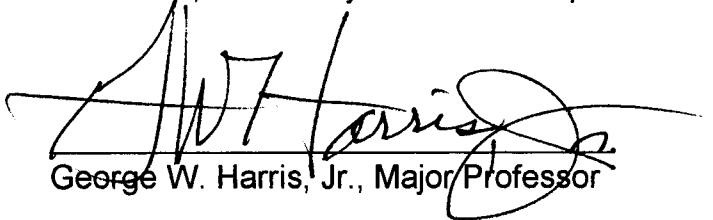
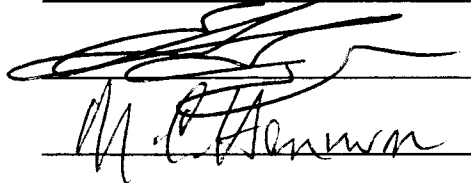


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Eloise Martin Webb entitled: *Portraits of Experiences: African-American Women in Secondary School Administration*. I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Leadership Studies in Education.


George W. Harris, Jr., Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:


Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

PORTRAITS of EXPERIENCES: AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW STUDY
OF AMERICAN-WOMEN
IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

A DISSERTATION
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Eloise M. Webb
December 1996

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DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my daughter, Pamela and my three granddaughters, Khrysta, Kiara and Kijana.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At some point in our lives, we take a journey that is meant to be a personal and private venture; yet, it turns out that we have carried numerous people with us-some in actually and some in our hearts. I would like to thank my daughter, Pamela, for her patience and tolerance of me during the entire process of completing this study. Buckets of thanks go to my three beautiful granddaughters, Khrysta, Kiara and Kijana, who made me stop and take a break even when I felt that I didn't have the time. At times, your needs and your demands were more important than this study. You were my rest stops. I always felt renewed and re-energized after "breaking" with you. I hope my efforts in completing this study will serve as a source of motivation for you at some point in your lives. To Dee Dee, thanks for transcribing my notes in such a timely manner. I would not be at this point without your help. To Sandra Squire, thanks is hardly adequate for all the help that you gave me in refining this study. I truly thank you. Many thanks to my good friends Lana and Lewis. Your encouragement and support have been unwavering. You kept me focused and steadfast in this endeavor. And to my committee, Dr. George Harris, Dr. Grady Bogue, Dr. Kathleen deMarrais and Dr. Michael Hannum, thank you for guiding me through this project. With your assistance, I am presenting a study that gives me a sense of pride not only for myself, but for the growing number of African-American female public school administrators.

E. M. Webb

ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative study on the career path experiences of five African-American female secondary school administrators. A review of literature on the history of education in America revealed that history has been unkind to African-American women by omitting them from the existing literature on women in school administration. The purpose of this study is to begin to fill that void. Five African-American female secondary public school administrators were asked to share their career path stories of experiences. The interview was selected as the data gathering instrument.

The text of the stories were analyzed for common threads which were transformed into common themes. The stories are presented in the participants' own words so as to capture the essence of the narratives and to add continuity and cohesiveness to the retelling of the experiences. The stories are first told as holistic, verbatim entities. Next, they are presented in an African-American oral tradition of 'breaking the text' down as a re-telling. The re-telling is from the perspective of the researcher. Closure is brought to each theme as the researcher presents her reflections on the theme by combining her perspectives with those found in the literature.

Through data analysis, four central themes emerged: (1) Family History of Education/ Mentors; (2) Discrimination; (3) Leadership and Leadership Styles; and (4) I'm in Charge—Establishing Credibility. No attempts were made to augment or embellish the stories. This study was limited to participants from East Tennessee who are currently serving or who have served as secondary public school administrators within the past two years.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
but still, like dust, I'll rise.
Maya Angelou*

The above verse from the poem "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou expresses the inner strength and values maintained and displayed by talented and assertive African-American women. Today, as numerous African-American women strive to make their mark in the corporate and political arenas, a growing number of black women are making notable gains in the area of public school administration. Traditionally, women have been underrepresented in this field. Some early literature on women in school administration concurred that general societal opinions about women and school administration have been threefold: (1) women do not want to become administrators; (2) home responsibilities keep them from becoming administrators; and, (3) they are unsuited for the job (Coursen & Mazzarella, 1981; Edson, 1987; Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Giddings, 1988). However, a study by Valverde (1974) resolved that "women and minorities are held back, not by lack of aspirations, but by 'faulty characteristics' subconsciously or consciously ascribed to them—characteristics assumed to predict failure as school managers (in Edson (1988) p. 261). In a case study of one female principal, Ortiz and Covell (1978) concluded, "Women have the same career ambitions as men, but they do not have the same opportunities" (p. 214). Contemporary researchers also acknowledged these myths (hooks, 1992; Sapiro, 1994; Alderman & Enguidanos,

1995). A survey of old and new perspectives on women in public school administration revealed that, contrary to prior and current generalized assumptions, women do aspire to careers in public school administration.

Societal norms played a large role in the career choices of women in the past; however, women in the 90's have gained notable entry into nontraditional professions. Traditionally, most administrators first served as teachers before gaining entry into school administration. And, in general, secondary public school administrators have been white males. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) women comprise over half of the teaching work force, but hold fewer than half of all school principalships (NCES, 1994). During the 1984-85 school year, women held approximately 68 percent of the public school teaching positions but only 21 percent of the building level administrative positions. In 1990-91, women held 72 percent of the teaching positions in public schools and 30 percent of the principalships. In private schools for the same year, the statistics were noticeably higher with women holding 77 percent of the teaching positions and 51 percent of the principalships (NCES, 1994). Even though women made gains as school administrators in the public sector, the number of women principals compared to the number of women teachers is still quite small.

The statistics on public schools revealed an abundance of female teachers but yet a small number of women in school management. In general, school administrators begin their career as classroom teachers. As a result, one would typically assume that the number of high school administrators would be more

parallel to the number of high school teachers. Yet, according to the latest United States Census Report (1990), there were 9,060 African-American female teachers in Tennessee versus 1,896 males. Of these numbers, 782 females and 385 males were secondary school teachers. In addition, Tennessee showed only 548 African-American male public school administrators and 1033 African-American female administrators (United States Census Report (1990) on the Internet: <http://www.census.gov/>). What, then, are the reasons for the small number of female administrators in general and African-American female administrators in particular?

A 1978 study by Byrne, Hines & McCleary revealed that 75 percent of female principals worked in schools of 745 students or less, whereas only 37 percent of male principals were employed in smaller schools. Also, 14 percent of male principals were assigned to schools of 2,000 or more, while only 1 percent of female principals were found in the larger schools (Smith, et. al. (1981) p. 41). Today, a simple glance at the leadership in area secondary public schools reveals little change with only a marginal increase in the number of African-American women in secondary school administration (see Chapter 2, p. 29).

The literature on public school administration does not offer a conclusive reason for the discrimination of women in this field. However, a nationwide acceptance of myths and stereotypes about an acceptable role for women has caused some to be excluded from this traditionally male-dominated field. It is generally assumed that women can do the 'motherly' jobs such as teaching but a

man must be chosen to administer schools. Biklen (1980) resolved, "As schooling becomes more of a business, those in administrative positions turn to their image of effective business managers: business men" (in Smith, et. al. (1981) p. 43).

The 1960s and 1970s brought an array of equal opportunity legislation designated for women and minorities. The second Feminist Movement was viewed by many educators as an opportunity for women to increase their visibility in school administration. Affirmative Action programs sought to provide opportunities in educational leadership by requiring superintendents to hire more minorities at all levels and in all segments of the school system where deficiencies existed. However, affirmative action did not abolish discriminatory hiring practices nor did it ensure equal opportunities for women and minorities in school administration. Stockard (1980) concluded that "affirmative action simply allowed administrators to fulfill two mandates, sex and race, at one time" (p. 80). And, in relationship to traditional hiring practices, Adkison (1981) stated: "Despite changes in law and policy, educational organizations maintain recruitment and hiring practices that exclude candidates outside their administrator's informal networks. Even when women's organizations made concerted efforts to identify openings and notify qualified women, traditional strategies favored men" (in Edson (1988) p. 169).

What, then, makes women in general, and African-American women in particular, seek entry into a field that has been traditionally dominated by white males? Many educational researchers have offered generalized explanations to this question; however, much of the existing literature does not focus on the

individual experiences of African-American women. Educational researcher Barbara Krohn emphasized the need for representative voices from all women in school administration: "Instead of looking at women administrators as individuals, the system draws the same conclusion about all women" (in Smith, et. al. (1981) p.42). Paula Giddings, author of *When and where I enter* (1984), also articulated the need for documenting the career path experiences of African-American women:

For a Black woman to write about [Black] women is at once a personal and an objective undertaking. It is personal because the woman whose blood runs through my veins breathe amidst the statistics...One must put such experiences into historical context, find in them a rational meaning so that forces that shape our own lives may be understood...Black women have a history of their own, one which reflects their distinct concerns, values, and the role they have played as both Afro-Americans and women..." (p. 5)

The words of Laura B. Randolph (1994) convey the perspectives of assertive and aggressive upwardly mobile African-American women of the 1990s:

The founding Fathers never envisioned Black women being in this place so every time another one of us comes, we jolt the system just a little bit more simply by being there. (p. 62)

Despite a long history of obstacles, African-American women are slowly beginning to see their achievements rewarded with positions of leadership.

BACKGROUND of the PROBLEM

Women in general and African-American women in particular have long been underrepresented in the field of school administration. In the past, common societal opinions have been that women would not make good school leaders and that they

simply were not interested in educational administration. Today, however, we find an increasing number of women obtaining advanced degrees that will enable them to pursue administrative positions. This career climb has not been an easy one. From the outset, women faced numerous hurdles trying to gain entry into a field previously controlled by white males. In addition, for African-American women, race became as big a barrier as gender. As time passed, women began to acquire principalships at the elementary school level while secondary schools were still being managed primarily by white males.

During the last decade, women began to emerge as secondary school administrators; however, the growth has been much slower for African-American women. Yet, in spite of gender and race-related barriers, African-American women have continued to aspire to leadership positions as secondary school administrators. The small number of African-American women who obtained these positions were cognizant of the fact that they were in a very unique position. Ella Edmondson Bell (1994), assistant professor of Organizational Studies at M.I.T. Sloan School of Management made the following conclusion:

When you're in the solo role, you're up against all the stereotypes, while you're also creating new images of what it means to be black and female. Black women are like blank screens where people are constantly projecting different images on you, most of which may be totally unrecognizable. That throws you off balance. So you must remain anchored and know who you are. (p. 60)

While individual competence should be the primary credential for the upward mobility of any person, male or female, black or white, the criteria have always been

greater and more demanding for African-American men and women. Linda Baker

Keene (1994), V. P. of Market Development at ID Financial Services, resolved:

Whenever anyone who is different is put into a new level, it's always at a risk. When white males...fail, it's not perceived as being a failure of white men. I've never heard anyone say, 'let's not put another white man in a job.' But, when it is a woman or if it's a person of color, then all of a sudden a failure takes on proportions of huge magnitude. When they put you in a job, you feel as if you are carrying the future of any black person or any woman in this role forever. (p. 60)

In her book, *Pushing the limits*, Sakre Edson (1988) determined that gender makes entry into educational administration problematic for all women (p. 2). If this is true, then dual barriers of gender and race must surely be problematic for black women. Are there unique problems that African-American women encounter when pursuing administrative careers? Historically, white males have dominated secondary school administration with white females second in rank. What, then, are the chances of African-American female aspirants overcoming the dual barriers of being a woman and a minority, plus securing a position in secondary school administration? What are the experiences of those women who have gained entry into the field? This study was created to answer those questions by presenting narrative portraits of the career path experiences of five African-American female secondary public school administrators. The study sought to present an accurate, first-hand accounting of the experiences of five women who are currently serving or have served as secondary school administrators within the past two years. This study was created to augment the literature on women in public school administration in general and primarily African-American women in secondary

school administration.

THE PROBLEM

Race and gender have always been prevalent factors in public school administration. In the past, most public school teachers were women. Women who gained entry into the field were usually found at the elementary school level whereas the high school principalship was still dominated by white males. However, a historical review of women in education revealed that women, both black and white, have always served as school administrators. Many earlier schools for blacks were established by women who served as both teacher and principal. A review of the existing literature on women in school administration depicted generalizations on the perspectives of women that have been used for decades. These generalizations were intended to be inclusive of the viewpoints of African-American women; yet, current literature on women in school administration supports the fact that history has been unfavorable in documenting the experiences of African-American women. The perspectives of African-American women must be heard so they can be understood. In their book, *Racism in the lives of women*, Aldeman and Enguidanos (1995) concluded that "a comparison of the oppressions of black people to those of other immigrant groups minimized black experiences, denied aspects of the uniqueness of that experience, and denied blacks access to opportunities accorded to white persons" (p. 311). In addition, the authors continued:

It can not be assumed that to understand one's own oppression is to understand another's, or that it precludes oppressive behavior toward others. We must move to the level of acknowledging different levels and kinds of exploitation, as well as privilege, without seeing them dichotomously as either the same or in direct competition with one another, but perhaps as simply different. (p. 312)

The perspective of Barbara Smith (1992) offered an appropriate summary on this issue:

There is much diversity among white women as a group, just as this diversity is reflected among black women as a group. We must therefore be wary of reductionistic explanations of these complex phenomena and their equally complicated sequelae. (p. 312)

One way of appreciating cultural diversity is to listen and share the experiences of those who are different in ethnicity from ourselves.

In a report on *Women and blacks in school leadership*, Coursen (1981), noted that the identity of administrators is important in determining how schools socialize their students:

Schools educate children not only by what is taught in the classroom, but also by what is shown about how the world operates. When there is someone in authority who has characteristics in common with a child, that person becomes a role model, a figure for the child to admire and emulate. (p. 38)

Coursen clarified his statement by saying that "if black children see only whites in executive positions in schools, they may conclude that blacks are excluded from power and that it is useless for them to strive for decision-making positions" (Ibid.).

The perspectives of African-American female administrators must be documented for other black women who might be considering a career in school administration.

This document can also assist those who are currently serving as public school

administrators. Coursen (1981) concurred with this rationale: "If schools are to attract members of all cultural and racial groups, they must have leadership that is representative of all these groups" (p. 39).

For hundreds of years, African-American women have been victimized by racial and gender related oppression. They have suffered hundreds of years of dehumanization. During slavery, the African-American woman's ability to work as long and as hard as the black man was considered a strength by slave owners. However, in the nineteenth century, that strength became one of the reasons for the dehumanization and devaluation of African-American women. In her book *Ain't I a woman* (1981), bell hooks stated, "No other group in America has ... had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from black men, or as a present part of the larger group 'women' in this culture" (p. 7). The history of African-American women is embedded in racial and gender related innuendos; yet, African-American women have always shown great dignity, strength and perseverance. However, as with any life experience, it is comforting to know that someone else like you has "been there" and can be empathetic to your experiences. Women who have already gained entry into the field can also benefit from an awareness of the experiences of other women. From voices of experience, other African-American women can make informed career decisions on whether or not to enter the field of school administration.

It is also important for those in control of school management to know the perplexity of barriers and emotions that black females face when they elect to enter the male-dominated field of school administration. This study is designed to portray those experiences as vividly as possible in the participants' own words. When those in the majority seek first to understand the career plight of those in the minority, a giant step will have been taken toward eliminating some of the continuous social injustices of African-Americans. The words of Laura Randolph (1994) summarized a need for this study:

When Black people talk about Black people, they educate white people. They tell them about the lives they have never lived, the indignities they have never suffered, the problems they have never faced. (p. 20)

PURPOSE of the STUDY

The purpose of this study was to document the experiences of five African-American women who are currently serving or have served as secondary school administrators within the past two years. It was the intent of the researcher to present a written portrait of the career path experiences of the participants as they climbed the career ladder from teacher into the arena of secondary school administration. This study was also created to contribute to the existing literature on women in public school administration in general and African-American women in public school administration in particular. Traditionally, available research on women in this field has been written from a generalization of all women. However,

we need to know if the career experiences of black women are different not only in terms of gender but also in terms of race. While women in general seek to 'crack the glass ceiling,' Ella Edmondson Bell (1994) concluded that "African-American women must first 'crack the rock ceiling' which carries an added dimension of racism that is encountered by women of color" (p. 60). It is one thing to envision sexism and racism but to have lived with it simply by being born black and female is a totally different experience.

IMPORTANCE of the STUDY

Throughout American history, little research focused on the differences and similarities of career path experiences in public school administration among women of various ethnic or racial groups. This study was designed to enhance the literature on African-American women in that field. It can serve as a hands-on document for African-American women who want to be aware of the hoops to jump and the hoops to skip as they seek career advancement in administration. It can also be a source of reference for future research in the field. It is my hope that this study will raise the consciousness level of decision-makers in public school administration. A study of this nature can help eliminate job related discriminatory practices, based on gender and ethnicity.

ASSUMPTIONS

The experiences of African-American women in school administration have

been significantly different from those of white women, white men, and black men.

Existing literature on women in school administration does not adequately address the experiences of the African-American woman.

African-American women have always been leaders in educating their race.

No one can tell the story of African-American women in school administration better than the women themselves.

This study on African-American women in school administration will be of value to educational research and to black women seeking entry into the field.

Because of the gender and ethnic struggles of African-American women in general, as well as societal myths and stereotypes, the experiences of black women in public school administration may be similar.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited to the individual experiences of five African-American females who are currently serving or have served as secondary public school administrators within the last two years. It did not address the perspectives of African-American women in any other position within the school or in any other division of the school.

The participants for this study were drawn from public school systems in East Tennessee. Their experiences will not be generalized to African-American women in private schools or outside this geographical area. This study did not make comparisons or generalizations to other African-American administrators outside

the study. It was designed only to portray the experiences of the five participants.

The gathering of data took place at the participants' job site per their request. The site did not inhibit participants' responses, duties or responsibilities.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Numerous educational researchers (Coursen, Mazarella & Piele (1981), pp. 37-39; Shakeshaft (1987) p. 21) concluded that the limited amount of literature on African-American women in public school administration has largely been a compilation of generalizations. In her book, *My soul is my own*, Etter-Lewis (1993) noted that the generalizations, usually compiled by white men, were often filled with mythical as well as stereotypical assumptions (p. xvii). Yet, in spite of subtle and overt acts of discriminatory hiring and advancement practices in public school administration, African-American women are slowly rising to the top of the career ladder and are making noteworthy gains as school leaders.

According to Sakre Edison, author of *Pushing the limits* (1988), "Public school management is one of the many professions in this country that underutilizes its pool of potential female candidates" (p. 2). In addition, existing literature on women in school administration has not given adequate representation to the perspectives of black women. Therefore, this study was created to fill that void by portraying the experiences of five African-American women as they sought and gained entry into secondary public school administration.

In order to obtain a first-hand accounting of the career path experiences of African-American women in secondary school administration, the participants were asked the following broad research question: **What were your experiences as an African-American woman who sought and gained entry into the field of school administration?** If the field of education is to present a complete and accurate accounting of its history, there should be adequate documentation on the experiences of African-American women. Edson (1988) summed up the need for documenting the experiences of women in school administration:

The qualitative details of the lives of women suggest an alternative way of viewing issues in educational administration. Their stories give texture and color to the quantitative data most often relied on in other studies, as well as offer a way of identifying with individuals throughout the country who seek administrative jobs and who wrestle with the demands of the work once employed. (p. 3)

DEFINITION of TERMS

Administrator- (as related to this study) a person who directs, manages, or supervises a school at the building level.

African-American- a modern title for American people of African descent. The term is used synonymously with Black in this study.

Aspirant- a person who aspires to a specific career.

Bracket interview- suspending one's suppositions by going through the same interview process as the participants.

