by concepts that are multidimensional and contextualized, which I discussed and described in thick descriptive details in the first section of chapter four.

[51] The school leaders consistently spoke of the importance of using their leadership to 'level the playing field' for their stakeholders.

opportunities, services, and outcomes. I learned through my prolonged time in urban city school communities, interviews, shadowing participants' interactions, facilitating online group discussions, and my subsequent transformation[304] of data that their philosophical belief systems[52] significantly contributed to their path of success as effective school leaders. Their expressed philosophical belief of 'all kids can learn' was not mere rhetoric. As Hilliard (1991) pointed out, the belief is not universally accepted with great confidence by majority policymakers and educators, particularly of marginalized groups. However, the contemporary Black school leaders in this study embodied strong belief systems that cultivated counternarratives about disenfranchised students, leadership, and education in contemporary marginalized contexts. Although they worked in the midst of highly contestable political contexts with heighten public accountability, scrutiny, and lingering capacity stereotypes, their work was supported by belief systems that differed from the traditional systems, structures, and majority power figures that attempted to frame their leadership to reform their schools with 'minimum competency' goals.

Their belief systems were birthed from the multiplicity of teachings and social grooming lessons taught in the (in)formal school contexts of home, church, neighborhood, and the streets. Their teachers in the (in)formal schooling spaces provided them with lessons from sociocultural, sociohistorical, and sociopolitical perspectives. Therefore, in these contextualized (in)formal schooling spaces they were taught an expectation of excelling to their highest capacity as African American citizens. This teaching countered their lived formal schooling experiences. Thus, through their educational experiences in in/formal school contexts, they became cognizant that two different educational paradigms existed—highest capacity and minimum competency—

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[52] In this study, the participants' philosophical belief systems represent their ideology; a system of ideas, ideals, morals, values, ethics, principles, and standards that shape the basics of their beliefs about how society functions and/or should function.

based primarily on race. Their understanding of the two differing paradigms based on race underscores DuBois's (1994) proclamation of a systemic ideological structure of 'double-consciousness' socially constructed within the Black culture. DuBois declares,

> It is a particular sensation, the double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his[/her] two-ness, —an American, and a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, whose dogged strength along keeps it from being torn asunder. …[S/]he would not bleach his[/her] Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for [s/]he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (p. 2-3)

In many respects, their awareness of the two competing educational paradigms and their expected "responsibilities of being young, gifted, and Black" mirrored the lessons Dillard's (1995) African American female principal spoke of as "greatly influencing her own (re)interpretations of principal work (p. 547). Thus, their early educational experiences coupled with family and communal expectations significantly shaped their belief systems, which countered traditional white supremacy and deficit ideologies.

The four contemporary Black school leaders' belief systems challenged traditional structures. They believed 'all kids can learn' to their highest capacities when afforded 'an opportunity to learn' in an environment where they are 'taught and pushed', 'supported', 'encouraged', 'motivated', and 'challenged' to excel 'above and beyond' mediocrities to become productive community and global minded citizens[53]. However, they believed that multiple structures of inequi-

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[53] The school leaders prepared their students to become 'productive community and global minded citizens', which for them means that their students pursue 'best practices' from diverse sources to implement within their communities and nation at-large to improve all human beings daily lived experiences and social interactions as democratic citizens. The students are groomed to be self-aware; self and mutually accepting; flexible; and able to overcome

ties existed to create seemingly intractable 'gaps in opportunities' for students to learn to their highest capacities rather than the contrived achievement gap (Hilliard, 1993, 2003). Through prolonged daily shadowing, participatory engagement of in/formal conversations, and analyzing relevant documents, I was able to confirm the pervasiveness of multiple structures of inequities that the four school leaders successfully overcame with their leadership. I identified structures of inequities within multiple organizational systems like the local school sites, district, and state levels that included: a funneling down of low expectations and academic goals; narrow and flattened curricula programming; unjust discipline policies; inequitable funding and unsustainable resources, especially quality human capital. Also, I noticed an intersection of structures of inequities between organizational systems, socioeconomics, and politics that included: decontextualized preparation of educators; standardized instructional practices and irrelevant assessments; and unsupportive, uncaring, and unsafe milieus cultivated through an accumulated history of institutional disenfranchisement and intellectual oppression. Likewise, I found that public and private political relationships help to both construct and sustain structures of inequities through media driven negative perceptions and public criticisms and predatory support agencies that offered deficit reinforcing services. Moreover, at the crux of the multiple structural inequalities was a phenomenon of 'setting and hitting' low academic expectations and goals for marginalized students.

Of major importance to this study is the apparent difference in contemporary Black school leaders and White majority leaders' belief systems. The four contemporary Black school leaders' philosophical beliefs afforded them the moral latitude to do what was 'right and best' for

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obstacles of change with creative solutions through collective problem solving, cultural responsiveness and sensitivity, and diversity driven for a more inclusive society.

their students and school communities. Therefore, unlike their majority white counterparts, the Black school leaders challenged traditional structures. They did so by asking critical questions and then dismantling systemic structures such as the practice of 'hitting and setting' low academic expectations. The practice in this school district, through state mandates, seemingly created a false pattern of success based on standardized test reports, which help sustain the deficit thinking of majority educators and policymakers. I concur with the contemporary Black school leaders that the practice was unethical, dehumanizing, and delimiting of marginalized groups' opportunities to develop to their highest capacities. Gorski (2011) explains, the ideology is "based upon a set of assumed truths about the world and the sociopolitical relationships that occur in it" (p. 153). King (2015) asserts, "Actually this reasoning is not new" (p. 129). She refers to it as a "pseudo-theory of the 'culture of poverty'" and explains that in the 1960s it "consisted of variations on the theme of Black people's cultural deficiency: lack of culture, absence of culture, deficit of culture, and so forth" (2015, p. 129). Today, King (2015) says, "Now, thirty years later, the dominate discourse about the 'achievement gap' continues to focus on Black people's supposed deficiency rather than societal structures of race, class, and gender oppression" (p. 129). Indeed, deficit ideology is hierarchical in nature, structure, and practice. Moreover, the ideology is predicated upon assumptions that disenfranchised individuals from impoverished, racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse backgrounds lack the intellectual capacity to learn at high levels compared to the mainstream norm (Gorski, 2011; Hilliard, 2003, 1991; King, 2015, 1991; Sleeter, 2004). Importantly, the ideology perpetuates sustainment of structural inequities that are pervasive throughout our educational systems in the United States. Sleeter (2004) confirms the ideology is long-standing. She stated the ideology "still runs rampant in many schools, solidifying low academic expectations for students of color, despite the abstraction of 'all children can learn'"

