

THE IMPACT OF COACHING ON
NEW AFRICAN-AMERICAN FEMALE PRINCIPALS
by

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This is cross-case analysis of four new African American female principals who reported that coaching was critical to their success. They described the challenges inherent to all newcomers with particular attention to how their professional socialization was further confounded by factors of race and gender. The conceptual framework used for this multi-participant case study is critical race theory with an emphasis on counter-storytelling narratives. The transcripts yielded descriptions of the role of coaching in negotiating their experiences as new African American female principals and the ways race and gender influenced their professional induction.

The analysis of data revealed themes such as marginalization, institutional racism, and broader societal perceptions of African American women. Participants offered examples of how their race and gender influenced how they were perceived as less competent, giving examples of European Americans and male colleagues being promoted more often to upper management positions. Participants believed that having an external coach was better than an internal coach, creating a safe haven for confidential discussions and strategizing.

In addition to providing the field of educational leadership with information that can improve professional induction of new African-American women principals, interviews provided the opportunity for these four women to openly share their thoughts about coaching, race, and gender. The principals recommended that external coaching be

provided for a minimum of one year; coaching matches should be appropriate and the race and/or gender of the coach should be carefully considered; if the coach/coachee match is not appropriate then it should be rectified quickly. The implications for providing coaching for new African American female principals includes a greater chance for their success, an increase in student achievement, and the potential to recruit and retain more in the profession. Through the series on interviews, researcher and participants recognized of the power of hearing their voices through counter-storytelling with culturally responsive coaches. Coaching proved beneficial to all four principals and helped to powerfully and positively shape the professional induction of these four participants.

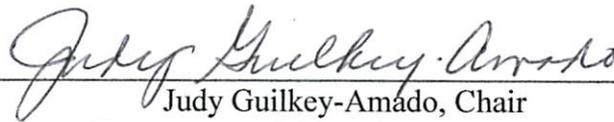
Keywords: African-American female principals, coaching, critical race theory, counter-storytelling, race, gender, intersection of race and gender, institutional racism, marginalization

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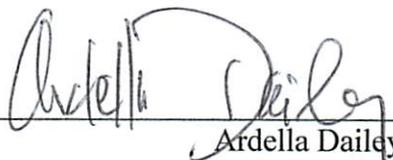
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Historical Perspective.....	3
Coaching for New Principals.....	6
Policy.....	8
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	14
The Principal’s Role.....	14
Impossible Expectations by District Officials, Staff, and the Community ...	15
Teacher Perceptions of Their Principal.....	18
Expectations of Women Leaders of Color.....	20
Mainstream Perceptions of African American Women.....	22
Racial Microaggressions.....	27
Benefits of Coaching for Principals and Teachers.....	28
Models of Principal Development.....	32
County-based Coaching Program.....	40
Limitations in Coaching Programs.....	41
Equity and Social Justice.....	42
A Closer Look at Principal Coaching.....	44
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....	47
Relational Accountability.....	47
Positionality.....	50
Counter-Storytelling.....	54

Sampling.....	55
Interview Data.....	56
Analysis.....	57
Participant Rights.....	58
Materials.....	59
Limitations of This Study.....	60
Data Collection.....	61
The Process for Data Analysis.....	62
CHAPTER4: DATA ANALYSIS.....	65
Elements and Themes.....	66
Coaching.....	68
Design of coaching.....	69
Support.....	71
Internal versus external coach.....	75
Principals’ recommendations for districts.....	76
Ideal design of coaching.....	77
Principal recommendations for other professionals	78
Race.....	80
Marginalization.....	83
Perceptions.....	84
Institutional racism.....	85
Gender.....	88

Males versus females.....	89
Significance of gender of the coach.....	90
Invisible network.....	91
Intersection of Race and Gender.....	91
Unique to African American women.....	94
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	98
Coaching	100
The Role of Race.....	105
The Role of Gender.....	109
The Intersection of Race and Gender.....	111
Suggestions for Further Research	113
REFERENCES.....	116
APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 1)	126
APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 2)	127
APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (ROUND 3)	128
APPENDIX 4: SURVEY RESULTS FROM PROFESSIONAL RESIDENCY....	129

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The challenges of the principalship in the early 1980s, when much of the literature that focused on the principalship emerged bear little resemblance to what new educational leaders face today (Robbins & Alvey, 2009; Wise & Jacobo, 2010; Bossi, 2007, & Fullan, 2002). Reform mandates and other societal changes now dictate the path that principals and school districts must follow. The educational system is fraught with red tape, negative academic designations, and requirements to implement reform efforts, resulting in increased responsibilities for principals. The preparation offered through administrative programs does not always adequately prepare a person to assume an administration position whether through on-line programs or in traditional university preparation programs. Some choose to skip the administrative credential program route altogether and take the exam. Credentials are at best, minimum preparation for an increasingly difficult role.

Once in the position of school administrator, principals need professional support in all cases. Authors including Garmston, Linder & Whitaker (1993), Eller (2010), Bossi (2007), Bloom, Danilovich, & Fogel (2005), and others have provided reasons why coaching is beneficial for teachers and administrators. These reasons include the fact that coaching allows administrators to receive tailored support specific to their needs as well as their site needs. Coaching helps leaders grow and become stronger instructional leaders. It is also beneficial because it allows principals to work through particular situations occurring at their site and they can receive immediate feedback from their

coach. An emergent group of professionals may need more focused coaching, an approach that recognizes the specific challenges faced by leaders of color and women. One area of leadership research that has not been explored adequately is the effect of coaching on new female African American principals.

Ellison and Hayes (2006) believe that principals are probably the least supervised of all school professionals and yet are among the most vulnerable. A principal's leadership is a critical factor in student learning. Some researchers believe that the current lack of mentorship constitutes a crisis in leadership in public education (Ellison & Hayes, 2006). Without a well-developed support system for new principals, more will struggle and some will fail. It is essential that all new principals receive thoughtful, on-going systematic support in order to navigate the situations that occur in schools and districts. It is imperative that African American women receive appropriate coaching so they succeed in their transition to formal leadership roles in schools and remain in the profession. Coaches and mentors who have had a wealth of experience on the job and understand the particular challenges faced by women of color would be ideal to encourage and retain promising equity-minded leaders. This is a study of the coaching experiences of new African American women principals.

Using critical race theory as a lens, I examined the experiences of four principals via interviews utilizing counter-narrative storytelling. The purpose of this multiple participant case study was to explore the individualized coaching received by new African American female principals as they navigated through their first years of the principalship using counter-narrative storytelling to frame the qualitative methodology. I

sought to illuminate the professional induction experiences of new African American female principals. This study informs the practices of other aspiring African American administrators and addresses ways district officials can support African American women administrators. This research project explored how coaching supports new African American female school principals so they can survive and thrive in the climate of reform through the following questions: How do new African American female school principals describe the influence of external coaching on leadership? What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an external coach? What can be learned about African American female principals' experience serving in school leadership roles by using a cultural lens?

Chapter one provides an overview of the journey of the African American female principal from a historical perspective; the benefit of coaching for new principals, and policies created to support new principals as well as an excerpt from a blog that provides reasons as to why coaching for new principals is important.

Historical Perspective

In 1954, the United States Supreme Court declared segregation unconstitutional in its landmark ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education*. Over the next twenty years, this ruling slowly changed the racial make-up of school faculties, especially in the "Deep South". When school integration finally took place in southern states, many African American principals who were in charge of predominantly Black schools lost their jobs to white administrators (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Alston, 2005; Brown, 2005; Ogletree, 2004). In one southern state during the post-Brown decision, the number of African American principals (elementary and secondary) dropped from 620 to 170

between the years of 1963-1970, a devastating 73% decrease in the time span of seven years (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Patterson, 2001). Brown (2005) also found similar numbers of African American principals in the South losing their jobs after desegregation. The decrease of African-American leadership in education is not simply an artifact of desegregation in the years immediately following the decision of Brown; even today's aspiring African American principals face almost insurmountable odds in trying to obtain and maintain a principalship (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Brown, 2005; Tillman, 2003; Valverde, 2003).

