

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF RACISM AND SEXISM ON THE
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN
WOMEN PRINCIPALS

by

Chrystal Ages Brown

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Approved by:

Dr. Lisa R. Merriweather

Dr. Claudia Flowers

Dr. James Bird

Dr. Janaka Lewis

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ABSTRACT

CHRYSTAL AGES BROWN. Understanding the impact of racism and sexism on the development of the professional identity of African American women principals (Under the direction of DR. LISA R. MERRIWEATHER)

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of racism and sexism in the development of the professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. African American women experience the principalship differently from their colleagues. Research on African American women in the principalship supports the notion that they encounter a different set of struggles. Many of the experiences of African American women principals involve racism and/or sexism. This qualitative study used constant comparative method to analyze the experiences of eight African American women who are current principals in K-12 public schools or have been principals in the last three years. The data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews transcribed by the researcher. There are two themes that emerged from the data 1) narrow and unfounded judgment and 2) motivated to succeed for students' well-being. The first theme posits that African American women principals have an awareness of negative perceptions about them due to their race and gender and that they rely on a strong sense of identity to combat the discrimination they experience. The emotional effect of experiencing racism and sexism stimulated a sense of strength in the participants and coupled with encouragement that was both internal and external they were able to push through and do the job at hand. The second theme posits that African

American women principals have characteristics that drive them to be successful.

Having a strong assurance of their ability coupled with personality traits that correlate to effective leadership, African American women are prepared for the role of principal.

The driving force behind them is a desire for their students to be successful. Inspired to set a positive example for students, African American women principals do not allow discrimination of any form to prohibit their success. The implications of this study are applicable for the K-12 education realm and society in general. Cultural and gender sensitivity training should become a requirement for all educators on a continuous basis.

There is a need for an honest and open discussion on gender and racial bias' in education with regard to who holds those bias' and why.

DEDICATION

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

I thank God for this journey and the ability to see it through to the end. I dedicate this dissertation to my late grandmother Minister Claudia Dean Rumph, who constantly prayed for me and with me and always reminded her “Cream Puff” to rely on the strength of the Lord. To my three little Brown girls, Camille, Raven, and Makayla, this is for you. I am so blessed that I was chosen to be your mommy. Know that you were born to be great and have bright futures ahead of you, I look forward to watching you shine.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As a whole, society's view of school leadership is of a Caucasian male in spite of the statistics that indicate that Caucasian women largely occupy those leadership positions. African American women however have limited representation within the ranks of school leadership. The Schools and Staffing Survey showed that there were 89,810 principals in the 2011-2012 academic year (Characteristics of Public and Private Elementary and Secondary School Principals in the United States, 2013). Of that number 50.1% of those principals were women. Of that same number, African Americans made up 10.1 of all public school principals. Alston (2000) stated that African American women are still a serious minority even though women in general are moving into more powerful positions. The representation of African American women principals does not reflect the representation of African American women teachers in public elementary, middle, and high schools (Roane, 2013). This disproportion should make African American women leaders an asset and to some extent a commodity to the profession.

Problem Statement

For many African American women, both race and gender are central aspects of identity (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). In the field of education, African American women are stigmatized by both race and gender. This has created an unfortunate situation in educational leadership where African American women must examine their professional identity and be conscious of not losing their individual identities as African

American women. Public education at the K-12 level continually fails to acknowledge the intersections of race, gender and other characteristics of African American women that are different from Caucasian men (Berry, Jay & Lynn, 2010).

Crenshaw (1989) framed the idea of intersectionality from a legal perspective when the courts failed to acknowledge that when Black women experience discrimination, it is possible that it is both racism and sexism. She noted that when the courts dismissed cases for groups of Black women, they used cases that showed White women facing sexism and Black men facing racism to support those decisions. Crenshaw noted that feminist theory in general excludes Black women, but does so even more prominently “when White women speak for and as women” (p. 154). Black women are also excluded when Black male leaders claim to speak for the race, but fail to specifically speak for Black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Intersectionality has succeeded in examining gender through a multiracial lens (Burgess-Proctor, 2006).

African American women bring something different to the field of education. According to Reed and Evans (2005) two assumptions grounded in educational leadership are: African-American leaders have values and attitudes that differ from those of the White leaders and African-American female leaders are caregivers or ‘othermothers.’ African-American women principals tend to hold additional maternal-like qualities within their leadership, which are particularly important for African-American communities and schools (Reed & Evans, 2008). Studies of African-American women leaders support the notion that they believe their maternal instincts of caring and concern drive their leadership orientation (Loder, 2005).

These and other pressures connected to their gender are presumed to affect the ways that Black women perceive their leadership in tandem with their other personal identifications (Vinzant, 2009).

While the likelihood of encountering African American women principals has increased over the years, their professional experiences have not been examined as frequently in leadership literature. In the study of female principal experiences, Williams (2013) studied seven former African American female principals. His findings shed light on the notion that “research on African American female principals is vital and necessary to understand a growing population of professionals that have traditionally been omitted from leadership literature on two counts, by race and gender” (p. ix). Unfortunately, their experiences are not often discussed in extant literature.

Many African American women principals experience both racism and sexism in their professional environment (Jean-Marie, et al., 2009). Experiences in the workplace not only impact how a person feels about their career, but can also impact how they feel about themselves as professionals - their professional identity (Collay, 2006). Professional identity refers to what it means to be a professional within a given profession (Krejsler, 2005). In essence a person’s professional identity will change based on their profession or position within their profession at any given time. In every profession, people must identify who they are personally, who they want to be professionally and how the two intersect to allow them to be the best person for the job at hand. Women in general have to prepare themselves for the possibility that they will encounter sexism. African American women have to prepare themselves for the

possibility that they will encounter racism and sexism (Davis & Maldonado, 2015). These phenomena create tension between the personal and professional identities of African American female professionals.

As the number of women in leadership positions continues to grow, they are forced to examine their professional identities and the alignment of who they are and who they need to be in order to be successful against a structure that favors male leadership. Little is known about the development of professional identity in educators beyond school counselors. As educators ascend to the ranks of school leadership, the evolution in their career and the experiences of such will shape their professional identity. Male behavioral patterns are perceived to be the norm for leadership in education, which complicates the perceptions and effectiveness of a female leader. Male behavior patterns are associated with aggression and assertiveness, characteristics that are frowned upon in women as leaders. Pfafman and McEwan's research (2014) found that women's effectiveness is dependent on their ability to communicate based on gendered norms for males and being subordinate to males even when they themselves are the leaders. Women associate assertiveness and strength with professional identity (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). Unfortunately reception of that strength and assertiveness is taken differently from African American women compared to males and females of other races (Katila & Merilainen, 2002).

The culture in education emanates from belief systems in which men are seen as the most powerful. The belief systems work to preserve a culture through its practices that supports male privilege and power (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Failure to

appropriately address the structures, practices, and policies that support male privilege and power puts women at an immediate disadvantage to be seen as strong and assertive. This is an even larger burden to African American women as these characteristics carry a larger stigma when combining their race with their gender. It is imperative that we acknowledge how African American women principals are treated and address how they feel about it in order to understand the development of their professional identity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of racism and sexism on the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools.

Research Question

What factors impact the role racism and sexism play in the professional identity of African American women principals?

Significance

The significance of this study is that it explores the perspectives of several African American women principals based on aspects of themselves that are immediately identifiable, their race and their gender. The rationale for focusing on African American women versus all women of color is that African Americans have been and continue to be oppressed in our society based on race and women have been and continue to be degraded in our society based on gender. African American women bear the brunt of both forms of oppression and degradation and society is consistent in

failing to account for how the two circumstances impact this one group of people (Zinn & Dill, 1993).

This study is significant in terms of practice and policy. This research explored the experiences of African American female principals and helped to demonstrate their value and increased appreciation of the dynamic that African American women bring to the principalship. It is important that African American women are able to comfortably lead and become leaders. This study informs practices and policies in educational leadership that continue to impact African American women through race and gender discrimination.

Theoretical Framework

Despite increased attention to equity and social justice, African American women continue to be stigmatized by both race and gender (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). Critical Race Feminism is a theoretical framework that explains inequalities as a combination of race/racism and gender/sexism. This framework dispels the notion that the plight of African American women is either only racism or only sexism. It instead supports the intersection of racism and sexism as the reality in experiences of African American women.

Methodology

This phenomenological study used qualitative interview method to understand the impact of racism and sexism on the professional identity of African American women principals. Only African American women were interviewed, as they were the foci of this research study. There was no minimum number of years of experience

required, only that the participants were current principals or had been within the last three years in public K-12 schools.

Definition of Terms

Critical Race Feminism- a multidisciplinary theory that addresses the intersections of race and gender while acknowledging the multiplicative and multi-dimensionality of being and praxis for women of color (Berry, 2010)

Elementary - referring to K-12 public schools with grades K - 5/6

Majoritarian - views of the majority

Professional identity - refers to what it means to be a professional within a given profession and how a person feels about themselves as a professional (Krejsler, 2005)

Principal - the leader in a K-12 public school responsible for student academic achievement, student safety, teacher retention, public reputation, facility maintenance and a host of other duties officially and unofficially documented

Principalship - the tenure of being the principal of a school; responsible for all aspects of student safety, academic achievement, and social development

Secondary – referring to K-12 public schools with grades 6-8 (middle school) or 9-13 (high school)

Assumptions of the Study

1. Women in the study had an experience with racism and/or sexism.
2. Each participant would answer the questions honestly and would be thoughtful in their responses.

Limitations of the Study

1. Results of qualitative studies are not generalizable.

Delimitations of the Study

1. The only participants selected for this study were women who were African American and were either currently principals or had been within the last three years.
2. The participants came from the southeastern United States.
3. The primary factors to be considered in analyzing data were racism, sexism and professional identity.
4. Participation was limited based on the number of people who agreed to participate in the interview.
5. Participants were not selected at random. Purposeful sampling was used.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of experiences with racism and sexism on the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. This chapter gave a brief background of the topic, the problem statement, purpose of the study, the research question, significance, theoretical framework, methodology, definition of terms, assumptions, limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter two provides an overview of areas of literature relative to this research to include Critical Race Feminism, professional identity,

professional identity of principals, being a principal, being an African American principal, challenges of race and gender, and intersection of race and gender.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of racism and sexism in the development of professional identity of African American women principals in K-12 public schools. This study focused on the interconnecting of four phenomena: African American women, racism, sexism and professional identity. There is a wealth of literature on the phenomena individually. This review will shape the need for literature that intertwines them together.

Critical Race Feminism

Critical Race Feminism provided the theoretical framework for this study. This theoretical framework is under the paradigm of Critical Race Theory. Exploring the topic through the Critical Race Theory lens was important because it focuses on issues of power and domination and the study is narrated from the perspective of the exploited and oppressed (Glesne, 2011). Critical race theory is a critique of legal studies, which includes race analysis and civil rights theory and is the foundational theory in the development of Critical Race Feminism (Carter, 2012). Bell's work in the establishment of critical race theory serves as the essential framework for Critical Race Feminism (Carter, 2012).

In the article, *Other People's Daughters*, Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010) state, "Black women deserve a theoretical framework that combats racial and gender oppression and forms multiple standpoints" (p. 19). Critical Race Feminism, unlike feminism and Critical Race Theory, considers both race and gender. Adleman and

Enguidanos (1995) suggest that the term “feminist” is “frequently attributed only to white women by women of color and white women alike” (p. 173). Critical Race Theory indirectly focuses more generally on experiences of African American men and women. Critical Race Feminism is the result of the merging of critical race theory, black feminism, critical legal theory, and feminist legal theory. Critical Race Feminism is a branch of critical race theory that gives voice to the experiences and perspectives of women of color that was omitted in critical race theory (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Critical Race Feminism conveys the reality that (a) experiences of women of color are different from men of color and White women and (b) women of color face discrimination due to the intersections of race, class and gender (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). Critical Race Feminism combined creates the platform for a philosophical position that focuses more specifically on African American women.

Critical Race Feminism not only uses racism and race to explain inequalities, there is also contention that gender and sexism play dominant roles as well (Croom & Patton, 2011/2012). The need for a theoretical framework such as Critical Race Feminism is impelled through the concept of “white solipsism” defined by Adrienne Rich, a contemporary white feminist, as a “tunnel vision which does not see nonwhite experience or existence as precious or significant” (Yorke, 1997, p. 21). There is a tendency to discount the complexity of being African American and a woman. The argument of whether the plight of African American woman is of sexism or racism, allows an oversight of the intersection of the two, which is the reality for African American women (Bhavnani, 2001). Critical race feminists assert that understanding the

collective experiences of women of color can help to unveil the systemic effects of racism and sexism (Croom & Patton, 2011/2012).