(2004, p. 133). Hence, majority educators tend to lead districts, schools, and classrooms with a double-minded achievement belief system of capable and incapable based on students' racial, cultural and socioeconomic affiliations, where racialized bodies are readily labeled deficient. King (2015) confirms, "teachers and researchers hold culturally sanctioned negative views about Black people and about Black culture, which are far more pernicious than what the research literature identified years ago as teachers' 'low expectations'" (p. 130). Their double-minded belief systems is inherent of a racialized victim blaming principle, which significantly influences the quality of educational opportunities, services, and outcomes afforded to students, especially those traditionally marginalized (Dantley, 1990; Gorski, 2011; Hilliard, 2003, 1991; King, 2015, 1991; Sleeter, 2004; Weiner, 2006). Through intensive shadowing of contemporary Black school leaders' social interactions with majority colleagues, I found that majority school leaders disregarded sociopolitical forces that disproportionately and unjustly invaded marginalized students' bodies, minds, homes, neighborhoods, culture(s), and schools (Gorski, 2011; King, 2015, 1991). Their uncritical ways of thinking about the impact and outcomes of inequitable sociopolitical forces for racialized students and communities is a form of 'dysconscious racism' (King, 1991). King (1991) describes dysconscious racism as,

> [A] form of racism that tacitly accepts dominant White norms and privileges. It is not the *absence* of consciousness (that is, not unconsciousness) but an *impaired* consciousness or distorted way of thinking about race as compared to, for example, critical consciousness. [It is] [u]ncritical ways of thinking about racial inequity [and] accept[ing] certain culturally sanctioned assumptions, myths, and beliefs that justify the social and economic advantages White people have as a result of subordinating diverse others. (p. 135)

I witnessed majority educators absolving themselves of their professional responsibilities to highly educate marginalized students through un/spoken words and actions. Majority educators, in this school district, seemingly believed it was students' responsibilities to 'desire to learn' and 'want to be educated'. Here again is a point of departure in belief systems between majority educators and the four contemporary Black school leaders.

Contemporary Black school leaders think differently about the purpose of education for all students, especially marginalized groups. They envision and prepare their students to be productive citizens to 'help their communities' and to 'compete' and 'collaborate' with kids in countries like China, India, and Japan. However, as Dr. Asa Hilliard, III surmised, the prevailing goals of our public schools are "mainly about minimum competencies, reflecting a very low estimate of capabilities of the masses of Americans" (1991, p. 202). Thus, majority educators continue to put the onerous of learning onto marginalized kids and families without critically considering the 'savage inequalities' imposed upon impoverished communities by inequitable sociopolitical forces (Kozol, 1991). Whereas, contemporary Black school leaders lead with an engaged understanding of how social conditions like racism, unemployment, resegregation, violence and crime, and food and healthcare injustices in urban city[305] communities adversely affect racial, ethnic, and culturally diverse students' access to quality education and social outcomes. The four school leaders embraced the racial, cultural, social, and political diverse contexts of their respective school communities. Thus, unlike those who uphold traditional educational leadership paradigms, they did not decontextualize their schools and principalships. Instead, they developed responsively engaged sociocultural perspectives. They recognized, like Dantley (1990) asserted, schools are not "neutral instructional sites immune to the effects that class, race, and gender have on specific student populations" (p. 586). Therefore, whereas traditionalists hege-

monically approach schools and leadership as systems that "either deny or ignore social and political intervention within and without the walls of schools" (Dantley, 1990, p. 586), the four contemporary Black school leaders recognized the limitations and injustice of such perspectives and thus conceptualized an alternative leadership.

Their conceptualizations of effective school leadership represent an alternative to traditional canons. I enlisted Dillard's (1995) notion of 'alternative perspective' towards school leadership. She explained that an alternative structure of leadership is conceptualized when "there are persons actively engaged in reconstructive and transformative activities on behalf of themselves and traditionally marginalized groups within schools" (1995, p. 542). I found participants' conceptualizations of school leadership to be a natural embodied 'model'. Their conceptualizations emerged from their deep-rooted beliefs, experiences, and an engaged sociocultural knowledge of urban city communities' urgent need for effective and socially just leadership. They believed being a school leader is a "calling". The "calling" is couched in a "moral imperative" to co-create "a revolution" of change in urban city schools that improves the social, economic, and political conditions for marginalized groups within impoverished communities and humanity at-large. Their calling to conceptualize an alternative leadership that departs from traditional canons seems to align with Dantley's (1990) discussion of the role of 'critical leadership' in urban poor communities. Dantley (1990) explains,

> Leaders of schools for the urban poor must develop a broader, more expansive concept of schooling. They must be visionaries, yet their vision must not be yoked completely to the prevailing cultural hegemony. Instead it must be wedded to the notion of schools as vehicles for social and political reconstruction. That mindset must include belief and subscription to notions such as…[for example these three tenets]: The critical pedagogy of

> schools causes students to become critically reflexive citizens. Schools are the bastions of democratic policies and practices. Schools serve as the preparatory arenas for the makers of political and social change. (p. 594-595)

Thus, their leadership concepts of being a role model, sociopolitical advocate, courageous decision maker, and morally responsible visionary servant of citizenship underpinned their path to success as effective school leaders. Their leadership concepts seemed to respond to the 'calling' for 'critical leadership' in urban city communities. Importantly, the concepts framed how they (re)visioned leadership in the context of contemporary urban city school communities. As they collectively realized "the stakes are higher" for urban city students and their communities when educational systems fail to provide them access to equitable quality educational opportunities, services, and outcomes.

The four contemporary Black school leaders chose to do the untypical. They chose to critically analyze the political ethics and potential hidden purpose(s) of education in impoverished communities. Whereas the vast majority school leaders continue to lead from traditional frameworks, which uphold achievement assumptions and sustain status quos within systems through inequitable structures. As Dantley (1990) notes, this effective leader in traditional depoliticized context is "charged with producing and maintaining an environment that is safe for students and teachers to work but not to learn, to walk but not to think, to be but not to contribute" (p. 592). For the participants, as parts of the whole system, they committed to changing their respective educating systems and structures. They closely examined and analyzed school reform policies endemic of urban city school communities to conceptualize an appropriate leadership model to thwart the un/intended consequences of NCLB in their school communities—'minimum competency diplomas or expulsion papers'. Indeed if left unchallenged, the two high-

ly prevalent high school outcomes will continue to result in an accumulation of future opportunity losses for marginalized groups, communities, and ultimately the nation at-large. Therefore, the four school leaders critically challenged the fact that NCLB was "law and legal". They collectively believed that effective school leaders of impoverished communities must "go above legal and go to ethical" to ensure implementation of "right and best" structures for marginalized students and communities.