Loder (2005) conducted a study of African American principals in Chicago born before and after the Civil Rights movement. Her review of the literature indicated that, before the Civil Rights movement occurred; professional opportunities for women were limited because women were tracked into traditional female jobs such as nursing, teaching, and social work (Loder, 2005; Amott & Matthei, 1996). Moreover, during the 1960s, the Chicago Public Schools System was charged with having an over-representation of white male principals; in 1967 fewer than 5% of the principals were African-American and those principals worked in African-American schools (Loder, 2005; Crowson, 1982).

African American leaders were perceived as followers under the guidance of European American principals, and for decades their talents were portrayed as mediocre (Foster, 1995; Jones, 2002). This perception of leaders of color as inferior was prevalent in school systems throughout the United States, leading to exclusionary practices that created an African American educational leadership vacuum throughout the country until

the start of the Civil Rights movement. With belief systems rooted in dual school systems of the past, European American colleagues considered African American principals as insignificant in leadership roles (Delpit, 1995; Jones, 2002). Sizemore (1986) also found that African Americans were perceived by their counterparts as “lesser leaders” in the world of school leadership (Sizemore, 1986; Jones, 2002).

The Civil Rights movement spawned another legacy which benefited African Americans, as well as other people of color. The provision of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 required businesses to open up employment and career advancement opportunities in white-collar professions and government jobs for African American women (Amott & Matthei, 1996; Jones, 1985; Loder, 2005). In addition, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 barred gender discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal monies, which opened doors for women to move up to the ranks of school leadership (Loder, 2005; Mertz, 2003). According to the Education Code section 44100 (3): Past employment practices created artificial barriers and past efforts to promote additional action in the recruitment, employment, and promotion of women and minorities did not result in a substantial increase in employment opportunities for these persons (California Department of Education, ND).

An historical look at these studies demonstrates a connection between past employment practices and the current lack of professional opportunities for African American women, in education and other fields. While we have come a long way in terms of the education code and civil rights policies that have been implemented, opportunities for African American female principals remain limited. Perceptions of our

role as leaders are biased in the world of education, based on the “perceived need” versus the “realistic need”. Historical documents reveal that lawmakers tried to create more equitable opportunities, but the experiences of African Americans in the workplace? portray a professional landscape that is neither fair nor equal. The fight for true equal rights, fair treatment and respect continues. While all new principals benefit from professional coaching, it is essential for this particular group (Reynolds-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). The purpose of my study is to learn how African American female principals are supported through coaching so they can have an equitable opportunity to succeed.

Coaching for New Principals

Coaching for new principals includes one-to-one time with the coach, time spent setting up the school year, reviewing professional development plans, assessing staff needs, and setting goals for the principal to achieve. The way in which principals are coached can vary; the route to and through their principal induction is critical to their success. Most principal preparation includes coursework and an internship that are intended to precede the first placement. According to Silver, et.al. (2009), while new administrators are routinely required to participate in an administrative internship prior to certification, this experience is frequently insufficient to prepare them for the rigors of leading a school, let alone the personal challenges associated with educational leadership. There is some coaching associated with fieldwork, but the quality and depth of that coaching varies from program to program (Williams, Matthews & Baugh, 2004; Ferrigno, 2003). The role of coaching is often largely under-developed and the support

provided frequently stops at completion of the administrative preparation program (Silver, Lochmiller, Copland & Tripps, 2009). Coaching throughout the internship provides some professional development, but until an individual steps into the role full-time, many concerns do not surface. As important as the principal's role is, the daily demands are often unpredictable. There are a few leadership programs designed to provide more powerful preparation and a stronger coaching model. These include The Leadership Academy (TLA) and The Administrator Leadership Training Academy (ALTA) that we will explore later. The names of these two programs were changed for the purpose of confidentiality.

First-time principals face dual problems that include the difficulties encountered by newcomers to any organization and the daily challenges facing all principals. However, because of the importance of the principalship, schools obviously cannot afford to suspend operations while new principals are learning how to do the job. Thus, it is crucial to identify the problems that are especially challenging for new principals and offer practical suggestions to assist new and prospective principals (Robbins & Alvey, 2009). These researchers and others point to the increased scrutiny of schools, budget shortfalls, and student achievement challenges being among the many problems facing today's school leader. As the challenges of society have increased, the role of the principal or school leader has become increasingly difficult and complex (Eller, 2010; Ortiz, 2002).

Systematic mentorship of new principals is not available in most urban schools (Bossi, 2007; Bloom, Castagna & Warren, 2003). Budget cuts, time, and other pressing

reform efforts have taken priority. In schools where problems related to Program Improvement status or reconstitution are becoming more complex, there may be little time to prepare or plan for succession of new principals into leadership positions. Some new school leaders are placed in a building and left to discover how to lead, satisfy the needs of the community, and support their teachers and students on their own. New principals need support and guidance as they assume the role of the school leader (Eller, 2010). Many new principals are placed in schools with the greatest challenges and the fewest resources (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007). These types of schools include underperforming program improvement schools, low socioeconomic status, and schools with under-served populations of students. Communities of color and the poor have the greatest need for well supported leaders and leadership turnover at all levels of schooling reduces the effectiveness of their schools. Leaders can play a powerful role in educating the underserved. Professional development models for principals should center learning activities on a conscious equity agenda (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). “It seems logical given the increased accountability of school leaders that the use of coaching is becoming more common in education” (Wise & Jacobo, 2010, p. 160).

Policy

There is policy written for almost everything in education, including Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) teacher preparation. I did not see anything in my previous district’s Board Policy about principal preparation (coaching) or support provided to new principals. I also consulted the California Education Code. According to California Education Code section 44681: The Legislature recognizes that the principal

plays a pivotal role in the life of a school. Research indicates that at schools where pupil achievement is higher than might be expected, principals provide strong leadership and support. Other studies show that the principal is the most effective agent for bringing about educational improvement (Weller, 1985; Schuleter & Walker, 2008; Perez, Uline, Johnson, James-Ward & Basom, 2011). The Legislature further recognizes that although principal leadership is essential to effective instruction, research shows that many principals are neither prepared nor encouraged to be educational leaders. According to principals and others, administrator training does not always match responsibilities of the job, and opportunities for continuing development are inadequate (California Department of Education, ND). By including the aforementioned information in the Education Code, the Legislature is cognizant of the need to provide site and central district administrators' ongoing opportunities to improve their management and leadership skills. State policy is vague in terms of implementation. It is left to the interpretation of the districts. There is a defined program for BTSA.

The Legislature intends that administrator support and development activities funded by Education Code Section 44681-44689 will result in direct improvements in instructional services to California public school students (California Department of Education, 2011). While attending an interview in a local school district, I asked the panelists what kind of support they provided to new principals. All three panelists struggled to provide a cohesive response. In the end, it was determined that principal support was something that they were "working on," but they offered that there was a retreat for all new administrators that takes place prior to school starting.

According to the California Department of Education there is an Administrator Training Program that is funded by the federal government (California Department of Education, 2011). The program supports professional development that focuses on building principals' and vice principals' leadership skills and the capacity to serve effectively in their critical and complex roles. Federal funding comes from No Child Left Behind: Title II, Part A, principal training. Local educational agencies are eligible to apply. Principals or vice principals at a school site can participate in Administrators' Training. Principals or vice principals at school sites that receive the following funding are required to participate in Administrator Training: Reading First, High Priority Schools, and the School Assistance Intervention Team Programs. For the fiscal year FY 2010 the amount of funding available is \$1,554,000 and each recipient will receive \$3000. A match is also required. Moreover, pursuant to AB430, the government provides professional development funds for school administrators using California State Board of Education (CSBE) approved training providers. The Principal Training Program is one of California's major school reform initiatives. The program is supported by state funding. Coaching is not mentioned as a form of support on the California Department of Education website, however, some individual districts have mapped out how they plan to use their funding, and have allocated funds toward principal coaching. The ATP (now PTP) is administered by select providers following a particular program. The CDE has not mandated that these funds can be used for individualized principal coaching, even though research on principal development indicates this approach would be beneficial to new principals (Bloom, Castagna & Warren, 2003).