Professional Identity

Professional identity is not a stable entity; it is complex, personal, and shaped by contextual factors (Clarke, et al., 2013). Lasky (2014) defines professional identity as “how professionals define themselves to themselves and others” (p. 901). A key component of professional identity therefore is how each individual professional sees herself based on what she has experienced. Madileng (2014) defined professional identity as a “construct of the professional self that changes throughout a career as the professional experiences different institutional cultures and interacts in different social spheres” (p. 2027). Jebril (2008) found seven themes related to professional identity that provide a clearer context: (1) professional identity construction is a process, (2) professional identity development includes an ongoing integration of internal and external factors (3) professional identity is evolving, (4) professional identity is a developmental process that evolves through one’s life and starts at childhood, (5) professional identity is adaptive, (6) professional identity is highly correlated to personal identity and (7) professional identity is a learned phenomenon. Professional identity is a changing facet of a person’s identity and begins developing as soon as we begin understanding the world around us. Krejsler (2005) noted that there is a link between personal identity and professional identity. The attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences that define a person’s self-concept also define one’s professional identity (Slay & Smith, 2011). Both are shaped by experiences and environment. This is

particularly true for developing one's professional identity. Environmental cues of what is rewarded, highlighted and promoted mold the professional identity a professional assumes.

In a society that privileges maleness, women often times struggle to navigate the demands placed on them and are required to develop strategies for negotiating tensions surrounding professional identities (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). For instance, research shows that workplaces favor assertiveness, which is associated with masculine communication (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). Telling women to be more assertive is counterproductive and shifts the onus of responsibility for structural and cultural problems onto the individual by requiring homogeneity in professional identity within a profession (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). Further assertive women run the risk of being inappropriately and disrespectfully labeled according to Pfafman and McEwan (2014).

Women are forced to negotiate the tensions surfaced by assuming the attribute of assertiveness in the context of male-centeredness. For women, it is more than just adopting a manner of behavior that may or may not be consistent with their identity because it can be difficult for women to know when to highlight and when to hide aspects of their personal identity. This results in alternating between the various facets of themselves to craft and manage their professional identity (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). Women are expected to teeter between being womanly which is viewed through a lens of the level of politeness and being a professional, which is viewed through a lens of being assertive. Katila and Merilainen (2002) found that the workplace is an arena where sexuality is constructed and affirmed based on stereotypical notions of what

women should be. It is an internal struggle to be who you are expected to be without losing who you are. Telling women to simply be more like men is counterproductive (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014).

It is an internal struggle to be who you are expected to be without losing who you are. Telling women to simply be more like men is counterproductive (Pfafman & McEwan, 2014). This phenomenon is even more complicated for the professional identity of African American women whose race as well as gender is different than the Caucasian male who serves as the standard bearer. Harlow (2003) states, “Black women are confronted with the burden of negotiating femaleness and blackness” (p. 357). The happy medium is difficult for African American women due to the complexity of them not being the dominant race or gender. Their experiences are continuously two-fold. They not only have to be like men, but Caucasian men. African American women who encounter racism and sexism have experiences that will shape their personal identity and their professional identity.

Professional Identity of Principals

Professional identity development first requires that principals be in control of their self-concept (Mpungose, 2010). Day, et al. (2016) acknowledges that gender, race, class and other group factors influence professional identity in principals. They described identities as being “improvisational, emphasize human agency, and are dynamic” (p. 2).

Mpungose’s 2010 study examined to what extent professional life stories of principals reflect the development of professional identity. His findings were that in

developing their professional identity, principals combined what they knew they were capable of delivering with what their students, parents, teachers, staff, and supervisors expected from them. Factors of professional identity discussed by Day, et al. (2016) are whether it is individually constructed or culturally and historically determined. The way that principals respond to immediate cultural and socio-political environment provides for them about themselves and supports the development of professional identity (Mpungose, 2010). For principals their professional identity is negotiated through interactions with stakeholders, students, parents, teachers, and supervisors. The lived experiences of principals professional identities are negotiated through how they live, work, and enjoy life outside office. Professional identity for principals does not rely on what others say about them what they say about themselves, it is mostly dependent on what they call themselves throughout experiences and how they tell their stories. Crow, et al. (2016) found that personal identity formation for principals might vary depending on life experiences, emotions, reform expectations, school culture, and other influences. The severity of either extreme of these experiences can affect the sustainability in professional identity development for principals.

Being a Principal

In the 1999 article, *Urban Schools: Forced to Fail*, Crosby wrote “For those of us who work in schools, it is...the best of times and the worst of times” (p. 299). Sixteen years later the state of education is still in the same place with the school leader at the helm of turning the worst into the best for their teachers and students. The school leader is ultimately responsible for student academic achievement, student safety, teacher

retention, public reputation, facility maintenance and a host of other duties officially and unofficially documented.

Even though the leader of a K-12 school has had a variety of names: principal, headmaster, deputy principal and head of school; the history of the principalship embodies the consistency of the principal always being accountable to persons or entities outside of or inside of the school. Outside of the school building principals can be accountable to the local community, school board, or the superintendent of the school district. In other instances, accountability is to those inside of the building. In either instance, principals must lead according to the rules set up for them by their supervisors while maintaining the trust and confidence of those they supervise.

Initially the principal was a “principal teacher” who was in charge of basic administrative duties that kept the school running, while still actually being a classroom teacher. Late in the 1800’s this position lost the teaching responsibility attached to it and it “became primarily a manager, administrator, supervisor, instructional leader, and increasingly a politician” (Kafka, 2009, p. 321). As the position gained more administrative responsibility; regulations, expectations and professional requirements increased (Kafka, 2009). Principals now have greater autonomy with decisions and the direction of their schools but also have more rules governing their actions. The level of autonomy granted is often dependent upon the leadership style of the district superintendent.

It is noted throughout the literature that principal preparation programs are lacking the components necessary to prepare principals to be successful early on in their

career (Portin, 2000; Lattuca, 2012). “How to be a principal” is a missing component of these programs. Many aspiring principals who complete school administration programs leave with little to no problem-solving or survival skill preparation due to programs providing hypothetical, rare or unrealistic situation exposure in the curriculum (McGee, 2010). This lack of preparation has led to a large number of educators with principal certification, but lacking the desire to enter the administrative field, fearing lack of preparedness (Meiksins, 2010).

According to Lattuca (2012), the most critical component missing is training on the reality of the “social side of administration” (p. 224). The basic concepts of finance, facilities, instruction and management are standard in the majority of principal preparation programs. However, teaching administrators to balance the demands of the job with topics such as personal health and self-preservation, and managing family and a life outside of school are lacking elements. Each can impact job performance and success.

The lack of ability to master the socialization aspect of an administrative role can outweigh one’s ability to apply theoretical knowledge related to the infrastructure in a school (Lattuca, 2012). For example, Meiksins (2010) and Lortie (2009) described the principal as a manager who must motivate, but cannot reward employees with traditional methods. This makes skills in the socialization of being a principal critical to their professional success as it is one of the only ways to influence performance (Meiksins, 2010). Knowing how to lead and motivate are key to a successful principalship

experience (Allen, et al., 1995). Those who are good at socialization are able to push others to perform their best without losing themselves in the process (Bloom, 2003).

Being a principal necessitates support both professionally and personally. Being an assistant principal or other leadership experience within the school building and/or district can be part of the preparation process. Those experiences are adequate for grooming towards being successful in a principalship and play a huge role in understanding the needs for personal support. These experiences, however, may not prepare an individual for the professional support that is also needed to be successful as a principal (Enomoto, et al., 2000). Mentorship is not only important in support of a principal in the position, but also key in many situations in providing the opportunity for progression to a principalship (Allen, Jacobson & Lomotey, 1995). Mentoring is the professional support that is indispensable for principals.

Being an African American Woman Principal

According to Reed and Evans (2005), in the pre-Brown era, “all Black schools” embodied the essence of racial identity, common social space, and collective understandings between educators and the community. Tillman (2008) found four themes in Dr. Asa Hilliard’s work relative to African American principals and educating African American children: (1) leadership that facilitates providing African American students with high-quality educational services, (2) culturally proficient leaders who are knowledgeable about African culture, (3) going beyond minimum competency standards, high levels of educational excellence to raise student achievement, and (4) fighting against the inequitable structures in education, such as standardized testing

which is the most prevalent. These themes were directed specifically to African American school leaders and provide a blueprint of what should be tackled to appropriately educate African American children. African-American principals show that they often act in ways that aid African-American students' navigation through the hierarchical social system (Reed & Evans, 2005).

It is not uncommon for educators, community members, and others to posit that a predominantly African-American school needs an African-American principal (Reed & Evans, 2008). While this can be true in some instances, it minimizes the positioning of African American principals into schools based on the race of the majority of the students in the school and/or community. African American principals have continuously demonstrated their ability to perform just as well regardless of the racial composition of a school (Reed & Evans, 2005). In all actuality if African American principals are strategically placed in schools to be voices for African American children, they are most likely needed in schools where there is smaller percentage of African American students. Regardless of the type of leadership assignment, Black women principals face sexism as well as racism in their practice as educational leaders (Alston, 2005; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Loder, 2005; Skrla, 2000; Vinzant, 2009). A 1996 study by Burgin indicated that the prejudice experienced by women as both African American and women is not unexpected or unusual. The participants were conscious of what impact their race had on their work and career goals and that gender bias was quite evident in some situations. Burgin stated that for African-American female educational administrators "the construction of their identities is very much grounded in the political

realism of today” (p. 31). Vinzant (2009) stated that, “Black principals have overcome significant personal obstacles to achieve their current positions, one of which is the expectation that they may fail because of their race. This expectation is magnified in situations where they assumed positions of authority over whites and others. In their rise to educational leadership, black principals have had character building experiences involving race and education. They have seen the inequality and injustice that plagues the American schools system along the lines of race and class” (p. 19).

Reed (2012) stated that “once in the role of principal, it is clear that school leadership for women tends to be framed differently than for their male counterparts” (p. 41). With the majority of public school principals at the secondary level being Caucasian men (McGee, 2010), the African American woman principal presents a visual alternative to the norm. Allen, et al. (1995) found that African American administrators “must constantly view themselves through the eyes of both White society and the African American community” (p. 412). For instance, studies reveal that sensitivity and consciousness are characteristics of African American women principals that result in them being viewed as racial "insiders" (Foster 2005; Gooden 2005). At the same time many view them as ‘outsiders’ in terms of their gender and leadership abilities (Coleman 2003; Rusch 2004). Tillman (2004) discovered that alternative forms of decision-making implemented by African-American principals provided benefits to students and also offered alternative definitions of organizational effectiveness in schools.

Not recognizing varied characteristics of African American women leaders is a manifestation of those views and constitutes a failure to account for history,

discrimination and bias against women and African Americans (Croom & Patton, 2011/2012). The practices accepted and established as norms in education have largely emanated from majoritarian views and often fail to include the varied characteristics of African American women leaders. Majoritarian views have been held since education was formalized in America – a time when education was reserved for wealthy white males (Vinzant, 2009). As education was once only for white males, so was the principalship. Breaking the mold and allowing the faces of African American women to be seen as the norm is a continued struggle. “Overcoming the white male power structure has presented enormous challenges for African American women seeking leadership position” (Christie, et. al, 2007, p. 9). Being African American is a barrier in itself, but being a woman as well is even more of a barrier as “leadership has long been equated with maleness” - Caucasian maleness in particular (Alston, 1996, p. 4). As we continue to accept that Caucasian males are the standard in the principalship we support an environment where “women are continuously held up to a male countered paradigm of management and leadership” (Alston, 1996, p. 2). An unfair comparison as the leadership styles of men and women differ. For African American leaders an additional layer of difference is in style, which adds to the difficulty in normalizing them under a majoritarian view.

Being a principal who is a woman and African American in any K-12 public school district owns a complex set of experiences and resulting perceptions. The lack of African American women leaders in education has created a “norm” or pattern in education that has been hard for African American women to significantly break

(Williams, 2013). The difference in experiences for African American women and Caucasian women is that African American women's experiences come with a history of discrimination and oppression of their race that was once the law and now continues "unofficially" (Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

Existence as an African American woman in educational leadership is difficult (Wiggins & Williams, 2010). The scarcity of their quantity stands out, and also attracts attention so their presence is hard to miss. The expectations are high, the standards are high, and resilience is expected no matter the obstacles or circumstances. Yet, an essence of invisibility is apparent (White, 1995). African American female principals are seen in practice, but not heard (James & Farmer, 1993). The lack of being heard is evident in the sparse amount of literature that celebrates, rewards, and understands the difficulties of being, maintaining and succeeding as an African American woman principal.

Challenges of Race and Gender

In multiple roles African American women are expected to exert leadership, and they do. From homes to schools African American women carry those values and that inner drive to lead. The research on specifically African American women principals is not as abundant as the literature on women in general. The available literature includes research regarding how women acquire and experience principal positions, experiences they have with exerting their authority in their schools, and stereotypes and misconceptions of being a woman leader. Within this, there is literature embedded with experiences of African American women however it is often times generalized to either

a minority experience or a woman experience. There is much room for some deeper understandings of their experiences.