The four contemporary Black principals' leaderships challenged the political sociocultural structure of setting 'minimum competency' standards. Hilliard (1991) reminds us that historically inequitable social "structures sustain practice over time, even when the outcomes of such practice are not beneficial and may even be harmful" (p. 201). Thus, the four contemporary school leaders understood that policy simply changes laws and often fails to change traditional perspectives, people, and practices with fidelity and expected expediency, much like the desegregation ruling of *Brown* (1954). The humanity of the vast majority of their students was at stake. As a result this meant conceptualizing a leadership paradigm that differed from traditional leadership models influenced by white supremacist and deficit ideologies. The contemporary Black school leaders conceptualized a leadership model that countered dominate narratives about the education of marginalized groups, particularly in impoverished school communities. Their leadership model enabled them to (re)center education from a holistic paradigm of excellently educating the whole child for substantively greater life outcomes. They led from a humanizing rather than deficit paradigm. Their educational paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanism "not only mocks the status quo and the illusion that those in power indeed have power over [their] decision makings, but through seemingly ordinary acts of leadership provides an alternative interpretation of leadership possibility" (Dillard, 1995, p. 549). They believed the quality of

educational opportunities, services, and outcomes afforded to students should no longer mirror their "low performing neighborhoods". I argue that low performing neighborhoods are the result of a historical accumulation of imposed 'savage inequalities' perpetuated by systemic macro-systems (Hilliard, 2003; Kozol, 1991). However, the school leaders refused to allow socially imposed structures to continue authoring stories of deficit, defeat, and dispossession in their school communities. The school leaders have (re)visioned their schools to become the 'hub of their communities'[306]. They recognized that their students embodied inherent sociopolitical greatness and entrepreneurial ingenuity to be the change agents of their "forgotten communities" within an inclusive democratic nation. Importantly, they appreciated the inherent racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of their students. The four school leaders regarded diversity as an essential asset to developing a stronger, inclusive, progressive, and sustainable egalitarian nation. Thus, the contemporary Black school leaders conceptualized a leadership model to prepare students as productive citizens who help their communities and the nation at-large operate to their 'highest capacities'. I believe that through their conceptualizations of leadership, they have captured the spirit of egalitarianism, a principle that should structure and support our systems, especial our public schools. Thus, I assert that their conceptualizations of leadership, rooted in an intuitive sociocultural perspective(s), challenges traditional educational leadership and administration paradigms. It also challenges traditional educational perspectives, people, programs, and practices.

Professional Preparations: It's About Learning On The Job

The four contemporary Black school leaders believed traditional educational leadership and administration programs are ineffective and irrelevant for preparing aspiring principals to affect substantive changes in contextualized school environments like impoverished urban city communities. I learned through formal interviews and daily informal conversations with Biko,

Stevens, and Vertner, who participated in traditional higher educational leadership and administration programs that they viewed such programs as organizational structures embedded with inequities—professors' perspectives (e.g., beliefs and ideas); theories and paradigms; field experiences; and practices. Whereas, Daily's participation in a progressive leadership preparation program provided an opportunity for me to pursue a more in-depth exploration of what created the difference between the two programs. The daily dialogues and active participation in both professional and social contexts with the participants also allowed me to identify what seemingly filled the gap, local site mentorship with elder Black educators, in their divergent program experiences of which I discussed in the third section of chapter four.

Majority educational leadership programs include equity and diversity as objectives that often remain elusive and eventually expressed as nonissues for most participants who eventually become school leaders. Program coordinators include the objectives with the expressed purpose of developing and preparing aspiring school leaders. Thus, the aspirants expect to be equipped with experiential knowledge, skills, and practices to cultivate structures of equity for racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and culturally diverse students in various geographical contexts. The unfortunate reality is that within the corpus of educational leadership, equity and diversity continue to be elusive objectives and significant barriers of preparing school leaders to effectively afford all students an 'opportunity to learn' to their highest capacities. The objectives rarely manifested through professors' perspectives and classroom discourses; paradigms and theories; and field experiences and practices as experienced by Biko, Stevens, and Vertner and as Daily witnessed of colleagues. Thus, the persistent absence of equity and diversity in reality, rather than in rhetorical discourse, is a manifestation of structural inequities that continue to significantly undermine equitable and excellent educational experiences and outcomes for all students. Therefore, despite

the very welcomed emergence of alternative leadership paradigms like culturally relevant (Beachum, 2011; McCray & Beachum, 2011), culturally proficient (Terrell, 2009), critical spirituality (Dantley, 2003; McCray, Beachum & Yawn, 2012; Tillman, 2002), social justice (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Theoharis, G. 2007), and stewardship (Gooden, 2002), traditional educational leadership bodies of knowledge and practices are still the foremost guiding canons of preparation programs (Gosetti & Rusch, 1994, 2002; Hilliard, 1991, 2003). Moreover, privilege is at the root of the systemic structural inequities; it is a product of white supremacy and a function of power to sustain status quo systems (Gosetti & Rusch, 1994; Hilliard, 1991; Lipsitz, 1998; Rusch, 2002; Tillman, 2002). Privileged perspectives are firmly embedded in the leadership construct, and thus the institutional system of educational leadership and administration. As Rusch (2002) explains, "Once a structure or a pattern of power relations become deeply embedded with leadership theories, the assumptions and values upon which the theories were originally based become invisible" (p. 64). Thus, traditional leadership structures are accepted as legitimate, authoritative, ideal, relevant, and importantly as the universal taken for granted norm of who and how and what is taught, learned, and practiced as effective school leadership (Gosetti & Rusch, 1994; Hilliard, 1991; Rusch, 2002). Hence, this privileged perspective embedded in traditional leadership programs is extremely problematic for aspirants, who fervently believe 'all kids can learn' to their highest capacities, particularly kids historically marginalized by in/visible institutionalized structures of inequities. Moreover, the traditional programs' underpreparation of aspirants to successfully cultivate high performance learning communities is also an in/visible structural inequity that inevitably affects marginalized students educational opportunities, quality of services, and outcomes.

The contemporary Black school leaders believed traditional program professors possessed myopic perspectives of effective school leadership. Biko, Stevens, and Vertner participated in traditional educational leadership programs. Their programs were facilitated predominately by White middle class men, who prepared them from privileged white supremacy standpoints. Their standpoints significantly undermined the existence and relevance of diversity, specifically diversity issues concerning the intersections of race, ethnicity, class, culture, and equity in K-12 public education. As critically reflective school leaders, they questioned the un/intended messages program professors seemed to convey through their failure to facilitate substantive discussions that centered relevant cultural diversity issues aspiring school leaders may face, particularly in impoverished urban city school communities. They concluded, similarly to Rusch and Gosetti (1995), that traditional program professors' "silences loudly communicated a privileged view" (p. 14). A view that they believed systemically excluded multiple perspectives, experiential knowledge of cultural diversity, and their Black voices from influencing a critical critique of leadership structures that would disrupt the tradition of race, ethnic, and class inequities. In doing so, they would make visible the privileged perspective of leadership from a majority white middle class male culture (Lipstiz, 1998; Rusch, 2002; Tillman, 2002). However, as Rusch (2002) points out, "Inequity can be generated in multiple ways within the academy. In the case of educational leadership classrooms, professors have the power and privilege to reproduce and reify whatever discourse they choose in classrooms and in research" (p. 74). Therefore, despite their attempts to engage critical classroom discussions that centered cultural diversity and equity issues, the three participants of traditional programs expressed feelings of frustrations about being underprepared. They described sentiments of disbelief that professors, especially those a part of a minority educational leadership recruitment preparation program, lacked an understanding and

value of urban and inner city sociohistorical, sociocultural, and sociopolitical contextual differences. The participants reported a lack of engaged classroom discourses that centered racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of urban inner city school communities, but rather a concerted focus on the ideal cultures of suburban school environments. They also discussed disdain with their professors' overreliance on traditional leadership paradigms, theories, and models that they believed were irrelevant and ineffective to affect substantive changes within urban city school contexts with majority Black, Hispanic, and poor students. Tillman (2002) agrees with the four contemporary Black school leaders' critical assessment of professors' overreliance on irrelevant and ineffective theories. Tillman (2002) states,