Glass Ceiling- an invisible barrier encountered by women as they seek entry and upward mobility in the organizational arena.

Participant- a person who participated in this study

Public School Administrator- (as related to this study) a person, male or female, who manages, directs or supervises a public school.

Rock Ceiling- a barrier of racism that is encountered by women of color.

ORGANIZATION of the STUDY

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction, background of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, importance of the study with its assumptions, limitations, and definition of terms. Statistical information on women in general and African-American women in particular is also included.

Chapter 2 provides a review of related literature. Due to the scarcity of literature on African-American women in school administration, the literature in this study addresses black women as related to issues of gender, family and education. It also addresses religious beliefs because religion has always been a constant source of strength and assurance for African-Americans. Statistical data on the current placement of African-American women in secondary school administration in Tennessee is presented here also.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research design, methods of data collection, description of instruments and data analysis procedures. The research design for this study is qualitative. The methodological approach selected to conduct the study is phenomenological due to the fact that the focus is on what was experienced. The sample is composed of five African-American women who have

served or are currently serving as secondary public school administrators. Unedited narratives were used for data analysis. The data collection instrument is the interview because it lends itself more appropriately for extension of data through probes and clarifications initiated by the researcher.

Chapter 4 provides the participants' stories in their own voice. A rationale for using stories to present this study is to give voice to the participants' experiences and to try and make sense of another person's life, to understand his or perspective and to hear what is essential.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of findings and recommendations. In many ways, this section of the study serves as a bookmark on the career path experiences of five African-American women who sought and gained entry into public school administration. The recommendations are those offered by both the researcher and the participants. My personal recommendations are based on what I know about women in secondary school administration and from my own career path experiences into the field of public school administration. From individual career path experiences each participant was able to reflect and make suggestions for future aspirants to the field.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW of LITERATURE

*Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries.
Maya Angelou*

INTRODUCTION

While there is an emerging amount of literature on women in school administration, there is a disproportionately small amount on the experiences of African-American women. According to some researchers (Shakeshaft (1987); hooks (1992); Giddings (1984); and Jackson (1996), much of the current literature on women in school administration is not found in easily accessible sources but in dissertations, unpublished papers, ERIC documents and journals. Therefore, Shakeshaft (1987) continued, "There is a need to document the experiences of women administrators so that we begin to expand the theory and lore of the field to include them" (p. 8). As related to African-American women, Giddings (1984) concluded:

Most of the books on African-American women are of the contribution type: the achievements of black women who, despite double discrimination and oppression, were able to duplicate the feats of black men and white women. One must put the experiences (of black women) into historical context, find in them a rationale meaning so that the forces that shape our lives may be understood. Black women have a history of their own, one which reflects their distinct concerns, values, and the role they have played as both Afro-Americans and women. (pp. 5-6)

A review of the literature concerning women in public school administration did not produce any accessible studies on the experiences of African-American

women in public school administration. However, a growing amount of literature is accessible on African-American women "breaking the glass ceiling" in the corporate world. Several educational researchers acknowledged that women of color have been excluded from the literature (Coursen, 1981); Shakeshaft (1988); Edson (1982); and hooks (1992). In her book, *Blacks looks* (1992), hooks stated:

If we compare the relative progress African-Americans have made in education and employment to the struggle to gain control over how we are represented, particularly in the mass media, we see that there has been little change in the area of representation. We have collectively made few, if any, revolutionary interventions in the area of race and representation... Without a way to name our pain, we are also without the words to articulate our pleasure. (pp. 1-2)

In a study on "Women and blacks in school administration," Coursen (1981) resolved, "If the schools are to attract members of all cultural and racial groups, they must have leadership that is representative of all groups" (p. 39). Also, he continued, "The extent to which women and minorities participate in administering the schools is one measure of education's real commitment to the ideal of equal opportunity for all Americans" (p.37).

In March of 1992, the General Assembly enacted the Tennessee 21st Century Classroom reform program—the Education Improvement Act (EIA). The EIA was created to raise standards, reduce regulations, increase accountability, improve management and provide greater funding for instruction. Implementation began during the 1992-93 school year. The act also provided for a new funding

over a five-year period to insure sufficient and equitable state and local funding. In April of 1996, the Southern Regional Education Board made a report on the impact of the EIA to Tennessee's education workforce. The report stated that the education workforce grew 4.5 percent during the first two years of implementation of the Tennessee Education Improvement Act (EIA). However, while the number of classroom teachers increased, the number of superintendents and secondary principals made marginal increases. Additionally, while the proportion of women and blacks in the total workforce increased, the percentage of black educators in the total workforce remained at 11 percent (Educator Supply and Demand in Tennessee, p. 4).

According to the report, 1993-94, women retained 79 percent of all the teacher positions, but only 36 percent of all school administrative positions. Women comprised 10 percent of the superintendent positions, 38 percent of the elementary principalships and 15 percent of all secondary principalships. While the number of women in the workforce has risen, the demographic make-up of the educational work force in Tennessee has not changed substantially in the last few years. The report also stated that approximately eight of every ten teachers are women, while only one of every three administrators is a woman. However, the statistics indicated that the number and percentage of administrators who are women is growing. Black educators (teachers, administrators, and support staff) accounted for 11 percent of the total educational workforce in 1993-94. The percentage of all black administrators, superintendents, elementary principals,

secondary principals and supervisors remained basically unchanged.

**GENDER and ETHNICITY by EDUCATIONAL ASSIGNMENT
in TENNESSEE
1991-92 and 1993-94**

	1991-92	1993-94
ALL FEMALE EDUCATORS	76%	77%
Administrators	33	36
Superintendents	9	10
Elementary principals	34	38
Secondary principals	12	15
Supervisors	58	59
Teachers	74	79
Early childhood	99	99
Elementary	92	93
Middle/Junior High	75	76
High school	56	56
Special education	89	89
All Black Educators	11	11
Administrators	14	14
Superintendents	1	2
Elementary principals	12	13
Secondary principals	16	16
Supervisors	9	9
Teachers	11	11
Early childhood	10	9
Elementary	12	12
Middle/Junior High	12	11
High school	10	10
Special education	11	11

Source: Education Supply and Demand in Tennessee 1996 (re-printed with permission).

**PERCENT of EDUCATORS WHO ARE FEMALE and BLACK
by POSITION
1993-94**

	1991-92	1993-94
ALL BLACK EDUCATORS	11%	11%
Administrators	14	14
Superintendents	1	2
Elementary principals	12	13
Secondary principals	16	16
Supervisors	9	9
Teachers	11	11
Early childhood	10	9
Elementary	12	12
High school	10	10
Middle/Junior High	12	11

Source: Education Supply and Demand in Tennessee 1996 (re-printed with permission).

According to Shakeshaft (1987), prior to the 1970s, statistics on the number of minority workers in schools was seldom reported:

A historical account of the ebb and flow of women in administration either details the experiences of white women only or obfuscates the lives of women of color by subsuming them within statistics and reports of women in general. (p. 21)

Hanscot & Tyack (1981) stated that after 1930, data by sex became "strangely inaccessible which resulted in "an intentional conspiracy of silence" (in Shakeshaft (1987) p. 13). They continued by stating that "the 'conspiracy of silence' has made it difficult to determine women's representation in school administration" (Ibid.).

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) compiles statistics on workers in the field of education infrequently and disregards gender except in specific

categories. Most statistics on staffing in public schools do not separate elementary and secondary principals into categories of race and gender. Shakeshaft resolved that incomplete information on the representation of women in public school administration makes it easier to depict that things are better for women.

By not citing figures on the number of women in formal leadership positions in schools, it becomes more difficult to identify and remedy the condition of underutilization of women in schools (p. 21)

In order to present a clear portrait of the upwardly mobile African-American woman in school administration, it is necessary to present her through her role as a woman delineated by society—a role that was previously stripped of human rights and racial equality. Throughout this insensitive time of degradation, inhumane treatment, and racial and sexual oppression, African-American women remained strong and resilient against devastating disadvantages. As a result, strong African-American women such as Mary Church Terrell, Anna Julia Cooper and Sojourner Truth began to speak about, and document their experiences. Out of these experiences came the desire for racial equality, voting privileges and the right to a free and public education.

This study sought to portray the career path experiences of five African-American woman who sought and gained entry into the field of public school administration. In order to present a reputable portrait of the African-American woman's career entry into school administration, it is important to present a composite of her life experiences. For hundreds of years the gender and family roles of black women lingered under the hammer of societal myths and assumptions

based on racism and sexism; yet, African-American women who were previously devalued and perceived as tokens became pillars of strength for their families and their race. Historically, African-American women were denied the right to an education. Today, we see African-American women serving as school administrators. While educational statistics indicate that the representation of black women as public school administrators is still small, black women are pursuing advanced degrees to prepare themselves for career advancements.

GENDER ROLES

According to Hyde and Rosenberg (1980), "The gender identity of any woman comes from the gender roles prescribed for her by her culture or subculture" (p. 273). Gender roles for black women included worker, head of household, mother, and lover, whereas those of white women were labeled full-time housewife and mother. As a result of these differences, black women took on other gender roles and found alternative definitions of womanhood. Maya Angelou addressed this issue when she was interviewed for Brian Lanker's book, *I dream a world* (1989):

Black women who were brought to the United States beginning in 1619 have lived through conditions of cruelties so horrible, so bizarre, the women had to re-invent themselves. They had to find safety and sanctity inside themselves or they would not have been able to tolerate those tortuous lives. They had to learn to be self-forgiving quickly, for often their exterior exploits were at odds with their interior beliefs. Still they had to survive as wholly and healthily as possible in an infectious and sick climate. (p. 8)

As black women were being publicly dehumanized and devalued by white men and women, Sojourner Truth took it as her mission to redefine black womanhood. She bared her breast unashamedly before white men and women at an anti-slavery meeting in Indiana to prove that she was a woman. White men of that era considered black women as chattel—unworthy to be called women. Again, in 1852, Sojourner took a stance for black womanhood. Amidst protests from white women at a women's rights movement in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner "told her story" (in Hyde & Rosenberg, 1980) about black womanhood:

Well children, whar das is so much racket dar must be something out o' kilter. I tink dat 'twixt de niggers of de Souf and de woman at de Norf all a talkin 'bout rights, de white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what's all die here talkin' 'bout? Dat man ober dar say dat woman has to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to have de best place every whar. Nobody ever helped me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best places...ar'nt I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm!... I have plowed and planted and gathered into barns, and no could head me—ar'nt I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as man (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well—and ar'nt I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and I seen 'em mos' all sold off into slavery and when I cried out with a woman's grief, none but Jesus heard—and ar'nt I a woman? (p. 160)

This soul stirring speech from an uneducated black women has been embedded in black history as a focal point for future African-American women to remain strong, persevere and plunge forward. Sojourner's story was one of lived experiences. She had experienced numerous social injustices (humiliation, degradation, rape, torture, persecution and other physical abuses) and emerged a

stronger woman. In subsequent years, African-American women such Mary Church Terrell, Anna Cooper and Berry Smith "broke through long years of silence and began to articulate and record their experiences" (hooks (1981) p. 3). Upwardly mobile African-American women of the 1990s can not afford to remain silent on issues of sexism and racism because they know, from experiences, that sexism can be just as oppressive as racism. Moreover, the two are so intertwined, that it is often very difficult to distinguish between them.

FAMILY ROLE

In order to gain an understanding of the plight of African-American women in society and in the workforce, one must be knowledgeable of the tenacity that it took for these women just to survive in a society whose historical foundation was grounded in racism and sexism. According to Berry and Blassingame (1982), "African-Americans developed two social institutions before the Civil War which provided protection against American racism; the family and the church" (p. xviii). Peterson (1992) concluded that "The two institutions sustained blacks through slavery, segregation, violence and oppression and that they provided avenues for personal identity, communal strength, individual triumphs in the face of overwhelming odds..." (p. 70). In many aspects of life, especially for African-Americans, the ability to cope and survive is instrumental to career advancements.

African-American women have always found strength and solace in the family and in the church. When plantation masters sold their men to other masters,

these women became the glue that kept the family together. After slavery, the men often left the family to seek better paying jobs—sometimes never returning. African-American women, however, remained in place and served as the head of household; yet, society has tried to minimize that strength. As African-American women took charge of their families, they acquired the title of matriarch, a label assigned by whites which suggested that black females had greater power than the males in the black family and culture. Researchers, however, have attributed the high frequency of black families headed by females to three factors: (1) the obstacles black men have encountered in seeking and maintaining jobs to support their families; (2) the rules of the welfare system which often caused black men to take jobs away from their families in order to support them; and (3) the disproportionate number of black males to females due to death, incarceration and a need for relocating to find employment. Also, according to Hyde and Rosenberg (1980), "because black women have had to work in addition to their numerous other gender roles, their educational and occupational ambitions were affected" (p. 273).

Contrary to societal assumptions, black family ties have always been strong. When African-American women were torn asunder from their men, other male figures such as uncles or family friends became male role models. As fathers spent more time away from the family, the voices of the mothers became the final word. The black family grew out of a combination of African traditions, religious beliefs, and survival adjustments made to slavery. Peterson (1992) argued that religious faith is probably the one thing that unites African-American people with their African

roots. When slaves were brought to America, they came with deep religious convictions which did not wane as they were forced into Christianity by slave masters. In fact, African-American history tells us that all of the activities of the men were experienced with religious meaning and significance. Cone (1975) summed up the importance of religious convictions for the slaves:

Thus the slave transformed Christianity and reinterpreted the Scriptures in the light of the black religious experience. He was not led to an understanding of God via the Scripture; rather, the deepest meanings of the Scriptures themselves were interpreted in the light of the slave's African religious background, his situation of despair, and his personal meeting with God. (p. 79)

Conversion to Christianity was viewed by many whites as the last measure to strip the slaves of all linkage with home and insure control over them; however, this act is viewed by many African-American historians as the beginning of the movement for freedom (hooks, (1992); Peterson (1992); Giddings (1994). Old Negro spirituals such as "Steal Away", "Go Down Moses" and "Dis Train is Bound for Glory" depict strong religious affirmations. They were also used to send messages about meetings and escape to other slaves. Like Moses, African-American slaves were looking for freedom. Cone (1982) concluded that the hope found in Black religion is based on a vision not present in, but created out of historical struggle. He continued, "Hope is the expectation of that which is not. It is the belief that the impossible is possible, the "not yet" is coming in history (p. 80).

In Africa, according to Berry and Blassingame (1982), the family exhibited strength through the dominance of males, the importance of children and extended kinship networks (p. 71). During the twentieth century, the black family weakened. Some researchers attribute this condition to the fact that black families finally gave in to the pressures of white oppression (Giddings (1984); hooks (1992); Peterson (1992). However, Pauli Murray (1972) summed up the task of African-American women:

Negro women have often carried disproportionate burdens in the Negro family as they strove to keep its integrity intact against the constant onslaught of indignities to which it was subjected. Not only have they stood shoulder to shoulder with Negro men in every phase of the battle, but they have also continued to stand when their men were destroyed by it. Who among us is not familiar with that heroic, if formidable, figure exhorting her children to overcome every disappointment, humiliation and obstacle. This woman's lullaby was very often "Be something!" "Be somebody!" (p. 65)

EDUCATION

Education has always been a precious commodity in the African-American culture and it has always been viewed by African-American people as the key to economic, political, and social advancement for themselves and their race. It was also seen as a way to "uplift" the race. During slavery and subsequent years, blacks who were fortunate enough to have learned how to read and write considered it their duty to "uplift" the black race by teaching other blacks to read and write. The earliest efforts to educate African-Americans evolved from religious teaching. In 1717, Reverend Cotton Mather started an evening school for slaves

in New England. In the South, clergymen initiated educational opportunities for Blacks. They defended the education of slaves as a religious duty to save their souls. They also felt that by converting the slaves to Christianity, they would become more docile (Lincoln & Meltzer, 1968). As a result, slaves were stripped of their African names, given Christian names, and stripped of their native gods and given a new deity. Through all of these efforts, many African-Americans remained united in a strong religious faith.

Schools were established in the North for free blacks. In 1731, Anthony Benezet, a French-born Quaker, started a school for slave and free black children in Philadelphia. Benjamin Franklin, as president of the Abolitionist Society, founded a school in 1774. In 1787 an African free school was begun in New York City with an enrollment of forty students. By 1820, the enrollment had grown to over five hundred. The city provided funds in 1824 and took over the schools in 1834, thereby providing education for African-Americans before many whites were receiving it (Ibid.).

In 1833, Prudence Crandall, a white Quaker school teacher, established a school for black girls in the North; however, due to repeated acts of violence, the school was forced to close (West, 1972). After much slave rebellion in the early 1800's, states began to prohibit the teaching of black children whether slave or free. Some of the more humane masters in the South had been teaching their slaves to read; however, many slave owners began to reason that reading would lead to thinking, and thinking would lead to a desire for freedom. After the Civil War, the

education of African-Americans began to expand. During the period of Reconstruction, from 1865 to the early 1870's, the federal government, through the Freedmen's Bureau and the United States Army, began to encourage black voting registration and schooling. Private and religious organizations provided help in the North (Ibid.).

In an attempt to help whites benefit from the efforts being made in the North and South, schooling was also advocated for the general public. At first, whites refused to participate in integrated schools as well as segregated schools. By the end of the Reconstruction, Southern whites began promoting the existence of separate, but equal schools. "Jim Crow" laws were passed which separated blacks from whites in all areas of life. The right to vote was taken from African-Americans by poll taxes and "grandfather rules," which allowed the right to vote only to those blacks whose families could vote before the Emancipation. This move excluded all of the freed slaves (Pullman, 1982).

In 1881, Booker T. Washington, a young black teacher, was asked to start a black normal school at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Upon arrival, Washington found only a few students, no physical plant, and a hostile white community. Washington, a former slave, noted that the traditional curriculum of the classics would not enable his students to help educate other blacks, nor help ease anxiety within the white community. Washington believed strongly in the idea of learning by doing and thereby instructed his students to build the school themselves. By doing so, the students would learn practical skills, grow produce that could be sold

to the white community and in general show whites that blacks could be productive members of society. These efforts helped Washington to gain recognition as an outstanding leader by white communities (Hines, Brown, and Terborg-Penn, 1993).

Many blacks who had not been born into slavery felt that Washington's method of training for menial positions in white society would not profit black people for any meaningful length of time. According to Schroeder (1992), "they believed that along with practical training there must also be an intellectually sound and academically rich program of study for the 'talented tenth'—the ten percent of college educated black Americans who would form the black intellectual leadership" (pp. 104-105).

In 1896, public education for African-Americans took a setback when the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of separate but equal accommodations for blacks in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson. This ruling added federal sanction to the legal separation of black school children from white, most notably in the South, for the next sixty years. Most Northern states did not have legal segregation of schools; yet, the crowding of blacks into isolated neighborhoods often resulted in de facto segregation. In addition, many of the black students who migrated with their parents to Northern schools had to be demoted because they had not mastered the same amount of material as students in the North. Even in the North, black teachers generally taught black children (Ibid.).

These conditions continued in varying degrees through the 1940's. Some gains were made in the areas of salaries for black teachers and the average daily

attendance of black students. However, organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), founded in 1909, began to question the legality of "separate but equal" rulings. A culminating precedent-shattering case was that of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), in which the Supreme Court ruled that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal (Hines, Brown, & Terborg-Penn, 1993). At the time, the case seemed to end one hundred years of struggle to gain educational equality; yet, the struggle continues even today.