In some instances, the African American woman is grouped with Caucasian women to understand gender perspectives. At the same time the African American woman is also grouped with African American men to understand race perspectives. These groupings fail to allow others to see the dynamic of the African American woman and her double removal from the majority. The barriers created either empower African American women to more diligently seek opportunities to prove and confirm their belonging and ability, or frustrate them to the point of giving up. African American women who are in and aspire to obtain leadership positions face multiple barriers. They experience the effects of both sexism and racism (Alston, 1996). The societal vision (Caucasian and male) of a school leader does not correspond with the general nature of a woman, and being an African American woman yields a candidate who is even more detached from that societal vision (Adams & Hambright, 2004). Beyond race, gender presents another leadership obstacle for African American women principals in a society often hostile to the concept of women leaders (Vinzant, 2009). Knowing this, African American women may interpret the meaning and process of their leadership differently ultimately affecting how they lead.

There are several factors both internal and external that contribute to the way African American women experience the “principalship.” Little is known with regard to if the double jeopardy of being both African American and woman is unique to districts where these women are the Minority or if the “double jeopardy” exists

regardless of the place where African American women are in leadership positions. At the school level, issues of race and gender are critical within the leadership ranks (Reed, 2012). Lane-Washington and Wilson-Jones (2010) noted in their research that “women still must learn to function in a male dominated leadership culture, and it becomes difficult for many women to break through and succeed against the glass ceiling” (p. 2). The term “glass ceiling” is used in much of the literature about women in leadership. Credit for using the term often has been given to Gay Bryant who first used the term around 1985 (Reisch, 2014). Glass ceiling is used to describe how women progress into leadership roles but confront invisible barriers along the way (Reed, 2012).

Women administrators encounter glass ceilings in their leadership progression with regard to both positions and pay. African-American women have only recently begun to tap the glass ceiling of the principalship (Loder-Jackson, 2009). That male-dominated society is not only male, it is also Caucasian, adding race to the gender difference that African-American women must compete against (Mertz & McNeely, 1998). As the face of leadership changes, it is imperative that aspiring leaders understand the context of their existence relative to their surroundings. Although the numbers are increasing, African American women are still the minority in educational leadership as principals as well as in district level positions (Shorter-Gooden, 2004).

The presence of African-American women in educational leadership roles is not new to the education profession (Alston, 2005). As the number of African American women in leadership positions continues to increase, particularly the principalship, there is a growing perception that challenges faced by this specific group can be categorized

into either a racial issue or a gender issue. The recognition of the two perspectives that impact African American women is still under the surface of most literature available regarding African American women principals. Reed's 2012 study concluded that African American women principals are still living with the challenges of race and gender. This study found African American female principals were not taken as seriously as their male counterparts as evidenced by disrespect from parents and dismissive actions from some of their superiors and colleagues. Participants attributed the challenge to their authority to their race and gender. There is a need for a more aggressive approach to improve conditions for female principals of color.

African-American women principals may confront racism and sexism from both their Caucasian and African-American constituents and be burdened with role expectations above and beyond those expected of other administrators (Reed & Evans, 2005). Reed and Evans (2005) found that in some instances, African-American female principals who lacked adequate mentoring and support in their leadership experienced a sense of hopelessness for their school and students. The desire to be seen as simply a school leader versus an African-American woman school leader in some situations is difficult. Reed and Evans (2008) found that "school leaders moved between identities based on the way being Black was defined and by whom" (p. 497). Anyon (1997) describes this as social distancing. Social distancing occurs as African-American leaders attempt to separate themselves from aspects of their racial group traits that they do not like or affiliate with. According to Orr, Young, and Fuller (2008) female candidates complete educational leadership degrees at a rate of 67% yet progress to the

principalship is much slower than men. With our societal perception that women are less than men, it becomes a struggle for some to see women in leadership roles and for women to even see themselves effectively in leadership (Reed, 2012). Since there are so few women in leadership, there could be a lack of fit between the job and attributes more often associated with women (Reed, 2012). The characteristics women principals bring to their leadership practice are typically undervalued (Reed, 2012). Like women leaders in the larger society, women principals are almost encouraged to distance themselves from any of the intrinsic leadership qualities that may be viewed as feminine (Reed, 2012).

Reed and Evans' (2005) study revealed that identity is not fixed; it is fluid and context-specific. Depending on the context, certain aspects of social identity became relevant, while other receded to the background (Verkuyten, 2005). Women tend to hide characteristics that may make them look less competent than men (Sczesny, 2003). Women tend to feel that they need to prove themselves more than men in leadership (Reed, 2012).

The contribution of African American women principals is not uniquely recognized. African-American educators contribute to the professional learning community of other educators by bringing race into the educational discourse of schools (Reed & Evans, 2008). The specific experience of the Black female administrator is denied when literature infuses the experiences of African American women under "women and minorities" (Reed, 2012; Tillman, 2004) and when female leadership is categorized under teacher leadership as opposed to administration (Reed, 2012).

Intersection of Race and Gender

The status difference between men and women is blatantly documented through scholarly research. There exists literature that focuses on the perspectives and experiences of women. Unfortunately, the majority of research and discussion occurs around the perspectives and experiences of women are of Caucasian women. Descriptions of women in scholarly literature encompass characteristics associated with educated White women (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). African American women experience life in ways generally differently from Caucasian women. There continues to be a disconnection in understanding the plight of African American women in educational leadership. Women of color are mired at the bottom of American society according to every social indicator (Wing, 2003).

The feminist movement fails to proportionally exert the issues unique to African American women. At the same time the movement to combat racism of African Americans in general overall fails to exert the issues unique to African American women. Wing (2003) uses the term “multiplicative identity” to describe the concept that women of color are not white women plus color or black men plus gender. The identity of women of color must be multiplied together when analyzing the nature of discrimination against them” (pg. 7). Most theories and legal perspectives have allowed women of color to fall between the cracks. This inevitably makes African American women voiceless and invisible when they are characterized and classified solely under race-based or gender-based analyses (Wing, 2003).

Gurin and Pruitt (1978) noted that the combined effects of racism and sexism in the workplace subject the African American woman to more discrimination than Black men or White women. African American women have faced challenges of a two-fold nature in the workplace for centuries. Not only have they been discriminated against based on race, but also based on gender. In 1997, Bell wrote, “Black women have always been the salvation secret of our people. It is time for them to assume formally the positions they have always held-in fact” (Wing, 1997, p.xix). The problem has been recognized, but there has been a lack of progressive movement in consistent honest conversations and action in changing experiences of African American women in the workplace. Unfortunately African American women do not always have the luxury of relying on the notion of hard work as the sole key to advancement in society (Croom & Patton, 2011/2012).

In the article, “*The Influence of Racism and Sexism in the Career Development of African American Women,*” it was noted that there needs to be continued work in ensuring that the number of African American women in education is reflective of the teaching population. As aspiring African American female educators see more of themselves in educational leadership they have more perspective in the reality of attaining these goals for themselves. Leather (2001) noted that African American women in principal positions should share their experiences and stories with others aspiring to the same level. Gaining access to positions is a common problem for African American women although they have a great deal to offer public schools as leaders (Cubillo & Brown, 2003 & Leather, 2001). Evans and Herr (1991) stated that, “there is

general agreement in the literature that, despite efforts, racism and sexism do exist. There is evidence to show that the internalization of attitudes associated with these biases has a negative effect on the career aspirations of the African American woman” (pg. 5).

A phenomenological study conducted by Davis (2012) on the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women captured the lived experiences of women in academia and business. Davis found that all eight women in the study felt that “differential treatment based on their race and gender in their specific organizations influenced their leadership development” (p. 168). Davis concluded that (1) African American women must be viewed as more than a means to satisfying quotas and enforcement of diversity practices and (2) policies and environment must be in place for African American women to establish positive relationships with mentors at higher levels within the organization who could influence their success.

Davis and Maldonado (2015) explored the intersectionality of race and gender in the development of African American women leaders. The study results showed that their experiences with race and gender informed their leadership development. These women were in an atmosphere where they regularly had to prove themselves, even though they were doing their jobs correctly. The five themes that emerged from the study were 1)predestined for success, 2)sponsorship from the unexpected, 3)double jeopardy of race and gender, 4)learn how to play the game, and 5)pay it forward.

There is a struggle of power that is taken away when discrimination comes into play. Unfortunately for African American women this is quite frequently. It becomes

difficult to characterize the discrimination against African American women. The perpetrator could be focused on race, gender or both, there's really no way to tell and it all looks so different, yet is so common. There is legislation in place, purposed to address race and gender inequalities, but it is geared in separate categories with one being toward women equality and the other being racial equality, again failing to account for persons who simultaneously deal with both. Evans and Herr (1999) studied the influence of racism and sexism in the career development of African American women. They noted that the achievement gap between African American women and White men and women is widening (pg. 3). They concluded that African American women have developed a coping system to survive the effects of dual discrimination. Most likely along the lines of avoiding working environments that will be potentially harmful, ultimately lowering or altering their career goals.

Summary

Although the percentages of African American women principals' are increasing, the relevant literature to highlight the specifics of that growth is not increasing. The discussion and prevalence of women as leaders continues to miss the small, but very unique component relative to African American women. As women in general rise and break barriers, there are still some that remain difficult for African American women to break. African American women who are in and aspire to obtain leadership positions face multiple barriers. They experience the effects of both sexism and racism (Alston, 1996). Looking at what happens to African American women as they acquire and

maintain principal positions may dampen the perceived progression of women in education. This could be why this literature is less appealing to some researchers.

The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of racism and sexism in the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. This chapter discussed issues that inform racism, sexism and professional identity for African American women principals in education. This included discussing Critical Race Feminism, professional identity, professional identity of principals, being a principal, being an African American principal, challenges of race and gender, and intersection of race and gender. Chapter three will describe the research design used in this study. It will give the rationale for using phenomenology and qualitative interviewing and the data collection and analysis. The participant criteria and interview questions will be discussed as well.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of racism and sexism in the development of professional identity of African American women principals. This chapter describes the research question, qualitative paradigm and methods, participants, study design and data analysis.

Research Question

What factors impact the role racism and sexism play in the professional identity of African American women principals?

Qualitative Paradigm & Methods

To answer this question, phenomenology, a qualitative methodology was used in interviewing the participants. The methods used for participant selection, data collection and data analysis are detailed in this chapter. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), qualitative research is “understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (p. 6).

When a study involves marginalized populations as a result of racism and sexism, qualitative methods are considered appropriate to capture their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Sue et. al., 2008; Thomas, 2004). Quantitative methods limit the opportunity to encompass the intersection of race and gender thereby supporting the need for qualitative methods (Thomas, 2004). When choosing to use qualitative research, the researcher will determine that a need exists to explore the topic with a specific group of

people (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Choosing to conduct a qualitative research study is also influenced by the researchers personal preferences and experiences (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Comfort level with a certain type of research and/or experience with the topic, similarities with the participants or simply wanting to know more about a topic than current existing research can impact the researcher's choice to use a specific research approach.

The research methodology for this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology is a type of qualitative research where the researcher attempts to understand how individuals experience a phenomenon (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). When using a phenomenological research design, the researcher endeavors to understand a single phenomenon by collecting information and describing essential aspects of the participants' experiences (Clark & Creswell, 2010). Phenomenology focuses on individual, person-to-person interactions (Gay, et al. 2006). By gathering data directly from the participants, the researcher is able to describe the meaning of the data from the perspective of the participants (Gay, et al. 2006). Events and experiences mean different things to each individual and those differences must be respected and valued. The role of the qualitative researcher is to strive to understand and interpret each participant's experiences and perspective based on what events and defining moments have occurred in their lives and what those experiences mean to them.

Phenomenology is useful when making an effort to describe a common experience and give meaning to it for the people who experienced it (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The purpose of using phenomenological research in this study was to

gain understanding into each research participant's inner world of personal awareness by understanding what her experiences mean to her (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Johnson and Christensen (2008) stated that phenomenological research has the following characteristics:

- 1) the researcher's purpose is to determine the essence of a single phenomenon
- 2) the researcher sets aside personal experiences about the phenomenon and collects data from other people who have experienced it
- 3) the researcher analyzes the data for significant statements and meaning about the phenomenon
- 4) the researcher reports themes, description, and the essence of the phenomenon

Participants

Qualitative research methods employ purposeful sampling, by intentionally selecting individuals (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Qualitative researchers seek to develop an understanding of a central phenomenon and this can only be acquired by selecting participants who can best help the researcher understand the phenomenon (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2010). Gay, et al. (2009) states that, "selecting participants who are very similar in experience, perspective, or outlook produces a narrow, homogeneous sample and makes data collection and analysis simple" (p. 137).

Initially, the researcher planned to select participants using the researcher's personal network of African American women educators. Having been a teacher, assistant principal and principal in the southeastern United States for the last fourteen years has allowed the researcher to develop a large network of educator associates. The

original recruitment plan was adjusted and instead the researcher contacted persons with membership in organizations that would most likely have African American women principal members to request email addresses of potential participants. Once the email addresses were received, the researcher emailed the potential participants for participation in the study.

Once IRB permission was obtained, the researcher emailed organizations in the eastern United States who had members that met the study criteria. The criteria to be a part of the study was that the person identified as female, identified as African American, and was a current K-12 public school principal or had been a K-12 public school principal within the last three years. The email contained a brief overview of the study and a request to respond via email if interested. Once the researcher received email notification or verbal communication from persons interested in participating, the participants were be contacted via phone to schedule an interview time (Appendix C). A follow-up email was sent to confirm the interview date and time (Appendix E).