> This over-dependence on theory is often at the expense of poor and minority children. …Traditional theories of educational administration also often reinforce deficit theories that construct children of color as less interested in and capable of learning. Thus, this over-dependence on traditional models may limit the opportunities for K-12 leaders to serve poor and minority students who lack the 'cultural capital', which for the most part, defines success in schools. (p. 152)

Their classroom experiences seemed to mimic the participants of Rusch and Marshall's study (1996). Similarly, my four participants argued discourses and practical field experiences involving issues of equity, race, ethnicity, class, and cultural diversity should be a critical standard of aspirants' preparation experiences (Rusch, 2002). For the school leaders, these were significant issues. They fervently believed that these issues should be inclusive and integral to: classroom discourses; reading materials of relevant theories, models, and paradigms; guest speakers; and field experiences and applicable practices. Indeed inclusion of these issues could

help to prepare all aspirants to be effective, regardless of their ideal school placements and student populations.

The participants believed the best preparation for effective leadership in urban city school communities was 'learning on the job' under the mentorship of esteemed elder urban city school and community leaders. Their elders helped them overcome preparation and practice gaps inherent of the inequitable sociostructural system(s) that support traditional canons of educational leadership and administration. Their mentors, Black men and women educators and community activitists, were a part of the South's segregated and integrated systems and now a resegregated system. Thus, they possessed experiential knowledge of the privileged practice that seems to intentionally underprepare principals for effective leadership in urban city schools. They, like their contemporary mentees, vowed to dismantle inequitable structures that perpetuate low performances in urban city schools and communities. The school leadership elders reimagined the professional organizational network of the Association through concerted local site mentorship and professional development (Walker, 2009). Through this contemporary network they passed on historical, cultural, and community knowledge that significantly shaped the school leaders' conceptualizations of leadership and practices. The community activist elders reimagined traditional Black communal support of fostering 'community schools' of academic and social excellence through active engagement; financial support; dissemination of socio-historical and cultural knowledge and community expectations; and a mutually dependent relationship (Anderson, 2004; King, 2015; Walker, 1996). Thus, the elders helped the school leaders develop a natural embodied framework for effectively leading in their school communities. As the school leaders reflected on their preparation of becoming effective school leaders, elder mentors like Mrs. Igou were consistently herald as "the pivotal piece in the success of our school through the school

leader". Of comparable importance and very telling of their critical role as elder community mentors, they were held in high esteem through a cultural perspective of kinship. Through this cultural kinship perspective, elders like Mr. Rutherford were respected as a 'god-father' within these school communities. Overall, the elder mentors were deemed "the architects of their careers". Moreover, the elders' transmission of sociocultural and historical knowledge and practices afforded contemporary Black school leaders' experiential support on a daily basis as they implemented structures of equity to afford their students an educational paradigm of hope, high expectations, and humanism. Indeed the four contemporary Black school leaders are a part of those who are 'changing the face of urban education'. Through their leadership, they were advancing Dr. Hilliard's (2003) concept of 'gap closers'. They intentionally planned and strategically implemented equitable structures that supported all students with excellent opportunities to excel to their highest capacities—educational, behavioral, emotional, social, and creatively.

Changing School Conditions: 'Right and Best' Practices

Contemporary Black school leaders believed their conceptualizations of leadership afforded them ethical latitude to think "out of the box" to implement practices that sustained their philosophical belief systems. I found that the most significant practices the school leaders performed to improve school conditions included: changing culture and climate; sharing leadership; modeling expectations; restructuring school; changing communities' perceptions; hiring and professional development; and assessing and reflecting on the outcomes of the work. I provided rich, thick descriptions, analyses, and interpretations of their practices in section two of chapter four. I argue the fact that the school leaders were strategic, purposeful, intentional, transparent, inclusive, resilient, and reflective in identifying, planning, implementing, and assessing practices to dramatically improve school conditions helped pave a path to success. Their practices, under-

girded with moral imperative and social justice perspectives, were purposed to dismantle unjust structures and provide students equitable opportunities to learn to their highest capacities. In essence, their practices were the structures that created equitable educational systems for marginalized students, parents, and community neighbors. Thus, their school leadership's vision for community education was underscored by the humble and courageous words of the late abolitionist and minister, Theodore Parker. Parker (1979) declared,

> Look at the facts of the world. You see a continual and progressive triumph of the right. I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends towards justice. Things refuse to be mismanaged long. (p. 48)

Tillman (2002), in discussing the caliber of leaders and leadership that "holds the greatest promise for change in educational leadership theory and practice" (p. 149) notes the third strand of social justice as the space for researchers to expand the body of educational leadership through constructing theories, frameworks, systems, structures, models, and processes for social justice. Tillman (2002) explains,

> [L]eaders for social justice are called upon to promote issues of community. Community-wide initiatives where the purposes of education and the needs of communities of color and communities of poverty are central to the discourses, policymaking, pedagogy, and practice are critical to the meaningful systemic change that is needed in public education today. (p. 149)

I argue that the four contemporary Black school principals' leadership provides a framework with models of practices that affected substantive changes in their urban city school com-

munities. The school leaders, along with diverse stakeholders, identified and implemented practices to affect structural changes on multiple levels—classroom, school, neighborhoods, district, public and private business communities, and state.

The school leaders reported success stories directly related to the structural changes driven by their practices. Their success was due in large part to their belief that implementing sustainable structural changes required publicly sharing the vision, goals, and plans with diverse stakeholders. They also experienced success because they were able to mobilize a 'revolution' of followers who believed in 'the cause' of changing the educational paradigm for marginalized students and to ultimately affect structural changes in their communities as well. The school leaders each had commendable leadership teams. Their leadership teams brainstormed, collaborated, and developed best practices to keep their kids in schools. Thus, these Black contemporary school leaders refused to use the power of the pen to permanently 'expel' some of their most challenging kids—academic, emotional, behavioral, and social. They believed that although society may deem them as the worst kids, 'they're still ours'. For them, this meant structuring schools with supportive educational programs for all students regardless of their literacy and grade levels. For instance, with the help of the Murray leadership team, Mr. Vertner restructured the school program to implement the Success Academy, a school-within-the-school. The Success Academy was constructed to afford traditionally discarded students equitable access to educational experiences framed with hope, high expectations, and humanism under the leadership of caring educators. He did not give up on the kids and in turn they did not give up on themselves—their inherent identities as intelligent students and future productive citizens. The Academy teachers and students took ownership of their teaching and learning processes, which resulted in several years of documented academic progress. Importantly, the school leaders recognized

committed teachers as the pivotal root (re)sources of developing relevant, responsive, and rigorous educational programs to meet the individual academic and social needs of all kids, especially their most challenging kids. Their teachers represented the caliber of educators urgently needed in urban city schools. They helped implement and sustain substantive structural changes in classrooms; afterschool extended learning programs; hallways; lunchrooms; bus lines; athletic events; and community, interstate, and international fieldtrips. All four school leaders recognized and celebrated teachers in their buildings who demonstrated a fidelity to implementing practices within a teaching and learning frame of equity, high expectations, and excellence. They collectively focused on implementing structural practices that were 'right and best' for their students and neighboring communities. The school leaders experienced success in revolutionizing majority of their stakeholders to become followers. The followers were 'flexible', 'non-traditional', willing to 'do more with less' and 'go above and beyond' the standard expectations of minimalism to do the 'detailed work' necessary to ensure their students' access to equitable learning opportunities and excellent services.