Throughout the history of African-Americans, numerous efforts were made by individuals as well as organizations to provide educational opportunities; however, African-Americans were very instrumental in forging their own way in learning how to read and write. Once the torch was lit, numerous African-American women sought to "uplift" their race by educating other blacks in accordance with the old African proverb, "It takes a whole village to educate a child." The education of African-Americans expanded beyond the classroom. Literary and educational societies were formed to enhance educational opportunities. One such group, the Female Literary Society of Philadelphia documented the prevailing beliefs of African-American women during the early 1800's (in Hines, et. al., 1993):

It is our duty, daughters of a despised race, to use our utmost endeavors to enlighten the understanding, to cultivate the talents entrusted to our keeping, that by doing so, we may in a great measure, break down the barriers of prejudice, and raise ourselves to an equality with those of our fellow beings, who differ from us in complexion. (p. 381)

This proclamation was written during a period of time when Caucasian women were being ridiculed for having educational aspirations while African-American women were encouraged and praised for their educational pursuits.

Education for black children was also a community effort. African-American adults within a given community considered it their duty to help raise and educate their neighbor's children. And, contrary to societal beliefs, the black family often had a male figure for the children to look up to if the father was absent from the home. Extended kinships were common. Sons, uncles and other males within the community generally took over the role of the absentee father.

When public education became available to African-Americans, it was viewed as the key for obtaining and maintaining the American dream: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The more affluent African-Americans would often relocate their families to the North in search of a quality education. When slavery ended, African-American women were instrumental in educating the emancipated slaves. Missionary and religious organizations, as well as the federal government's Freedman's Bureau, established a large number of private elementary and secondary schools in the South after the Civil War. These schools, along with black colleges, provided a majority of the teacher training while many African-Americans, both men and women, attended predominantly white colleges. However, a study by Du Bois (1901) documented that in 1900, only 252 women obtained baccalaureate degrees compared to 2,272 men.

The disproportionate number of female college graduates caused some African-American women to voice concerns of sexism and limited educational opportunities for women. In her book, *A Voice from the South* (1892), educator Anna Julia Cooper expressed concern over this issue:

I fear the majority of colored men do not yet think it worthwhile that women aspire to higher education. Let money be raised and scholarships be founded in our colleges and universities for self-supporting worthy young women. (p. 74)

Numerous attempts were made to establish exclusive institutions for female students. The Presbyterian Board of Missions aided Lucy Laney, a graduate of the first normal class of Atlanta University, in establishing the first African-American school for women in 1886. It was called the Haines Normal and Industrial Institute and was located in Augusta, Georgia. Mary McLeod Bethune, a former teacher at Haines, established the Daytona Normal and Industrial School for Girls in 1904; however, her son also attended the school. As with the Haines Institute, the need for education was so great that a school established on gender was simply non-feasible. As a result, Bethune admitted boys to her school two years after it opened. In 1923, Bethune's school merged with Cookman Institute for boys, creating Bethune-Cookman College. It was 20 years before the newly formed school awarded baccalaureate degrees (Hines, et al., 1993).

In 1909, Nannie Burroughs founded the National Training School for Women and Girls in Washington, D. C. This school was initially funded by the National Baptist Women's Convention. The instructional focus was on skills

traditionally associated with women: "Christian womanhood" and vocational training, sewing, home economics, home nursing, bookkeeping, shorthand, typing, gardening, laundering, and interior design. A few nontraditional courses such as printing, shoe repairing and barbering were also taught. By 1910, black colleges witnessed an increased enrollment of women who outnumbered the male graduates. This trend continued throughout the century and presently African-American women annually earn more college degrees than black men (Hines, et. al., 1993).

After Reconstruction, black men had great difficulty finding jobs aligned with their educational skills. African-American women had been overrepresented in land-grant teacher training colleges; therefore, with the great demand for teachers in the South, black female teachers had little difficulty finding jobs since teaching was viewed as women's work. In 1924, 14,028 black students were admitted to the seventeen black land-grant colleges of which 64 percent of those admitted by high school certificate were women and 73 percent admitted by examination were women (Ibid.).

In 1930, the U.S. Census revealed that 45,672 African-American women were school teachers, compared with 8,767 Black men. A 1938 study of black college graduates disclosed that 71 percent of black elementary school teachers and 63 percent of black high school teachers were women. Despite these figures, only a small portion of African-American women were represented in leadership positions within the schools. These statistics inspired Lucy Diggs Slowe, the first

black female dean of Howard University (1922-37), to conduct a survey on women's careers in 1931. Of 153 freshman women surveyed, 90 percent indicated that they aspired to teach—especially at one of the leading black institutions (Ibid.).

In 1933, Slowe wrote an article on the trend of limited career choices for African-American institutions entitled "*Higher education of Negro women*" which repeated concerns that had been voiced by Anna Julia Cooper, principal of Washington, D.C.'s famous M Street High School and president of the city's Frelingbuysen University (an institution whose mission was to educate "colored working people") three decades earlier. Slowe's article focused on the diverse career opportunities for black men compared to the limited areas of education and social work for black women. Of the four coeducational black colleges surveyed, Slowe found that black women received little in courses, activities or role models that prepared them for leadership. Even though educated black women were expected to lead, Slowe stated that black colleges perpetuated a conservative view of women that limited their leadership growth.

During the early 1900s, when educated white women were forbidden entry to faculty positions at most coeducational institutions (except in traditional "female" disciplines), African-American women were experiencing few problems obtaining jobs on faculties and staffs of most campuses that employed black Americans. Due to the tremendous demand for trained black faculty, institutions could not afford to exclude women due to gender or racial biases.

Many of the private black colleges were headed by white elites well into the twentieth century; however, African-American history tells us that black land-grant institutions were primarily operated by African-American presidents. In addition, while most of the students at these institutions were women, all of the presidents have been men. Only three private black colleges for women have had female presidents. Willa Player was the first black female president of a college (Bennett College, 1955) since Mary McLeod Bethune founded Bethune College. In 1987 Johnetta Cole made history by being appointed the first black female president of Spelman College. A review of the statistics on women in public school administration clearly shows that African-American women have not made gains in positions of leadership comparable to white women in the field of education.

The educational goal of African-American women throughout the nineteenth century was to "uplift" the black race. By the beginning of the twentieth century, African-American women began to organize and challenge the prevailing racist assumptions about their moral conduct. History tells us that the efforts of black women were made extremely difficult by black colleges establishing rigid rules and regulations concerning the social conduct of female students. This stance tended to reinforce the prevailing notion held by whites that black women were wild, untamed, and needed constant supervision. Jean Noble (1956) addressed this issue:

The African-American woman's education in many instances appears to have been based on a philosophy which implied that she was weak and immoral and that at best she should

be made fit to rear her children and keep house for her husband. (p.64)

Despite setbacks of this nature, African-American teachers were in great demand throughout the early twentieth century. As a result, thousands of African-American women attended normal and teachers' colleges. By 1950, twice as many black women as black men were college graduates. However, few black women obtained advanced or professional degrees. Some historians concluded that this was directly related to African-American women's overrepresentation in teacher training colleges with curricula that stressed domestic training at the expense of courses required as preparation for graduate schools (Hines, et. al., 1993). Lucy Diggs Slowe's research (1931) suggested that even at liberal arts colleges, African-American female students seldom considered professions other than teaching.

Today, after facing numerous obstacles, African-American women are making slow but noteworthy gains as leaders in both the corporate arena and in the field of education. Early in the twentieth century Du Bois gave African-American women credit for their sacrifices and contributions on behalf of their race. He also noted their lack of recognition by African-American men. In his publication, *Darkwater: Voices from within the veil* (1920), Du Bois stated, "After the Civil War, the sacrifice of Negro women for freedom and uplift was one of the finest chapters in their history" (p. 178). Du Bois further stated that the men of the race received more press and praise for their accomplishments, but women's achievements had been more impressive. He concluded his message with these words:

As I look about me today in this veiled world of mine, despite the noisier and more spectacular advance of my brothers, I instinctively feel and know that it is the five million women of my race who really count. (p. 179)

SUMMARY

The struggle for equal access to education for women and African-Americans has been a laborious journey. Both groups have been historically labeled as intellectually inferior compared to white men. As a result, education for all women, white and black, and for African-American men suffered serious neglect. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the prevailing view of the majority of American society was that neither women nor African-American men should be educated beyond what was appropriate to their different and inferior roles in society. With this kind of educational background, it is historically important that the records be set straight. If the literature on public school administration is to be complete, it must be inclusive of the career path experiences of African-American women. Their stories must be documented and re-told so aspirants to the field can have a knowledge base from which to probe before making the decision to enter the field of public school administration.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

*Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.
Maya Angelou*

INTRODUCTION

Societal stereotypes have been a hindrance to the career advancement of women in general and African-American women in particular. In a report on *Two special cases: Women and blacks*, Coursen (1981) concluded:

Instead of looking at women administrators as individuals, the system draws the same conclusions about all women: that their home responsibilities keep them from doing well in administration, that they don't want demanding jobs, that they are too emotional, and that they have to stop work to have babies. (p. 42)

Most myths, assumptions and stereotypical statements in relationship to African-American women have been presented and received as facts. However, in her book, *Don't believe the hype*, Chydeia (1995) resolved, "As much as facts can be manipulated, facts are also a powerful way to destroy stereotypes. "Facts," she continued, "empower us" (p. 5). In 1988, Greene (in Peterson, 1992) defined the stance that all educators must take to set the record straight:

We who are in education cannot know, cannot truly know how it was, how it is [discrimination against Blacks]. But we can attend to some of the voices, some of the stories. And as we do so, our perspectives on the meaning of freedom and the possibility of freedom in this country may particularize and expand. (p. 10)

This study was designed to "attend to some of the voices" by portraying the career path experiences of five African-American female who sought and gained entry into the field of secondary public school administration. How does one give voice to experiences? This task can be accomplished in a manner similar to the way Alex Haley (1978) re-told stories of his ancestors' experiences in *Roots*. Stories are gathered, transcribed, read and re-read, thematized, categorized, analyzed and interpreted. However, the reader must draw his/her own interpretations and conclusions about the essence of the stories.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research method for this study is qualitative; therefore, the findings are descriptive rather than statistical. The main focus of this study was the career path experiences of five African-American women who sought and gained entry into the field of public school administration. This is also a phenomenological study in that it investigates phenomena—the career path experiences of the participants. Phenomenological research is a study of lived experience (Van Manen (1990) p. 9). In phenomenology, investigation is an open-ended, on-going process. Through the process, according to Stanage (1987), one comes "to feel, experience and 'conscious' better what was previously felt, experienced and 'conscioused' in part" (p. 93).

According to Edie (1987), phenomenological research methods are grounded in philosophy because philosophers felt that it offered the "clearest

exposition of what they had been thinking or trying to think all along" (p. 2).

Phenomenology seeks to grasp the essence of a phenomenon as it is presented to us. Heidegger (1962) made the following conclusion:

We create meaning in our world not by the things alone, but by our experiences with the things, the object world. Through our experiences, we form concepts and these concepts are not the things at all, but they are the meanings or structures forged by the mind in its experience of the things. (p. 4)

Peterson (1992) contends that "by reflecting on our experiences one can flesh out the processes of awareness that normally remain hidden and 'see again' the phenomena as it emerges" (p. 24).

One way of investigating experiences is through narratives or stories. Narratives or stories have been described by some contemporary researchers as one way of making sense of lived experiences (Bruner (1986); Brunner (1994); Polkinghorne (1988, 1995); hooks (1993); and Giddings (1986). Stories allow the story teller an opportunity to reflect on specific moments in time. Grumet (1988) suggested after reading Joan Didion's essay "Keeping a Notebook," that the narrative fills the space between 'what happened' and 'what it means (in Kramp (1995) p. 8. The value of stories became apparent to many Americans when Alex Haley's book *Roots* (1978) was made into a miniseries for television.

When analyzing or interpreting a narrative or story, the researcher goes through a process called hermeneutics. The aim of this process is to connect the past with the present. The text of the story must be understood in its natural form—as written or told by the author. The researcher must be open-minded and remove

himself/herself from the process in order to give a fair interpretation of the text. Peterson (1992) resolved that "the text must first be understood in its cultural and historical context as written by the author" (p. 26). However, Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* (1975), concluded that we must go beyond understanding the text: "We must approach the text with all of our biases, presuppositions, and prejudices in place, for these are the things which make meaning possible in the first place" (pp. 273-274). Gadamer (1975) also spoke of "horizons of meaning." He believed that it is only by "fusing horizons" (fusing the horizon of the past with the horizon of the interpreter) that true understanding can take place" (p. 273-274). Smith (1993) concluded that "It is only in the presence of prejudices that we are open to our own experiences and allow those experiences to make a claim on us" (p. 195).

According to Peterson (1992), hermeneutical interpretation is appropriate for this study on African-American women in public school administration because it is a part of the African-American oral tradition. Black preachers, teachers, and storytellers have used their gift of interpretation to give meaning to their words in churches, classrooms and other gatherings. The significance of the African-American interpretation of stories is that the text is "broken down" or interpreted in a way that the audience understands. In essence, these story tellers "tell it like it is" (p. 27).

SAMPLE

Five African-American women who have served (within the last two years) or are currently serving as secondary school administrators were selected as the population sample for this study. Due to the shortage of African-American female secondary public school administrators in the East Tennessee area, names of potential participants were solicited from area superintendents and colleagues. The basic criteria used for selection of participants were accessibility, locale, and a commitment to participate in the study. All of the women agreed to participate in the study without hesitation. It seemed as though they were honored to have someone show interest in their career path experiences. The participants' years of experience was not a factor of consideration. Since the number of black female public school administrators is small, a simple "yes" was the most important factor. All participants were selected from the East Tennessee area and were assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The inquiry technique used in this study was the interview because it lends itself more appropriately for extension of data through probes and clarifications initiated by the researcher. The researcher, as the research instrument, must take what is narrated and make sense of it. He or she must get to the essence of what has been told. As the researcher, I also become the narrator of each participant's story. Collaboratively, the participants and I reconstruct lives once lived.

The names of five potential participants were secured from colleagues who are employed in the field of public school education. Each potential candidate was contacted by telephone, given preliminary information about the study and asked to participate. They all agreed to do so without hesitation. Two of the participants are also pursuing doctoral degrees. I followed up with a letter to the participants--thanking them for giving me the opportunity to share their stories of experiences. After receiving approval from the University of Tennessee's Human Subjects Review Board, interviews were scheduled. I knew one of the participants very well, the other four were strangers; however, they all were very gracious.

As the researcher, I engaged in a bracket interview prior to the collection of data. During a bracket interview, the researcher makes known his/her biases and prejudices on the phenomenon; however, according to Van Manen (1990), it is virtually impossible to put everything one knows about an experience aside. Therefore, "we make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories. We hold them at bay so as to come to terms with the lived experience" (p. 47).

Prior to conducting the interviews, I established rapport with the participants by engaging in small talk. We talked about our families, advanced degrees and awards they had received. I devised a demographic form and a semi-structured interview guide to ascertain similar data from all participants (see pp.47-48). I maintained enough flexibility to pursue information in whatever direction appeared to be appropriate as participants began to tell of their experiences. There were no

time restraints on the interviews; however, the time spent on each interview lasted approximately two hours. The participants were assured confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were ascribed to each participant by the researcher. Each participant was cognizant that she could remove herself from the study, or stop the interview process at any time without penalty. None chose to do so. The five participants were asked to tell about their experiences in five broad areas: (1) educational background; (2) preparation for entry into school administration; (3) leadership experiences; (4) leadership style; and (5) career related experiences (see interview guide below).

INTERVIEW GUIDE

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Part I

1. In what section of the country did you obtain your undergraduate degree?
2. In what section of the country did you obtain your graduate degree?
3. What was your major?
4. What was your career path before obtaining your present position?
5. How many years of experience do you have as an administrator?
6. How long have you worked in this district?
7. How many people do you supervise?
8. Tell me about your school community (population, ethnicity, education, etc.).
9. Tell me about the mentors or special persons who influenced your career.
10. Tell me about your family.

Part II SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about your educational experiences.
2. Tell me about the people who encouraged you to enter the field of education.
3. Tell me about your experiences as you sought entry into the field of public school administration.
4. Tell me about your experiences once you gained entry into the field of public school administration.
5. Describe your perception of the experiences of African-American women in school administration versus those of women in the majority.
6. Tell me about the barriers that you encountered as you entered the field of public school administration.
 - (a) Describe what you perceive as the greatest barrier for African-American women seeking entry into public school administration.
 - (b) Tell me about some specific instances when you were certain that specific barriers kept you from progressing up the career ladder in school administration.

Open-ended questions were used to help facilitate the gathering of information. The phrase "Tell me about a story when" was used to elicit material for possible data usage. All interviews were taped. Probing techniques were used to expand data. Field notes were also used to document other possible sources of data such as facial expressions, posture, etc.; however, none of this data proved to be relevant to the study and therefore, was not used. Questions based primarily on past and present experiences were utilized to eliminate speculation and ensure greater reliability. Each participant was encouraged to recall specific experiences freely without time constraints. Since there is no

definite point at which data collection stops, I allowed the participants to bring closure to their individual stories through probes by the researcher and/or silence by the participants. The stories are recorded in each participant's own words so as to present each story as accurately as possible and to capture the essence of the participants' feelings and experiences. According to Etter-Lewis (1993), "[Even though] editing results in a 'neat' version of the data and increases readability, it can obscure the distinct style and subtle linguistic features of a narrator's speech" (p. xii).

After the collection of data, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. The contextualized data was then read several times and carefully scrutinized for commonalities and differences. Common threads were identified and color-coded. Due to the enormity of data, I elected to select one major thematized story from each participant for re-telling, interpretation and analysis (a style adopted from Bohstedt, 1996). The re-telling of each story reveals my own efforts, in keeping with the African-American oral tradition (Peterson, 1992), to "break the text down" for further analysis and interpretation. African-Americans, according to Peterson (1992), who have learned to appreciate the "gift" of "breaking it down" judge the speaker as much on his or ability to interpret a complicated idea or text as the content of the text itself (p. 27). The focus here is to make sense of another person's life , to understand another person's perspectives and to hear what is essential. Gadamer (1975) suggests that this kind of hermeneutic reading is, in fact, a conversation with the text. In the

narrative process, this technique is commonly called a *closed reading* (Barthes (1974) p, 13). During this process, I view the story through my own lenses in order to construct meaning based on my prior experience and my own learning.

As narrator of the participants' stories, I in turn, re-told or "broke down" what I had heard and read. The hermeneutic process was used to derive a better understanding of the contextualized data. During the this process, the perspectives of the researcher and those of the text are merged to arrive at an understanding of the experiences. This section is labeled reflections. The reflections offered on each theme are my own perspectives combined with the literature on women in school administration. I make no efforts to influence the interpretation of the reader because each time a story is read or re-told, it takes on new meaning for the teller as well as the listener. Therefore, interpretation and data analysis are continuous. As the receiver of stories, the listener accepts what he or she hears and/or reads at face value and subjectively interprets the text.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was naturalistic in that there was no attempt by the researcher to augment or embellish the participants' stories. This proved to be an extremely difficult task for me as an African-American secondary school administrator. Having "been there" put me in a position of having numerous biases and prejudices about the career path experiences of African-American

women in this field. Therefore, I engaged in a bracket interview to table my convictions about African-American women in this career field. A bracket interview allows the researcher to suspend all presuppositions regarding the study until it has been carefully reflected upon as described. Peterson (1992) concluded that "By reflecting on experiences one can flesh out the process of awareness that normally remain hidden and "see again" the phenomena as it emerges" (p. 24). As a result, the researcher is able to listen attentively to each story with an eagerness and excitement for the newness of the participants' stories.

Detailed, thick descriptions of experiences emerged free of predetermined constraints or outcomes. Data analysis focused on coding and identifying individual and collective themes for the stories. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The text of the interviews served as the primary source of data for analysis and interpretation. After each interview session, I listened to the tapes to gather, as accurately as possible, a representative accounting of the stories. The process of data analysis demanded a continuous weaving in and out of the data to gain new perspectives.