As noted earlier, African American school leaders face additional challenges that white leaders do not have. Sometimes African American women are under a different kind of scrutiny. The quotes below come from a public blog regarding a new African American female principal in Northern California. The comments were taken directly from *The Education Report*- Reporter Katy Murphy's blog on Oakland Schools Contra Costa Times.Com/ Inside Bay Area www.ibabuzz.com/education/2009/03/ (website address) about a new African American female principal. They illustrate some of the challenges a new African American female principal may encounter.

March 29th, 2009 at 10:07am Joanie/JM Parent Says:

This group of parents and teachers have been campaigning against Ms. O.

A staff member exposed the RACISM going on against Ms. O at the beginning of this school year. This community got scared of the dreaded 'R' word being attributed to their community. What do they do instead? Plot with those like-minded prejudiced teachers to 'silence' the principal before the RACISM at JM became public knowledge. I know for a fact that there are very many Caucasian parents like me who adore Ms. O, but the majority is racist, like the teachers, and have never liked the idea of having a Black principal at the school from day one!

March 29th, 2009 at 8:10pm Joanie/JM Parent Says:

Ms. O has so much to offer, but these teachers belong on another planet and time in history! They are in a time warp, period.

You bring a young and bright principal like Ms. O on the scene, and like a lynch mob, they plot and make up stuff, anything, to smear her, all in an effort to draw attention away from their ineptitude. Through it all, Ms. O remains professional, dedicated to her job, cheerful, and ever so courteous to her persecutors.

Face it...our people always feel threatened by confident, intelligent, highly enlightened (might I add, well-traveled) Black people like Ms. O. So what do they do? Anything and everything they can to discredit them. Look at history! And you tell me it's not racism? The sad thing racist folks are so prejudiced, they don't even see it.

March 31st, 2009 at 8:34pm Frightened...Says:

“8 years at JM is a liar.” Leave the female alone; no one deserves the public humiliation you people have put Mrs. O through. Lies, hate, bigotry and racism are consuming your lives. It is frightening that some of you are parents in the year 2009. How does it feel to ruin another human's life for sport?

This blog provides evidence of the need for new administrators of color to be supported. More specifically, it showed the need African American female principals may have for coaches that are aware of how they may be targets of racism. If a coach had been available for this principal at the beginning of the school year, she might have received assistance in dealing with some of the issues and perceptions presented in that blog which consisted of parent and teacher opinions of this young, new African American female

principal. As stated previously, the principalship is a challenging job to undertake. Proper preparation and coaching can be critical to the success of a new administrator.

After looking at the trials that African Americans have faced in the work force, it is necessary for support to be provided. As such, coaching may enhance the skills of the principal being coached and help them to be more successful. Although policy does not directly state how funds for principal development should be used, the literature review will provide information that will define coaching and why it may be beneficial for new African American female principals. Chapter One provided background information on coaching and chapter two will provide a review of the literature that provides a foundation for this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature in this chapter provides research that supports the need for new African American female principals to receive coaching. Scholarship presented in this section provides information regarding the realities of the principal's role, the impossible expectations of principals, especially new principals, and the role of the school and community in socializing the new administrator. This section also explores literature about teacher perceptions of their African-American principals. Furthermore, expectations of women leaders of color are considered as well as mainstream perceptions of African American women. I then discuss research about racial microaggressions, briefly review politics and coping, and look at the benefits of coaching for principals and teachers. Different models of principal development will be explored such as the Administrator Leadership Training Academy (ALTA), the Leadership Academy (LTA), and county-based coaching programs. That literature is followed by review of perceived limitations in coaching programs, and how equity and social justice values support the need for coaching for new African American female principals. The literature review is rounded out by taking a closer look at principal coaching.

The Principal's Role

New principals are not only on unfamiliar ground, their solo position at the top of the management hierarchy in their schools means they do not necessarily have professional peers with similar responsibilities in their immediate environment. Unfortunately, there may be no one else who can relate to the problems new principals

face (Robbins & Alvey, 2009). On a daily basis, principals meet with parents, do walk-through observations, encourage students, empower teachers, appreciate the custodians, manage the budget, and strive to involve the community. The role isolation can become apparent in different facets of the job. No matter how many principals want to diminish the principal versus staff perception, it is rare that principals do not find themselves in isolation on a daily basis. Billger (2007) asserts that accountability standards have been implemented in many schools, tying compliance to school resources, reputation, and at time, educator pay. Of the various factors with the power to respond to such initiatives, none is more central than the school principal (Billger, 2007, California Department of Education, ND). Moreover, principals have the authority to hire and fire staff to protect the vision of a core group for broadening and deepening leadership without an “anti-reform” group becoming a barrier. They also play a necessary role as a buffer between district and school, protecting the work initiated at the school site, particularly in cases where the work conflicts with other priorities (Copland, 2003; Muhammad, 2009; Chapman, 2005; Reitzug, 1994). The literature regarding the role of the principal provides a sense of the needs principals might have for coaching support.

Impossible Expectations by District Officials, Staff and Community

The school principal is held to an impossibly high standard as both communities and centralized administration add greater responsibility and lessen authority (Chapman, 2005). The spotlight focused on the school principal is the result of the visibility and political nature that the position has in any school community (Eye, 1976). Many of the best and brightest young leaders are being asked to assume their first school leadership

roles in Program Improvement 2, 3, and 4 schools (Bossi, 2007). Moreover, there is a shortage of candidates for the principalship, and an increasing trend for individuals with relatively limited experience to be placed into these positions (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). In a study conducted by Ferrigno-Browne and Muth (2006), 62% of their student respondents reported that they were not ready to assume a position as a school principal. Some students provided reasons about their lack of readiness to assume leadership positions. Forty percent of the respondents referenced “needing more experience” or “on the job training” as reasons why they delayed their career change (Ferrigno-Browne & Muth, 2006).

Due to the fact that the principalship is challenging (Wise & Jacobo, 2010), consideration must be given with regards to principal preparation, induction, and support. The aforementioned factors can indicate the success or lack of success for new principals. It is expected that principals know what they are doing when they assume a leadership position. A decision to become a principal is one that has to be thought about deeply because the profession is not for everyone. Leaders who are prepared and supported have a greater opportunity to meet the expectations of various constituents and to be successful (Bossi, 2007; Weller, 1985). The previously mentioned challenges for new principals makes it imperative to provide support to them.

There is always some nervousness when a principal is new to a school-- especially when a first-timer takes over responsibilities. The nervousness, of course, is mutual. Newcomers usually find that staff resistance to change is one of the major obstacles they face. The resistance may be even more pronounced with the more

experienced teachers who may comment, "We tried this two principals ago" (Robbins & Alvey, 2009 & Muhammad, 2009). Moreover, if the staff is resistant to change, the teacher union is adversarial, and it is a low-performing school, it could be a long and difficult year for the new principal. Often, first-timers walk into situations that they have no control over and lack the know-how to change.

With all of the literature on the principal as an instructional leader, the new-comer may hope to make a quick and significant curriculum change or implement an instructional innovation. However, these ideas usually will need time to be nurtured as staff members adjust to the newcomer and the newcomer learns about the culture of the school (Robbins & Alvey, 2009). There is growing recognition among scholars and practitioners in the field that the demands placed on administrators to become instructional leaders in their schools may be unrealistic if they cannot effectively delegate some aspects of their roles to others (Steiner & Kowal, 2007).

Reitzug (1994) believes that whether leaders mandate compliance with organizational goals or whether they influence subordinates to embrace specific notions of organizational culture, the key issue remains the same: How do leaders know that the organizational direction suggested by their own goals, values, beliefs, and assumptions is the best one? New principals strive to understand and interpret the culture of the organizational direction that already exists within a school. Coaching helps those new to the role to negotiate the organizational direction along this continuum.