Implementing equitable structural changes was also fraught with contradictions. However, the school leaders were resilient. They overcame internal and external obstacles while implementing structures to afford their students the educational experiences they deserved and needed to become change agents in their communities and the world at-large. It was natural for contemporary Black school leaders to push back on systems and structures that sought to sustain barriers to equitable academic and social opportunities. School culture and climate were major barriers that the school leaders had to overcome. For instance, Ms. Daily committed concerted time and effort to change the school culture and climate without the support of the district and Southern Department of Education. Nonetheless, with the followership, support, and help of her trusted

staff, she courageously forged ahead with implementing relevant and responsive 'right and best' practices that changed the way stakeholders thought and behaved in school. The school leaders individually and collectively believed it was foremost important to change their schools' culture and climate despite the inevitable backlash from the district and state department of education for seemingly taking their direct gaze off of student achievement. However, the school leaders, unlike the state department, were attentive and accountable of the 'many other factors' that were symptoms of inequitable structures in their respective urban city school communities. They understood that intentionally leaving symptomatic factors unaddressed would adversely impact practices purposed to 'level the playing field' for students. Some of the many factors were: accounting for decreased student enrollment through transfers, hardships, and private school options. Other contributing factors consisted of negative public perceptions and stigma of unsafe and failing schools. The aforementioned factors often impact the full-time equivalency count of students and invariably school funding. A reduction in school funding present visible contradictions in the district's publicly stated goal of 'leveling the playing field' within and between all schools. The persistent inequitable structures that disproportionately impact impoverished urban city schools often affect school leaders' ability to attract highly qualified and content certified teachers; structure smaller class sizes; and provide teachers and students additional support services and resources. It is unfortunate that majority districts and states seem to focus predominately on minimally improving students' academic outcomes. Moreover, it almost appears as if districts and states collude to intentionally reproduce socioeconomic status quos through the systemic structure of school reform. School reforms uphold white supremacist and deficit ideologies, which perpetuate the racial and cultural dyad of black and white. The practice of school reform systematically and intentionally sustains marginalized groups on the bottom of the educa-

tional spectrum, which ensures White majority culture a seemingly permanent ‘whipping post’. However, I found four contemporary Black school leaders who strategically implemented a leadership of ‘right and just’ practices with the hope of permanently untying their urban school communities from the public ‘whipping post’.

Implications

Implications for Policy

The academic achievement and social success of all children should be the overarching goal of school reform policies, especially when authored to improve educational outcomes of marginalized groups. As such, policies like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 authored to extend the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act of 1965 (e.g., Title I) should be revised of the low expectations that students reach ‘minimum competencies’ and replaced with higher expectations such as students are expected to excel to their highest capacities within a modern liberals arts curricular framework that includes humanities, social sciences, natural and formal sciences. Thus, policymakers should establish maximum proficiencies as the new structure of standard for educational reform policies. This new structure of maximum proficiencies would be the impetus for new perspectives, programs, and practices in how educational communities’ at all hierarchical levels think about and approach education for all students, especially those traditionally disenfranchised. Suggesting that there is a critical need for all levels of policymakers to think and approach educational policies differently also means submitting that there is an imperative need for policymakers to adopt policies of ‘doing business differently’. ‘Doing business differently’ should mean establishing new policy protocols that include experiential knowledge through firsthand experiences. Policymakers should establish a policy of participating in quarterly school site visits, especially the ‘target schools’ that reform policies often are specifically au-

thored, aggressively mandated and disproportionately sanctioned. The quarterly school site visits could help policymakers become enlighten to author relevant, rigorous, equitable reform policies that re/structure a public education system for all undergirded with egalitarian systems. Moreover, policymakers should author school reform policies from frameworks of excellence, high expectations, equity, and purposed to substantively improve disenfranchised students' educational experiences and outcomes.

Implications for Program Preparation

Given the preparation gaps created by the persistent rhetoric of equity and diversity issues within traditional educational leadership and administration programs, the implications for such programs become critical to the work of preparing aspirants to successfully cultivate sustainable high performance learning communities for all kids to learn. Three of the principals in the study believed their programs underprepared them to lead effectively in the assumed decontextualized and depoliticized contexts of urban city school communities. They believed the curriculum content; course discourse; experiential knowledge; and field experiences were irrelevant to effectively prepare aspirants to work in urban city school communities with high populations of disenfranchised, dispossessed, and culturally devalued youths and their families. Therefore, to improve participants' program and leadership experiences in all schools, professors must become open-minded and willing to learn about school leadership from new perspectives that represent an alternative to the traditional canons. In doing so, the professors must commit to learning about and thus becoming engaged in issues of equity, race, cultural diversity, social justice, and the social politics that affect the fulfillment of a democratic education. They should become engaged in prevalent issues that adversely impact the quality of educational services and opportunities afford to marginalized students by: attending professional conferences; including relevant literature as

part of the course reading list and discourse; establish ongoing partnerships with diverse school contexts; and invite Black and other racial and cultural minority school leaders as guest speakers for classes. The aforementioned are suggestions to help move traditionalists forward towards embracing progressive leadership theories and practices that are more relevant for effectively leading diverse student populations.

Implications for School Districts

School districts, particularly with growing populations of diverse constituents, should be proactive by developing and/or restructuring existing traditional district leadership preparation programs. The programs at the district level must be designed to ensure the cultivation of culturally relevant and responsive programs. The district facilitators should possess a demonstrated effectiveness with diverse student and staff populations, which I assert exemplifies their philosophical beliefs about the purpose of education. Facilitators should prepare school leaders to be critically conscious and intentionally reflective of local site structural inequities, which are manifest as contractions in the ways we often think about the purpose of education for *all* children and practices. Therefore, school districts must hire program facilitators who can responsively center the intersection of prevalent issues school leaders face, like issues of equity, race, ethnicity, cultural diversity, socioeconomics, social justice and politics. Facilitators must be willing to: engage aspiring school leaders in equity, culture, diversity and social justice discourse; provide relevant scenarios that can be applicable in context rather than in theory; and importantly, facilitate extensive experiential learning in multiple school contexts, particularly urban city schools in 'low performing' neighborhoods. What I am calling for is definitely a sustained investment in finances, human resources, and time. More importantly, I am calling for districts to invest in their student stakeholders through their leadership programs, facilitators, and aspiring leaders,

because all of our children deserve to attend schools where the adults care about their holistic well-being: educational, social, economic, emotional, behavioral, creative, and civic. Thus, districts' commitment to structuring a sustainable financial investment in all students, particularly traditionally marginalized youths and schools, should begin with (re)structuring an equity school funding distribution policy. Equity policies should be structured to sustain a 'level playing field' for impoverished school communities rather than perpetuate structural inequities through human, material, and technological resources. The hiring and placement of personnel in schools is another inequitable systemic structure that districts should dismantle and restructure to ensure all students have access to highly qualified educators who believe in their capacity to excel academically, socially and behaviorally. As all four participants asserted, if we continue to fail to equitably invest in our kids early, especially traditionally marginalized students, we are consciously contributing to their future demise and ultimately the sociocultural, economic and civic demise of our communities and nation at-large.