Thematic data was identified by extracting common threads or similar information from all of the individual transcripts and grouping these together as potential data. I basically cut and pasted the bits and pieces to ascertain a common theme that would encompass all of the parts. From this compilation of data, I identified four major themes: (1) Family History of Education and Mentors;

(2) Discrimination; (3) Leadership and Leadership Styles; and (4) I'm in Charge—Establishing Credibility. The following data collection and analysis format was used to conduct this study:

Data Collection	Data Analysis
1. Bracket Interview Interview of Researcher by a Colleague 2. Interview Five Participants Use Semi-structured Interview Guide Probe (when needed) 3. Transcribe Data 4. Select Stories for Presentation as Data	1. Read Transcription Table personal biases and prejudices 2. Take Field notes / Expand Data Read/re-read/reflect/re-read/re-flect 3. Read/Re-read Transcriptions Reflect/Make meaning of the stories Denote themes/interpret/ Re-tell 4. Reflect/Re-tell/Reflect Interpret/Analyze/Reflect to Determine the essence of the stories 5. Craft a text of the whole

Data Collection and Analysis Format adapted from Kelchtermans, 1993.

To reduce the possibility of being repetitious, and in order to maintain a freshness in the data, I consciously elected to select one story from each participant's collection of stories for presentation, analysis and interpretation. In order to grasp the reader's attention, I introduced each story with a selected passage from the text. These excerpts help to paint individual portraits of experiences. All of the stories used for presentation are first presented as holistic entities to be read and understood as written. The stories are then analyzed for a contextualized interpretation or re-told. Smith (1992) resolved that retelling is a social characteristic of narration. "As in any social transaction, each party must be individually motivated to participate in it. Each party must have some interest in telling or listening to that narrative" (p. 7). Bruner (1987)

stated, "Life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about possible lives that are a part of one's culture" (p. 7). Heilburn (1989) resolved that narratives allow women to assume power over their lives. She offered this concluding thought on the power of narratives:

We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. What ever their former medium, these stories have formed us all; they are what we must use to make new fictions, new narratives. (p. 37)

When qualitative data is interpreted or analyzed, the researcher engages in a *hermeneutic* reading to derive a better understanding of the context that gives meaning to stories (Bohstedt (1996) p. 47). During the hermeneutic reading, the perspectives of the text and the perspectives of the researcher combine to provide an understanding of the experience (phenomenon). Mahoney (1990) stated, "New or changed meanings arise from the active encounter of the text and the reader" (p. 93).

A final look at the story is seen through the lenses of the researcher. At this point, the perspectives of the text and the perspectives of the researcher connect to provide a new understanding of the experience. I labeled this section "*reflections*." During reflections, I took a "bird's eye view" (Bateson, 1994) of the data and viewed it in a more distant manner. Here, I am forced to acknowledge and put aside my own biases and prejudices and try to connect with the stories in a new and spontaneous way. In this section, I combine my understanding of

the stories with the historical literature on women in school administration to determine the essence of the experiences.

When reading and interpreting stories, Polanyi (1966) determined that "we can know more than we can tell" (p. 4). Upon reading my transcripts, I realized that I had collected more potential data than I could portray in this study. How then, do I as researcher, relate the essence of experiences in the stories unveiled in this study? How do I remove the fear of misinterpretation? Through the hermeneutic process, I can interpret new meaning to the words of others. Stories allow the researcher to create a variety of interpretations; yet, no one single interpretation is correct. Gadamer (1975) states that "it is only by fusing horizons that true understanding can take place. Fusing the horizon of the past (the author's horizon of meaning) with the horizons of the interpreter" (pp. 273-274).

The uniqueness of a phenomenological study is that it is a study of lived experiences. As researcher, I bring a reflective awareness to the events experienced. I merge my perspectives with those of the story teller to gain new insight on the essence of the experiences. In fact, I become transformed. I acquire a new paradigm—a new way of viewing the data. This process is ongoing. I am constantly weaving "in and out" of the stories in attempts to make sense of them. Every time I read or hear a story I acquire new perspectives. I hear something that was unheard during the previous presentation. I also gain an understanding of my own stories of experiences. Van Manen (1990) stated

that a complete reduction of a phenomenon is almost impossible— that full or final interpretive descriptions are unattainable. [Therefore], he continued, "The initial point for interpretation and analysis is where we find the phenomena [where they are naturally engaged]" (p. 20). In phenomenological research, according to Van Manen, "the researcher becomes a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the phenomenon. He or she describes and interprets the event while remaining faithful to it" (Ibid.).

Gadamer (1986) concluded that when analyzing or interpreting an experience, "we actually interpret an interpretation" (p. 68). Once an analysis has been made, the researcher describes what he or she found to be the true meaning of the experience. In turn, the researcher's explanation is tabled for additional clarification by the next reader. One interpretation will never exhaust the possibilities for comparable interpretations.

African-American women's stories of experiences are crucial to the literature on women in school administration. They represent a missing voice—"a missing piece of the puzzle." In *Pushing the limits*, Edson (1988) determined:

The missing part of the puzzle was that no one talked to these women about their lives, their work experiences or their career aspirations. People assumed women lack such aspirations, and nothing could be more misleading. (p. 1)

No one can tell about the experiences of African-American women better than they can themselves. As listeners and readers, we can not add to or take away from the stories—we can only analyze, interpret and try to make sense of them.

CHAPTER 4
STORIES OF EXPERIENCES
THEMATIC PRESENTATIONS

*You may shoot me with your words,
 You may cut me with your eyes,
 You may kill me with your hatefulness,
 But still, like air, I'll rise.*
 Maya Angelou

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I give voice to the participants' stories. I present their stories as holistic entities so that the reader's can draw his or her own interpretation as to the essence of the stories. Carol Gilligan (1982) defined voice in the following manner:

[It is] natural and cultural...It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. It is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. Speaking and listening are a form of psychic breathing. This ongoing relational exchange among people is mediated through language and culture, diversity and plurality. For these reasons, voice is a key for understanding the psychological, social, and cultural order—a litmus test of relationships and a measure of psychological health. (p. xvi)

For many years African-American women remained silent because they were not allowed a voice by white or black men. As a result of not speaking, these women submerged feelings that should have been voiced aloud. Audre Lorde, poet, concluded that women did not speak for fear their words would not be heard nor welcomed (in hooks (1989) p. 12). When African-American women tell of their experiences, the experiences gain validity and become realistic. According to hooks (1989), "Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active

self-transformation and a rite of passage where no one moves from being object to subject...Only as subjects can we speak. As objects we remain voiceless—our being defined and interpreted by others” (p. 12). Gilligan, author of *In a different voice* (1982), observed that “Bringing in women’s lives changes the voice—how the human story is told, and also who tells it.” She also acknowledged that “differences in the body, family relationships, and in societal and cultural position made a psychological difference” (p. xi).

In the past, the history of women in school administration was articulated primarily from the perspectives of white males. Gilligan (1982) concluded that “By restricting their voices, many women are wittingly or unwittingly perpetuating a male-voiced civilization and an order of living that is founded on disconnection from women. Women, in term, dissociated themselves from men because they were afraid to speak. For the last decade, women have begun to speak out in large numbers on a variety of issues—issues that were previously left to the male voice. The stories contained herein give proof that women do speak in a different voice and that voice must be heard, understood and valued. For when society listens to the experiences of women, it gains a knowledge of the experiences of men.

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

To help the reader draw a mental portrait of each participant, a short demographic profile on each participant is listed below:

Mary is an only child. She received her undergraduate degree from a college in the Southeast where she majored in History and Social Studies. She received her Masters from a university in the Midwest. She is currently pursuing the doctorate degree. Mary has been an administrator for 27 years. Her school is located in the intercity. She supervises a staff of 112 and a student body of 450. Ninety-five percent of the student population is black. Forty percent of the students continue their education at the college level. The economic make-up of the school community ranges from low, middle class to indigent. Mary cites her mother as her strongest mentor and best friend.

Gayle has two brothers and two sisters. She received both her graduate and undergraduate degrees from a college and university in the South. Her undergraduate major was Secondary Education. With a concentration in Mathematics and Science. Her major in graduate school was Business Administration. She lived with an uncle who was a principal for a period of time. His wife was a teacher. Gayle has worked in the same district for 24 years. She has served in several positions—math teacher, assistant principal on both the junior and senior high school levels, and as middle and high school principals. She currently supervises 35 schools in one of the academic areas. Her mentors were a third grade teacher and her aunt. She is also pursuing the doctorate degree. Gayle's school districts are comprised of both black and white low to middle class working families. Gayle would like to become an assistant superintendent for curriculum instruction.

Jessica has two brothers. One brother is a high school teacher and a college coach. She received all of her college education in the South. Her undergraduate major was History while her graduate major was Educational Administration and Supervision. Jessica has worked in the same district for 27 years. She began her career as a secondary Social Studies teacher. As a result of job vacancies, Jessica was promoted as a junior high school assistant, junior high principal, high school principal and director of personnel. She served a total of 10 years in building level school administration. She is currently serving in a key position in the central office. Fifteen people report directly to her. Jessica cited two former principals as mentors. The school community is composed of low to middle class working families with an ethnicity of 50% white and 50% black. Originally, Jessica wanted to become a lawyer. She hopes to culminate her professional career as a college law professor. She is also pursuing her doctorate degree.

Gloria received her undergraduate degree from a college in the East and her graduate degree from a university in the South. Her undergraduate majors were English and Political Science. She received her Masters in English and her doctorate in Educational Administration. All of her siblings, two sisters and one brother, are working in the field of education. Her father was an administrator and her mother was a teacher. Before becoming an administrator, Gloria taught English for 14 years. She later served eight years as an assistant junior high school principal. For the past four years, Gloria has been the assistant

principal of a high school with 2,000 students. The ethnic make-up of the student body is 32% black, 66% white and 2% other. Approximately 50% of the students attend college. The school community is 50% working class and 50% professional. The socioeconomic status is upper to lower middle class. The school does not draw from public housing. Gloria supervises a staff of 130 persons including four assistant principals. She acknowledges her father and two other administrators in her city as special mentors.

Maxine has worked in public education for 25 years of which 22 years were served in her current district. She has been a high school assistant principal for four years. She received her undergraduate and graduate degrees from a Southeastern university. Her undergraduate major was Elementary Education with a minor in Health Education. She obtained a Master of Science degree in Guidance Counseling. Maxine began her career as a Special Education teacher and later served as a guidance counselor and an assistant principal. Maxine's primary job responsibility is in the area of student discipline. She does all of the discipline for the Special Education students. She serves as administrative counselor to the 11th grade. Maxine's school has 1500 students who come from middle to upper class families. The student body is predominantly white. Approximately 85 to 90% of the students go on to college. Maxine is very active in student activities. She is the youngest of five brothers and two sisters. Her mentors were a third grade teacher, her aunt and godmother.

THEMES

During data analysis, I identified four major collective themes:

THEME # 1	FAMILY HISTORY of EDUCATION and MENTORS... All of the participants indicated that education was highly valued in their homes and families. Either family members or mentors encouraged them in their career choices.
THEME # 2	DISCRIMINATION... All of the participants experienced overt and subtle acts of discrimination.
THEME # 3	LEADERSHIP and LEADERSHIP STYLES... All participants viewed leadership as being situational; however, they agreed that a team approach was the most effective style.
THEME # 4	I'M IN CHARGE--ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY... This theme focused on the participants either being in charge of a specific duty or having to "get" the attention of staff, students and/or parents in a specific situation.

All of the participants had an advanced college degree or were in the process of obtaining one. They all identified family members and special mentors who encouraged them toward achieving their career goal in school administration. Each participant had experienced acts of overt and subtle discrimination. For some participants, discrimination not only centered on race, it also filtered into gender related areas. Leadership and leadership styles were prevalent when the participants told their various stories of experiences. The theme "I'm in charge--Establishing Credibility" was interrelated with the theme on "Leadership." It revealed the managerial or operational stance that the participants had to take initially to let their staff know that they were capable of administering their schools. In some instances, this theme proved to be

pertinent to gaining the respect of teachers and other staff members.

Theme # 1- FAMILY HISTORY of EDUCATION AND MENTORS

PROLOGUE

My father was extremely bright...More than [being] a good cook, daddy knew how to work with people...[The hospital] recognized that he had good skills and moved him right along...Mary

MARY'S STORY

My mother finished college. My father went to the eighth grade. My father was extremely bright. My father had a job way before black folks had what was considered a good job. He was the Director of Food Service at [a local hospital]. After my daddy died two or three years ago, the hospital got another Director of Food Service. My daddy was a good cook but more than a cook, daddy knew how to work with people and being the hospital's only black (see that was a long, long time ago), they recognized that he had good skills and moved him right along. Then, when the person who was in charge got sick, they put my daddy in charge and when that person died, they just gave him the job—which was unheard of 35 or 40 years ago.

Oh, yes! I had some special mentors. The President of Martin Marietta was a mentor. The Superintendent of [our local schools] was a mentor. The Chairperson of my dissertation committee was and is a long time friend. My mother is probably the best friend that I have. She urged me to make moves

and do some wonderful things. My mother had some good sense about what I needed to do. She is real good about advice and about the right moves [for me]. I talked to my mother about whether or not it was okay for this job. I went to her and said that I had been contacted by two school systems who had never contacted me before and she said, 'That is good.' The very first thing that she said was, without hesitation, 'You have been in that county long enough.' She said, 'This is the best thing that could happen to you.' Of course she was right. She was exactly right.

RE-TELLING

Mary thinks highly of her mother and father. While her mother was fortunate enough to finish college, her father only went to the eighth grade. Mary viewed her father as being extremely bright. Her father had a good job with a local hospital as Director of Food Service, and he was the only black employee there. Another employee had the job prior to Mary's father. Unfortunately, he became very ill and died. As a result, Mary's father was awarded the job. A black man appointed as a supervisor in any capacity was unheard of 35 to 40 years ago. Mary feels that her father was given this job because the hospital recognized that he had more than cooking skills, he also had good people skills.

PROLOGUE

[The first principal under whom I worked] had requested a minority female assistant to have a little hands-on approach with the students...It was a marvelous experience to be able to be trained under one like myself, another black female...Gloria

GLORIA'S STORY

My father was a school administrator. My mother was a school teacher. She was an assistant principal for a short while but she went back to being a Guidance Counselor. All of my siblings are working in the field of education. I had two very special mentors. They were husband and wife and they both were in school administration. [The wife] was the first principal under whom I worked. It was a year between the time that I got my certification and the time that I got on so I didn't really have a mentor prior to that. I was sent to her high school ...and this was sort of a surprise. She had requested a minority female assistant to have a little hands-on approach with the students but she was not a part of the interview process or the selection process. But, I was selected to go and work with her. It was a marvelous experience to be able to be trained under one like myself, another black female. I followed her by example but she is what we call a teaching principal because she took the time to show me and another person- there was a male also, the kinds of things we needed to know. That was important. Having worked with her (and all of the other principals that I worked with being white males), I had the opportunity to make some comparisons about

how they ran the schools. From her, I did learn to be more involved in the running of the school. I don't know whether this is good or bad but women tend not to be able to delegate as well as men do. I don't think it is just a gender issue. I think it comes about because people in the work force don't take women as seriously and therefore you have to manage in other ways. Seeing how she did it—for example, when the other man and myself were interviewed, she told us that nothing goes out of this school on school letterhead without my approval. At that time, being a former English teacher, I thought I knew how to write a letter. I didn't need anybody proofreading my things but it wasn't so much proofreading for grammar but for content. She needed to know what was going on. I follow that same example—particularly with my new principals.

RE-TELLING

Gloria has a special admiration for her two mentors—especially the female mentor. She was her first principal. When Gloria was sent to her school as an assistant, she did not know that this mentor had specifically requested a black female who could offer some hands-on experience for her students. However, this mentor was not a part of the interview process nor the selection process. It was a marvelous experience for Gloria to be able to train under someone like herself- a black female. Gloria followed her by example. This principal took the time to teach her assistants (there was a male also) what they needed to know to do the job. Gloria considered this an important training technique.

By working with this principal, and comparing her style with that of the white male principals that she had worked with, Gloria was able to formulate a perception about how they ran the schools. From her mentor, Gloria learned to become more involved in the running of the school. She observed that women administrators tended to delegate less than men although she did not consider it a gender issue. Gloria felt that people in the workforce did not take women as seriously as men; therefore, [women] had to manage in other ways. Gloria cited an example of her mentor's management style. When Gloria and the other assistant were interviewed by this mentor, they were told not to send anything out on school stationery without the principal's approval. At the time, Gloria felt that this was unnecessary. Later, she came to understand why this issue concerning the stationery was important to the principal—she needed to know what was going on. To date, Gloria follows that same example with her administrative staff.

PROLOGUE

When I got my first principalship, I really walked into a kind of jungle situation. I got all kind of grievances against me but Jessica was very supportive. I know she fought battles that I didn't even know that I had created...Gayle

GAYLE'S STORY

I got my [first inkling] for education from my uncle, the one that I just

mentioned, and my aunt. My aunt was a teacher and my uncle was a principal at a different school. I think I have been teaching since the age of six. I would make them sit down and, you know, have school. We first cleaned up the house and then we had time for play teaching so far as I can remember—six or seven or so. None of my brothers and sisters are in education.

[Jessica], whom you will meet later, was a mentor. [When I got my first principalship] I really walked into a kind of jungle situation. I got all kind of grievances against me but Jessica was very supportive. I know she fought battles that I didn't even know I had created. My uncle was a principal and I stayed with him for a while. I didn't call on him for advice because he was so removed. He was about 90 something years of age—93. But, I remember things that he would say—that he would instill in us such as 'You finished to begin so the job is never done.' He made us write a little poem—'The task once begun, do you know it?' I remember, oh gosh...We got paddled because we didn't memorize it. 'So, be it late or not at all.' I thought, 'I just won't remember it.' However, that was not an option. I also really looked up to our superintendent. He really cared about kids. Although he was really not a mentor, the kinds of things he would say motivated me to want to do things like him.

RE-TELLING

Gayle's uncle and aunt were inspirational in her career choices. Her uncle was a principal and her aunt was a teacher. Gayle had spent much of her

time "playing school" since the age of six. She would do her chores and make her brothers and sisters sit down and have school. This childhood game motivated Gayle to enter the field of education as a career choice although none of her brothers and sisters chose to do so.

Gayle considers Jessica a special mentor. As a new administrator, Gayle walked into a bad situation. There were many grievances against her and she was convinced that Jessica fought battles for her that she was not aware existed. Gayle lived with her uncle for a short period of time. She did not seek advice from him because he was ninety years of age. However, she does remember statements that he would make—ideas that he would instill in her and her siblings. One example was, "You finished to begin so the job is never done." He would make them write a poem—"The task once begun..." They would get paddled if they did not have it memorized. One day Gayle decided that she simply would not memorize it but she quickly found out that she did not have that option. Gayle also admired her superintendent who really cared about kids. Even though he was not a mentor, to Gayle, he was inspiring and motivating.

PROLOGUE

I was real fortunate in that I lived with an aunt who lived above two people who were educated...I was encouraged by them to always pursue and do my best...Maxine

MAXINE'S STORY

I have six brothers. One of them is deceased now. I have two sisters. I am the younger of the family. I am the baby...I am the one who has gone far in education. I have my Masters and I went into administration. I have a sister who teaches and another sister who is a secretary. She was a nurse's aide. She has done home nursing. I have nieces and nephews my age who have gone on to college. Sometimes, I consider them my brothers and sisters. My other brothers and sisters have at least a high school education. Some went to college but did not finish. My parents were not in education.