Teacher Perceptions of Their Principal

Teacher perceptions of their principal's status and effectiveness are influenced by their own race, culture, and experience. Cornel Jones (2002) conducted a comprehensive study that examined teachers' perceptions of their African American principals' leadership in urban schools and how the principals responded to their teachers' perceptions. The data revealed that several of the European American teachers felt uncomfortable sharing their perceptions of African American principals with an African American researcher. According to the findings, the data revealed that teachers of color perceived their African American principals' leadership capacity differently than that of their European American counterparts. The teachers of color perceived their African American principals as legitimate leaders and gave them unconditional respect. Furthermore, teachers of color believed that because they were of the same ethnic background as their principals, this allowed them to be more effective in their interactions with their principals. Thus, they felt that their African American principals were legitimated just on the basis of their racial affiliation. Although the European American teachers did not have the racial affiliation with their principals, those teachers did believe that over time they were more receptive to their African American principals. However, they were hesitant to trust their principals. The data revealed that the possible causal factors were fear of retaliation from their principals for being unable to meet expectations established for students of color.

Although both novice and veteran European American teachers believed that their principals were legitimate leaders, there was no consensus among them on what that

meant. Those European American teachers felt that their principals were legitimate leaders, but this legitimacy was based on their socialized view of the person in the position. Jones (2002) found,

Although the European American teachers learned to trust their principals over time, this became problematic when principals promoted culturally relevant responses to students of color. European Americans were uncomfortable addressing issues of race and its connection to culturally relevant instruction that may have influenced how they trusted their African American principals (Jones, 2002, p. 20).

Jones' findings are in direct correlation with the sentiments expressed by the seasoned African American principals I consulted with before, and during the course of my study.

The Jones' study demonstrated how the participants viewed their African American principals. Unfortunately, the European American teachers only trusted their leaders in the area of instructional leadership inclusive of professional and staff development. Other studies show that African American principals are competent people who endure racism, racial microaggressions, stereotyping, and the second guessing of their ability to lead a school. Furthermore, Jones' (2002) study shed light on the thoughts of teachers of color versus European American teachers, and found that teachers of color were more comfortable with and trusting of their African American leader. It is alarming that European American teachers would question the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy, but it is still an issue today. With this in mind, new African American female

principals need to be coached through various situations, where they are being judged by the color of their skin, rather than by their ability to lead a school (McCray et al., 2007; Echols, 2006; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami & Hodson, 2002; Clark, Anderson, Clark & Williams, 1999; Rowe, 1990).

Expectations of Women Leaders of Color

Conversations with retired African American women leaders prior to my study provided me with an abundance of insight regarding what it was like to be a new African American female principal during their era. The common thread was the perception that they are held to a different set of expectations than their white counterparts. Given the perceived challenges of the workplace and historic exclusion of women and people of color from positional leadership, the study conducted by Collay and Cooper (2008) explored how graduate education could become more transformative, supporting teachers to fully inhabit their roles as leaders in schools. Moreover, it is “essential that women of color are not only recognized as qualified leaders, but that the multiple perspectives of leadership they bring to the profession help transform the way schools are led” (Collay & Cooper, 2008, p. 19). The literature indicates that women of color have the experiences described above, however, in this study I specifically looked at the experiences of African American women.

A study conducted by Bloom and Erlandson (2003) characterized the world of African American women administrators as a struggle for equitable recognition and visibility within the field of education. Each female in their study recounted the successes, failures, and limitations of her actual work, the reconstructions of deeply held

leadership belief systems, and the personal resolutions evolving from her leadership experiences within schools (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003). McCray, Wright, and Beachum (2007) explored race and principal candidate placement. Their study brought to the forefront issues concerning whether or not the historically negative presumptions as it relates to the leadership capabilities of African American principals are still part of the thought patterns of decision-makers regarding the placement of African American administrators (McCray et al., 2007). They found that African American principals were seemingly being placed in schools where the majority of the student body was Black. White principals had a greater chance of being chosen to lead majority white schools. In one Southern state it shows there is a tendency to place African American principals in mostly urban, segregated, underfunded schools.

The limitations of the aforementioned study conducted by McCray et al., (2007) are that while the study explored the placement of African American administrators, it did not address how they were treated or the formal or informal coaching and mentoring support they did or did not receive. They do, however, recommend that university leadership preparation programs address the issue of race and how race has influenced the assignment of African American and minority principals. Loder (2005), Echols (2006), Mattis (1997), Neighbors, Jackson, Bowman and Gurin (1983), Turner and Bagley (2000) all suggest that spirituality and religiosity help African American women cope with life's stresses and make sense out of the adverse circumstances that arise due to their marginalized status in society. Echols (2006) found, "Dialogues, music, and laughter

enable people of color to maneuver within the game of politics, for if one does not learn to play the political game he/she will surely be played by politics' (p. 11).

Mainstream Perceptions of African American Women

African American women have demonstrated they are talented and have many gifts to share with their communities and the larger society. And yet, as a society and as a nation, many do not take time to appreciate the truth of their experience, the verity of what it feels like to be African American and female, the reality that no matter how intelligent and competent an African American female may be in our country today they still cannot count on being understood and embraced by mainstream white America (Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). In a June 2002 Gallup poll, 61 percent of African American women said they were dissatisfied with how society treats African Americans (www.gallup.com). For African American men, the rate of dissatisfaction was lower at 47 percent. Due to the fact that marginalization of people of color by the dominant culture is still commonplace, African American female principals need to be supported as minority leaders in a majority white occupation.

After an extensive search, the most current and complete work was done by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003). They are two scholars who created the African American Women's Voices Project, which was a comprehensive study that explored the impact of racism and sexism on African American women. Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) found that the ways in which an African American female shifts has changed overtime. An enslaved female or African American female living under the heel of Jim Crow would have to shift literally, casting her eyes downward, moving her body off a sidewalk or to

the back of a crowded bus when a white passenger came into view. To shift is the art of learning how to ignore a comment one believes is racist or to address it in such a way that the person who said it doesn't label you threatening or hostile (Romero, 2003; Villaplando & Bernal, 2002; Leggon, 1980). Furthermore, most African American women continue to "shift" or engage in more subtle forms of shifting their behavior to accommodate others.

Today, shifting is more inconspicuous—acting eager but not aggressive at work, so as not to upset a white boss; shifting is what an African American female does when she code switches between home and work (Greer, 2011). A majority (58 percent) of the women who responded to the survey given by Jones and Shorter-Gooden, indicated that at times they have changed the way they act in order to fit in or be accepted by white people. Of that group, 79% say that to gain such acceptance, they have changed the way they speak, toned down their mannerisms, talked about what they felt white people were interested in, and avoided controversial topics.

The data analysis from the African American Women Voices Project reveals that racist and sexist attitudes and discriminatory behavior are still prevalent and frequently encountered at work, taking a significant toll on African American women. While African American women responded to racism, sexism, and discrimination in various arenas, it is the workplace where they frequently encounter it. Sixty-nine percent of the survey respondents say that they have experienced racial or gender discrimination at work. Issues related to the workplace, including getting hired, being paid equitably, and

being promoted fairly emerged as the major difficulties African American women encountered.

To avoid being labeled overbearing or too assertive, an African American female may suppress her opinions and her voice, and she may mute her personality. Tina, one of the participants in the African American Women Voices Project shared that her parents warned her about the myth of African American women's inferiority. They told her, "What you have to understand, Tina, it's like you already have two strikes against you. You're African American and then you're a female. You need to stay two steps ahead of what everybody else is doing in this world." Tina internalized her parents' advice and reflected on it. She shared,

How are they going to perceive every Black female? You feel like you gotta be perfect. You gotta be fit. You gotta be smart. You gotta be strong, but not so strong that you offend everybody. You gotta be outspoken, but not too outspoken. You've got to be all these different things. You've got to be able to take crap from people and bite your tongue... You feel that almost every day.

Paula, another participant shared that

By trying to disprove the whole 'attitude' stereotype, I make myself small. In other words, instead of being the strong female that I am by voicing my opinion and saying how I feel, sometimes I back down so as not to seem like I've got an attitude, which is discouraging.

Many Black women feel that they must be far better at their jobs than their white counterparts just to prove that they have a right to be where they are. They sense that the

margin for error that they are offered is much smaller than the one offered to most white people. In a study conducted by Rosette and Livingston (2012), the results suggested that African American women leaders may carry the burden of being disproportionately sanctioned for making errors while at work compared to white women (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). When a white colleague falters or fails, executives seem to be relatively forgiving. But when a Black female stumbles on the job, white executives are more inclined to see it as “proof” that she just doesn’t have what it takes—that she is inferior. Black women do not believe that they have the leeway to be average, to be better at some things rather than others, simply to have a bad day. The women in the African American Women Voices Project say that they feel a strong demand to exceed people’s expectations, to do everything right.