There were eight participants, seven of which were current principals. One participant had just left her first principalship less than a year ago. She had been an elementary principal in for six years. There were two current elementary principals, each in their 3rd principalship, one having been in her current role for three years, the other for four years. There were two middle school principals, both in their second principalship, and one having been in her current role for five years, the other for eight years. There were three high school principals, one in her first principalship with two years in her current role, one in her second principalship for fifteen years, and one in

her fourth principalship for two years. Five of the participants worked in urban schools districts and three of the participants worked in rural school districts.

Study Design

IRB permission was obtained prior to recruiting and conducting any interviews (Appendix D). Interview questions were developed based on gaps in literature on the phenomenon being studied.

Interviews

Data was collected through face-to-face and phone interviews. An interview for data collection was used in lieu of other methods for the knowledge production that occurs through professional conversations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To learn more about the phenomena there was an interactive process that occurred between researcher and the participant. Most interviews were approximately one hour, and none of the interviews exceeded an hour and a half. Each interview was semi-structured which allowed the researcher leeway to ask more probing questions based on each individual participant's responses. Semi-structured interviews provided a rich and thick description of the participant's experiences of the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994): racism, sexism, and professional identity. Follow-up questions were asked during the interview for additional information as needed based on each participant's responses to the interview questions.

Each interview was digitally recorded. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher word for word and pseudonyms were used for each participant that were

determined prior to the interview. Follow-up interviews were not conducted as adequate information was obtained in the initial interviews.

The following statements and questions were used to guide the interview.

1. Tell me about your journey in the field of education.

What was your decision making process in deciding to become a principal?

2. What have been some of your successes in the principalship? (adapted from Burgin, 1996)

Describe how being African American played a role in these successes.

Describe how being a woman played a role in these successes.

Help me understand how you know your race and gender were factors in these successes.

3. What have been some of your challenges in the principalship?

Describe how being African American played a role in these challenges.

Describe how being a woman played a role in these challenges.

Help me understand how you know your race and gender were factors in these challenges.

4. How do you negotiate the difference between being a principal versus being an African American woman principal? (adapted from Beckford-Bennett, 2013)

How do you maintain your identity as an African American woman? (Owens, 2001)

5. Tell me about some experiences in the principalship that you feel were positively impacted because you are an African American woman. (Burgin, 1996)

Give me some examples of experiences that you feel were negatively impacted because you are an African American woman.

6. Describe how you view yourself as a professional? (Jebril, 2008)

In what ways does your race contribute to this view? (adapted from Jebril 2008)

In what ways does your gender contribute to this view? (adapted from Jebril 2008)

7. Describe how your professional identity is impacted by your experiences as a principal.

In what ways do experiences specifically tied to your race impact your professional identity?

In what ways do experiences specifically tied to your gender impact your professional identity?

8. Based on your experience, what recommendation would you give other African American women principals regarding race, gender and professional identity?

What differences in recommendations would you give based on level (elementary, middle or high)?

Data Analysis

Analysis of the interview responses allowed the researcher to identify themes based on the participants' responses. After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher read through each interview. The researcher provided each participant with a copy of their interview transcription through the method they indicated at the end of their interview. The researcher requested that the participants provide any additional information or clarification of their responses within one week of receiving the transcription. There was no additional information obtained from the participants after the initial interview.

The researcher then began the data analysis. Constant comparative method was used for the data analysis. Constant comparative involved the constant interplay among the researcher, the data, and the developing theory (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). The researcher read through each interview a second time, underlining and highlighting words, phrases and quotes that seemed to have relevance to racism, sexism, professional identity, and the principalship. The researcher then listed patterns that emerged from the data, key phrases, repeated experiences and responses that matched other participants' responses during the reading of the data (Gay, et al., 2006). The researcher coded the data by categorically grouping the words, phrases, and quotes and then labeled each group as a code as a way to indicate patterns and meaning. Once data from all of the interviews had been coded, the researcher analyzed the codes and grouped them as categories. Several categories were formed, and were based on how the codes could be grouped together to insight a deeper meaning of the data. Finally, the researcher analyzed the categories to develop themes based on how the categories could be grouped to make meaning of the intersection of race and gender and how it impacts professional identity.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is shown through the researcher identifying methods for credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and confidentiality.

Credibility

According to research guidelines by Cohen and Crabtree (2006) credibility in research involves the following methods: prolonged engagement, triangulation, peer

debriefing, and member checking. Ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in ensuring trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

To ensure the credibility in this study the researcher used triangulation in the study. Triangulation is the use of multiple data-collection methods, multiple sources, multiple investigators, and/or multiple theoretical perspectives (Glesne, 2011). The researcher achieved triangulation by having multiple sources, 8 participants. The data collection for the study was done through interviews of participants who met the participant criteria. Once the participants completed the demographic questionnaire, the researcher began the interview. The participants selected were from different levels, elementary, middle and high school, and from different school districts.

Prolonged engagement was achieved by spending sufficient time in the field to learn or understand the culture, social setting, or phenomenon of interest. The researcher achieved prolonged engagement through the interview process with the participants. Peer debriefing was a method used to ensure credibility. Peer debriefing involves others in the process to provide balance and accountability for the researcher. A peer debriefer helped uncover taken for granted biases, perspectives, and assumptions on the researcher's part (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Peer debriefing is most effective when the debriefer is disinterested in the research topic. The peer debriefer was a former doctoral classmate who had successfully completed the program. The peer debriefer reviewed the data analysis and the findings.

The data was verified with each participant by performing member checks. Once the data was collected through the interviews, the interviews were transcribed. The

researcher then gave a copy of the transcribed interview to the participant to review, verify, and provide any additional information that was not discussed in the interview. The participants were advised to confirm the transcription within one week and provide any additional information that was relevant to what was discussed in the interview. This also gave the participants an opportunity to clarify any responses that did not completely reflect their experiences and perspectives. Responses from transcriptions not received within the allotted time frame from the participants were recorded as “accepted as transcribed.”

Transferability

To ensure transferability in this study the researcher provided demographic information about the participants (with alias’) and included the maximum data from each interview and provided the reader with a broad and in-depth picture of each participant’s experiences and background.

Dependability

The researcher ensured dependability of the study by providing thorough step-by-step details of the research design, research methods, data collection process, and data analysis so that the study can be duplicated with fidelity.

Confirmability

Trustworthiness was attained through triangulation and member checks prior to analyzing the data. Providing a thick description was a way of achieving this type of external validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confidentiality

Following all IRB protocols, including informed consent of each participant, insured confidentiality. Each participant was given a pseudonym to lessen the risk of any identifying information. These pseudonyms were determined prior to the interview and was kept on a password protected document separate from the transcriptions and recorded interviews. Transcriptions were kept in a locked file cabinet at the home of the researcher. The researcher and advisor had access to the transcriptions with the pseudonyms. These documents were not shared with anyone else. Once the dissertation is published, the voice recordings will be destroyed, along with the document with the participant's identifying information. The transcriptions will be kept on file for further research, as the researcher plans to revisit this topic in academia.

Risks and Benefits

The researcher did not identify any risks to participation in this study. There was a possibility of risks that the researcher did not foresee, however no risks were identified, during or after the study was completed. The researcher used personal email addresses to provide an additional layer of protection in confidentiality. State employees do not own their email accounts and district personnel can access them at will. There is no benefit for individual's participation in this study.

Researcher Subjectivity

Although it is difficult to do, researchers must suppress their personal assumptions when using the phenomenological method. This is imperative during both the collection and analysis of the data. I have a bias when dealing with this topic

because of my own experiences. Remaining aware of my own biases and keeping my experiences in the background helped in the interview process to not lead the participants in a particular direction with their responses. In an effort to minimize bias or assumptions of understanding from the participants, I refrained from sharing any of my professional experience information other than I had been an educator for 14 years and that I had administrative experience at the elementary and high school levels.

In 2004, I began a School Administration Master's degree program. I had no intention of becoming an administrator any time soon and was simply pursuing my degree so I would have it when I got ready to move into administration, which in my mind would be 10 or so years later. I experienced a difficult year of teaching, which prompted me to change school districts where I encountered an outstanding leader, mentor, and educator. This person saw leadership skills in me that I thought were just necessary attributes of being a good teacher. Within my first year in the new district, I was quickly groomed to be an assistant principal while completing my internship at the school during the fall and spring semesters.

I began my administrative career in 2007 and was one of only a handful (less than five) of African American assistant principals in a district of over 35 schools and my principal was only the third African American principal in the district's history. It remained that way until 2010. The year 2010 was deemed "the year of the Black female" unofficially and indirectly by many of my Caucasian female colleagues. This particular year a number of assistant principal, principal and district level leadership appointments were made to African American women. Male colleagues in the district

shared with myself and other African American women administrators that the Caucasian women in the district who were seeking promotions felt that they did not get many of the appointments that year because they were not “Black females.”

Although I received my call for my first principalship at the last minute, I was pretty confident that I would get a school. I was the only African American person who was interested in becoming a principal that year, to my knowledge there were no other minority applicants from within the district. There were less than 20 total African American administrators (principals and assistant principals) in a district of over 35 schools and within the last three months five African American women administrators had left the district. As the district continued to talk about the need for more minority leaders, I felt like the odds were in my favor.

As I have researched my topic I reflected on the support and conversations from the other African American women principals with whom I worked. We discussed situations, outcomes, and obstacles, but never openly discussed experiences of racism and sexism. It was simply understood that things happened for some of us the way they did because of who we were (African American and female) and not to others in the district because of who they were (Caucasian). This topic was so interesting to me because I did not know how I would put into words my experiences with racism and sexism, but I knew what it was and that I experienced it. I desired to know what other African American women experienced in their roles as principals and give it a voice. I wanted more insight on how the experiences impacted them on the professional journey

as I knew several of my African American women colleagues were consistently looking for positions beyond the district, and some beyond the field of education.

Chapter three described the research design used in this study. It gave the rationale for using phenomenology and qualitative interviewing in addition to the data collection and analysis processes. The participant criteria and interview questions along with strategies for ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability were also described. Chapter four will discuss the findings of the study, with detailed information about the participants from their interviews. The themes that emerged from the study were not in line with what the researcher expected to find from the study. The researcher expected that the impact of racism and sexism would be very negative on the African American women principals, ultimately resulting in a strong desire to leave their roles or the education profession as a whole.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this research study was to understand how racism and sexism impact the development of professional identity in African American women principals. To develop this understanding the following research question was posed: What factors impact the role racism and sexism play in the professional identity of African American women principals?

There were eight participants in this study and each participated in an interview where they discussed their experiences or lack thereof with racism, sexism and how those experiences impacted the development of their professional identity. Each participant was a principal in a K-12 public school or had been a principal within the last two years. The framework of Critical Race Feminism was integral in understanding the uniqueness of each participant's experiences.

Table 1: Participant Overview

Name	Carolyn	Mary	Freda	Jasmine	Valerie	Audrey	Diane	Kelly
Current Position	Elementary 3 years	High 2 years	High 2 years	High 15 years	Elementary 4 years	Middle 5 years	Elementary 6 years	Middle 8 years
# of principalships	3	1	4	2	3	2	1	2
Type of district	Urban	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban
Size of school	500-1,000 students	500-1,00 students	More than 1,00 students	More than 1,000 students	Less than 500 students	500-1,000 students	500-1,000 students	500-1,000 students
Colleagues	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women	Mostly Caucasian women
Students	Mostly Caucasian	Multiracial	Mostly Caucasian	Multiracial	Mostly Caucasian	Mostly African American	Mostly Caucasian	Mostly African American
Racism has had an impact	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sexism has had an impact	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Degree	Has Doctorate	Working on Doctorate	Has Master's degree	Has Master's degree	Has Master's degree	Has Doctorate	Has Doctorate	Working on Doctorate

Participant 1 (Carolyn)

Carolyn is currently an elementary school principal. She has been in her current position for three years. This is her third principalship. She has only worked at the elementary school level as a principal. She works in an urban school district and her school has between 500-1,000 students. Carolyn's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is mostly Caucasian. She indicated that racism and sexism have not impacted her professionally. She holds a Doctorate degree.

Participant 2 (Mary)

Mary is currently a high school principal. This is her first principalship. She has been in her current position for two years. She works in a rural school district and her school has between 500-1,000 students. Mary's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is multiracial. She indicated that racism has impacted her

professionally and sexism has not impacted her professionally. She is currently working on her Doctorate degree.

Participant 3 (Freda)

Freda is currently a high school principal. She has been in her current position for 2 years. This is her 4th principalship. She has served as middle school and an elementary school principal, this is her second high school principalship. She works in an urban school district and her school has more than 1,000 students. Freda's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is mostly Caucasian. She indicated that racism and sexism have impacted her professionally. Freda has a Master's degree.