The four contemporary Black school leaders attributed the success of their schools in large part to their local site mentors, who helped them to become effective leaders for all school community contexts. Therefore, this is another area that I believe school districts should invest time and finances. Novice school leaders, especially of underperforming schools require additional support and guidance, because they are usually learning on the job a new body of knowledge, such as Title I and School Improvement Grants (SIGs) mandates, while attempting to perform the job. The work and information can be overwhelming. Therefore, quite often for novice, struggling and traditional-minded school leaders this means maintaining existing sociostructures, which perpetuate cyclical inequities for students' educational experiences and outcomes. Thus, mentors can help challenge school leaders to think different(ly) about the purpose

of education and their role in sustaining and/or disrupting status quos through the implementation of equitable educational structures of opportunities, services, and outcomes for all students. Hilliard (1991) states,

> [T]he solution to our problem is less a matter of skill than a matter of will. …[W]e have always known how to educate all of the children whose education is of importance to us. Whether we do or not depends on the final analysis of how we feel about the fact that so far we have not done so. (p. 211-212)

The four school leaders, collectively and individually, believed their intensive onsite mentorships greatly contributed to the construction of their leadership and practices. Therefore, I recommend that school districts offer retired/ing educators who have demonstrated a commitment to educational equity, excellence, culture, diversity and social justice, a part-time contract as onsite leadership mentors, who work side-by-side with schools through a gradual release process. I believe with concerted daily mentorship, novice and/or struggle school leaders would develop an egalitarian mindset, will and skills needed to be effective in struggling urban city schools. Additional, the intensive mentorship of care and support might encourage once struggle school leaders to stay at their current school sites instead of requesting transfers and/or applying for positions at schools with the lowest learning curve levels and the least challenges.

Three of the school leaders in this study began their careers as principals with high learning curve levels. Do we want this pattern to continue to be the norm for emerging school leaders? I suggest that we do not, especially if we truly do want all children to have access to equitable, excellent, and equal educational services, opportunities and outcomes. Therefore, we need to learn from practitioners, like the four school leaders in this study, who have successfully implemented effective leadership paradigms, policies, and practices in urban city school communities.

Thus, districts should formalize bodies of work that documents in-district effective school leadership paradigms and frameworks of effective school leaders for new and/or struggling leaders to use as a springboard to begin restructuring their schools for equity and excellence. Moreover, I believe that the aforementioned implications can help school districts work towards implementing sustainable structures of equity and excellence to ensure the (re)structuring of more democratic public school systems.

Implication for Practitioners

School leaders must take the initiative to open their minds and eyes to the fact that all public schools are becoming increasingly browner and socioeconomically diverse. Therefore, it is imperative that school leaders, especially those who embody traditional educational leadership paradigms, conduct a critically reflexive inventory of their philosophical beliefs about education and the practices that support their belief systems in an effort to learn to identify potential contractions in their leadership (Gorski, 2011). In doing so, school leaders must model for their staff and others how and why it is essential that as educators they become critically conscious of how they think impacts their behaviors that un/intentionally adversely affect students access to equitable educational services, opportunities, and outcomes. It is up to school leaders to set the tone and vision of the school as an egalitarian structure. Thus, school leaders should model critical conscious thinking 'out loud' through affirming words, behaviors, and practices. They should facilitate in/formal discussions of how deficit thinking and practices adversely impact students' holistic development. Also, in setting the tone and vision for the school, they must dismantle inequitable structures and implement ones that afford all kids access to equitable educational structures. Therefore, educators who are committed to affording all kids high quality educational services must invest first in themselves as role models, instructional leaders, professional develop-

ment facilitators, and data experts. They should invest in themselves by: attending relevant conferences and professional developments and then sharing learned knowledge with colleagues; purchasing and reading applicable literature; and putting forth concerted efforts to develop an appropriate relationship with students and their families to get to know them as human beings. Students must know that educators care about them and that beings with planning for students' success through the implementation of equitable educational structures that support students' needs: academic, social, economic, emotional, civic, and behavioral.

Future Research

All educational systems need effective school leaders, but especially schools with marginalized student populace. Marginalized students deserve school leaders who willing advocate on their behalf as human beings, kids, and students, who live in neighborhoods where socioeconomic and sociopolitical forces impose egregious structures that undermine kids' access to equitable and excellent educational services, opportunities, and outcomes. Therefore, given the history of educational leadership programs and reform policies to be silent on the intersections of equity, race, culture, economic, politics and social diversity issues in public schools and school leaders' capacity to effectively address the issues, particularly in impoverished communities, is an area that requires researchers to further explore. Moreover, researchers in the field of educational leadership and policy should continue this line of inquiry by exploring the ways in which school leaders effectively implement structures of equity that help improve school conditions for traditionally marginalized students to experience increased education, social, economic, political, and civic success.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Project: Black School Leaders In Urban Environments

Time of Interview: _____
Date of Interview: _____
Place of Interview: _____
Interviewer: Student PI
Interviewee: _____

The purpose of this interview is to construct an understanding of school leadership in urban environments. I am interested in learning from your voice, perspective, experiences, and practices. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, so please just share your thoughts with me about the questions that I ask you.

If I ask you a question that you do not want to answer, you do not have to answer. You may request that we skip to another question. If at any point you remember something that you would like to share about an earlier question, please feel free to say so, because remember, I am interested in your perspectives and experiences.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Okay, let's get started.

INTERVIEW SESSION 1—Introduction and Background (Q1 – Q10)

1. Tell me why you decided to participate in this research project. What do you see as the opportunity this project offers you, your school, students, and the community?

2.Tell me about your (early) experiences as a student with school.

3.Talk to me about why you decided to become an educator.

4.Tell me about your path to becoming an educator.

5.Talk to me about why you decided to become a school leader.

6. Tell me about your experiences in your school leadership preparation program. How have you carried over your leadership preparation into your daily practices?

7. Talk about your professional development experiences? How do you implement professional development into your leadership practice?

8. Tell me what being a school leader means to you

9. Tell me about your philosophy for education.

10. Share with me the school goals, mission, and vision. Why? Discuss how the school is progressing towards achieving those goals.