When it comes to public portrayals and representations in the media, black women have been known to get the short end of the stick, often being cast as villains or scapegoats rather than successful career women and girl power gurus, as Aretha Franklin and Annie Lennox once did. From “loud” to “angry” we have had to face a whole host of negative labels and stereotypes that have surfaced about us and our competencies, some of them with deep-seeded cultural and historical roots. (Adelman, 2011)

The participants in Jones’ and Shorter-Gooden’s study were able to share their feelings and experiences about what life is like for them as African American women in mainstream society. The data is telling, because it indicates that these are not isolated experiences. The literature does not indicate the profession of the respondents but they

could just as well be African American principals. Thus, while being a principal requires skill and savvy, it also requires African American women to be able to shift in order to avoid unfavorable outcomes in political situations, with the district, community, and their immediate staff (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). The concept of shifting is real and when we look at racial microaggressions, it will become evident that African American principals still have a place in society and must work double-time in order to be considered as effective as everyone else. Thus, having a coach help a new African American principal navigate the first years of principaling is critical to their survival in addition to the many facets of the job that they also must figure out issues related to race and gender.

Oprah Winfrey and Condoleezza Rice are iconic exceptions to the mainstream perceptions about African American women, contrary to the experiences of most African American women. These women do not have to contend with the assumptions and stereotypes alleging that they are always angry, abrupt or rude. While struggling with the society-implied inferiority and marginalization of African American women, one would think that it would be natural for African American women to be angry, however, this population bears the brunt and burden of white people assuming that that is just the way they are. It is a misconception to say the least. Reality television shows do not portray African American women who are educated, and in sound body, mind, and spirit. This impacts African American female principals negatively because they too have to contend with the stereotypes and judgments based on what society has come to determine are the standards by which these women measured. The negative perceptions perpetuated by

these portrayals will continue to hold back the African American race ad infinitum. It will take a movement of empowered and educated leaders to change this.

Racial Microaggressions

Research on racial microaggression was initiated by Chester Pierce, MD in the 1970s. More recent research has been primarily lead by Dr. Derald Wing Sue. Racial microaggressions are the brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities and denigrating messages sent to people of color by well-intentioned white people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated. These messages may be sent verbally (“You speak good English”), nonverbally (clutching of one’s purse more tightly) or environmentally (symbols like the confederate flag or using American Indian mascots). Such communications are usually outside the level of conscious awareness of perpetrators. Getting perpetrators to realize that they are acting in a biased manner is a monumental task because (a) on a conscious level they see themselves as fair minded individuals who would never consciously discriminate (b) they are genuinely not aware of their biases, and (c) their self-image of being “a good moral human being” is assailed if they realize and acknowledge that they possess biased thoughts, attitudes and feelings that harm people of color (Sue, 2010; Hinton, 2004; Steele, Spencer & Aronson, 2002; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

The research conducted by Dr. Derald Wing Sue (2010) led her team to create a classification of racial microaggressions that include microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Their research found that microinsults and microinvalidations are potentially more harmful because of their invisibility. Moreover, these studies support the

contention that people of color frequently experience microaggressions, which is a continuing reality in their daily interactions with friends, neighbors, co-workers, teachers, and employers in academic, social and public settings. Furthermore, Sue summarized the harmful impact of racial microaggressions which reveal that racial microaggressions have powerful detrimental consequences to people of color. They have been found to: (a) assail the mental health of recipients, (b) create a hostile and invalidating work or campus climate, (c) perpetuate stereotype threat, (d) create physical health problems, (e) saturate the broader society with cues that signal devaluation of social group identities, (f) lower work productivity and problem solving abilities, and (g) be partially responsible for creating inequities in education, employment and healthcare (Sue, 2010). Other researchers are building on the work of Pierce and Sue, including Wang, Leu, and Shoda (2011) and they believe that racial microaggressions are damaging to people of color.

Benefits of Coaching for Principals and Teachers

In schools all over Boston, change coaches and content coaches are offering principals and teachers the kind of professional development that research says is most effective: ongoing, in school, high quality, and focused on instruction (Guiney, 2001). The research indicates that coaches assist teachers in a variety of ways and often use multiple strategies over time. They often work with individual teachers to help them improve their practice, modeling instructional strategies, observing teachers, co-teaching, co-planning lessons and units, and providing feedback. There is growing evidence that among these various approaches, certain coaching practices do have a positive influence on teachers' knowledge and skills and even, in a few cases, on student achievement.

Just as teachers benefit from systematic and purposeful coaching, new principals do as well. Principals need more than “one-shot” professional development provided by one-day seminars and workshops. They would benefit from consistency and feedback from assigned coaches. My hope is that the findings from this study support that notion and highlight the need for more funding for professional development by way of coaching for all principals, but, especially for new African American female principals. African American female principals have society-imposed challenges due to their race and gender. Systematic coaching might help them address those challenges, so they can focus on being effective leaders.

A coach’s immediate goal is to improve teachers' and principals’ instructional practice (Steiner & Kowal, 2007; Ellison & Hayes, 2006; Garmston et al., 1993; Joyce & Showers, 2002). What works for teachers can be beneficial for principals as well. In a study I conducted in 2011, new principals responded that having a coach has allowed them to brainstorm ideas with a neutral party. Moreover, the participants indicated that the value of being provided with external coaching from one who is not in their current district is that there is no judgment on behalf of the coach. Steiner and Kowal (2007) found that in Ai’s and Rivera’s survey of 1,100 randomly selected teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School district, a high percentage of respondents did not think there was enough time scheduled for participating in coaching activities. Cognitive coaching can help teachers and principals expand their repertoire of teaching styles, and leadership exploring untapped resources within themselves (Garmston, Linder & Whitaker, 1993).

California has proven models in place for mentoring educators in its Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) programs. Quality BTSA programs are organized around a well-articulated vision of effective teaching and provide dedicated, trained and supported mentors who are detached from the supervision process (Bloom, et al., 2003). The New Teacher Center in Santa Cruz, California, has expanded its programming to include coaching of new administrators (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003).

The terms “mentoring” and “coaching” are used interchangeably by many although some researchers distinguish between the two. Bloom et al. (2003) for example, believe that mentors are typically senior organizational insiders in job-alike positions. However, McCormick and Burch (2008) believe that the most effective coaches are generally outsiders who, while professional experts, have leadership coaching as their primary work. These authors further suggest that novice principals should have a mentor or coach as a source of advice and information regarding district matters. In addition, novice principals need an external coach as a source of confidential and expert support around the numerous, complex, and often deeply personal issues that they must deal with from their first days on the job. Thus, there are many benefits to having someone from outside of the district as a coach. The issues principals must deal with are not always about skill shortages, performance problems, change challenges, and are certainly not necessarily by the principal being coached (McCormick & Burch, 2008). For the purpose of this study a coach is defined as someone who is an outsider trained in professional coaching.

It is important to understand that coaching is not training. Training conveys a particular curriculum, while coaching addresses the needs of the individual. It is the coachee who determines the focus of the coaching session (Bloom et al., 2003).

Individualized coaching might be of great benefit to new principals. Coaches who act as consultants work at the behest of the principals to help them with their own self-improvement efforts (Steiner & Kowal, 2007). The support of a one-to-one coach who is available for just-in-time coaching offers a level of individualization and relevance not possible in a workshop format (Bloom, Danilovich, & Fogel, 2005).

Ellison and Hayes (2006) indicate that, when principals are supported by coaching, it improves their efficacy, consciousness, interdependence, flexibility, and craftsmanship. All principals inherently deserve an ongoing system of support, tailored to their unique needs and those of their schools. One of the most powerful approaches to professional development is mentoring. More than half of the nation's states require that all beginning principals receive at least a year of mentor support when they assume their first administrative post (Daresh, 2002; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). How can we make sure administrators receive this kind of support everywhere? What does that support look like?