I was real fortunate in that I lived with an aunt who lived above two people who were educated. They went to college and got their degrees. I was encouraged by them to always pursue and do my best. My teachers and school—[especially] my third grade teacher, encouraged us more than anybody...I would be willing to bet that most of my class of 35 [students]—at least 75% of us, are professionals in some manner...We were encouraged in middle school and high school too. Some of us went to college because education was truly taught. It was taught in church, school and even at home. You didn't have a choice. My children often tell me now that they don't have a choice whether they go to college or not. That is a given. My daughter will say, 'Mamma, I don't think I have a choice. I have to go to college.' I told her that she always has a choice but she says no I don't.

Like I said, I lived with my aunt and I mean—she was like a high school math teacher. I went places with her and did things with her. I was the only child in the neighborhood so education was always around me and I didn't think that I had any choices. Even though my aunt was not college educated, she had a few years of college, but not four years. So, looking at the environment and being constantly reminded that you had to be somebody...[silence]... then I [got] in high school and I had a guidance counselor (I will never forget her). I guess I think sometimes that I remind myself of her. She was always saying, 'You have got to be the best, you've got to do this, you've got to do that.' I wanted to be like her. I felt that she had our interests at heart. She wanted us to do our best. So, when you look at my life, being the youngest in my family, coming out of a small town in Georgia to a big city—I went from my mother to my older sister who wanted a daughter. I ended up being that daughter. My nieces and nephews and I were more like brothers and sisters. I considered my sister my mother.

When I first started school, I went to a private Catholic school because my sister and her husband were in the military. I guess if you look at the story of my life, I could go on and on, starting here with maybe no hope of going for it because people were saying that you came from a particular environment or small community where very few people did more than work in other folks homes—but, then you live with someone like my older sister who had moved from state to state and country to country, she had a different view. She knew where she wanted her children to go and being her younger sister and like a child to

her, I was pushed from that point of view. Then you move from that environment because you can't go with them because you really aren't related to them [immediate family]. They went to Germany, I couldn't go. So, where do you go? Back to Mamma who is barely providing for herself? So, you go with an aunt who already has two of your siblings, a brother and sister who has been through school and then another child. She was a single parent at that time...Now there was another child that she had to provide for on her salary. It is a story!... Dynamics, emotions, feelings—they all run through dysfunctional families. Then you have other people who are an influence in your life. You just work with them.

RE-TELLING

Maxine comes from a large family. She is the youngest of nine children. She is the only one of her siblings who has excelled in education. She has her Masters and certification in school administration. She has a sister who is a teacher and a sister who is in nursing. Some of her siblings attended college but they did not finish; however, they all graduated from high school. Maxine has nieces and nephews her age who attended college and because of the way they were reared, she considers them her brothers and sisters. Maxine's parents were not in education.

Maxine feels that she was lucky to have lived with an aunt who lived in an apartment building with two college graduates. She was encouraged by them to

always endeavor to do her best. Maxine has fond memories of her teachers- especially the third grade teacher who was very encouraging to her and the rest of the children in her family. She predicted that the greater portion of her graduating class of 35 students are now working in a professional capacity.

Maxine was encouraged by her teachers throughout her schooling. They were the motivating factor behind Maxine attending college. For Maxine, education was taught everywhere—the home, church and school. She did not have a choice about whether or not she would attend college. Maxine has instilled that same principle in her own children. They, too, feel like they don't have a choice about getting a college education.

Maxine's aunt did not graduate from college but she did teach high school math. Since the aunt and her husband were in the military, Maxine traveled extensively with them all over the country. Maxine was constantly reminded that she had to "Be somebody" by her teachers, especially her high school guidance counselor whom she greatly admired. The counselor was always telling Maxine that she had to be the best or do her best. Maxine can see a likeness of that counselor in herself.

Maxine reflected on her life from a small southern town to a large urban area and from her mother to her sister who wanted a daughter. While in her sister's care, Maxine attended a private Catholic school. She considers the story of her life as typical of dysfunctional families. She started out with little or no hope for success because of her environment; however, her sister's care and

guidance changed all of that in a positive way. When her sister left for Germany, Maxine felt a void in her life. Her options were limited. She ended up with another aunt who was single and who had already had two of her siblings and another child. Maxine feels that in order to be successful, she had to take what she had and use it to the best of her ability.

PROLOGUE

I was going to be a lawyer but my father said, You get some education courses because you can always use it as a backup...Jessica

JESSICA'S STORY

I was going to be a lawyer but my father said, 'You get some education courses because you can always use it as a backup.' Well, I ended up staying. I got in it and enjoyed it and never went back. I have a brother who is a high school teacher and a college coach. I had two special mentors. When I was a junior high school Social Studies teacher, the principal would designate someone to be next in command when either he or the assistant principal were out of the building. I was the third person. Only occasionally did I have to do that. Probably my most significant mentor was the gentleman who I did my assistant principalship under in 1979. He, probably to me, was the pioneer of democracy in the selection process...He was not the sole decision-maker. He had a committee of teachers along with him make the selections. [When I applied for

the assistant's job], they recruited two African-Americans applicants. I was interviewed by the committee and then by the principal. The bottom line is that I was chosen. Once I was selected and assigned to the high school, I learned more about administration from him than anyone else. Even after I left him to become a principal of a junior high school, he continued to serve as my mentor. When there were circumstances that I needed to bounce off someone, I called him. Even today...I feel like if I needed to talk to him I can pick up the phone and do that. He is a common sense type person. He is fair in his dealings with people. I would say he is my mentor.

RE-TELLING

Jessica's original career choice was to be a lawyer; however, her father assured her that she needed some education courses as a back up. He felt that Jessica could always teach if everything else failed. Jessica has a brother who is a high school teacher and a coach on the college level.

Jessica identified two special mentors; a former junior high school principal and a former high school principal. Whenever the junior high principal and his assistant had to be away from the building, Jessica was appointed next in command. She did not have to do this very often but it did give her some experience. Jessica credits the high school principal, under whom she served as an assistant, as being a pioneer of democracy in the selection process. This principal exhibited a team approach in leadership. He established a committee

of teachers to aide him in selecting a new staff. When Jessica applied for the assistantship, the principal had specifically recruited two African-Americans. Jessica was chosen for the job. Jessica avows that she learned more about administration from this principal than from any other principal in her career path. Their professional relationship has been unbroken. Even today, if Jessica needs to discuss a specific issues, she feels like she can call him. She describes him as a common sense type person.

REFLECTIONS

African-American history tells us that even from the days of slavery, two social institutions remained steadfast in the lives of black Americans—the home and the church. In the home, education was seen as the key to obtaining all that life had to offer—life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Education was viewed as the only avenue to get ahead and to "uplift" the African-American race. Slave masters worked exceedingly hard to deny slaves the right to learn how to read and write. They felt that with education came the desire for freedom. They also felt that if the slaves were forced to remain illiterate, they would also remain dependent on the slave master for survival. In retaliation, slaves who had learned to read and write became teachers of those who could not. Schools were established in very inconspicuous places throughout the plantations. Even some of the more humane masters assisted slaves in learning to read and write. From the 1870s to the first decades of the twentieth century, most southern

whites contended that blacks were incapable of benefiting from the same education that whites received. They claimed that blacks were intellectually inferior to whites and were fit only for manual labor. To expose blacks to the same education as whites was also considered dangerous. Lawton Evans (1894) expressed the sentiments of those whites who felt that similarity of education would destroy the caste distinction between blacks and whites:

Being taught as a Negro child the same things and in the same way as the white child, when he becomes a Negro man he will want the same things and demand them in the same way as a white man. (p. 264)

Today, we have ventured far away from such views. African-American women have used education as a stepping stone for career advancement. And as a result, they are making a notable impact in a variety of fields. A growing number of these women are assuming advanced degrees to prepare themselves for jobs as school leaders. Where did the career path in education start? Who were the mentors who encouraged these efforts? Booker T. Washington's views (1909) are characteristic of the prevailing thought among assertive and aggressive African-American women of the 90s.

There was never a time in my youth, no matter how dark and discouraging the days might be, when one resolve did not continually remain with me, and that was a determination to secure an education at any cost. (p. 263)

The participants in this study shared special and unique career path stories in relationship to education and mentors. In keeping with the history of African-Americans, education was a major asset in their lives. Mentors were

continually remain with me, and that was a determination to secure an education at any cost. (p. 263)

The participants in this study shared special and unique career path stories in relationship to education and mentors. In keeping with the history of African-Americans, education was a major asset in their lives. Mentors were found in the home, school and community as well as the workplace. A variety of people were instrumental in encouraging these women to achieve their career goals.

MENTORS IN THE HOME

Gloria grew up in a home where her father was a public school administrator. Mary's mother (whom Mary considers her best friend and a mentor) completed her college education. Even though her father, now deceased, had a limited education, Mary sees him as having been extremely bright. His strength was his people skills. Gloria's mother, also a college graduate, served in several capacities in the school system—teacher, assistant principal and guidance counselor.

The only person in Jessica's immediate family that is in education is her brother, who serves as a high school teacher and a college coach. Even though her father is not working in the education field, he values education. As Jessica prepared to enter the field of law, he advised her to take some education classes as a backup. He was fully aware that there would always be a clientele in this

memorize a poem, "The task once begun..." and if they failed to memorize it, they received a paddling. None of her siblings are in education.

Maxine's entire life has been encompassed with an aura of education. She lived with an aunt whose neighbors were college graduates. They encouraged her to pursue and do her best. Maxine was the only child in the neighborhood; therefore, she was engulfed in education. She did not feel as though she had any other options. Maxine remembered her third grade teacher as being especially encouraging and motivating. She predicted that the majority of her third grade class is now serving in a professional capacity. Throughout her schooling, Maxine's teachers were instrumental in her educational gains. She stated that during her school days, education was truly taught in the home, school and church. Maxine often felt that she has modeled herself after a high school guidance counselor who constantly reminded her that she had to do her best—she had to be somebody.

Maxine feels that her life has been typical of a dysfunctional family. She came from an environment where very few women did more than domestic work. However, Maxine was very fortunate. As a child she grew up with an older sister who was a mother figure and who valued education. The sister and her husband were in the military; therefore, Maxine traveled extensively. She attended a private Catholic elementary school. When the sister's family was stationed in Germany, Maxine's entire environment changed. She moved in with a single aunt who was already caring for two of her siblings and her own child. Maxine

found herself clinging to teachers and counselors for support and encouragement and they did not let her down. Maxine was always encouraged to do her best and to be the best. The words of Zora Hurston in *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934) delineate a prevailing message [as depicted in Maxine's story] for Maxine and other African-American women in similar situations:

...member tuh git all de education you kin. Dat's de onliest way you kin keep out from under people's feet. You always strain tuh be de bell cow, never be de tail uh nothin'. Do de best you kin, honey... (p. 39)

MENTORS IN THE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

How does a mentor fit into this scenario? How do they make a difference in one's life? All of the participants had special mentors outside the family. Maxine had former teachers as mentors. Mary cited four individuals who were inspiring and encouraging to her. Gayle, Jessica and Gloria considered specific former supervisors as having made an impact in their lives. Gayle viewed her former Director of Schools as a special mentor whom she felt fought battles for her that she did not even know about. Jessica acknowledged two former principals as mentors. She viewed one in particular as a pioneer in the democratic process of staff selection. He utilized a team approach in selecting his staff. This technique made a very positive impression on Jessica. Gloria's two mentors were husband and wife. Both of them were in school administration. Gloria remembered the opportunity to train under the woman as very

special. She stated, "To be able to be trained under one like myself, another black female, was marvelous." Mary's four mentors were her current superintendent of schools, the "chair" of her dissertation committee, the president of a large business organization and most especially, her mother. She credits her mother with being insightful about what she should do and the moves she should make. Maxine had an abundance of mentors—her sister, neighbors, teachers and counselors. When she lived with her sister, she felt that education was valued and taught throughout her environment.

In 1980, Erickson and Pitner conducted a survey of female administrators in Oregon to ascertain what advice these women would offer to administrative aspirants. One of the suggestions that these administrators offered was that female administrative aspirants should find someone in school administration to become a mentor or sponsor. One respondent advised, "Find male and other female mentors and advocates! Let them help and advise in your behalf." Another stated, "The mentor concept is alive and well, among men and women both. Many men in education are very supportive of competent women." Yet another female administrator advised women to develop a "multitude of contacts with men who can hire women administrators because there are very few women who hire administrators" (pp. 122-123). The participants' stories revealed that they took advantage of the mentoring process. They identified individuals who could help them early in their careers and have maintained those relationships even today.

Theme # 2- DISCRIMINATION

PROLOGUE

When I became an assistant [at this high school], somebody said that they were expecting this to be a joke. They said I had knocked out another job for a black male...Gloria

GLORIA'S STORY

In this county, there are thirteen high schools and six of these have female principals while two have African-American female principals. When I became an assistant, somebody said that they were expecting this to be a joke. They said I had knocked out another job for a black male. I fought adamantly against that kind of thing. The administrative advice generally mirrors the [mind set of the] giver. I don't remember exact statistics but I think that about 70% of the teachers in high schools are female. What I figure is that 70% of the administrators ought to be women. That doesn't happen.

This community has accepted me as a whole. I have had very good relations with parents, community and everybody. There have been a few isolated incidents where I feel what happened was that the people didn't know me or had never talked to me. I think that happens many times with parents. They are disgruntled about something here at school and they don't even call me, they go over my head without even talking to me. Without being on the other end, I can't say that this happens to others as well but I don't think it does. That is where the sensitivity part comes in. I think that people who don't know

me just say , "That is a black female" and call the superintendent.

RE-TELLING

When Gloria became an assistant principal, her position was viewed as a joke by some people. The general perception was that she had knocked a black male out of a job. Gloria felt that she had fought hard to dispel that kind of thinking. However, she was aware that the comment mirrored the mind set of the giver. Gloria expected to find the same number of female administrators as female high school teachers; however, that has not been the case.

Gloria has felt that her school community, which is predominantly white, has accepted her. She has established good relations with everyone involved. She attributes the few bad incidents that she has experienced to the fact that the people simply do not know her or have never talked to her. She believes that complaints are generally initiated by parents who are upset about something at school. They look at the fact that she is a black female administrator and call the superintendent without giving her a chance to correct the problem.

PROLOGUE

I think that the race factor never played a part in my previous jobs until the last principal that I had came on the scene...Mary

MARY'S STORY

I think that the race factor never played a part in my previous jobs until the last principal [at my former school] came on the scene. I think when the last principal came on the scene , race became a factor, being a female became a factor, and I think that his judgement was so skewed that anybody that he had not personally hired [would have a hard time]. He was the kind of administrator who needed all of his folks to be in place. I think that unless you were one of his hires, there was nothing that you could do that was right and yet [I] had been doing the job for 17 years with encouragement and doing it right.

He made assignments at football games [assigned supervisory posts] and I felt that my assignment was ridiculous and that caused me to think. I certainly felt that [it] was uncalled for, unprofessional and ugly. I did it and I never said anything to anybody about it but that helped me to make some decisions that I really needed to make before now.

RE-TELLING

Mary did not experience problems that she considered racial until she worked with her former principal. She felt that not only race but gender as well were problematic for him. Mary felt that part of the problem was due to the fact that this principal had not personally hired her. She had worked at the school for 17 years before he became principal. During that span of time, Mary had received encouragement and felt that she had done a good job.

One incident that remained vivid in Mary's mind was a football assignment that the principal made. Mary felt that her assignment was ridiculous, uncalled for, unprofessional and ugly; yet, she did it without complaining. However, it caused her to think about making a change.

PROLOGUE

That is probably what left a bitter taste in my mouth—the district putting people in jobs where they didn't stand a chance of being successful...Jessica

JESSICA'S STORY

A long time ago we had a superintendent who was a stickler for doing what is right regardless of sex, gender, or ethnic origin. There was a high school opening and I was a junior high principal. I was at a principal's convention. One particular night I called home and found out that the superintendent had appointed a white male to this particular school. At that time they always said that they liked to promote their own, but they put someone in who I didn't think should have gotten the job.

There were two people at the time, for lack of a better word, who had seniority and should have been looked at more carefully. One of them was another junior high principal and myself. We both were overlooked. We weren't even considered. The night before the board made the appointment, the headline of the newspaper was about this new principal. He had committed theft

years ago but the board members went ahead and made the appointment. There were some viable candidates within their own [system]. But, to put someone there even after the person had made the newspaper all through the county because of theft was a shot in the face to those who could have done the job right and didn't have skeletons in their closet—someone who had the chance to be successful there because the kids and the staff needed it. That is probably what left a bitter taste in my mouth—the district putting people in jobs where they didn't stand a chance of being successful. I think I didn't get the job because I was a female and because I was a black female. But, there haven't been but two female principals in the whole district. I didn't apply for anything after that.

RE-TELLING

Jessica was a junior high school principal and a vacancy became available at the high school level. Jessica's superintendent had a reputation of doing the right thing regardless of race, gender or ethnic origin. The superintendent had always said that he wanted to promote from within the system. Gayle and another junior high principal had applied for the job. While Gayle was away at a principal's convention, the school board voted in favor of a candidate from the outside. The night before the board's selection of the principal, the newspaper carried a story on the man stating that he had been involved in theft; yet, the board appointed him anyway. Jessica felt that there had been some good candidates within the system. To Jessica, putting an

outsider in the principal's position even after it was revealed that he had a criminal record, was a harsh blow. It was like a shot in the face. It left a bitter taste in Jessica's mouth. She felt that the students and staff deserved someone who knew them and cared about them. Jessica felt that she did not get the job because she was a black female. After that incident, she did not apply anymore.

PROLOGUE

I am left out of... the major functions of the school. I don't feel a part of the major decisions. The things they talk about with me are superficial...Maxine

MAXINE'S STORY

I am left out of, how can I say, the major functions of the school. I come from [a school] where I was used to being a part of all curriculum changes. The very strong knowledge that I have [about education] came from central office or the state department. I don't feel a part of the major decisions. The things that they talk about with me are superficial kinds of things. I also feel that I get brought things that they have carried with them and when they finally take them to the others, it is totally different than what they brought to me. I also feel that everything that comes across the principal's desk that has anything to do with black institutions, black organizations, I get. But other things maybe similar in nature, I never see. I also get things late—that if you are going to respond [to] and in order to respond, you better hurry up. I also find that if a minority student

gets into trouble, he or she is brought to me first. I guess they feel like I am going to do the least restrictions. I have felt that there was a betrayal of what I felt our administrative team was all about. So, I don't take anything from them anymore. I have a tendency to create my own positiveness by the things I do with kids.

RE-TELLING

Maxine has felt that she is left out of the major functions of the school. She came from an environment where she was a part of curriculum changes. She acquired the knowledge that she has now from the central office and the state department of education—not from her principal. She has felt left out of major decisions. When she has been involved in administrative discussion, they have usually focused on superficial concerns. Maxine has felt that school related issues are told to her differently from the way they are told to the other assistants. She also has felt that because she is a black administrator, she gets all of the literature on black institutions, black organizations, etc; however, she never sees other literature that is similar in nature.

Maxine also stated that she received important forms and documents late and if a reply was necessary, she felt forced to hurry up and respond. Minority students who got into trouble were brought to her first. She stated that the rationale behind this technique was that the principal felt she was going to give the least restrictions. Maxine felt that the administrative team concept had

gotten lost in the shuffle. It still existed but it did not operate the way it was designed to function. As a result, she decided not to take anything from them anymore. She began to create her own positiveness by the things she did with her students.

PROLOGUE

I think that the reason that I was asked to take a school is because they felt embarrassed or ashamed that they had [overlooked me] ...Gayle

GAYLE'S STORY

I think that the reason that I was asked to take a school is because they felt embarrassed or ashamed that they had [overlooked her]. I had told you when we opened the school, we brought in the director of the school from [the outside]. All of the faculty called him fantasy and me reality because he would say anything and, you know, get them all fired up about it and then I would have to make it happen. Sometimes he would say some things that could not happen because they would be against work policy or something. We would get a lot of waivers for things. Anyway, they called him fantasy and me reality. So, in essence, I ran the school for three years. Anyway, he was leaving [at the end of the school year].