INTERVIEW SESSION 2—Leadership Practices (Q11 – Q19)

11. Talk to me about your leadership practices in the school, district and community. Discuss how you practice leadership in the school, district and community. What is your process? In what way(s) are others involved with your leadership processes/practices? Please share examples.

12. Describe your typical work day.

13. Talk to me about your leadership practices. Describe and provide examples.

14. If there's a process, tell me about the process(es) that you put in place to practice leading in the school…and community.

15. Talk about those who are a part of your typical work day.

16. Tell me about your staff.

17. Tell me about your students, parents and the surrounding community.

18. Talk to me about the educational processes (i.e., school leadership, curriculum, teaching strategies, guidance counseling, school day, and extra-curricular activities) in place with your school. That is, how has the school and educational processes been organized? Why?

19. Talk about the school and community relationship. Discuss your leadership practices in this relationship.

INTERVIEW SESSION 3—Effective Leadership for Urban Environments (Q20 – Q29)

20. This research seeks to develop an expanded role for racial/ethnic diversity in the field of educational leadership by using Black school leaders voices. Tell me what are your ideas about the intention of this study?

21. Tell me about how you implement policies, practices and/or strategies to improve the learning environment? Talk about how you address potential obstacles when implementing changes.

22. Describe school leadership? Talk about how your description of school leadership is specific to working in urban environments and applicable to other areas.

23. Discuss what it means to you to be an effective school leader, particularly in an urban environment. What is effective? How do you assess the effectiveness of your leadership?

24. How has your school leadership been effective in the school? Community?

25. Tell me about the [educational leadership] theories, practices and/or styles that you believe shape your leadership practices.

26. Talk about any historical and/or cultural knowledge that you believe is important for you as a school leader to use as a part of your leadership in this urban area. Discuss how you use local historical knowledge—resources and/or materials.

27. Talk about life and/or educational experiences—from your own life or someone else—that you find meaningful to help you do this work in an urban area.

28. Do you have any questions for me?

29. Do you have additional thoughts that you would like to share that you believe is important to help develop an understanding the how you perceive and experience school leadership in an urban area?

Appendix B

Project: Black School Leaders in Urban Environments

Medium: Online Discussion Questions and/or Statements

The purpose of the questions and/or statements is to stimulate an engaging dialogue that will help to construct a contemporary understanding of school leadership in urban environments from the perspectives of Black school leaders. I am interested in learning from your voices, perspectives, experiences, and practices. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, so please just share your thoughts with us.

DISCUSSION SESSION 1—Constructing an Understanding of the Contemporary Urban/Inner-City Contexts

What are your perceptions of the environment in which you work? What (and/or who) helps you to develop an ongoing understanding of the current context and students with which you work? If you have worked as an educator in a suburban environment, please discuss the differences and similarities that you believe exist between the two environments. Why do you believe the differences and/or similarities exist?

Provide examples.

Discuss your perceptions of what has happened to Black communities in general and then specifically discuss what you believe is currently happening to the structure of education in Black communities like the one in which you work and/or work with. How have the change(s) impacted your leadership practice(s)?

Provide examples.

DISCUSSION SESSION 2—Constructing Effective School Leadership in Urban Environments

Historically Black school leaders creatively constructed valued learning environments in Black communities by 'doing more with less', particularly resources.

Describe situation(s) in which you have found yourself in a position of having to potentially work with less such as resources (i.e., materials, humans/staff, capital, services, etc.) that would affect affording *all* students' access to equitable and equal opportunities. Discuss in detail—the how, what, when, where, and who of what you did to address the situation(s).

As you reflect on your (inter)actions, discuss those things you believe that you did well, those not so well, and how you would approach it differently. Explain why.

Provide examples.

DISCUSSION SESSION 3—Constructing Effective School Leadership in Urban Environment

As you consider your leadership practice in an urban/inner city environment, discuss what you believe to be the most effective practice(s), particularly working in schools with high Black, Brown (e.g., Hispanic, Latino/a and Puerto Rican), and poor student populations.

Discuss what the practice(s) looks like. What does it entail? How do you operationalize it in your school and the community? Who is involved and in what capacity? Why do you believe the practice(s) has been effective? Ineffective? Provide examples.
Discuss, in what ways, if any, is the practice(s) different from traditional mainstream leadership practices such as those based on technical rationalism and scientific models?

Provide example(s).

If you have worked as an educator in a suburban environment, discuss how your practice(s) of working with stakeholders (i.e., students, parents, faculty/staff, community constituents, district office personnel & businesses) potentially differs and the ways it has remained the same. Discuss why you believe you made those changes in your practice(s) as well as why you believe you were able to retain some of your practice(s) from a suburban to an urban and/or inner-city environment.

Provide example(s).

ENDNOTES

[1] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3_May 23, 2013.
[2] Ethnography, Spradley (1980) explains, is "based on an assumption that warrants careful examination: knowledge of all cultures is valuable" (p. 13).
[3] F. Igou, personal communication, October 21, 2015.
[4] Methods include sampling, data collection, data management, data analysis and reporting as discussed by Carter, S. M. & Little, M. (2007) as discussed in Justifying knowledge, justifying method, take action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 17*, 1316-1328.
[5] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[6] Mrs. Faith Igou's role in this study is that of a participant-informant and peer debriefer.
[7] The Aliceville Public School System was a part of a large-scale federal standardized testing cheating scandal. As a proctor of the high school graduation test, I witnessed cheating by teachers and students. I subsequently spoke with the assistant principal of instruction and vehemently requested to no longer be selected as a testing proctor because my moral integrity did not support the culture of cheating. The next year I was reassigned a senior homeroom until I resigned from the district.
[8] I emailed the following four documents: Chapter 1_April 10, 2011; Week 3 Final Draft_May 31, 2011; Chapter 3_April 17, 2011; and IRB Application Proposal_June 2011, for Mrs. Igou review.
[9] IRB Application Proposal_July 2011
[10] M. James, personal communication, July 27, 2011.
[11] Loeb, S., Kalogrides, D., & Horng, E. (2010). Principal preferences and the uneven distribution of principals across schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(2), 205-229.
[12] M. James, personal communication, August 2, 2011.
[13] M. James, personal communication, August 2, 2011.
[14] M. James, personal communication, August 2, 2011.
[15] See A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013, for supporting evidence, specifically page 31, Lines 1190 – 1192.
[16] R. Grady, School Board Member, personal communication, June 21, 2013.
[17] Multiple personal conversations with Mrs. Faith Igou, Mr. Lee Henry, and Mr. Willie Thompson (Field notes, August 10, 2012, Lines 18 – 19 and 161 – 171).
[18] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013, see p. 13.
[19] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013, see p. 15.
[20] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013, see pp. 29 – 31.
[21] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013, see p. 29.
[22] Field notes, August 10, 2012, see lines 159 – 160.
[23] Standpoint(s) are multiple and overlapping in this context.
[24] IRB Consent documents
[25] Mrs. Igou called Ms. Stevens to also refer her as a potential participant of the study, See Field notes, Date.
[26] Ms. Daily referred me to Mr. Cedric Winans, a Black male assistant principal at Seeds of Hope Academy. I did qualify Mr. Winans as a participant. I spent six weeks shadowing him throughout the school community. However, time did not permit us to co-construct his school leadership through the method of interviewing and as a member of the online community forum.
[27] Personal communication with Ms. Daily and Ms. Frances (Fall 2012).
[28] Personal Communication with Mr. Vertner and Mr. Biko, (Date, 2013).
[29] After spending a few weeks shadowing Mr. Biko, I felt that he and I needed to sit down to talk about my role as a researcher and his role as a voluntary participant. During the conversation we were able to present and accept each other's standpoints and positionalities. We resumed working together to co-construct his principalship in urban city communities. See S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 2013, for how it appears that he has reflected on our collaborative working relationship over the past year. He tells me that I never was in his way and that he enjoyed working with me, especially because he believes that the work is important to get into the hands of policy-makers, professors, district level supervisors, and school leaders.
[30] Private pauses are off the record moments that occurred during shadowing and interviewing during which participants entrusted me with their views from a more complex and deeper level of insider knowledge about the multiple