Participant 4 (Jasmine)

Jasmine is a currently a high school principal. She has been at the same school for the last 15 years. This is her second principalship, her first principalship was at an elementary school. She works in an urban school district and her school has more than 1,000 students. Jasmine's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is multiracial . She indicated that racism and sexism have impacted her professionally. Jasmine has a Master's degree.

Participant 5 (Valerie)

Valerie is currently an elementary school principal. This is her third principalship. She has been in her current role for four years. She has only served at the elementary level. She works in a rural school district and her school has less than 500 students. Valerie's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is mostly

Caucasian. She indicated that racism and sexism have not impacted her professionally.

Valerie has her Master's degree.

Participant 6 (Audrey)

Audrey is currently a middle school principal. This is her second principalship. She has been in her current role for five years. Her first principalship was at a high school. She works in a rural school district and her school has between 500-1,000 students. Audrey's colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is mostly African American. She indicated that racism and sexism have impacted her professionally. Audrey has a Doctorate degree.

Participant 7 (Diane)

Diane was an elementary school principal. That was her first principalship. She has been removed from her principal role for less than a year. She was a principal for six years. She worked in an urban school district and her school has 500-1,000 students. Diane's colleagues were mostly Caucasian women. Her student body was mostly Caucasian. She indicated that racism and sexism have impacted her professionally. Diane has a Doctorate degree.

Participant 8 (Kelly)

Kelly is currently a middle school principal. This is her second principalship. She has been in her current position for eight years. Her first principalship was in an elementary school. She works in an urban school district and her school has between 500 – 1,000 students. Her colleagues are mostly Caucasian women. Her student body is

mostly African American. She indicated that racism and sexism have impacted her professionally. She is working on her Doctorate degree.

The participants were very open in sharing their experiences and seemed to have a firm grip on why they experienced what they experienced leading up to, and within their current principalship. Each participant talked about how they began in the field of education and who or what influenced them to pursue the principalship. They discussed the positive and negative experiences of being an African American woman in education. The participants described experiences that they felt were a result of racism, sexism, a combination of racism and sexism, or normal within the territory of being a principal. Much of the discussion described experiences with statements indicating that they had certain experiences because they are African American or because they are women. Feelings about racism, sexism, and professional identity were not unique to the women based on experience, geographic location, or district make-up by students or colleagues. The impact was the same regardless of experience or other factors that contributed to how they experienced racism and sexism in the principalship.

The data was analyzed using constant comparative method. The researcher analyzed the data and identified codes and categories, and then themes for this study were revealed through the analysis. The following themes emerged from the data: (a) narrow and unfounded judgment and (b) motivated to succeed for their students' well-being. Each theme was interpreted based on the research questions and purpose of the study.

Table 2: Summary of Themes

Theme 1: Negative and Unfounded Judgment		Theme 2: Motivated for Succeed for Their Students' Well-being	
Categories	Codes	Categories	Codes
Awareness	Others' negative perception of me	Characteristics	Ability
	Identity		Personality
Emotions	Strength	What Drives Me	Inspiration
	Encouragement		Discrimination

Theme 1: Narrow and Unfounded Judgments

The participants described what they perceived other people to think of them. Judgment was one of the experiences that was universal to all principals, but in this research, the participants who were all African American women, experienced judgment differently. They discussed a different level of judgment that they felt was not based on what they actually did or were able to do as professionals in their roles. This judgment was based on their race and gender combined, which made it unique to the African American women in this study. The judgment that was experienced was across the board as it came from parents, teachers, other principals and supervisors.

This theme emerged from the following two categories: awareness, and emotions. The codes that emerged to define the category of awareness were others' negative perception of me, and identity. Many of the statements from the participants were transferable across different codes based on the raw statement and how it was used in context. Under this category, the codes "others' negative perceptions of me," and "identity" show the women's sense of awareness of what goes on around them, how they internalize it and what actions are a result of their awareness.

Awareness

Awareness is an internal knowledge that something is happening; being aware is a sensory type of consciousness in which a person feels that something is right or wrong and/or good or bad (Merriam-Webster, 2016; Roeser & Peck, 2009). Through their awareness of the environment around them, the participants were able to draw conclusions about what they experienced. Awareness as described by the participants is the ability to know that something exists. The participants identified that they knew that racism and sexism existed in their professional environments, because they either experienced it themselves or because they had seen others experience it. Through their experiences, the participants were aware that negative and unfounded judgment exists in their environments. They expressed awareness of negative and unfounded judgment through reactions to their presence as African American women in their professional environment as well as reactions to how they functioned in their environments. The participants described being perceived as angry when they spoke up to advocate for their schools and being perceived as incompetent when they didn't perform the same as

principals of different races and/or genders. The essence of being aware does not suggest understanding, simply an inherent ability to draw inferences from your experiences (Peters, 2003). Valerie said, “Depending on the situation, I have to remind myself not to react to situations as an African American woman, but as a principal who is principal for all students.”

Mary said,

I'm true to myself but what I find is that, in my real life I have to be very careful what I say. How I say it, who it's said to because people can be very sensitive...like you're true to yourself but you're also mindful of how your expressiveness and your advocacy comes across to somebody who is just not used to dealing with a minority leader or black woman leader.

In the theme “narrow and unfounded judgments,” the participants were able to have an awareness of perceived judgments about them without understanding why, thus the descriptions of unfounded judgments. Mary expressed her awareness of how what she says, is interpreted based on the recipient's past experiences. Being careful of what she said and how she said it because of her audience displays her awareness in her environment. Many of the other participants shared her feelings regarding being conscious of their environment and audience when handling various situations.

Others' Negative Perceptions of Me

The first code under the category awareness is “others negative perception of me.” There was a level of awareness that allowed the participants to identify a negative perception within their environments. Perceptions about any person or situation is a direct result of your awareness of the environment you are in. In this code, "others" was described by the participants as “anybody that's not a Black woman,” “White people,”

“Caucasian people,” and “anybody that doesn’t look like me.” The participants were aware that perceptions about them as African American women exist. They have identified these perceptions to be negative based on their experiences.

Mary said,

I think sometimes, we're naturally perceived as being aggressive or being angry or mad at something and so when you say things, you have to be very mindful of, am I being overly expressive, am I being overly passionate because the perception could be, she's mad and you're just passionate and very expressive.

Many of the participants described not being able to express passion in their roles due to being perceived as angry and aggressive. They explained that going against the grain in anyway was defined differently for them than it was for their colleagues.

Audrey stated, “I just have to be a different person and it’s uncomfortable, you know.”

Maneuvering through trying to express yourself, but not too much, or in an accepted way proved to be a general reality for the women.

Judgment occurred within this code in the context of the participants’ awareness of how they are judged. To describe any person in words such as “categorized as angry,” “mad at something,” and “naturally perceived as aggressive,” is negative in general. These were the words the African American women principals used when they discussed how they believed other people perceived them to be in their role as principal. Seven of the eight participants discussed being perceived in a negative light as something they were consciously aware of in their environment. They attempted to censor their actions and conversations as to not give confirmation to the negative perception. Valerie said, “I am poised and always keep my cool in the midst of stressful situations. I remain calm and always encourage students, staff, and parents that all will be okay.”

Carolyn said,
I'm very calm I'm very leveled. I could be very, very upset about something but most people would never know it and I do that on purpose because I don't want to lose control. When you lose control then you get this stigma about you that you don't know how to control your emotions.

Losing control in the eyes of the participants is to get upset about anything in their environment and showing that particular emotion or any emotion that could be perceived as anger. The women discussed being very cautious in how they decide to express themselves regarding different situations because they were aware that they would be perceived as "the angry Black woman." Jasmine said, "If you're a strong African American female or any strong female you're either angry and aggressive or you're incompetent in most circles. There's rarely ever any in between." It was apparent that perceived incompetency in addition to anger and aggressiveness played a role in the perception of negativity about the participants in their environments. This awareness of negative perceptions had an impact on who the African American women have to be while in their roles as principals.

Kelly said:
I find myself being a little bit more like, for lack of better words a regular principal who's considered to be maybe a white female or a white male. And I say that because I might take on certain characteristics that I observe white females or white males taking on. I might do things that they might do that are uncharacteristic for what I would do if I were just being a Black female. And I recognize that because I'm like hmm, I would do it this way for real for real, but because I'm in this role let me take the Eurocentric approach.

There were struggles that came with being an African American woman principal. While the participants had an awareness of the perceived judgment against them, they also dealt with what follows the negative perceptions. Seven of the eight

women identified their struggle in the role through phrases like “not accessible for me,” “despite the negativity,” “odds against me,” and “people are looking for me to mess up.” Discrimination was one of the areas in which African American women principals dealt with what follows negative perceptions. Their awareness of what discrimination was coupled with how they believe they are perceived negatively set the stage for struggles in their experiences as African American women principals. Seven of the eight women discussed discrimination based on race through statements such as “majority viewpoint,” “type-casted,” and “marketed negatively.” Viewpoints of African Americans were considered minority viewpoints because African Americans are not the dominant race. The participants discussed negative perceptions and reactions when they had opinions that were not majority opinions regarding how they ran their schools. The women also discussed how African Americans are negatively portrayed in the media and how that had an effect on how other races interact with them as well as how negative marketing adds to negative perceptions about African American women.

The women discussed experiences where they were made more aware of discrimination based on their gender through statements such as “women will not be as tough,” “women usually can’t handle this,” and “that’s more of a masculine perspective.” Women in general were perceived to be weaker than men. The African American women principals dealt with perceptions of weakness and negative perceptions of who they are as African Americans. Mary said, “I feel like a lot of my experiences with people underestimating me, as a woman leading a tough school, and as the first minority in a tough school has made me work that much harder.” Valerie’s

input on this topic was relevant as well, “One has to work extra hard to prove that females can do just as well, if not better, as their male counterparts.”

There was consistency as the women shared how they maintained their professional demeanors and attempted to thwart opportunities for perceived negative perceptions of them to have substance. In doing so they put on a face for the job and maneuvered through how to express themselves without really expressing themselves. Two of the eight women discussed people using their negative experiences with other people of color to assume the worst from them in their role as principal. The experiences that they observed involving other African American women principals also substantiated how discrimination manifested towards them.

Identity

The second code under the category awareness was identity. Identity is the attributes and principles that make a person who they are. These attributes and principles ultimately make people different from each other. A person’s identity can be shaped from characteristics they identify with, to beliefs they have about themselves, their situation, or their environment (Clarke, et al., 2013). In defining your identity, an awareness of your environment is important as external factors can shape your identity. The women discussed being aware of how others perceived them and being sure of their identity in knowing who they are and what they are able to do.

The qualities that the women described about themselves were based in their beliefs about themselves as African American women and professionals. In the discussion there was a sense of knowing who I am, even though I believe others think

differently about me. The participants talked about how they feel about themselves even though they felt they were perceived in a negative light. It was stated, “I know who I am regardless of what they think of me.” The women discussed feelings that they are “automatically discriminated against” based on their appearance and Freda stated, “unfortunately, that’s not something I can hide,” referring to herself being a Black woman. Appearance becomes a part of your identity as people sometimes use physical traits in describing their identity or exercising their beliefs. The women discussed being very aware that what they look like could garner the negative perceptions that they already believed existed. There was a constant awareness of negative judgment that the women expressed throughout their discussion of different experiences and how they identified themselves based on their environment.

When asked about some of their successes in the principalship, the participants expressed the experiences through their personal identity. There was discussion of values, which is a foundational piece in defining your identity. In the foundation of identity the women spoke of colonial structures and history and how those pieces made them have to be who they are. Because of how they understood their history and their awareness of discrimination and negative perceptions in their current roles, their values led them to be upstanding professionals not just for themselves, but for everyone who fought for them to be able to have these opportunities. The participants saw themselves as visionaries, having high expectations, and being representatives for their race and gender. Many of them discussed being role models and having an awareness that they

were not only being judged against their favor, but that little girls and young professionals of color would be looking at them as well.

The women's responses showed that they were confident in their ability to do the job and that positive attributes about themselves resonated strongly within. There was expression of being African American women in their role and Kelly shared that she identified herself as a Black woman who "happens to be a principal," and called herself a "woman doing the work." All of the women identified themselves as African American or Black women and discussed being proud of who they were. Audrey said, "I think being Black has allowed me to be able to better relate to the diverse backgrounds of the Minority students and even their parents."

The women expressed knowing they have what it takes to be in the principalship and to do it well, but that in even the most confident woman doubt is sometimes able to find a place in her thoughts. The women expressed that the pressure of being consciously aware of negative perceptions, dealing with discrimination, and the awareness that they are not able to truly express themselves, leads to doubting if they could really do it. The women talked about being aware of negative perceptions and that made it difficult to trust in their environment. They spoke of experiences where they were made to feel like they were a part of and valuable to their schools and districts, but it was short lived as there was always doubt, and lack of trust. Being in an environment and feeling a "false sense of belonging" combined with uncertainty in the level of trust to give because of past disappointments can take a toll on your identity as expressed by the participants. All of the women discussed that their identity had to be strong, to

counteract the doubt that is regularly felt. Freda said, “A judgment is made long before I open my mouth or have an opportunity to work with people. So it sometimes makes me doubt how successful I can be.”