All principals need feedback and assistance, but principals seldom get it in any organized, meaningful form in relation to their work (Ernest, 1985). Principals, just like their teachers, benefit from professional development that examines best practices, provides coaching support, encourages risk-taking designed to improve student learning, cultivates team relationships and provides quality time for reflection and renewal. In the

end, principals and teachers should leave these experiences with a renewed sense of faith in the transformative power of schools in children's lives (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002).

Models of Principal Development

The following is a review of the literature for programs that provide coaching. National programs, California-based programs, and those from other states and professions will be reviewed.

One national program is the Leadership Academy (the name of the program has been changed). Over the past 10 years, the Leadership Academy has built a cadre of principals who play a key role in efforts to help lead schools to brighter futures. In the past two years, The Leadership Academy has focused on learning from those principals who make breakthrough gains, allowing them to share out what is working across the country with other principals, to inform our program training model, and to increase the numbers of principals who are able to turn the complex work of changing a school in to breakthrough success for children. Early results indicate that many are succeeding in this work. For example, the cumulative impact of The Leadership Academy over time: Preliminary results indicate that students in elementary and middle schools led by The Leadership Academy principals for at least three years are academically outpacing their peers by statistically significant margins.

The Leadership Academy principals are turning around urban “dropout factories,” graduating students at higher rates and increasing the percent of graduates by wider margins than other schools. As they continue to drive and improve these results, our learning agenda increases our capacity to offer deep, new, and useful insights to inform

program improvements, and to share what we are learning with the field. The objectives of The Leadership Academy embed coaching for their principals within their program. Their learning agenda focuses on the needs of their schools and the development of their principals. The successes of those administrators are influenced by the conceptual framework of the program. The Leadership Academy principals receive coaching during their residency year. The coach meets with a cluster of principals. These principals no longer receive coaching, as evidenced by Principal C who had her coaching cut last year. However, Principal D received the full breadth of coaching offered by the Leadership Academy when she matriculated through the program.

Principal Centers were designed to provide practicing and aspiring principals the chance to meet in settings to explore and reflect on current school and leadership topics. Many of the centers are modeled after The Principals' Center at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Founded in 1981, the Center is the springhead for 150 principal centers existing today throughout the United States (Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). Principals and principal supporters will benefit from taking more extensive training in the principles and practices of Cognitive Coaching (Center for Cognitive Coaching, 2005). The examination of data in this study enabled the researchers to study what participants were able to actually use from their experiences in the program back at their school sites. Participants reported that areas that related to understanding and working with staff members, clarifying their role as a leader, attaining and maintaining balance, and delegation and involvement were among the most important but unexpected outcomes of the program. They reported that this knowledge helped them back at their buildings even

more than some of the more technical aspects of the program (Eller, 2010). The Development program did not have coaching, so this program would counter The Leadership Academy and the Administrator Leadership Training Academy. Eller's (2010) research references the plight of the leader, but the program is not structured with coaching as a component.

Many professional development programs for principals utilize a values-based theoretical framework. The next two programs are grounded in equity and social justice. Zajda, Majhanovich, and Rust (2006) define social justice as the idea of creating a society or institution that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity that understands and values human rights and that recognizes the dignity of every human being (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). Equity in education is defined in this study as ensuring all students, teachers, and administrators have access to resources to achieve at the same level as their peers regardless of their background, race, gender, or sexual identity.

The Administrator Leadership Training Academy (ALTA) at California University A and California University B (names have been changed) are two equity-centered California-wide principal preparation programs designed to be long-term induction programs over the course of three years. In 2000 ALTA was created and established to target the urban population of students in schools in Northern California. The program maintains a strong connection between the realities of urban schooling and university coursework. In regards to equity and social justice, this program requires a commitment from their students to work in California urban schools in a leadership

capacity for four years. ALTA students learn about reform efforts and how to become change agents in order to implement the reforms.

The program at California University A is funded by Donor X and accepted students become Donor X Scholars and receive partial funding in the form of a scholarship and ALTA grants towards fees. A university field supervisor in the form of a retired school principal is provided to all students. The program prepares them for the role of an administrator. The ALTA has expectations of support embedded in their program. Partnerships have been established with local school districts in order to ensure a successful practicum experience for all students. After students complete the ALTA program they are eligible to participate in California University A's Leadership Support Program. It was created to provide support for new administrators who are completing their Tier II credential. Some of the components for the program include seminars, individual induction plans and individual coaching.

California University B established their ALTA in 2000 in response to state policy and limited sufficiently-prepared urban school administrators. The program was established as a fifteen month program created so that students graduate with their Master's degree and a California Tier 1 Credential. Data from their 2007 Cohort indicate that 60% of their alumni work in high priority-poverty areas. The goal of both programs is that students become social justice and equity minded leaders of schools who create culturally-responsive learning environments, implement reform efforts, and are advocates for all students.

The New Teacher Center at University of California, Santa Cruz, in collaboration with the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) is an example of two organizations are taking steps to address issues through professional development program for leadership coaches: Coaching Leaders to Attain Success (CLASS). CLASS is grounded in the pioneering teacher induction work of the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project and the principal induction network of the NTC's New Administrator Program. CLASS has trained hundreds of leadership coaches, established an ongoing coaches' network, and assisted in the development of principal induction programs in districts up and down the state (Bloom et al., 2003). The New Teacher Center's research on the effects of coaching-based principal induction demonstrates that principals receiving this sort of support are more pro-active and focused upon systemic instructional issues than principals who do not receive such support (Bloom, 2003; Bloom, Danilovich, & Fogel, 2005).

In 2007, the state of California invested \$5 million in the Administrative Training Program, AB 430 (formerly AB 75). The federal government has contributed another \$1.5 million to the cause. California currently allocates almost \$141 million to teacher induction and training. When one compares the amount of funding available for principals versus teachers, there is no comparison. It would be beneficial to new principals if the same amount of money was available to them for coaching as is available for teachers. Research shows that the success of a school and student achievement is dependent upon a prepared leader. Moreover, AB 75/430 training generally does not include direct mentoring or coaching of principals (Bossi, 2007). An ongoing area of

need in the future will be the induction and support of new school leaders to the profession.

The next model is the Program for New Principals. It is a leadership coaching program offered by a private northwestern university in the United States to support graduates as they transition to new school leadership roles. First year research results of the Program for New Principals indicates that all of the program participants felt that the coaching program was a positive addition to the induction experience for new administrators. New Principals viewed coaching positively and emphasized that it is both a valuable and unique form of professional development. Both coaches and new principals cited personalized support as one of the coaching model's most significant assets (Silver et al., 2009).

The Recently Appointed Principals Program in SW Virginia is a collaborative effort between the Western Virginia Public Education Consortium and the Center for (COTA) at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Eller, 2010). The program is facilitated by three coordinators coming from a variety of roles in public education. Four 2 1/2 day sessions are held each year. The program utilizes instruction from leaders in the field, interaction and opportunities between participants, discussion of reading materials, and connections with a mentor. Eller (2010) found that participants offered their recommendations regarding areas of refinement for future programming for the Recently Appointed Principals Program which included an increase in informal networking and problem solving opportunities: participants said they would have liked to have less time structured for them and more unstructured time scheduled to be used for

discussion, informal problem solving, and networking. While any program that is designed will provide principals with some level of support, there were some important lessons learned from the Recently Appointed Principals Program (Eller, 2010). This program does not include coaching.

Because new principals need professional and personal support and many are working in the most under-served schools in the country, principal induction must be systematic, address personal and professional growth, respect the social context of the diverse communities, and articulate a clear theory of action. According to Bossi (2007), The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) is committed to providing leadership support, through leadership coaching for every educational leader who wants it (and can afford to pay for it). In May of 2007, ACSA's Board adopted a five-year plan to advance leadership coaching in California. Currently, ACSA, in partnership with the New Teacher Center at UC Santa Cruz, has established locally based coaching programs in Poway Unified School District, San Mateo County office of Education, and the LEAD Network which encompasses Pleasanton, Dublin, and San Ramon Valley school districts. ACSA's coaching program only employs leadership coaches who could demonstrate the ability to pass a research-based, rigorous, well-structured coaching training and certification process (Bossi, 2007). The focus of coaching should be completely individualized to the principal being served and contextualized to the circumstances of the school.