He taught me a lot—not on how to run a school but I learned a lot from him about getting along with people. Well, let's see, I won't say he was a people

person because some people can't stand him because he is very arrogant. Also, if he believed something, he didn't care how many people were against him, he still fought for those beliefs. I really admired that. We still get along real well. When he left [to go to another job], I applied for the position. This was a choice school! They had done a lot of renovations to the building. It was the prized place to be. No African-American (period) was going to be principal of that school, let alone a woman, but I applied anyway. Nobody else really knew what to do. I also said to myself, 'I had trained one white man and I wasn't going to train another one.'

There were about 60 applicants and the finalists were three. I was one, there was a white man who had been a superintendent and there was an Asian man. We were the finalists... This was the first time that a principal was not appointed from the district office. There was a committee of parents and students. They had this elaborate process. The candidates had to perform a seminar, parent meeting and all this kind of stuff. The people that they brought in were wined and dined. They would go see productions at the theater, eat lunch and so forth. I was still working. My day [interview performance] was scheduled for 2:00 P. M. on a day that I had to work. I wasn't getting any of the extras and I told them about it. I still didn't get the job. In fact I think that actually made me sick. For the first time in my life, I actually got strep throat. I was angry and hurt because I could see the inequalities. They would fly these people in and put them up in a hotel and just because I was an inside candidate, I was

treated differently. They were taken out to dinner with the principal and his wife and some others and they just talked and so forth. After I made my position known to a few people, the next day I was invited to lunch somewhere. I went just because—for the hell of it. I knew it was too late because my seminar was like that morning and my parent conference was that night. You know, it wasn't the same kind of meeting that was afforded the other candidates. I was still thinking as a lot of African-American women think, 'Hey, I am still strong and good. I can handle it.' It was real stressful. I think that it really did something to me as far as becoming hit with the reality of 'good enough isn't really [good enough].'

RE-TELLING

Gayle believed that the only reason she was finally given a principalship was because she had been overlooked for a previous school. When the school system hired a Director of Schools from the outside, Gayle was his assistant principal. She stated that the director was prone to presenting an idea that would get the staff fired up without thinking it through and she would have to make it happen. As a result, the staff would call him fantasy and her reality. Gayle stated that she literally ran the school for three years.

Gayle felt that she learned a lot from the principal—not so much in how to run a school but in how to get along with people. The principal was good with people even though he was not a real people person. Some people considered

him to be arrogant. If the principal really believed in an idea, he fought for it regardless of the number of people who were against it. Gayle admired that quality in him. When the principal left to take another job, Gayle, along with two others (a white male and an Asian man), applied for his job. The school was a choice school (one of the best in the school system) and Gayle felt that no African-American was going to be principal there—let alone a woman. But, she applied anyway. She felt that she was the most qualified candidate for the job. She reminded herself that she had already trained one white man and she was not going to train another one. Sixty applicants were narrowed down to three and Gayle was one of the finalists. In the past, principals had been appointed from the district office. The new process involved a committee of parents and students. The candidates had to perform a seminar, a parent meeting and other activities. The candidate outside the system was 'wined and dined.' He was taken to see a theater production, had lunch, etc. Gayle was still working. Her interview performance was set up for 2:00 P. M. on a day that she had to work. Gayle did not get any of the extras.

Gayle did not get the job and as a result, she became ill. She was angry and hurt because she could see the inequalities. The outside candidate was flown in, put up in a hotel, taken out to dinner with the principal and his wife and basically given superior treatment. Gayle made her concerns known to a few people and as a result, she was invited to lunch on the following day. She went, but only to prove a point. She knew that it was too late for her to have a fair

chance at the job because her performance seminar was that morning and her parent conference that night. Gayle felt that she was not given the same kind of treatment as the outside candidate. She wanted to say, "Hey, I am still strong and good. I can handle it." Gayle stated that this experience was an eye opener for her—'good enough really was not good enough.'

REFLECTIONS

How does an African-American woman overcome discrimination on the job and continue to give a high level of performance? What does she do when she has been overlooked for a promotion because of her race or gender. Are myths and stereotypes still influencing the decision-making process? How long will it take for an African-American woman to be judged on her own merit rather than on gender or race? All of the participants eluded to some form of gender related discrimination. Adkison (1981) resolved that gender related discrimination is a result of socialization. It is compounded by the structural characteristics of organizations that hinder women's rise in management and limits the effectiveness of those who do attain managerial positions. Even though African-American women are slowly making gains in school administration, the research literature determined that African-American women have to be better qualified and work harder than their male counterparts. As a result, many women have obtained the doctorate degree in hopes that it will open doors for them that were previously closed. One respondent in a study conducted by Edson (1985) made

the following assertion:

We [women] have a doctorate where a man with a master's would get the same job without it. If we don't over qualify ourselves, we won't even get in the door. And women definitely have a harder time just getting in that door. (p. 267)

All of the participants in this study experienced some aspect of job related discrimination; yet, they remained steadfast and task oriented. Mary, Gayle and Jessica felt discriminatory consequences from their principals and/or superintendents. Mary stated that she had never experienced discriminatory retribution until she worked with her former principal. She felt that the last assignment that he gave her for football games was unprofessional and "ugly." Nevertheless, she did it without complaining though that assignment caused her to begin thinking about making a move. Mary felt that since she had not been personally hired by the principal, she could not have made a positive impression on him under any circumstances.

Gayle believed that she was finally given a principalship because the superintendent was ashamed or embarrassed because he had not kept his word about promoting from the inside. Gayle's school was managed by a white male whom she had trained. In fact, she basically ran the school for three years. The principal was consistent in getting the staff fired up with some bright idea while Gayle would have to make it happen. As a result, the staff labeled the principal "fantasy" and Gayle "reality." When that principal decided to leave, Gayle applied for his job even though she felt that the school system would never give

the job to an African-American—let alone an African-American female. Yet, Gayle applied anyway because she had seniority. In keeping with the established order of things, the job was given to an outside candidate—a white male. This course of action caused Gayle to resolve that she would not train another white man for a job that she deserved.

Gayle also felt that the whole interview process was discriminatory. The new principal was flown in for the interview, provided hotel services, dinner and theater, etc. In essence, he was given the red carpet treatment. Gayle did not receive the same lavishness. In addition, the finalists had to conduct a seminar. Gayle's seminar was set for 2:00 P. M. on a day that she had to work while the outside finalist was not under that kind of pressure. The entire process caused Gayle to conclude that "good enough isn't really good enough."

Jessica's experiences were very similar to Gayle's. She was hoping to acquire a high school principalship but it also was given to a white male from the outside. Jessica was hopeful of getting the job because the superintendent had always stated that he liked to promote from within. Instead, the job was given to a man who had committed theft prior to his new appointment. This information made the front page of the local newspaper but the man was given the job anyway. This incident left a "bitter taste" in Jessica's mouth. She felt that she did not get the job because she was a black female.

Gloria and Maxine had their share of discriminatory experiences as well. Gloria stated that her appointment as assistant principal was considered a joke

from the very beginning. Some people went so far as to state that she had taken another job from a black man. This statement was very disturbing to Gloria because she had fought hard to dispel perceptions of this nature. Gloria works in a predominantly white school and she feels that she has been accepted. However, she admitted that a few incidents do weave their way to the central office in the form of complaints. Gloria feels that the persons who complained apparently do not know her because she has tried to resolve all disputes before they reached that level. She stated that the persons who complain at the central office level probably perceived her as just a black female and went over her head.

The discriminatory acts that Maxine experienced are typical of "the good old boys' network." When a minority female assistant principal is left out of major administrative decisions on a consistent basis, one can only conclude that omission was intentional. Maxine was intuitive enough to realize that the administrative conferences that included her were about superficial issues—not about the important issues that involved the school. What conclusion does a black female come to when she gets all of the literature on black issues but none on white issues similar in nature, or when she receives memorandums almost too late to make an adequate response? What perception can be drawn when a black administrator is given all of the hard core disciplinary problems that involve black students? Maxine is fully aware that she is treated differently from the other administrators; however, she does not look to the administrative group for

her hoopla. Her peers have already proven that they do not intend to make her a "real" member of the administrative team. In compensation, Maxine creates her own positiveness by the activities that she creates for her students.

In 1985 Sakre Edson conducted a study entitled "Voices From the Present: Tracking the Female Aspirant." As the survey respondents reflected on the field of educational administration, one of their major concerns was continuing discrimination. They attributed growing discriminatory practices to the political climate and to the emphasis on fiscal rather than equity issues (p. 270). The participants also concluded that the further they moved up the administrative career ladder, the more resistance they were likely to experience. One participant resolved that while more opportunities were available [for women], most of the decisions were still made by men for men and the issue of power and control is evident in almost all situations (Ibid.). The participants were also asked to assess the presence of discrimination. One respondent revealed the following thoughts:

We are not getting a fair shake. Women have been prostituted, used. We pay our dues, but we don't get the pay-off. We are still threatening to many men, and I feel angry and bitter...Despite my extra schooling, my proven skills, and my working forty-eight hours a week at three different positions, I'm still not getting anywhere. (p. 270)

Another respondent who completed a doctoral program to gain entry into the field of school administration made the following comments on the progress that women were making in the field:

The majority of women who do aspire and obtain administrative positions are quite competent and are generally more thorough than their male counterparts. Many, like myself, postponed entry into administration until they felt that they were ready. This may be a waste of women's years on one hand, but on the other it may account for women's competence once in their positions. (p. 268)

These stories reveal that even though it may appear that African-American women are recognized and accepted on their own merits, it simply is not true.

The good old boys' network is still alive and working. African-American women still have to work twice as hard as their male counterparts and white women to gain entry into school administration. The participants in this study felt certain that they experienced genuine acts of discrimination; yet, through flagrant discriminatory deterrents they persevered and attained their goals as school administrators.

Theme# 3- LEADERSHIP and LEADERSHIP STYLES

PROLOGUE

This is a job that is more managerial in nature than books would lead us to believe. I don't care what they tell you. Most...assistant principals can handle the academic tasks but it is the people tasks that they don't necessarily know how to do...Gloria

GLORIA'S STORY

This is a job that is more managerial in nature than books would lead us to believe. I don't care what they tell you. Most people that have been in education long enough to be assistant principals can handle the academic tasks but it is the

people tasks that they don't necessarily know how to do. Being a good teacher has nothing to do with knowing how to motivate people, solve conflicts, negotiating and dealing up and down the ladder... There certainly is a lot of on the job training. That was more, I guess, of what to do—laws and things that you have to learn.

I guess it [my managerial style] depends... I just had a teacher tell me that you [I] don't see yourself as others see you. I have had some people see me as authoritarian. I like to see myself as being democratic. I think somewhere in between that is where I see myself. I know that I have strong authoritarian views but I also know that group involvement and group decisions are best for organizations. So, I try to involve the group in decisions. I don't have a problem being a person where the buck stops, but if it's going to stop with me, there are some things that have to go my way. There are some philosophical issues that are not negotiable as far as I am concerned.. I would like to think that I do give input to the staff and they can develop it.

I think even among women we have differences just like you have differences all the way around but if I had to generalize, I'd say just like I told you before that women, in my experiences, tend not to delegate as much [as men]. I believe that people working for women don't respond the same way and I have a very good judge of character. Men can go to somebody who is not doing something right and do the one minute manager kind of thing. Well, from my experience, if a woman does the "one minute manager," it is wrong, don't do this

anymore, but it is likely to happen again. The only time some people will take you seriously is when you go into threatening and being forcible.

I have had some people tell me that I was too sensitive and that is possible too. I have had some good experiences with becoming a principal at schools that were populated more by whites. You would think that there would have been more hostility but that has not been the case. The community has accepted me as a whole. I have had very good relationships with parents, community and everybody. There have been a few isolated incidents when what I feel happens is that people who don't know me or have never talked to me judge me, and I think this happens many time with parents. They are disgruntled about something here at school and they don't even call me, they go over my head without even talking with me. Without being on the other end, I couldn't say that this happens to others as well but I think it does. That is where the sensitivity part comes [in]. I think that people who don't know me just say that is a black female and they will call the superintendent. I do think that happens.

RE-TELLING

From personal experiences, Gloria is convinced that the job of a public school administrator is more managerial in nature than books on school leadership would have us believe. Most administrators can handle tasks related to the curriculum but they fall short on people tasks. The career path of principals and assistant principals start as a classroom teacher. Here, they deal

with a relatively small number of people [students]—some of whose parents they never see; however, it is the school administrator who is charged with motivating people, solving conflicts, and negotiating—"dealing up and down the ladder." On the job training focused more on knowing and following school laws. Gloria was slightly uncertain about her own leadership style. She was viewed by some of her staff as being authoritarian. Gloria wanted to see herself as being democratic but she knew that her style leaned more to the former. Leadership for Gloria tended to be situational; therefore, she thought her style fell somewhere between authoritarian and democratic even though she admitted to having strong authoritarian views. She was fully cognizant of the fact that group decisions are best for organizational strength and she tried to utilize this process. However, Gloria also felt that if the buck stopped with her, there were some philosophical issues that would be non-negotiable as far as she was concerned. They would have to go her way.

Gloria acknowledged that differences existed among women just as they do among any other group; however, she stated that women tended not to delegate as much as men. She also claimed that people do not respond the same to female bosses as they do to male. Men, according to Gloria, can do the "one minute manager" whereas if women use this technique, it would be inappropriate, wrong, and they would be told to not use it again. She stated that some people will only take a female administrator seriously when she goes into a threatening mode and becomes forcible.

Gloria is aware of her own sensitivity. It is apparent to her staff as well. One teacher even told her, "You don't see yourself as others see you." Gloria felt that the few isolated incidents [complaints] that occurred were due to the fact that the persons involved did not know neither her nor her way of doing business. She felt that they simply say "That's a black female" and they go over her head.

PROLOGUE

I don't really know about the leadership style [of women in general and black women in particular]. I think that leadership style has to do with how you feel you can get the job done. Your style evolves around how you feel you can do a job effectively... Mary

MARY'S STORY

I don't know about the leadership style...I think that it would be interesting to talk to other people [black female administrators]...to see how they have been received and how they perceive themselves as leaders, how they perceive themselves as passive/aggressive and how they perceive themselves effective. [People skill] is my strength...I think that leadership style has to do with how you feel you can get the job done. Your style evolves around how you feel you can do a job effectively. I think that you have to have professional preparation. I think that we feed ourselves with professional preparation and I think this is essential. I think that until you have been in the field and find out what is going on in the world of people—then that is how your leadership style develops. I think

it is also very important that style develops, to me, from situations. You may have a different leadership style with a different clientele that is different from another clientele. It doesn't mean that you change as a person, you just change the way you do things. An inter-city situation is different from an affluent situation. Children are children anywhere you go. I think that you just have to decide on how you want to work.

RE-TELLING

Mary was reluctant to affix a label to her leadership style. She was aware that her greatest strength was found in her people skills. She stated that leadership had to do with how one feels he or she can effectively get the job done. Mary places great emphasis on professional preparation. In addition, she resolved that you have to get in the field and learn how to deal with people. She said that this is how leadership style develops. She saw her leadership style as situational—using a different style for different clientele. Mary concluded that "changing styles did not change the person, it simply changed the way one handled a specific situation."

PROLOGUE

There is a perception out there that women can't do principalship as effective as men. I disagree...Typically, after having been in administration, women tend to be more of an instructional leader...Jessica

JESSICA'S STORY

*There is a perception that women can't do principalship as effective as men. I disagree. I think that the principalship for many years went to your coaches. Typically, after having been in administration, women tend to be more of an instructional leader which is not as important to men as sports. It is an important part of the high school program but it is not **the** high school program. I can not put athletics at the level that men do. I think that we have to have so much going for us and someone out there pushing for [us]. Sometimes [we] are too smart, too articulate, too ambitious, and sometimes, I guess, it is frightening to the male counterparts. I have found that the women in administration that I have come to know—we tend to apply ourselves and continue learning by going to school or through staff development. We are trying to keep up with what is going on. I don't see that level [of commitment] out of male administrators. Even as a supervisor and as an assistant superintendent—my female administrators who were having problems outshone the males every time.*

I think that women have to have an aggressive leadership style to be competitive with the male counterparts. But, I think today's women look at the situation and the situation dictates the leadership style. Are we going to do "x" or "y," you know? I think there is a time that the leader has to tell, sell, delegate and participate. You have to be able to do all of these. The situation has got to dictate that and in the process of doing all of that, the people that you are working with are hoping that you are empowering them to make better decisions

so you can do less of the selling, delegating and be more of a participant. I like to think of it as a situational leadership that evolves into transformation.

I think that as females, we have things that men don't have. We tend to try and find the right thing to do. We look beyond a person's race, gender, political connections, and [say], 'I want to do this job because I enjoy working with kids...' We have to be able to simulate [work], poor word but that is the word I want to use, in both the black community and the white community. We have to be acceptable in both communities. We like to think that racism, skepticism and all of those "isms" do not exist but they do exist; yet, we go out there anyhow. I guess we are looking for that ideal world that is not there.

Sometimes I think I am too aggressive. I say that to say that at times, being blunt and overaggressive is perceived by people wrong...So, there are times when I think that I have been overly aggressive but yet, when I look at myself as a female, knowing that in administration, we have to move mountains where as I feel like my male counterparts have to move hills, the only way I can move those mountains is to be aggressive. Sometimes it is an asset and sometimes it is a liability. It just depends on how it is being perceived.

RE-TELLING

Jessica felt that there was a general perception that women principals could not be as effective as men. She refuted that notion with her own perception of women in school administration. She stated that after women have

been administration for awhile, they tended to become instructional leaders whereas men tended to lean more heavily toward sports. She realized that athletics are important in the school curriculum; however, she could not elevate them to the same level as male administrators. Women, according to Jessica, have to have more going for them than men. They need someone "pushing" for them. Jessica also believed that women can be "too smart, too articulate, and too ambitious" and these attributes could be frightening for men. From personal observation, Jessica found that female administrators tend to apply themselves and continue learning by going to school or through staff development. Women try to keep abreast of the field more than men. Jessica observed, as a central office administrator, that even her female administrators who were having problems outshone the males every time.

As far as leadership style goes, Jessica felt that women have to be aggressive to be competitive with men. Their leadership style is dictated by the situation at hand. Women also have to wear other hats; they have to "tell, sell, delegate, and participate." And in the course of being a leader, they must empower their followers so that a team approach results. Jessica felt that women have qualities that men do not have; therefore, they bring a different perspective to the table. She resolved that women tend to look beyond race, gender and political connections. Their main concern was the children.

Jessica observed that it was important that women learn how to work in both black and white communities. More importantly, they have to make

themselves acceptable in both communities because contrary to our wishes, racism and all the other "isms" still abide. Women, according to Jessica, are still looking for an ideal world that simply is not there.

Jessica contended that female administrators can be overly aggressive; however, she felt that women had to use that stance on occasions because in public school administration, women have had to move mountains whereas men have had to move hills. The only way Jessica could move her mountains was by being aggressive, even though aggressiveness can be both an asset and a liability.

PROLOGUE

I think it [the leadership style of women] depends... We have some pretty aggressive women out here. They [women] have to know where they are going. A lot of men can just kind of stand up and smile, style and profile, and have other people do the leading but if a woman is in charge, she has to know what she is doing... Gayle

GAYLE'S STORY

Women have to work a lot harder than men. I think it [the leadership style of women] depends. We have some pretty aggressive women out here. I think women have to be a little more aggressive. They have to know where they are going. A lot of men can just kind of stand up and smile, style and profile, and have other people do the leading but if a woman is in charge, she has to know what she is doing and she has to prepare the way in a fairly aggressive manner

in order to get people to take her seriously. That has been my experience as I look around. There was one woman who was not taken seriously because of her knowledge base or because the staff didn't think the woman knew what she was doing. In either case, they just sat around and talked about her and did what they had to do in her face.