Emotions

Emotions is the next category that helped to develop the theme narrow and unfounded judgment. Emotions are feelings that harvest internal and external reactions to an experience (Wang, et al., 2014). These feelings can either be immediately expressed or suppressed and delayed depending on the situation. For the African American women principals in the study, in different situations, many times their emotions were suppressed and delayed due to their awareness of the audience present. If the situation called for an immediate reaction, the expressed emotions were not always reflection in their true state. In other words, the participants remained aware of their environment and made sure to respond to experiences in ways that would not perpetuate a negative perception. The true emotions of the participants were often reserved for spaces where they felt comfortable and that they could be themselves without fear of judgment. One of the participants discussed being a part of multi-cultural groups outside of work to be able to express herself and be “authentically me.” Other’s discussed being intentional about displaying their heritage outside of work and maintaining social circles with other African American women.

Diane said,

I am unmoved by what happens to me in situations, my response is crisp and above board, until I am out of sight and earshot and then I have to let it out, you cant keep emotions bottled up and whether you share them with who needs to hear them or with who you need to hear it is fine. Keeping it bottled up

indefinitely is a recipe for disaster and an easy way to take you out of the character they expect to see.

Loneliness is an emotion that the participants expressed feeling as a result of the narrow and unfounded judgment. In this category the participants make statements such as “I was the only one,” “sometimes I feel bad,” and “I felt very alone.” Carolyn discussed being one of just a few African American women principals, “Initially, the thought of having to go to the district office for anything felt very uncomfortable, but as they began hiring more African American females, it felt better.” The participants discussed frustration in not being able to truly express their emotions and the root of those emotions beyond the experience itself as well as limited colleagues to convene with who may share their sentiments. “I wasn’t real to myself” is how one of the participants described not being able to truly display her emotions. The participants believed there were negative perceptions about them so they shied away from being emotional beings, which in general is a woman’s nature. After various experiences, their emotions became less about what they felt in the moment and more about what informs how they feel and why. For the participants who felt that “Black people are marginalized and ostracized,” race is what informs their emotions beyond the actual experience. For the participants who felt that women are still trying to “break the glass ceiling” in authentic leadership capability for women, gender informs their emotions.

Strength

The first code in the category emotions is strength. Being strong could be sometimes understood as not having and showing emotions. For the participants,

however, strength is expressed from the participants in their feelings about themselves. In discussing experiences of racism and sexism, the African American women principals discuss the necessity of feeling strong. As discussed by the participants, there was strong emotion in the women knowing and leaning on their own strength in the midst of their experiences. The participants used strength as somewhat of a shield in how they worked internally to counteract their initial emotions of anger, doubt, and frustration. They spoke of encouraging themselves in their leadership experiences using phrases such as, “strong African American female,” “I know I’m strong,” “I have to be strong,” or “strong willed Black female.” The women used the need to be strong to offset other genuine emotions for the sake of keeping their emotions in check. Within the discussions all of the participants described themselves and/or their leadership style using the word strong, along with their race and gender.

The participant’s internal and external reactions to their experiences were contradictory. Kelly discussed African Americans never being financially redeemed from pre and post-colonial structures that support racial discrimination. This is an instance where race informs emotions in different experiences, however the emotions are not expressed externally as they are truly felt. Freda discussed getting unwarranted suggestions from people who don’t take the time to get to know her or her situation. Feelings of negative perceptions produce feelings of anger and frustration, however the emotions are not expressed as they are truly felt. The participants discussed internal feelings of mistreatment and being put in unfair situations, but their external emotions always exerted strength.

Encouragement

Encouragement is the second code in the category emotions. Encouragement is what motivates a person to do something. Encouragement is usually positive affirmations and motivation that drives people to do their best. Encouragement typically touches on your emotions causing you feel a sense of responsibility to accomplish whatever you are being encouraged to do. For the participants in this study some of their encouragement was external from people who saw something in them that they didn't see in themselves. In other ways the participants were encouraged internally to uphold what had been accomplished before them to allow them to be in their current position. Two of the participants discussed knowing what their ancestors had encountered for them to even have this opportunity and not wanting to let them down, Audrey stated, "I look at other African American women who are professionals and I want to make sure I can live up to the standard they have set for me. I want to make them proud, which is why I believe it is imperative to maintain a level of professionalism at all times."

One piece of the encouragement described by the participants came from outside, by those who inspired the women to become principals or at least begin the administrative pathway. Statements by the participants regarding encouragement ranged from being told, "you can do better," "regardless of your race," "regardless of your background," and "think about your influence." Two of the African American women principals identified that they themselves saw their leadership potential. One of the participants was inspired by her female principal in elementary school and wanted to be a principal ever since. The other participants discussed being encouraged by their

principal to get into an administration program. These women did not immediately heed the encouragement to begin the path to the principalship and required some extended encouragement. This encouragement contributed to the strength that each of the women spoke of in their interviews as they discussed the value in someone outside of themselves seeing their value and ability to contribute. In these experiences the women felt positive emotions and used those emotions to drive them towards their goals.

Another piece of the encouragement the participants discussed was an internal sense of responsibility to not mess up. The women discussed knowing the environments they were walking into and what the outcome could potentially be as they were not always treated fairly as African American women. They expressed a charge from within to work to be the best no matter what. Audrey states, “African American women must always remember who they are and remember they must work twice as hard as their White counterparts.” This opinion was expressed by three of the participants and was a part of the internal encouragement that drove them to stay strong and succeed.

Theme 2: Motivated to Succeed for Their Students Well-being

The participants described their motivation to succeed for their students’ well-being. External satisfaction is a benefit that is for someone or something outside of themselves. Many times people want to succeed to settle an internal battle or to prove to someone else that they can do what was thought they could not. The African American women in this study are motivated to succeed for the benefit of students. They rally that claim throughout their interviews and speak selflessly of doing what they do and enduring the stresses of the principalship for the benefit of their students. They speak of being the

principal to all students regardless of race or gender. There is also a large amount of discussion of setting an example of professionalism to young girls of color and showing them that they can be whoever they want to be with hard work and dedication.

This theme emerged from the following two categories: characteristics, and what drives me. The codes that emerged to define the category of characteristics were ability, and personality. Under this category, ability and personality show how characteristics go beyond simply identified traits and become critical in recognizing what type of satisfaction a person is working towards in their successes.

Characteristics

Characteristics are the elements that make up who a person is. Characteristics are used to describe or identify a person and highlight their differences from others, whether good or bad. Characteristics tend to provide more of a superficial description of who a person is based on appearance, unsubstantial interaction, and societal expectations of roles. The first recognizable characteristics that can be used to describe the participants are African American and women. In their recognition of this reality, the participants discussed how they strive to take advantage of opportunities for their colleagues to know more about them than what they look like.

Jasmine said,

Well I'm always aware that people see my race and gender first. I am very much aware of that so I try to sometimes put people at ease and sometimes let them know we have some common ground...obviously that's something you have to approach very carefully.

The African American women principals discuss characteristics of being women, being African American women, and being principals. They discuss the tug of war that

ensues internally to deal with the complexities of being African American women principals, while being deliberate to not show any external sign of that struggle. Beyond physical characteristics there are attributes about African Americans that will be described through discussion on the codes ability and personality.

Ability

The first code in the category characteristics is ability. Ability is defined as having the skills, or aptitude in a specific area to perform a task. Ability can be assumed of another person and ability can be recognized in oneself. Ability as discussed by the participants was discussed two-fold. On one hand ability was discussed in the acquisition of the principalship in being placed in tough schools and based on assumptions, that typically an African American woman has the “ability” to handle large minority populations with low performance and high discipline issues. The other side of ability was discussed by the participants in them knowing that they had the ability to do whatever it takes to be successful. The women discussed knowing what they were capable of and discussed showing those abilities in the context of being an African American woman. They spoke as if they had no other option than to perform at a high level in their roles as African American women principals. All of the participants discussed that “you have to” in reference to work hard, be professional, and maintain a heightened level of awareness to be successful. The participants discussed their abilities in the context of being able to do certain things as an advantage to their students and would ensure student success, which is how the African American women principals felt satisfaction in their role. Mary stated that, “I think sometimes as women, we feel like we

have to work that much harder to prove ourselves in certain leadership roles that may be more so dominated by males. I think sometimes we're always looking to prove that we're just as strong, we're just as smart, we're just as capable." Experiences with sexism drove the discussion on women and needing to prove their competence according to a male standard.

The participants' ability is an area that came into question when the participants were challenged based on being women in their roles. Although the participants spoke of being placed in their specific roles because of abilities they were assumed to have, they were still challenged on their ability to succeed because they were women. All eight participants spoke highly of their own abilities in decisiveness and completing or accomplishing tasks above and beyond what is required. Freda said, "I believe African American leaders have always had an unwritten understanding that we must achieve above and beyond..." There was a high level of confidence in discussing being instructional leaders and ensuring the success of all students, not just students of color. Valerie discussed her confidence in her abilities and characteristics that she wanted to be identified with, "I am efficient, upbeat, organized and firm in the direction of every aspect of my school. I always do what I say I'm going to do and my staff knows that my attitude is (pause), I just pull the best out of everything so they always see positivity from me." The characteristics that describe the African American women principals are rooted in their ability to do and be. As the participants discussed experiences of racism and sexism, they continuously leaned on what they knew they were able to do and how those abilities were a defense in working through discriminatory situations. Diane

discussed how she pulled something positive from everything, “I feel like they want to see me down, I have to show them the light in everything, my faith keeps me grounded and grateful in this job.”

Personality

Personality is a set of qualities that makes a person who they are. Personality is constructed in a person’s emotional understanding of what makes them who they are. A huge part in the personality of the women is in knowing who they are versus who they must be in their roles. They attributed racism and sexism for defining the who they must be in their roles. Only one of the African American women participants spoke of being able to completely be herself in her role as principal. Carolyn was often invited to be a part of things (meetings, committees, task force) that she knew other African American women principals were interested in, but they were never approached to be included, yet she always was. She said, “I feel like I’m highly respected among my colleagues as well as individuals that I support. I’ve never really felt like I had to kind of play a game to show or prove who I am. I feel like I just, I’m true to who I am, you know, what you see is what you get. Either take it or leave it.

All of the participants spoke about being a woman, and being African American as a part of their personality. Three of the eight participants discussed their children and/or spouses with regard to priorities outside of work that contributed to being African American woman. The participants spoke of the responsibilities of being a woman as “person who takes care,” and taking on “traditional roles.” Separate from being a woman, the participants spoke about being the experience of being an African American

woman. They used phrases such as: “impacted by my Blackness,” “you can’t do as an African American,” “African woman’s capacity,” “had to do with my color,” “how my race applies,” “because of what I look like,” “see beyond our race,” and “regardless of your color.” The participants discussed experiences and indicated that they felt their race and gender impacted how they experienced their role as principal. They shared how they were deliberately ignored, excluded, and made to feel as outsiders in their own buildings. They also indicated how lack of support in certain instances was attributed to them being women and assumed to make a big deal out of small things. However they noted in contrast, that when a male principal brought up the similar concerns they were legitimized and then handled.

The women discussed leadership as part of their personality. The sense of leadership in each African American woman principal in the study was intense as they spoke of their leadership qualities being seen within themselves, by someone else or what they thought leadership should be. Once the participants recognized their leadership abilities, it inherently began to define who they were as African American women principals. They discussed the stakes for accepting the calling of leadership and that in understanding the responsibility and struggle of leadership, you must become different than you were in other roles. Jasmine spoke about leadership being less about dotting i’s and crossing t’s and more about how you treat people. The participants discussed their ability to lead and continued desire to lead even through discussion of experiences of racism and sexism. A sense of obligation to students, their race and their gender was most important. The African American women principals continuously

spoke of their desire for external satisfaction through doing what they do for their students.

What Drives Me

The second category in this theme motivated to succeed for their students' well-being is "what drives me." Drive can be described as being compelled to do something. The participants in this study describe being compelled to be successful at their jobs for their students. Two codes emerged from the data that support this category, inspiration, and discrimination. The women described two sides of what drives them, one being positive and being negative, but ultimately both driving the participants to be put their best foot forward in their roles as principals. The positive side of what drives them is inspiration and the negative side is discrimination. All eight participants discussed factors of drive using the phrases "ready to do the job I signed up for," "my desire to," "God called me for," "I knew I wanted," and "contribution to my job." Many of the African American women principals felt an accountability in the role as a spiritual calling, a desire to uphold what has allowed them to be in their current role, and overwhelmingly a commitment to students.

Inspiration

The first code in the category what drives me is inspiration. The women all described their inspiration for continuing in the principalship as students. The reason African American women principals wanted to want to be successful was for the students. Each participant also discussed inspiration at several points throughout the interview referring to kids, students, or children. Phrases such as "role model for female

students,” “underserved students,” “ensure that students of color are included,” and “they’re watching me,” and “instill the same thing in them” were used by the African American women principals describing their passion for student success.