layers of politics that they believed create and sustain tensions and contradictions within the principalship, especially when leading urban city schools.

[31] My Journals books consist of six legal pads with field notes that began August 2, 2012 and end November 28, 2012 from case sites 1 and 2.

[32] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012.

[33] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1_December 20, 2012.

[34] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_ March 19, 2013.

[35] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_April 19 & May 17, 2013.

[36] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.

[37] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.

[38] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2_June 3, 2013.

[39] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013

[40] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_April 19, 2013.

[41] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012.

[42] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012

[43] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2014.

[44] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.

[45] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.

[46] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2_December 26, 2012.

[47] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.

[48] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.

[49] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.

[50] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_April 19, 2013.

[51] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2_December 26, 2012.

[52] Stevens, F. (2013, July 22). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS#1B]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[53] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.

[54] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.

[55] Daily, U. (2013, June 14). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS1B]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[56] Vertner, A. K. (2013, June 24). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS1B]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[57] Biko, S. (2013, June 14). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS#2]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[58] Vertner, A. K. (2013, June 24). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS1]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[59] Stevens, F. (2013, July 22). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS#1A]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[60] Vertner, A. K. (2013, June 24). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS1]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[61] Vertner, A. K. (2013, June 24). Constructing an understanding of the contemporary urban environment [Msg DS1B]. Message posted to http://blackschoolleadershipproject.wikispaces.com/.

[62] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.

[63] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.

[64] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 13, 2013.

[65] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.

[66] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.

[67] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.

[68] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.

[69] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.

[70] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, (Lines 509 – 512), June 2, 2013.

[71] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.

[72] Multivoicedness, see Patrick M. Jenlink & Karen E. Jenlink, (2007). Implications of cultural psychology for guiding educational practice: Teaching and learning as cultural practices. In Joe L. Kincheloe & Raymond A. Horn, Jr., (Eds.). *The praeger handbook of education and psychology* (p. 374 – 384). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
[73] Research Question 1: How do contemporary Black school leaders conceptualizations of leadership contribute to their practices?
[74] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[75] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[76] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1_December 20, 2013
[77] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3_June 14, 2015
[78] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[79] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_April 19, 2013
[80] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[81] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012.
[82] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[83] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012.
[84] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013
[85] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013
[86] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013
[87] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[88] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[89] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[90] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013
[91] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1_December 20, 2012
[92] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[93] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2_June 2, 2013
[94] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[95] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1_March 19, 2013.
[96] Thick description is a concept that originated from the work of Gilbert Ryle in *Concept of the Mind* (1949) and later expanded upon by Clifford Geetz in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973).
[97] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[98] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[99] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[100] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[101] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[102] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 13, 2013.
[103] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[104] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[105] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[106] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[107] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[108] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[109] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[110] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[111] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[112] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[113] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[114] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[115] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[116] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[117] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[118] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[119] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[120] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.

[121] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[122] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[123] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[124] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[125] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 16, 2013.
[126] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[127] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[128] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[129] Field Notes, September 4, 2012.
[130] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[131] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[132] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[133] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[134] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013
[135] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[136] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[137] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[138] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[139] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[140] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[141] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[142] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 13, 2013.
[143] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[144] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[145] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[146] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[147] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[148] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[149] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[150] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[151] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[152] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[153] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[154] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[155] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[156] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[157] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[158] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[159] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[160] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[161] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1_April 19, 2013.
[162] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1_October 30, 2012
[163] See also Berman, Chambliss & Geiser, 1999; Valencia, Valencia, Sloan & Foley, 2001; and Garcia & Guerra, 2004 for additional deficit thinking articles.
[164] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[165] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1_December 20, 2013.
[166] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[167] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012
[168] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[169] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[170] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[171] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[172] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.

[173] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[174] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[175] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[176] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1, December 20, 2012.
[177] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[178] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[179] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[180] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[181] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[182] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[183] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[184] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[185] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[186] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[187] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[188] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[189] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[190] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[191] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[192] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[193] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[194] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[195] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
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[197] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
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[199] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[200] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[201] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[202] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 2, June 13, 2013.
[203] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
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[205] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[206] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[207] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[208] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[209] S. Biko_personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[210] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[211] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
[212] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[213] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[214] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[215] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
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[217] S. Biko_personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
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[222] S. Biko_personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[223] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[224] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
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[226] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[227] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
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[233] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
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[243] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
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[252] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
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[254] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[255] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[256] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 2, June 3, 2013.
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[262] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[263] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[264] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[265] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
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[267] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[268] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[269] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[270] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[271] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[272] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[273] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[274] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
[275] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[276] Hails High School had a 69% graduation rate for the 2012-13 school year.
[277] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 2, June 2, 2013.
[278] *The* Murray School had an 83.7% graduation rate for the 2012-13 school year.

[279] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[280] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[281] Research Question 3: How for contemporary Black school leaders do their practices represent an alternative to traditional leadership canons? And in doing so, contribute to their effectiveness?
[282] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 1, October 30, 2012.
[283] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 1, December 20, 2012.
[284] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[285] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[286] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 1, March 19, 2013.
[287] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[288] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[289] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[290] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
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[292] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.
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[298] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 3, June 14, 2013.
[299] U. Daily, personal communication_Interview 3, June 3, 2013.
[300] F. Stevens, personal communication_Interview 3, June 13, 2013.
[301] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 3, May 23, 2013.
[302] S. Biko, personal communication_Interview 1, April 19, 2013.
[303] During personal communication with Dr. Janice B. Fournillier, she explained, 'A methodological discussion explains how the methods, methodology, and research design that I employed helped me "get to the findings" of the explored phenomenon' (September 24, 2015).
[304] I employ Wolcott's (2005) the phrase 'transforming the data' to acknowledge that as the research instrument, I systematically mined the data to tell a story through descriptions, analyses, and interpretation to ensure the representations authentically represents participants multiple voices and lived experiences.
[305] Rural communities are adversely affected by similar social conditions that I will explore later in future research.
[306] A. K. Vertner, personal communication_Interview 2, December 26, 2012.