[I see my leadership style as] direct and assertive—a style that needs more compassion. I am getting there—I am getting better. I told Mrs. Jones something that I had done. She said, 'You know very well you had those teachers crying.' I would have some expectations for my teachers that we would agree on—reasonableness and a time table. At that point, short of severe illness or death, I expected it to be done because I really feel that everything we do has got to be for the children first. We come way on down the line. That is not the way that teachers necessarily want it.

[When I became a high school principal], I walked into a jungle kind of situation. I got all kinds of grievances against me but the Director of Schools was very supportive. School principal is a hard job. I don't see a lot of the men even trying to do it right. They just put in their time and go on. It doesn't matter. It matters to us. I mean to the women administrators it matters a lot. We are going to stay until it gets done or keep after somebody until it gets done. I think there is a feeling that an African-American woman is going to work harder than a Caucasian woman or even an African-American man. In fact, the assistant principal that I had (that I really had to stay on) became a principal and had the

nerve to call me and ask me about working with him. The way our district is setup is that if you have more than one administrator, one has to be of another race. He was Caucasian. He didn't want an African-American man, he wanted an African-American woman because his perception was that they worked harder so he could take it easy.

I think the perception is that women can handle children but as the children get bigger and larger than the women, it takes a man to do that job. That perception is held by a lot of people, including a lot of women. They feel like brawn rather than brains is the controlling factor. There is one female high school principal in this county. There may be more than one at the junior high school level. In fact, at the high school level right now, we have all white men and one black man. We have one black female middle school principal. Women, particularly the black women, work so much harder.

Women have to work harder than men. I mean, they spend more time nurturing with their staff, sometimes because they have to and sometimes because the staff resents them. As a result, they get more grievances. Whereas with the men, they tend to do it easier. They [the staff] do it because he [the male principal] said do it whereas with women, there is a resistance. There is also with women, and I can only speak for administration around here, even at the district office, that white is right, male or female... You can kind of see those kinds of situations.

I remember when I came into administration in this city, it was my second year, I called in a work order to have something done in my building and the guy laughed. He said, 'We will see who is going to be on top by the end of the week.' He said, 'You have 106 work orders and Jones has 104 work orders. Most of the other schools don't have but about 15-20.' I said, 'Well, let's put priority order on it and come take care of it.' We were getting some things done but to the service center, it was a joke. They didn't want the work done. They didn't care if it got done. The ones that we have now (the women principals) are interested in the curriculum, and the men (with the exception of two in the secondary schools) are interested in management. That is going to have to change.

RE-TELLING

Gayle firmly believed that women have to work harder than men. She viewed the leadership style of women as being situational. She also felt that women have to be more aggressive than men. Women can not manage like men. They can not simply smile ("style and profile") and have other people do the leading. They have to know their "stuff" and they have to prepare their way in an aggressive manner in order to get people to take them seriously. Gayle has witnessed women who were not taken seriously. They have been perceived by their staff as lacking a knowledge base and/or not knowing what they were doing.

Gayle described her leadership style as being direct and assertive. Her co-worker would joke with her about making her staff cry. She was aware that her style needed more compassion and she was working toward that goal. Gayle offered a scenario to rationalize her way of doing business. She stated that during teacher evaluations, she and her teachers would agree on expectations and set a time table. Short of severe illness or death, Gayle expected the teachers to comply because she felt that everything must be done for the children. The children came first, while teachers were way down the line on the priority list.

Gayle felt that she walked into a very bad situation when she first became a principal. Several grievances on her were directed to the central office; however, her Director of Schools was familiar with her plight and was supportive. From her experiences, Gayle felt that male principals did not try to be effective leaders. They simply put in their time and went on. Doing a good job did not seem to matter to them. With women administrators, the situation was different. Women principals stayed late to see a project to completion or kept after somebody else until the task was completed. Gayle felt that a perception existed that said an African-American woman was going to work harder than a white woman or a black man. She experienced a situation where she had an assistant principal that she had to "ride" the entire time to do his job. That assistant eventually became a principal. The school district had a system in place that ensured a balanced representation of administrators. If a school had

more than one administrator, one had to be of another race. As a result, Gayle's former assistant was very forward in asking Gayle to work with him as an assistant. Gayle felt that he realized that she was a hard worker and he wanted her to do his work so he could take it easy.

Gayle resolved that an additional perception existed which implied that women can handle children up to a point. However, as the children became bigger and as larger than women, a man was needed to supervise them. Gayle felt that some women also maintained that point of view. "They feel that brawn is more important than brains." Gayle's school district has seven high schools. Only one has a female principal. There is one black male and the rest are white males.

Women, according to Gayle, have to work harder. They spend more time in nurturing their staff—either by choice or because they are trying to overcome resentment exhibited by some staff members. Women have more grievances than men. Non-administrative women tend to follow the directives of a male more than a female principal. Also, in Gayle's district, there is a perception that white is right (male or female). Gayle cited a story where she had sent a large work order to the maintenance and another black female administrator had done the same. The maintenance department made a joke of her requests. Therefore, she had to become aggressive to get the job done. Gayle concluded that in her district, women principals were more interested in curriculum than men, with the exception of two, and that would have to change.

PROLOGUE

I don't want to say laid back but I am not a pressure person because I want you to know that I feel like you are an adult person who has been educated to do what it is that you are supposed to do...Maxine

MAXINE'S STORY

I would describe my leadership style as being that I am always open to new ideas or ways of doing things. I think I bring to the profession some ways of doing things and I try to share them. I try to have programs implemented that are going to be beneficial for the students and easy for the team or staff to implement. I have tried to do enough training so that [the staff] will know what it is that [they] are expected to do. I don't want to say "laid back" but I am not a pressure person because I want [my staff] you to know that I feel like they are adults who has been educated to do what it is that they are supposed to do. What I try to do is to help them do that by giving them enough flexibility and creativity to do it well because this is something that they wanted. If I can help them do it better, then this is what I want to do. When I evaluate teachers, I tell them that I will allow them to evaluate themselves on the same form that I evaluate them on. [Later] we come together and compare notes. Very seldom are we off in terms of what we want to talk about. I allow them to evaluate their program with my evaluation sheet. So, I think for me, this is a good leadership style that I have in that I want to be their leader, but I want to be encouraging and I want to put a shine on that and if it is broken, lets fix it. If it is not broken,

but we want to try to reshape it to make it more beneficial, then we will work together to do that as opposed to being a dictatorial-type person. There are some things that we can't negotiate [because these are mandates for everyone]. So, they understand. I keep things running along smoothly. I run the interference so that it doesn't go to the principal so when good things come along, the principal's name is recognized.

RE-TELLING

Maxine wanted her staff to know that she was there for them. She was open to new ideas and ways of doing things. She felt like she had something to offer and she wanted to share it. She tried to present programs that were easy to implement and ones that would benefit the students. She sought to provide adequate training so that the staff would know what was expected of them. Maxine would not label her style as "laid back" but she did forego pressure tactics because she saw each person as an educated and responsible adult. She allowed sufficient flexibility and creativity so that the staff could grow in skills and knowledge. She wanted to be a facilitator.

During evaluations, Maxine allowed her staff to evaluate themselves using the same instrument that she used. Later, they came together and compared notes. Generally, they denoted similar areas of concern that they wanted to discuss. Maxine expressed to her staff that she wanted to be their leader; however, she also wanted to be encouraging. If there was a problem,

Maxine wanted to help fix it; if there was no problem, she wanted to rework the program and make it more beneficial. Maxine stated that some philosophical issues were non-negotiable; however, these were specific issues that everyone was required to do. Maxine felt good about her leadership style because it displayed her personality.

REFLECTIONS

Research tells us that the main purpose of leadership is to release human potential and improve collective performance (McCromick, 1996); (Kouzes & Posner, 1983); and (Bolman & Deal, 1991). McCromick (1996) resolved that leadership was not acquired by tools and training alone but through effective usage of tools that liberates others (p. 13). School leadership provides formal authority or power. However, Lacayo (1996) maintained the following thoughts:

To hold power is to have at your disposal blunt instruments. Power and influence generally go hand in hand. Leaders have the formal power to exert authority but without influence, power dies out at the end of its own channels of command. To have influence is to gain assent, not just obedience; to attract a following, not just an entourage; to have imitators, not just subordinates." (p. 12)

The five participants in this study depicted similar as well as contrasting views on leadership and leadership styles. Their perceptions of leadership focused heavily on their own leadership styles. While Gloria viewed leadership as managerial in nature, Jessica saw women as being instructional leaders. Mary, Gayle and Maxine agreed that ones' leadership style depended upon the

situation. Mary augmented this thought by concluding that leadership style was also dependent upon the clientele. She resolved that an inter-city situation was different from an affluent situation and while it did not require that the person change, it did require a different leadership style.

A general consensus among the participants was that effective leadership required good people skills. It influenced the behavior of others in obtaining desired goals and objectives. The participants also concurred that African-American women have to work harder as administrators than men. They have to know where they are going. Women do not lead the same way as men. From numerous personal experiences, it seems like teachers expect more from female administrators. According to Gayle, "men are able to smile, style and profile," but women can not. When women try this style, they are not taken seriously or they are perceived as not knowing their job. Mary concluded that a leadership style is not developed until an administrator has worked in the field. I concur. It is my opinion that one must actively participate and combine book knowledge with practical knowledge, develop strong people skills, and try different methods to see what works best. No one style will be effective for all situations.

The stories found in this study on leadership tell us that African-American women have had to be assertive and aggressive partly because people tend to respond differently to black female administrators. Gayle concluded that some African-American women are not taken seriously because the general perception is that they do not know their material or they simply can not do the

job; therefore, these women spent more time nurturing their staff either out of necessity or to curtail resentment. As a result, they are not given the same respect as white or black male administrators; instead, they are given what I denote as superficial courtesy. In general, the staff behaved one way in their presence while they did and said totally different things behind their backs. The stories also revealed that women tend to delegate less than men and they felt a personal commitment to follow a project to completion.

McCormick (1996) stated that "the type of leadership that will best meet the needs of a group will vary according to culture, circumstances and places" (p. 13). This definition described situational leadership. All of the participants agreed that leadership for them was situational. McCormick (1996) concluded that leadership can assume any number of forms. He also stated that a common element for leadership is "the release, stimulation, evocation, maximization of the potential of the individual" (p. 14). Gloria acknowledged that some of her staff viewed her leadership style as authoritative even though she felt that she was more democratic. However, she did conclude that a more accurate picture of her leadership style hinged somewhere between authoritative and democratic. McCormick (1996) made the following observation about authority and leadership:

When formal authority receives an independent value, we experience the controlled individual or group. The merely controlled individual or group is the enslaved individual or group. (p. 14)

In general, when the African-American women in this study resorted to an authoritarian style of leadership, they had exalted all other means. It was not a desired style of leadership but a necessary one. Some African-American women have had to resort to being threatening and forcible just to get the job done. McCormick resolved that "we submit to authority in hope that it will become leadership. Authoritarianism is authority that has ceased to struggle to become leadership" (p. 13).

Contemporary research tells us that leaders can accomplish more through a synergistic approach. Covey (1989) stated that synergy means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It's focus is on the motive of Win/Win. "It catalyzes, unifies and unleashes the greatest powers within people" (p. 263). "The essence of synergy," according to Covey, "is to value differences—to respect them, to build on strengths, to compensate for weaknesses" (Ibid.). Therefore, if a synergistic approach had been the initial technique that the participants utilized, the authoritarian leadership style would not have surfaced but would have been replaced by a cooperative team approach.

All of the participants stated that women administer schools differently from men. Women tend to be more curriculum-oriented. Gloria resolved that men can get by doing the "one minute manager bit" while women can not. Jessica's experiences showed her that racism and all of the other "isms" still existed. As a result, African-American women have had to be aggressive because there is still a perception out there that says "white is right, (male or

female)." All of the participants agreed that some administrative decisions are non-negotiable and they have to have a single and final voice from the principal.

In defining leadership, Mitchell & Tucker (1992) made the following statement:

Most educators tend to think of leadership as a matter of taking action and getting results; however, leadership is less a matter of aggressive action than a way of thinking and feeling about ourselves, about our jobs, and about the nature of the educational process." (p. 30)

In the educational process, teachers and students alike are more likely to "buy into" an idea or project if they feel that they have had a voice in the decision-making. If this happens, school leaders will see greater commitment by all involved.

The participants' stories revealed that as school administrators, African-American females have to know their job and prove that they can handle it. In general they feel they have to work harder than white men, white women and black men. They have to be educationally prepared. They must be risk-takers. And, because people tend to respond differently to them, African-American female administrators have to be aggressive but not too aggressive. They have to know where they are going. McCormick (1996) resolved that "one can command all day without being a leader for a minute. Therefore, true leaders must conjoin authority and leadership to maximize the potential of the group" (p. 16). This form of leadership requires high self-esteem and self-confidence. McCromick (1996) offered the following conclusion on conjoining authority and

leadership:

It is humble, quiet, painstaking, often dreary and unsensational, full of risks and doubts, lacking in immediate satisfactions, deprived of publicity and kudos and fairly bristling with sacrificial demands.
(p. 17)

African-American women have always been leaders. Their leadership started in the home as they took over as heads of household and evolved into the church where they made their presence known through efforts of service. The women in this study personify genuine leadership. They overcame resistance and defied the odds. Assertive and aggressive African-American female administrators of the 90s are turning stumbling blocks into stepping stones. And, according to Thompson (1992), "When they [women] learn the game from the inside out, they can break the rules with confidence" (p. 125).

Theme #4- "I'M IN CHARGE"—ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY

PROLOGUE

I had teachers who didn't know anything about computers. You know, this is the computer age!...I said, 'I am not going to have this lab here and teachers not knowing how to use it'...Gayle

GAYLE'S STORY

I had teachers who didn't know anything about computers. You know, this is the computer age. This particular year, I wrote grants galore. ..One of the grants was to buy equipment for a computer lab. I said, 'I am not going to have

this lab here and teachers not knowing how to use it.' I also bought some time for staff development for teachers. I told them it would be offered here, here, and here. I told them to chose a time. 'If one of these is not okay, it will be offered at this school on such and such a date. If you won't be here or here, please send me your transfer papers.' I didn't put that on there initially. I put it on there just before the last one (memo). I had sessions from 7:00 - 9:00 A. M., 4:00 - 6:00 P.M., and 7:00 - 9:00 P. M. I went to all of those who hadn't attended the training sessions and said, 'I need to know your plans.' I told them I had some transfer papers if they chose not to operate in this school. I said, 'My children are not going to be penalized because you don't know how to do this.' They all went to a session except for one. I wrote that teacher a letter. He came in and said, 'What are you talking about?' I said, 'Everybody in this school is going to be literate.' He was hot then...but he went to one of the sites and took the training.

RE-TELLING

Gayle wanted to make sure the students at her school were prepared for the 21st century. It was imperative to her that the students be computer literate. She was aware that many of her teachers were not prepared to introduce the computer to the students; therefore, she took steps to correct that inadequacy. Gayle wrote grants until she secured enough money to establish a computer lab and provide teacher training. She established a flexible schedule designed to

accommodate everyone's needs. It is a well-known fact that teachers are very slow to change their methods of instruction. Gayle anticipated reluctance from her teachers and was prepared to deal with it. She had to let the staff know that she was in charge and that they would follow her directive. She told the staff that they could transfer if they elected not to adhere to her directive and take the training. She made both oral and written contact with the teachers until everyone had complied with her request. Only one teacher had to be threatened with the possibility of a transfer.

PROLOGUE

When I was an assistant principal, the principal had to be out of town and therefore, I was in charge of the building...Bottom line, there were times when there was friction between the black and white students...I was the one in charge. I felt that if I was going to be in administration, I was not going to be afraid...Jessica

JESSICA'S STORY

When I was an assistant principal, the principal had to be out of town... and therefore I was in charge of the building. I was in a community that was still predominately lower, socioeconomic white and there was still a lot of racism. In fact, there was a gang that called themselves the Buzzards. Bottom line, there were times when there was friction between the black and white students. On one particular Friday...there was supposed to be some problems. I don't know if the teachers called the principal in Nashville and told him but he called back and

said, 'Are you ready to give up and turn the keys in?' I said, 'No, I will deal with it.' Low and behold that afternoon I went further [to look for the students] than I would normally venture from the campus. I went right into it. The kids had enough respect, both the black and the white, not to do what they intended to do. Someone had to do it. I was the one in charge. They were our students. It was just a chance that I took. I felt like if I was going to be in administration, I was not going to be afraid.

RE-TELLING

While the principal was attending a meeting away from the building, Jessica found her self 'in charge' of a potentially bad situation. Her school was located in a predominately white, low, socioeconomic section of town that was filled with racism. A white gang called the Buzzards and some of the black students had arrange a fight after school. The principal got wind of the problem and asked Jessica if she was ready to give up and turn her keys in. Jessica felt that it was her responsibility to resolve the situation; therefore, she said she would not be turning her keys in. Jessica left campus in search of the two groups. Luckily, she found the students before the action started. Her timely arrival dispelled the fight. She felt that the students' respect for her was instrumental in defusing the matter.

PROLOGUE

The first day I was on the job at my former job, I suspended nine boys for gambling on the steps...It very quickly got out that there was a new dame in town...Mary

MARY'S STORY

The first day I was on the job at my former job, I suspended nine boys for gambling on the steps and I shall never forget that. I suspended nine people that day—the first day I was on the job! It very quickly got out that there was a new dame in town. It helped me to get the attention of the people that I would be working with and, you know, it just kinda mushroomed from that. But to come into the system and suspend people on the first day is not what you do; and yet, that is what had to be done. I did it and I might have really done it out of being naive, not so much that I wanted it to happen but it was probably just being naive but that worked right then.

RE-TELLING

Mary found herself in a position where she had to make an administrative decision the very first day at work. She was new to the school but not to school administration. She found a group of boys gambling on the steps of the school building and immediately suspended all of them. In doing so, she set her modus operandi. She showed the students that she was indeed "in charge." The word quickly spread throughout the school that she was a lady who would take action.

PROLOGUE

A young man at this school hit another boy in the head with his football helmet because he was in the car with his ex-girlfriend. At that time there was no tolerance for using his helmet as a weapon...[I made a decision] that I still think was best...Maxine

MAXINE'S STORY

A young man at this school hit another boy in the head with his football helmet because he was in the car with his ex-girlfriend. At that time, there was no real tolerance for using his helmet as a weapon. I suspended him for five days out of school and five days in school. The father of the student that got hit in the head ended up calling the police and having it [the incident] investigated. They thought that they had handled it from their point of view. From the school's point of view, a call was made to central office because they [parents] felt that it wasn't handled properly. That was one decision that I still think was best...I don't know...I took into account that the young man was in his senior year. I felt that it [the incident] was not retaliation—not an out and out brawl.

RE-TELLING

As assistant principal, Maxine was in charge of discipline. She was confronted with an incident where a football player let jealousy control his actions. He hit another student in the head with his helmet because his ex-girlfriend was in that student's car. Since the helmet was used as a weapon,

Maxine took what she thought was appropriate action. After all, she was "in charge" of discipline. She assigned the student to five days out-of-school suspension and five days in-school suspension. She considered the fact that the student was a senior and felt that this was appropriate action for the incident.