New principals need access to leadership coaching. Many superintendents might want to provide coaching to their new principals, but are unable to afford the cost. If

programs are designed to take into account the learning and processing needs of these professionals, they can be extremely valuable (Eller, 2010). Furthermore personality-focused coaching can provide valuable insights and a path forward for behavioral change in a wide range of coaching situations (McCormick & Burch, 2008). Without this type of coaching, a “rising star” might not be fully developed to his or her full potential because of a personality difference. Coaching will help the coachee work through that aspect of coaching without focusing on changing the coachee, but changing the actions of the coachee. “Coaching has served as a catalyst to thinking and action by the principal, whose coaching of others leads to a school where all are engaged in making the vision a reality” (Wise & Jacobo, p. 167). Without the one-on-one coaching support that a new administrator needs, he or she might not have a successful year as he or she tries to learn on the job. It is important to provide coaching for new principals and then to find out what impact does coaching have on new principals. With that information an organization can make modifications to principal induction program in an effort to provide useful and effective support to new principals.

These models support coaching, principal development, networking, and instructional leadership. Even though the pool of literature on models of principal development is small, each model was created with the goal of supporting new principals. The principalship is a rigorous job, but through coaching, a principal stands a better chance at being successful during the first few years.

County-Based Coaching Program

Principal coaching is not a new idea, but it is not a widely used or implemented concept. Most principals credit their survival on the job at least in part to a relationship with an informal mentor. Unfortunately the mentoring received by most principals is inconsistent and suffers from some severe limitations. Because the mentoring beginning administrators receive usually comes from colleagues in the same district, it may be difficult to share confidences (Bloom et al., 2003). This is the reason why external coaching is of benefit.

One California school district assigns “support providers” to principals, which are informal mentors. Informal mentors are usually tied to their own demanding jobs, and though they may have the best of intentions, they are not fully available to their protégés. These relationships generally do not provide a coherent mentoring process that is focused upon instructional leadership (Bloom et al., 2003). The California school district described here has Instructional Leadership Training (ILT) and District Leadership Training (DLT) on Thursdays. Based on my participation it is my belief that principals needed more time in their professional learning communities (PLCs) in order to be able to take advantage of informal networking and problem solving opportunities amongst each other instead of a lecture-style format.

This school district also provided principals with the opportunity to attend a monthly Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTI2) training that had cognitive coaching embedded within the program. Cognitive coaching focuses on impact by assisting the leader in identifying the results that he or she is striving for and clarifying

the success indicators and strategies for doing so (Ellison & Hayes, 2006; Bloom et al., 2005). The RTI2 coaches met with the principals individually during follow-up sessions after the monthly seminars. My residency study (Appendix 4) showed that the coaching was helpful to new principals who were thirsty for coaching support. The coach focused on student achievement data, data analysis, and the development of action plans to ensure student success. The coaching helped participants define their role as a principal and instructional leader. The coach was a female of color, so her sharing her previous experiences helped other principals of color put things into perspective such as school culture, the ability to influence the staff and experiences leaders of color might have. The benefits of this coaching experience provided throughout the school year assisted principals as they navigated their first years as principals. One critical element that was missing from this experience was the additional time needed to receive guidance in the role of principal at a program improvement (PI) level five school in an urban district.

Limitations in Coaching Programs

Researchers and practitioners have identified gaps in principal mentorship, including lack of attention to individual personality, the context in which principals' work and systematic theoretical frameworks to guide program development, job placement, race, and gender, as well as the breadth and depth of principal coaching are areas not focused upon either. Professional development is client-driven for student achievement, focused on student achievement and reform leaves little room for the personal needs of individual principals. Principal coaching needs to be a focus. Policy

makers need to pay attention to it and it should be utilized as a resource or a way to support new principals.

Equity and Social Justice

Murtadha and Watts (2005) analyzed historical experiences of African American leaders.

African American educational leaders linked the struggle for education with social justice, acting within a moral imperative. Educational leadership for African Americans meant fighting to overcome the social barriers of poverty and class, slavery, and institutionalized racism's inequities within a democratic society. It meant getting resources where none or few were provided" (Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 592).

Personality focused coaching is an equity issue because it addresses the nuances that might be overlooked by other coaching models. This type of coaching fits in the educational system as well as corporate America. Personality in work-related performance and leadership can be an important factor in the success of a leader. It is necessary to identify ways in which potential leaders can be developed to ensure that they reach their full potential and how an understanding of individual personality traits will help bring about appropriate behavior change (McCormick & Burch, 2008).

A case example from McCormick and Burch's study (2008) provided information about a gentleman named Steven who was in line to be promoted to CEO of a company. However, some of his skills needed to be polished. His mentor, Terry, sought advice from an executive coach and the mentor began to provide systematic executive coaching,

focusing on Steven's deficits. Over the six-month period, coaching went well and progress was made. However, when Terry reported the progress to the Board of Directors of the company, one of the directors felt that although Steven was a good candidate for the CEO position, he did not have the 'X' factor that would make him an outstanding CEO. Terry consulted a psychologist who looked at Steven's personality profile. His profile included the following information: low on extraversion, with a preference for one-on-one meetings rather than talking to large groups, but he was certainly not socially awkward or withdrawn.

When Terry took the profile back to the executive coach, the coach explained a critical point: Steven's profile was not a good fit with the profile of a CEO. The issues were that he was too much of an extrovert and not conscientious enough. Steven was a talented employee who had a wealth of knowledge and experience. However, he had difficulty enthusiastically communicating his vision for the company, partly because his underlying tendency was introversion, and he had never learned effective influencing skills and behaviors. Issues that coaches must help coachees with are not always about skill deficits, performance issues, and change challenges. Personality-focused coaching as a part of any coaching model can provide valuable information and an opportunity for behavioral changes in a wide variety of coaching situations.

Executive coaching with its rapid, tailor-made, person-centered development focus is clearly the choice of many organizations and forms a part of leadership development programs in many of the world's leading companies. Executive coaching has become very popular, and it has been estimated that \$1 billion is spent each year in

the United States on coaching (McCormick & Burch, 2008). There is not much difference between corporate leaders and educational leaders, but coaching is not as consistently provided to educational leaders. Principal mentorship models might benefit from some of the strategies developed for executives, but for the purpose of this literature review, I assume coaching is provided by educational leaders who have experience in school settings.

A Closer Look at Principal Coaching

I completed a residency study (Appendix 4) about principal coaching previous to this study. The primary objective was to provide field-based examples of how new principals were influenced by having an RTI2 (Response to Intervention and Instruction) Coach. A survey instrument was created to gather data from four new school principals in a large urban school district. It used qualitative and quantitative research methodology. When new principals are not supported, their experiences can mirror those of other principals quoted below. My findings were consistent with the principals quoted in the literature. For example, one new principal stated: "I felt like I was supposed to know what I should do.... I want to succeed, but I'm not sure who to ask for help" (First year elementary school principal). First year principals often feel overwhelmed by the demands placed on them and are unsure who to ask for support (Silver et al., 2009). A similar comment cited was: "I felt like I was alone. I couldn't go across roles and confide with somebody" (A principal's voice) (Robbins & Alvey, 2009). "I found that becoming a principal was a lot like having my first child. No one can fully be prepared to meet the unique demands of the job. No one can fully understand the

principalship until she is in the leader's chair. Don't get me wrong-- I love it! But, if it hadn't been for the guidance, support, and reflective growth prompted by my coach, I never would have made it" (Bossi, 2007).

A well-intentioned assistant superintendent of human resources lamented: "I see the new, young ones struggling in their first administrative positions. Sometimes I feel like we row them out to the middle of the lake and just throw them in, hoping that they'll learn to swim. They are strong and brave, but the water is colder now, deeper now, and the shore is farther away than it was when I was thrown into my first leadership position" (Bossi, 2007). Although successful practitioners themselves, these informal mentors may not possess the tools or the skills that it takes to be most effective in providing individual support (Bloom, Castagna, & Warren, 2003). Wise and Hammack (2011) conducted a study to identify very specific coaching competencies that principals' coaches used that they deemed were effective. The findings indicated that the essential coaching competencies included establishing the coaching relationship, communicating effectively, and facilitating learning and performance (Wise & Hammack, 2011). School districts should be aware and prepared for the fact that: Our incoming educational leaders are being called upon to take demanding leadership positions, often with less experience and under more stress, with greater accountability than at any time in our history (Bossi, 2007).