Discrimination

The participants discussed racism and sexism throughout their interviews, describing how they experienced discrimination. The women experienced racism, when they were made to feel that being African American was less than being Caucasian. The women experienced sexism, when they were made to feel that as women they couldn’t do their jobs as well as men. Much of the discussion was driven by how these experiences made them feel and ultimately how these experiences drove them to perform in their roles as principals. They spoke about what they perceived was negative judgment against them and how that made them feel about themselves both personally and in their role as principal. Freda spoke of how she felt growing up, “I was smart, my sister was super smart and you know we just knew that people thought less of us as girls, as black girls and as poor black girls. And that was never an excuse for you know anything that happened, but it was our reality.” In essence the result of experiencing racism and sexism for the African American women principals is a drive to succeed in spite of.

The women discussed that even when they experienced racism and sexism that they had learned to use the anger, frustration, and disappointment to focus on their students. They all asserted that the students were the most important part of their job

and that what they experienced in a sense was part of the territory of being an African American woman principal. Most of the participants believed that all African American women principals experienced racism and sexism in the same ways they did. These experiences of discrimination drove the women to succeed, because their success in turn equated to student success. Student success was prominent as being the reason why success was important. For the African American women principals who experienced racism and sexism a common sentiment was to not allow experiences of discrimination to discourage them from being successful for their students. Diane stated, “This is not about me, it’s about my students, I’m the adult, I can’t let my hurt feelings or people treating me unfairly stand in the way of their greatness.”

Professional identity was developed in the participants through the intersection of their race and gender. Being African American women principals allowed for unique experiences that can be attributed to race and gender combined. The interview question responses support the notion that African American women principals experience the principalship differently, but because of the combined oppression there is a small outlet for understanding and reconciliation. Critical Race Feminism serves as the framework through which African American women can validate their experiences and make meaning of them. Bias’ can manifest through racism and sexism and are then magnified when the other characteristic comes into the equation. Women experience sexism, but the context of sexism is magnified when the woman is African American, thus drawing race into the situation. African Americans experience racism, but the context of racism is magnified when the person is a woman, thus drawing gender into the situation.

Whether the initial discrimination is either racism or sexism is irrelevant, what is imperative to understanding the experiences of African American women is that ultimately the intersection of racism and sexism is the reality in the principalship. Ignoring the intersection of race and gender in the experiences of African American women principals only allows continued discrimination against them.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

A phenomenological research design was used to understand the impact of racism and sexism on the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. Viewing the data through the lens of Critical Race Feminism provided an understanding of how racism and sexism combined must be addressed when discussing principalship experiences of African American women. Alexander-Floyd (2010) described intersectionality as a means to “capture black women’s multidimensional experience of oppression” (p. 814). Experiences of oppression based in the intersection of racism and sexism can impact the professional identity of African American women principals. While professional identity is formed based on how people feel about themselves as professionals, those feelings develop from experiences in their professional environments. Loneliness, disappointment, strength, and commitment comprised a discourse of professional identity for the women in this study.

This study found that being both female and African American influenced the participants’ experiences. The experiences stood at the intersection of two forms of discrimination: racism and sexism. The impact of those experiences was evident in the development of the professional identity of the women who participated in this study. The findings of this study can be best interpreted through some of the principles in Critical Race Feminism. Berry (2010) identified one principle as, “racism is ordinary and normal in American society” (p. 23). Within the context of this study, narrow and

unfounded judgment is based in racism and was described as just the way it is. Negative perceptions that lacked foundation were experienced as a form of racism that impacted the development of professional identity in the African American women principals. The experiences of racism compelled the participants to put on a façade of who they believed people expected them to be instead of truly being themselves to avoid the narrow and unfounded judgment leveled by peers, supervisors, and parents.

Relative to sexism, Reed (2012) stated that, “Once in the role of principal, it is clear that school leadership for women tends to be framed differently than for their male counterparts” (p.41). Sexism in general is existent, but is discussed less prominently in the principalship because there are so many female principals. This neglect of properly acknowledging sexism for African American women principals becomes another missed opportunity to combat the intersection of racism and sexism for African American women. Katila and Merilainen (2002) discuss gendered roles in the workplace as institutionalized and a staple to the way things are and have been. Similar to racism, sexism is inherent in our society and a relevant factor in the lives of African American women. This study found that the experiences of African American women principals could more often than not be attributed to both race and gender.

Pfafman and McEwan (2014) conducted a study on how women learn effective communication styles. They found that gender as well as experiences plays a role in communication style. They also found that assertiveness and strength are associated with professional identity for women. The findings in this study are consistent with the literature in how the women identified themselves. The African American women

principals described themselves professionally as strong and assertive, but because of their role they would shy away from showing too much assertiveness. The participants believed that their assertiveness would be perceived as being angry. Pfafman and McEwan's (2014) study identified that their colleagues could wrongfully label women who exhibit assertiveness in the workplace. The participants discussed the necessary strength in being African American women principals and that because of sexist beliefs about women and their professional abilities, they had to always appear to be strong.

Intersectionality

Carter (2012) discussed another principle in Critical Race Feminism: "multiplicative identity" which was first introduced by Adrien Wing. Multiplicative identity focuses on the intersectionality of race and gender, components of identity that premise the need for Critical Race Feminism. The intersection or combined effect of race and gender was found to be a factor in the development of professional identity of the participants. Experiences rooted in the intersection of race and gender support the notion that women of color need to adapt in order to survive in a racist and sexist society (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). This is a form of double jeopardy resulting in African American women principals dealing directly with racist or sexist environments or adapting their authentic selves in preparation of entering this environment. African American women must frame racism combined with sexism in the principalship, by presenting themselves as a raceless and genderless to fit into an environment created with a Caucasian male as the standard. There is no opportunity to be authentically

yourself when the scope of societal expectations does not support the realness of the African American woman that you are.

The findings of this study are similar to the findings of Davis and Maldonado's 2015 study on the intersectionality of race and gender for African American women in their leadership development. The themes that emerged from their study that align with the themes in this study were: 1) sponsorship from the unexpected, 2) double jeopardy of race and gender, 3) learn how to play the game, and 4) pay it forward. This study relates to the themes narrow and unfounded judgment and motivated to succeed for their students' well-being through the components that emerged to develop those themes. The participants discussed the double jeopardy of race and gender and learning how to play the game in narrow and unfounded judgments. They discussed sponsorship from the unexpected and paying it forward regarding motivated to succeed for their students' well-being.

Similar to the findings in Reed's 2012 study, this study found that African American women principals are still living with the challenges of race and gender. Challenges of their authority through dismissive and disrespectful behavior were attributed to their race and gender. Through the data from this study, the theme "narrow and unfounded judgments" emerged. The findings of this study are similar to what the existing literature says about experiences of racism and sexism of African American women in the principalship. In this study, the African American women principals attributed many of their experiences to them being African American and female. One of the participants stated that her experience was less about her being a woman and more

about her being an African American woman. Crenshaw (1991) discussed how African American women fall between issues of race and issues of gender, and how failure to acknowledge one without the other continues to be a disservice to all Minority women.

Professional Identity

African American women bring their whole selves and all connected experiences into their roles as principals (Berry, 2010). In knowing who they are as African American women, the participants recognize, that as principals who they genuinely are may not be warmly received in its natural state. The impact of racism and sexism in the development of professional identity can go one of two directions. The first possible impact is on career aspirations. Evans and Herr (1991) found that experiences of racism and sexism for African American women may change career trajectory based on perceived opportunity structure and influence further career aspirations. The second impact is reflective of the findings of this study, motivation. Whether or not there was some internal desire to succeed was not relayed from the African American women principals in this study. They did however, discuss being motivated to succeed for their student's well-being. Their professional identity experienced some dips as they doubted their ability at times, but overall, confidence, strength, resilience, and competence reigned as necessary to see students succeed.

The findings show that many of the participants felt that there is a perception of African American women being angry and thus were hesitant to be "authentically" themselves when needing to address different issues. There was lack of trust for how they had been treated in the past and the participants consistently contributed those

experiences to their race and gender. Davis' (2012) study on the intersection of race and gender found that all eight women in the study felt that their leadership development was influenced by differential treatment based on them being African American women. One of his conclusions corroborates the findings of this study, African American women must be viewed as more than a means to satisfying quotas and enforcement of diversity practices. The African American women principals acknowledged being specifically chosen for roles because of their race and not being chosen for roles because of their race and gender. Some of the data includes statements about being chosen because they needed an African American on the staff or as a way to diversify different committees. The data also includes statements about not being chosen or afforded opportunities in certain schools because poor, high Minority schools, and/or low-performing schools more often than not, were perceived as needing an African American woman principal. Reed and Evans (2005) supported the findings of this study through acknowledging that African American women should be assigned to leadership roles based on their experience and abilities and not because they match the majority race of a particular school.

This study found that the participants discussed that others have a negative perception about them as African American women principals. Because of that belief they take on a persona outside of who they are really are, through being less emotional, hiding anger and disappointment, and making decisions based on what they believe they're expected to do or what they feel their Caucasian colleagues would do in certain situations. These findings are supported through existing literature in how Pfafman and

McEwan (2014) found that African American women alternate between different versions of themselves, because it is difficult for them to know when it is safe for them to highlight or hide certain aspects of their personality. Fluctuating between femaleness, blackness, politeness, and assertiveness add to the complexity of being African American women (Harlow, 2003). For this reason, African American women principals must identify a space for themselves where it is ok for them to be themselves. They must ensure that they have an opportunity to be their authentic selves without fear of judgment. Whether it's with family and friends outside of work, or colleagues whom they can trust this safe space is a necessity for surviving the principalship as African American women. As African American women principals, their professional environment becomes where stereotypical notions of what women should be is constructed and affirmed (Katila & Merilanainen, 2002). This means that stereotypical notion of sexism, is a barrier for women in the principalship, as the role may require exertion of characteristics not consistent with what women are expected to be. As race comes in to the equation, African American women principals are going against the grain in two ways and as their race and gender intersect the level of discrimination increases. Such that, it's just easier to exist below the radar in navigating who they are expected to be with whom they need to be and that circumvents into who they actually will be in their role.

One of the themes that emerged from the data of this study was “motivated for their student’s well-being.” African American women have been called “othermothers” and in embracing that role of a mother figure, they are motivated to do their best for the

sake of their children (Reed & Evans, 2008). The participants in the study constantly talked about doing what they do for the benefit of their students. They discuss enduring uncomfortable and frustrating experiences all for the sake of being able to ensure that their students were successful. African American women have a nurturing nature and that does not change when they enter the principalship. What changes is how and when they exhibit that softer side to avoid seeming weak in a role that is seen as having masculine characteristics. Tillman (2014) described Black women principals as exhibiting an ethic of care as a natural instinct for due to cultural norms in their community and in taking on roles beyond being the principal. She discussed that Black women are conditioned to focus on student's academic, social, and emotional success. This theme in particular addresses what is not discussed in existing literature regarding African American women principals and professional identity, the motivation. Being motivated for student's well-being was extremely important to each African American woman principal. Part of that well-being is being able to be an example of success that some of the participants acknowledged is not what the media portrays Black people to be. Motivation for student's well-being is also a part of the nurturing quality of African American women. True to the nurturing process, seeing the principalship through to completion allows the African American women to see the true fruits of their labor, student success.

This study sought to understand how experiences with racism and sexism impact the development of professional identity in African American women principals. With race and gender being central aspects of identity, professional identity development will

be impacted by race and gender (Williams & Wiggins, 2010). What truly forms the professional identity is how race and gender is internalized in professional situations. Experiences are critical in how an individual sees themselves as professionals (Lasky, 2014). The findings of this study are that as professional identity was developed, racism and sexism had an impact on that development. Racism and sexism are contextual factors and as such, they shaped professional identity (Clark, et al., 2013). The findings in this study are consistent with literature that beliefs, motives and experiences shape professional identity. Slay and Smith (2011) defined professional identity as attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences. As experiences and environment shape personal identity, professional identity is impacted, as there is a link between personal and professional identity (Krejsler, 2005). In knowing the impact of racism and sexism on professional identity, it is important to not look at them as separate entities, but as a combined form of oppression. Looking at sexism alone groups African American women with Caucasian women and the two groups experience sexism very differently. Looking at racism alone groups African American women with African American men and the two groups experience racism very differently. Critical Race Feminism allows for the intersection of racism and sexism to be classified specifically together for women of color and to silence the notion that their experiences are acknowledged when racism and sexism are addressed individually.

Of the seven themes that Jebril (2008) found related to professional identity, two of the themes relate to the findings in this study, 1) professional identity is evolving 2) professional identity includes an ongoing integration of internal and external factors.

The findings in this study include that African American women principals feel differently about themselves as professionals as they go through various experiences. In experiencing racism and sexism, they went through periods of feeling confident and knowing they would persevere in spite of what they experienced to doubting that they could be successful. There were internal and external factors that contributed to these feelings. Some of the internal factors were lingering encouragement from people who saw their potential as leaders, wanting to set a good example for other aspiring African American women, not wanting to mess up what someone worked hard for them to have the opportunity to do, and wanting to show strength in every obstacle that they encountered. Some of the external factors were countering perceived negative perceptions, attempting to be who they were expected to be, not letting anyone see them show too much emotion, and wanting students to be successful.