The father of the boy that was hit called the police and had the incident investigated. He also called the central office. As a result, Maxine's disciplinary action took a new twist. The central office did not like receiving telephone calls from parents with complaints. The resolution of the case by the central office was that it had not been handled in an appropriate manner. Maxine still feels that she made the best decision under the circumstances.

PROLOGUE

The first year I did it [block scheduling] for 9th graders only. The next year we decided to move on with other grades and expand...I got some slack from the teachers saying that they didn't get any input. Gloria

GLORIA'S STORY

The second year that I was principal, I got enthusiastic about doing the block schedule but nobody else was. At the time, they [the staff] were not enthusiastic. The first year I did it for the 9th graders only. The next year we decided to move on with other grades and expand. That is when I did get some slack from the teachers saying, "We didn't get any input" which was not true because I had sent questionnaires out and we had talked about it. But, I had

pushed it at the end. I told them that as the principal, I perceived my role as being a visionary and if I am going to be responsible for whether the school succeeds or fails, then I certainly have to give it some direction. I was willing to take the heat, but if the school didn't improve, I would take the responsibility because I felt that this was something in the right direction.

RE-TELLING

Gloria wanted to give her school some new direction. In her own excitement for block scheduling, she decided to expand it to the entire schedule. However, her staff felt that they were asked to do something in which they had not had a voice. Gloria had not solicited a majority consensus on expanding the block schedule for the remainder of the grades. She felt that since she had sent out a questionnaire and they, as a staff, had discussed it, she had their approval to expand the schedule to the other grades. Gloria did admit that she had pushed the idea on the teachers; but, since she was "in charge" or responsible for the success or failure of the school, she felt that she had to give it some direction. She was willing to take the heat from the teachers because if the school did not improve, she would have to take the responsibility.

REFLECTIONS

What is it that effective leaders do to get desired results? As I reflected upon the theme of "I'm in charge," I immediately thought of one of my favorite

books on leadership, *The Leadership Challenge*, by Kouzes and Posner (1991).

Is the leadership challenge greater for women in general and African-American women in particular? What is the difference between leadership and authority?

McCormick (1996) stated that "Leadership is broader than juridical authority.

One can command all day without being a leader for a minute" (p. 12). The act of being "in charge" focuses heavily on effective leadership. How then, do we as school leaders, mesh authority and leadership and provide effective leadership?

Lacayo (1996) made the following conclusion:

Anyone who has the clout to make decisions with the stroke of a pen has influence over the way we think and live...Some people are more notable for the former than the latter...[What we] lack are things that help define influence: a vision that inspires people to shed their doubts and follow [our] lead, an ability to connect with people and shape the way they look at the world. (p. 12)

The African-American female school administrators in this study experienced the task of displaying the act of being "in charge" in various ways. Gayle's story reflects heavily on her leadership style. Upon a first reading, one may quickly conclude that Gayle was simply displaying authoritarian leadership. However, after looking at the literature on women in school administration, we come to know that women administrators in general and African-American women in particular have not had the same level of respect as men. On certain occasions, this factor caused some of the participants in this study to display an authoritarian leadership style which was not their desired leadership style, but it tended to get results. History tells us that school administration has traditionally

been a white, male-dominated field. In addition, African-American women were not expected to lead, they were expected to serve for the "uplift of their race." As a result, some African-American female school administrators have had to strongly show their staff that they were indeed "in charge"—in essence, they had to establish credibility. This method usually evolved into an authoritarian style of leadership which tended to push people away rather than draw them in as a part of the team. Gayle did not elect to use an authoritarian style but she felt that she had exhausted all other means. Taking a stance to prove that one is "in charge" does not ensure the desired result of effective leadership which is the release of human potential. It is the spirit of presentation that determines the outcome. Women can show that they are "in charge" and still get positive results if they value, respect, and empower their staff.

Jessica, Mary and Maxine were faced with potentially bad situations. Jessica established credibility with her students and showed that she was "in charge" by going on their turf to stop a fight. In doing so, she re-affirmed her self-confidence and showed the students that she was not afraid. She also proved to her principal that she could handle the situation.

How does a new administrator show that she is "in charge" on a new job? What are the implications for a homogenous working relationship in the school and the community? Do you make waves the first day on the job? When Mary made the decision to suspend nine boys for gambling, she showed the students that she was a lady of action and that she would follow school rules and

regulations.

As an administrator, I viewed Maxine's actions as exemplary of true leadership. Not only did she issue a "standard" type disciplinary action to the student who had hit another student with his helmet, she also remained nurturing and sensitive to that student's personal needs. The central office's reaction to Maxine's disciplinary assignment suggested that it may not have been in the realm of possible action that she could have taken. However, once a parent complains in public schools—especially at the central office level, panic alarms start ringing. Under normal circumstances school administrators do not digress very far from the school's rules and regulations. Disciplinary administrators generally familiarize themselves with the school rules, make the best decision possible under the circumstances and let the chips fall where they may. Therefore, we can assume that Maxine did work within the guidelines but was not supported when the parents complained. Did the lack of support affect Maxine's self-confidence? The answer is no. Maxine found other ways to create self-confidence and positiveness. Andrews (1984) resolved that if an individual believes that he or she can perform in a competent manner, the results will usually be positive. He continued by stating that "self-confidence affects the way women are perceived as well as the way they receive themselves" (p. 2). In addition, I am convinced that self-confidence affects the way women are received as school leaders.

Research has shown that women administrators spend more time dealing with the academics of the school (Pitner (1981); Fauth (1984). Gayle and Gloria had similar concerns in this area. When Gayle insisted that all of her staff take computer training that she had arranged, she was not going to accept any alternatives. She had worked hard to establish a lab and get money for the training. However, she left out an important element in her planning; she did not allow her staff the opportunity to have a voice in the matter. Therefore, they had no real "buy-in" to the training and as a result, it took them longer than expected to complete the training. Likewise, when Gloria added the block schedule for ninth graders, she took considerable slack from her staff. They felt that she had made an authoritarian decision. They said that they had no input. However, when Gloria decided to expand the block schedule to the entire school, she learned from her prior experience. This time, she had a committee study the process for several months. According to Covey (1989), Gloria moved from an independent paradigm of I to an interdependent paradigm of we- "We can do it; we can cooperate; we can combine our talents and abilities and create something even greater" (p. 49). As a result, she acquired numerous new ideas and resources. She realized that she could get more staff support for block scheduling if she allowed staff input. Therefore, Gloria opened an avenue for cooperation. She showed her teachers that she valued their opinions and more importantly, she empowered them.

The participants in this study revealed a dominant leadership style that leaned toward being situational. Authoritarian leadership came into play as a last resort. Because she was nurturing and sensitive to the needs of others, Maxine found herself standing as a thorn amidst roses. In spite of varied and sometimes seemingly unsurmountable hurdles, African-American women have emerged as strong and assertive leaders. They fought long and hard to dispel societal myths and assumptions and to gain the respect of their colleagues. When African-American women entered public school administration, they knew the road would be rough because they started out with two ingrained disadvantages- race and gender. I have determined, from personal experience and from conversations with other female administrators, both black and white, that women are generally not respected as much as their male counterparts. As a result, they have to spend time establishing territory—showing and proving that they are indeed "in charge." Most people have not relinquished the idea that school administrators, especially at the secondary level, should be men.

The act of being in charge focuses heavily on effective leadership and self-confidence. School leaders must be willing to release authority and power in order to gain a cooperative team. In the educational process, teachers and students alike are more likely to "buy into" an idea or project if they feel that they have had a voice in the decision-making process. If this happens, school leaders will see a greater commitment to a new idea or program.

The women portrayed in this study personify real leadership. They overcame resistance, shouldered weaknesses of followers, and produced effective action with a tremendous sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Today, assertive and aggressive African-American women of the 1990s are turning stumbling blocks into stepping stones, winding roads into straight pathways, and block walls into revolving doors. They are making things happen for themselves while still "uplifting" African-American women in educational administration.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY

When women began the journey to gain equal access to education, numerous African-American women emerged as leaders. They became teachers, principals and even superintendents. They continued to 'uplift' their race by providing educational training and opportunities for the disadvantaged. American history tells us that a prevalent general societal consensus had been that women and African-American men should not be educated beyond what was appropriate to their different and inferior roles in society. Today, as we embark on the 21st century, we can acknowledge and pay tribute to those strong and resilient black women who took a dream deferred and made it a reality.

This study focused on the career path experiences of five African-American females who sought and gained entry into secondary public school administration. Their portraits of experiences revealed supportive as well as discriminatory practices. Today, as affirmative action ebbs away, we must find new avenues to ensure that recruitment and hiring practices in the public school systems in the state of Tennessee do not exclude African-American women.

The sharing of experiences is not a new experience for African-American women. They have often expressed their sufferings in both verse and song. And when earthly problems become seemingly insurmountable, African-American women put everything in the hands of a superior Being. African-

Americans, both men and women, as no other ethnic group, have used songs and poetry to express a variety of emotions. Through music, they have had a marriage with the blues. Through poetry, they have revealed a conglomeration of emotions. Yet, through it all, African-Americans have survived—stronger and more determined than ever to gain their rightful place in society. Washington (1980) summed up the need for stories of experience from African-American women:

When black women told the stories 'bout their real lives and actual experiences, they proved the power of art to demolish stereotypes; and if power is the ability to name one's own experience...[the story was] a first step toward power, for it celebrated the legends of black women weaved dreams to myths that allowed us to recover and name our own past. (p. 31)

A review of the literature on women in secondary school administration revealed that African-American women have had to overcome numerous obstacles to attain their goal of becoming public school administrators. Throughout their history, black women have been besieged by societal myths and stereotypes. And, as they entered the workforce, unkind comments continued and generally resorted to discriminatory acts that focused on race and/or gender. In addition, African-American historians tell us that sexism and racism are so intertwined that it is often very difficult to ascertain where one begins and the other ends. In the all-time literary great, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), the words of Atticus to his daughter Scout could very well have served as a preface to this study: "You never really understand a person until

you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (p. 60). So it can be with the career path experiences of African-American women in public school administration. Their career paths are different and they need to be documented, heard and understood by those in the majority in the education field.

How then, does an intelligent, assertive and aggressive African-American woman deal with these problems? Edson (1985) concluded that “the missing part of the puzzle in public school administration has been the voices of African-American women.” How then, do we as educators complete that puzzle? We can start by sharing the stories of experiences of African-American women who have sought and gained entry into the field. We can listen to their stories and come to understand their pain and their struggles.

What then, motivates African-American women to pursue a leadership position in a field that has been traditionally dominated by white men? History tells us that for hundreds of years, African-Americans were denied access to a free and public education. What then, inspired these women to pursue a leadership position in this arena? The stories revealed in this study depicted women who were always taught that education was the key to self-betterment.

FINDINGS

The findings for this study are simple and ordinary because the career path experiences are revealed through simple, everyday stories in the lives of

each participant as she sought and gained entry to the field of public school administration and as she continues her career in an administrative position. In keeping with an African-American tradition, we have learned that education was and still is a high priority for all of the participants. All of the participants have a Masters or Doctorate degree or they are currently pursuing the doctorate degree. They all had special mentors who were instrumental in helping them reach their career goal of becoming a public school administrator. Mentors were acknowledged inside and outside the family. In two instances, the participants' parents served as role models and special mentors. One participant felt extremely fortunate in that she had been able to train with another black female administrator. Coursen (1981) recognized the importance of African-American role models and mentors when he stated that children needed role models like themselves. He concluded that If black students see only white males in leadership positions in school, they formulate the opinion that they can not aspire to that position. Therefore, from the findings of this study, we can concluded that family members often serve as special mentors as well as persons outside the family.

African-American history tells us that it is sometimes very difficult to distinguish between various acts of discrimination. Discrimination associated with gender is often intermingled with racism and it is hard to denote a complete distinction between the two. All participants experienced various discriminatory acts that they felt encompassed both gender and race. Only one participant, the

assistant principal, feels that she is still in a work environment where discriminatory acts are still being carried out. The other participants feel that they have reached a plateau with this type of problem. This is primarily due to the fact that they are now principals and/or supervisors and they are now calling the shots.

The literature suggests that the leadership challenge is greater for African-American women than it is for white males, white women and black men. Race and gender are still career path barriers. The findings related to the theme on leadership support these statements. Not only do African-American women have to be better prepared educationally than their white counterparts, they also have to work twice as hard as both white men and black men.

The findings on the theme "I'm in Charge—Establishing Credibility" revealed that as school administrators, African-American women have had to be aggressive and assertive—even when they preferred not to be. On numerous occasions they have had to take a hard-nosed stance that said, "I'm the boss—I'm in charge." This stance is due in part to the fact that historically, female administrators are not taken as seriously as male administrators. African-American women in particular are not taken as seriously as white or black men. And as stated by one participant, some women in general and African-American women in particular are often not taken seriously until they go into being threatening and forcible. However, the literature tells us that people experience a greater connection to an idea or program if they are a part of the

decision-making process. Therefore, it is advisable for administrators to know that leaders get other people to perform as they exercise control through worthy, shared and inspiring visions of new possibilities (Kouzes & Posner, 1983).

A major finding of this study centered on the values and beliefs of the participants. All of the participants' job related efforts focused on the needs of the students. The students were their primary concern. While teacher concerns were acknowledged, they did not come before student needs.

Covey (1989) resolved that leadership is effective when it brings about a Win/Win concept. Bolman & Deal (1991) tells us that leaders should view organizations through four frames: (1) political by telling followers what's in it for them; (2) human resources by telling followers the best is yet to come; (3) structural by telling followers that you need their help in setting goals for the future; and (4) symbolic by telling people that you care). McCromick (1996) determined that the more a leader relies on mere authority, the less he or she exhibits those practices that are essential to real leadership. He concluded that leadership is not attributed to tools or training alone— it is the use of tools that liberates followers. Effective leadership is not competitive but cooperative. When administrators empower their followers, they show that they are secure in their own leadership and that they value others. The African-American women in this study who have maintained longevity in the field have proven that they can do the job as well as a man.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study on stories of experiences of five African-American women in secondary school administration provided me with a strong sense of what it took for the participants to achieve their goal of becoming a secondary public school administrator. Strong, resilient African-American women would not accept a dream deferred but chose to prepare themselves educationally so that they would be eligible for career advancements. They encountered a variety of career path obstacles but they remained focused and achieved their goal.

From the participants' stories and the literature on women in public school administration, I offer the following recommendations to future aspirants to the arena of school administration: (1) Be prepared educationally; (2) Devise an individual development plan for yourself; (3) Verbalize your career goals to your principal, superintendent and colleagues; (4) Shadow an administrator when the opportunity avails itself; (5) Know your school rules and regulations from the state level all the way down to the building level; (6) Handle your own disciplinary problems as much as possible as a teacher because this will be a big part of your job as an administrator; (7) Make yourself known in your school community by attending civic programs and community churches; (8) Have a genuine love for all children; (9) In all that you do, strive to always be impartial and fair; and (10) Be reasonably assertive and aggressive but not overbearing.

One of the most valuable things that a future aspirant can do is to listen to the voices of experience. Find a mentor, male or female, and share his or her

stories of experiences. Learn the politics of career advancement in your school system. After you have reached your goal, establish a tradition of reaching back and helping someone else along the way. Document your own career path experiences so that they may someday be use to expand a study of this nature. And, when we read about and come to understand the career path experiences of others like ourselves, we are then better able to evaluate and interpret our own experiences. In addition, when we include the experiences of African-American female school administrators to the scholarly research in the field of education, we removed the status quo and give tribute and voice to the experiences and achievements of African-American women in public school administration.

This study serves only as an initial documentation on the career path experiences of African-American women in public school administration. It is my hope that a foundation has been laid for other researchers to expand the study in numbers and in geographical regions. A statistical component would also strengthen the study. According to Etter-Lewis (1993), stories of experiences reconstruct a life once lived. They offer an unedited intimate perspective of a narrator's interpretation and understanding of her/his own life that is not altered by the usual limitations of written language (p. xii). It is important that the experiences of African-American women be given voice because they are unique in terms of gender and race. What is true for white men, white women, and African-American men is not invariably true for African-American women.

As a conclusion to the gathering of potential data, I specifically asked the participants what recommendations they would make for future aspirants to the field of public school administration. They all concluded that one must be educationally prepared. Their individual recommendations are as follows:

Jessica- *Mentor with someone who is respected in the school district. Mentor with females, mentor with men, mentor with blacks, and mentor with whites. Find an area in administration that you can really and truly enjoy and know as much about it as anyone in that school district. Continue to renew yourself. Don't sit out there and get cold and think it is going to come to you. You have to be aggressive. Update your resumes. Participate in the appropriate staff development- do all of these things. Apply for those things [jobs] that you are genuinely interested in. Don't apply for everything that appears in the district because you get the reputation that you just want to get out of the classroom... Apply only for those things that you really want to do because you are going to do a good job. If you get the job, continue to mentor with other people, never stop growing because once you do, that is when stagnation starts to set in.*

Gayle- *Make sure that you know how to recognize effective teaching and have ideas in helping people to get there...Anytime you point out something, [be able to tell] what you would do [under the same circumstances]. Read a lot and be knowledgeable about what works and what research is saying about effective teaching in a lot of areas. Be out there and show that you have the capabilities of being a good leader because that is how you get noticed.*

Mary- *Work hard and go after it [administrative positions]. Have a good personality and be aggressive, but not too aggressive. I think that black women are not encouraging of each other because of jealousy. We have been like crabs in a bucket of warm water. I think that we are our own worst enemy...*

Gloria- *Once you make up your mind that this is what you want to do, do this [applying for administrative positions] just like we do business. Start acting like an administrator. Whatever position that you are aspiring for you need to start looking like and acting like you are already in that position. It is not so much who you know- it is more important that people know who you are. Take advantage of anything that comes along for you to go outside of what you are doing [your field]. Attend workshops, read- do as much of this as possible. Grow so you can seek. [And], you can not minimize dress. If you aspire to be an administrator, start looking like one because people will [judge you on the way you dress].*

Model after white males... There are some things that we can learn from how men operate... Try to work in different cultures- you learn different ways of working with [different] people.

Maxine- *Make sure that you know the system that you are going to. Be knowledgeable about the school that you are going into. Make yourself available by going to meetings and go to meetings to be knowledgeable. Know the politics of your school.*

These recommendations come from African-American women who have climbed the career ladder to success. Their career path stories are simple but genuine. As readers of their stories, we can connect with their experiences as we evaluate our own. The themes delineated in this study are not found in a black experience alone. All people have family histories related to education and significant mentors. While discrimination related to race and gender has been more prevalent in the lives of African-Americans, I am sure that many white Americans have noteworthy experiences of their own. Once a leadership position is obtained, it is not the ethnicity of the leader that is important but the content of his or her character. Followers ask only for equity to others—male or female, black or white—respect, to be valued as a contributing member of the school team and empowerment to express and implement their ideas. That is the leadership challenge for African-American female school administrators.

Contemporary educational researchers tell us that now is the time for women to break the silence. Women do have a voice and that voice must be heard. And, as for assertive and aggressive African-American women of the 1990s, no longer will we let our perspectives be articulated by white or black men. We will not present a portrait of 'bowed heads, lowered eyes and fallen shoulders.' 'We will rise, we will rise, **we will rise!**'

The words of Maya Angelou give tribute to assertive and aggressive African-American women who use obstacles as stepping stones to success:

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies. I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size. But when I start to tell them, they think I'm telling lies. I say, It's in the reach of my arms, the span of my hips, the stride of my step, the curl of my lips. I'm woman—phenomenally, phenomenal woman, that's me...

Now you understand just why my head's not bowed. I don't shout or jump about or have to talk real loud. When you see me passing, It ought to make you proud. I say, it's in the click of my heels, the bend of my hair, the palm of my hand, the need for my care. 'Cause I'm a woman—phenomenally, phenomenal woman, that's me.

Maya Angelou

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