Factors

The research question was: What factors impact the role racism and sexism play in the professional identity of African American women principals? The findings of this study are that many African American women are not able to be their authentic selves when in their principal roles. There were several elements in the discussions that led to this conclusion. One being that the participants struggled with feeling like they were a part of their organization. They felt undermined and were questioned of their competence when they went against a majority viewpoint and did not notice the same treatment of principals who were not African American women. This created an atmosphere where the African American women principals did not feel safe in being

themselves. As an African American woman principal feeling safe is key in determining what level of realness you can have in your environment. The make-up of the families in your school, colleagues, and comfort with your direct supervisor are all determining components. In addition, the participants believed that their Caucasian colleagues had negative perceptions about them based solely on the fact that they are African American women. The women discussed being careful in how they showed emotion and strength was the common term across all of the interviews that women used in describing themselves and their professional identity. Having an awareness of the perceptions about them as African American women may limit their ability to fully acclimate in their role as principals.

Implications

The implications of this study are applicable for the K-12 education realm and society in general. As a permanent practice, there is a need for an honest and open discussion on gender and racial bias' in education with regard to who holds those bias' and why. This will give some level of clarification and insight into individual and group perceptions about other races and genders. I believe based on the findings of this study, one practice should be interpersonal development through cultural and gender sensitivity training. This training should be inclusive from the superintendent's office down to all school level staff. It would be best practice to implement this training yearly during the staff orientation at the start of the school year or during the summer months for year round schools. This would catch any new employees who've never had the training as well as provide an opportunity for the current employees to reflect on what they learned

in the previous years training, analyze how they've applied it and to identify for district level staff biased practices that they've either experienced or observed. Differentiation in training based on personal analysis and supervisor recommendation is imperative to make these trainings valuable for all employees. Providing a safe opportunity for all educators to acknowledge and understand their personal racial and gender bias' is imperative to the fidelity in the process and ensuring that systematic policy changes will occur. Understanding how one's personal bias' impacts professional growth and professional identity development, and encourages exclusion for their colleagues, would be eye opening and grow the discussion beyond feelings to action. Equally important is follow-up on implementation of new practices developed as a result of this training. Giving a voice to individuals who experience racism and sexism on a regular basis will be enlightening not only for them, but also for others who have watched situations unfold but were not empowered to speak up on some else's behalf.

At the university level, administration preparation programs could benefit from exploring inclusion beyond the surface and incorporating some individual analysis of racial and gender biases for aspiring administrators. Recognition of biases and guidance on how realign beliefs and practices would be invaluable training before starting in the role of principal and/or assistant principal. It is critical that those in education, who have the voice and power to lead, understand the intersection of racism and sexism for African American women principals. It is unreasonable for African American women principals in their work environment to feel like being their authentic selves is not acceptable. Equally unreasonable is not being able to forthrightly combat the

institutional structure because the collective group experiencing racism and sexism is a double minority and is many times unseen or invisible.

The African American women principals in this study did not all define their experiences as racism and sexism, however they indicated that they experienced things a certain way because of their race and/or gender. My belief is that their situations seemed less prejudicial if they avoided saying racism and sexism, although actions based on race and gender are in fact racism and sexism. It is important that African American women understand that it is ok to define and label discrimination, it is what will help others clearly recognize their part in the oppression of African American women. It is also not necessary to classify experiences as racism only or sexism only, as it is likely that there is an intersection of the two.

Only African American women principals were interviewed for this study. Further extension could include other Minority women principals. It would also be interesting to get the perspectives of Caucasian women principals regarding specific perceptions of their African American colleagues to compare and contrast perceptions from both vantage points.

Conclusion

One of the participants stated, "So if I look for my identity or my sense of belonging from a positive perspective in other people I would never find it." Experiences of racism and sexism are not likely to evoke positive feelings from the recipient of such discrimination. These experiences however did not have a negative impact on the development of the professional identity of the African American women

principals in this study. To some extent these experiences strengthened their belief in themselves and motivated them to succeed so that their students could succeed. The findings from this study indicate that the African American women principals became who they believed they needed to be in their roles to be successful. To some extent they shied away from what makes them who they are to become what society is expecting them to be in their roles. Through this study, the experiences of eight African American women principals, was captured from the perspective of how racism and sexism impact the development of professional identity. Professional identity, being comprised of how a person internalizes experiences, is impacted from experiences of racism and sexism. The African American women principals in the study had to become different people to adjust to the expectations, norms, and prejudices that existed in their environment. This research revealed that the participants operate based on an unspoken rule that says they are limited in being their true selves in their position as African American women principals. “When the female gender role is inconsistent with a leader role, prejudice toward women as leaders is a common outcome.” (Davis and Maldonado, 2015). African American women are perceived to be caring, compassionate, and compliant, all characteristics that are associated racial servanthood (Dombeck, 2003). As principals, this association gives light to institutionalized beliefs of inferiority, and puts that much more pressure on African American women principals to behave outside of their general nature.

There is a strong reality for African American women principals that when being authentically themselves, there is a culture that perpetuates racism and sexism the further

they are from conforming to the societal norm of being a Caucasian male. Six out of eight participants felt that racism has impacted them professionally and seven out of eight felt that sexism had impacted them professionally. When asked about how experiences of racism and sexism impacted their professional identity the majority of the participants felt that experiences of racism and sexism did impact their professional identity. The participants continued to have good feelings about themselves as professionals, but discussed the experiences forcing them to have coping skills, and compelled them to persevere in spite of what they experienced.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Full name: _____

Preferred email address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Personal

What city and state did you grow up in? _____

Where did you earn your degree(s)?

Bachelor's degree: _____

Master's degree: _____

PhD, EdD, or Advanced Degree: _____

Professional

Is this your first principalship? Yes or No

If not, what other principal positions have you held?

Level _____ How long _____

Level _____ How long _____

Level _____ How long _____

How long have you been in your current position? _____

What is the gender makeup of your workplace?

Mostly Men

50% Men and Women

Mostly Women

What is the racial makeup of your workplace?

Colleagues:

Mostly White (80% or more)

Mostly Black (80% or more)

Mostly other non-white (80% or more)

Multiracial (lower than 60% of any group)

Students:

Mostly White (80% or more)

Mostly Black (80% or more)

Mostly other non-white (80% or more)

Multiracial (lower than 60% of any group)

How would you describe your school district?

- rural
- urban

What size is your:

School district:

- less than 30,000 students
- between 30,000 – 100,000 students
- more than 100,000 students

School:

- less than 500 students
- between 500 - 1000 students
- more than 1, 000 students

Has racism impacted you professionally? yes or no

Has sexism impacted you professionally? yes or no

Would you be interested in a face-to-face interview to share your experiences as an African American woman principal with racism, sexism, and professional identity?
yes or no

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Understanding the Impact of Racism and Sexism on the Development of Professional
Identity of African American Women Principals
Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your journey in the field of education.

What was your decision making process in deciding to become a principal?

2. What have been some of your successes in the principalship? (adapted from Burgin, 1996)

Describe how being African American played a role in these successes.

Describe how being a woman played a role in these successes.

Help me understand how you know your race and gender were factors in these successes.

3. What have been some of your challenges in the principalship?

Describe how being African American played a role in these challenges.

Describe how being a woman played a role in these challenges.

Help me understand how you know your race and gender were factors in these challenges.

4. How do you negotiate the difference between being a principal versus being an African American woman principal? (adapted from Beckford-Bennett, 2013)

How do you maintain your identity as an African American woman? (Owens, 2001)

5. Tell me about some experiences in the principalship that you feel were positively impacted because you are an African American woman. (Burgin, 1996)

Give me some examples of experiences that you feel were negatively impacted because you are an African American woman.

6. Describe how you view yourself as a professional? (Jebril, 2008)

In what ways does your race contribute to this view? (adapted from Jebril 2008)

In what ways does your gender contribute to this view? (adapted from Jebril 2008)

7. Describe how your professional identity is impacted by your experiences as a principal.

In what ways do experiences specifically tied to your race impact your professional identity?

In what ways do experiences specifically tied to your gender impact your professional identity?

8. Based on your experience, what recommendation would you give other African American women principals regarding race, gender and professional identity?

What differences in recommendations would you give based on level (elementary, middle or high)?

How would you like to receive your interview transcription? (email or standard mail) Please note that in general, email is not confidential and I cannot guarantee the confidentiality of information if delivered via email.

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Potential Participant,

My name is Chrystal Ages Brown and I am a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am conducting a research study to understand the impact of racism and sexism in the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. I would appreciate it if you would be a part of my study. Your participation would require you to have a face-to-face interview with me. The interview should take approximately 60-90 minutes and will begin with a demographic questionnaire. If more information is needed after the initial interview, we will have a 30 minute follow-up phone interview.

To protect your identity, I will assign you a pseudonym prior to the interview. The interviews will be transcribed word for word using the pseudonym for each participant that was determined prior to the interview. I will transcribe the interviews and then provide each participant with a copy of their interview transcription through the method they indicated at the end of their interview. I will request that the participants provide any additional information or clarification of their responses within one week of receiving the transcription.

Your participation in this doctoral research study is entirely voluntary. The data from this research will be used in partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree and will be published in my dissertation. If you are interested in being a part of this study please email me at cdages@uncc.edu. If selected to be a part of the study I will call you to schedule an interview. If you have any questions prior to agreeing to participate, you may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or email me at cdages@uncc.edu.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chrystal Ages Brown

APPENDIX D: PHONE SCRIPT

Good evening. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my research study. We will need to have a 60 - 90 minute interview in a location of your choice. The interview will be recorded and transcribed by me once all interviews have been completed. I have the following dates and times available:

Monday:

Thursday:

Saturday:

You will receive an email confirmation of the interview time within one week of our conversation. There will also be an informed consent form attached to the email you receive. Please read it and let me know if you have any questions. I will bring a hard copy for you sign before we begin the interview. Thank you again for agreeing to participate and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

APPENDIX E: CONFIRMATION EMAIL

Good evening. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of my research study. We will have our interview at ABC High School on Thursday, January 1, 2016. The interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and it will be recorded and transcribed. Please review the attached Informed Consent form and I will have a hard copy for you to sign prior to your interview on _____ . See you soon.

Thanks!

Chrystal Ages Brown



Department of Education

9201 University City Boulevard, Charlotte, NC 28223-0001
t/ 704-687-8722 f/ 704-687-4705 <http://education.uncc.edu>

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

“Understanding the Impact of Racism and Sexism on the Development of Professional Identity of African American Women Principals”

You are being asked to participate in a research study, “Understanding the Impact of Racism and Sexism on the Development of Professional Identity of African American Women Principals.” The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of racism and sexism on the development of professional identity of African American women principals in public K-12 schools. Please read the information carefully. At the end, you will be asked to sign this document if you agree to participate in the study.

Chrystal Ages Brown, a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership will be conducting this research project. She will be under the supervision of Dr. Lisa R. Merriweather, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Leadership.

You have been contacted about this study because you are an African American woman principal in a K-12 public school. You said that you would be willing to participate in this study by doing a face-to-face interview. There will be 10-12 participants in the study.

Once informed consent is obtained, the researcher will interview you for approximately sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes, starting the interview with a demographic questionnaire. The interview will consist of questions about your experiences with racism, sexism and your professional identity. If more information is needed after the initial interview, we will have a 30 minute follow-up interview. The interview will be audio recorded. The researcher will transcribe the audio recordings. The interviews will be transcribed word for word using the pseudonym for each participant that was determined prior to the interview. The researcher will then provide each participant with a copy of their interview transcription through the method they indicated at the end of their interview, which is either email or standard mail. Please be aware that in general email is not confidential and if you choose email I cannot guarantee confidentiality of

information. The researcher will request that the participants provide any additional information or clarification of their responses within one week of receiving the transcription.

It is possible that talking about your experiences with racism, sexism and professional identity you have experienced could make you feel uncomfortable. You are welcome to skip any questions that make you feel uncomfortable, and you may also stop the interview at any time. There are no known risks or benefits to the participants associated with this study.

Some people find talking about racism, sexism and professional identity to be helpful. A possible benefit of this study is that the results may help other people better understand racism, sexism and professional identity in African American women principals.

The research team will make every effort to protect your privacy. All your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. All digital files will be secured on a password protected computer or app (such as Google Drive). The recordings will not be stored on a public network folder. The recordings will be coded by a pseudonym rather than your name. After the dissertation is completed, the audio recording and identifying information will be destroyed. The transcriptions will contain no identifying information. During the study, all transcription materials will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. When the results of this study are published, participants will be referred to by pseudonyms, not names.

The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to be in this study. If you decide to be in the study, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that all research participants are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Office of Research Compliance at (704)-687-1871 if you have questions about your rights as a study participant. If you have any questions about the purpose, procedures, and outcome of this project, contact Chrystal Ages Brown at cdages@uncc.edu or Dr. Lisa R. Merriweather at lmerriwe@uncc.edu.

This form was approved for use on *Month Day, Year* for a period of one (1) year.

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

Printed name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Person obtaining consent