The recruitment, retention, and systematic development of school principals are important for all school systems because effective educational leadership is vital to improvements in achievement processes that foster the provision of education and student

learning (Chapman, 2005). Furthermore, Fenwick et al., (2002b) suggest that in order to truly leave no child behind and reduce the racial achievement gap reform efforts should structure schooling as an opportunity structure (Fenwick et al, 2002b). A principal stands at the forefront of the changes that need to be made at their site. With this in mind, along with the understanding that the principalship is a demanding job, every effort should be made to retain and develop good principals who are committed to the profession.

The literature reviewed in this section provides a strong argument for new principals to receive coaching and why it is important. From understanding the role of the principal to the nearly impossible expectations they are held to, the literature supported my research study by recognizing the importance of coaching for principals and it revealed the factual information about what the research participants might have experienced as new African American female principals. The literature solidified the need to explore the coaching phenomenon a bit further, but with a specific group of women—new African American female principals. Chapter Three will describe the methodology used in this study to specifically look at the impact of coaching on African American women.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explores the purpose of the study, provides the research questions, and considers relational accountability as it relates to me, my participants, and my positionality within this study as an African American female researcher. This chapter will explain the use of counter-storytelling, interviewing, and case studies through a review of literature as well as the procedure for sampling, data collection, materials, and analysis, along with participant rights as required by the Institutional Review Board.

The purpose of this study was to explore new African American female principals' perceptions of coaching as they navigated through their first years of principaling. The research questions guiding this study are: How do new African American female school principals describe the influence of external coaching on leadership? What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an external coach? What can be learned about the influence of race and gender on African American female principals' experiences with coaching support?

Relational Accountability

I believe that throughout the interviewing process, I was careful in my accountability as a researcher, in both method and portrayal of the information shared. This research project required me to build a level of trust with the participants because of the sensitive nature of the subject. While I had a feeling that their experiences would be similar to mine, I needed to be conscious of my bias. Thus, I maintained accountability to

the relationship that was created between the participants and me. It was important for me to seek clarity during and after the interview as to not misrepresent any of the shared information. Wilson (2008) indicates that knowledge and peoples will cease to be objectified when researchers fulfill their role in the research relationship through their methodology. Thus, the counter-storytelling methodology might decrease the possibility of new African American female principals being objectified or negatively categorized, and an awareness of their experiences can be created, which would hopefully result in district administrators and school board members seeing the value of external coaching for this marginalized population.

Imagine you are a single point of light. Not like a light bulb or even a star, but infinitely small, intense point of light in an era of otherwise total darkness or void. Now in the darkness of this void, another point of light becomes visible somewhere off in the distance—it is impossible to tell how far off, because you and the other point are so infinitely small. You form a relationship with that other point of light; it is as though there is an infinitely thin thread now running between you and the other. All that exists are these two points of light, one which is you and something that is connecting the two of you together. (Wilson, 2008)

A respectful relationship existed between me and my research topic. The topic is something I generated based on personal interest and experience as a new African American female principal. The respect accorded is due to the fact that I have experienced life as a new African American female principal with coaching. The methods I used included interviewing, member-checking, and triangulation during my research

project. These methods helped to build respectful relationships between the topic I am studying and me as a researcher by helping me to remember to stay focused on the participants and their responses. Relationships are built through listening, interacting, and sharing with my participants. I shared some of my experiences with them in order to build a relationship, but not to overshadow their experiences. Member checking by sharing transcripts with them helped me to confirm their thoughts and make sure I had accurately captured their truths.

Due to our similar experiences, I expected to develop a common bond with the other participants that would evolve. The conversation was respectful and insightful because my goal was to learn from them and their experiences. As a researcher my role was to not just sit and listen, but to share some of my experiences as an active participant in the process. My responsibility was to honor my participants by accurately capturing what they shared. It was also imperative that I effectively communicated what was shared in my findings and respect the political nature of the position that my research participants hold. It was my responsibility to remain unbiased and to not infuse my opinion with their issues, but to try to remain objective.

My role as an African American female researcher was critical to the research process. It was my goal to situate myself in this study as a researcher and a participant. My obligation to the other participants and to myself was to invest an unwavering commitment to see the research to the end, analyze the data effectively, to communicate the truth in the findings, and to share the information with those that might be unaware. As a researcher and a scholar I am helping to overcome the paucity of literature available

about African American female principals. I created an opportunity for the participants' voices to be heard as well as contributing my story to the conversation. It was my desire that the sharing, growth, and learning that took place be reciprocal between the participants and me. Thus, it is my hope that my experience connected me to my participants and the relationships and interactions that we have had in our lives that created those experiences as new African American female principals.

Relational accountability enables individuals to request and render accounts to one another in an atmosphere of collegiality and team spirit. By acknowledging individuals' discretion in making decisions, and by considering people as valuing beings, values and ethics initiatives can contribute to broadening the scope of traditional accountability to include its existential dimensions. The overall approach to Relational Accountability involves establishing and reinforcing multidirectional, real-time feedback. An important success factor for embracing Relational Accountability is de-tabooing conflicts. Another key success factor is the permission and ability to engage in dialogue. Relational Accountability supports traditional accountability and makes it more effective just as trust is known to improve the effectiveness of formal control mechanisms in organizations. (Warah, 2004)

Positionality

My position as a new African American female principal was important to the research project because I needed information from each participant through one-on-one interviews—information that might not have been readily available to a researcher who

was not an African American and who had not experienced the trials and triumphs of the principalship. As an administrator who recently undertook a principalship, I am an insider in collaboration with other insiders. As a peer with a similar experience, I interviewed new African American female principals who ranged in age from forty to sixty years of age. The information acquired through interviews will contribute to the knowledge base, support improved practice, and strengthen the racial and gender critique. Our work will lead toward organizational transformation (Herr & Anderson, 2005). As an insider, I encountered a willingness of the participants to share their experiences without hesitation or suspicion. Moreover, because I have also been a first year principal, my experience hopefully made the participants feel a connection that, in turn, yielded honest and uncensored accounts of their experiences with coaching. I was able to rely on the similarities I shared with all of my participants in order to acquire data. There was a chance that some participants might have been unwilling to share honest accounts of their experiences due to the political nature of being an administrator, but I do not believe that was the case.

The data I gathered now enables me to share this information with superintendents, human resources personnel, and other policy-makers, the benefits of providing coaching to new African American female principals. Furthermore, the data highlights the unique struggles and experiences of African American females in leadership positions. I was insider by race, gender and profession. Research by Anderson and Jones (2000) on dissertations in educational leadership concluded that researchers

wanted to use their research to empower themselves professionally, personally, and to bring about organizational change (Anderson & Jones, 2000; Herr & Anderson, 2005).

As the challenges of society have increased, the role of the principal or school leader has become increasingly difficult and complex (Eller, 2010; Ortiz, 2002). Systematic mentorship of new principals is not available in most urban schools (Bossi, 2007; Bloom, Castagna & Warren, 2003). The preparation offered through administrative programs does not always adequately prepare a person to assume an administrative position. Authors including Garmston, Linder & Whitaker (1993), Eller (2010), Bossi (2007), Bloom, Danilovich & Fogel (2005), and others have suggested reasons why coaching is beneficial for teachers and administrators. New principals need support and guidance as they assume the role of the school leader (Eller, 2010). Most principals come from the teaching ranks and fewer African American leaders are entering the teaching profession. Echols (2006) seeks to understand the challenges facing P-12 black principals and other principals of color by asking them what makes them successful. Did they have a mentor? Did they have a mentor who supported them in achieving their administrative and career goals? Using a Critical Social Theory lens, the experience of four new African American female principals was examined through a multi-participant case study approach through counter-narrative storytelling.

Case studies are a form of empirical social research in which the researcher explores in depth a contemporary phenomenon, program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals within its real-life context. Cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over

a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995; Schram, 2006; Yin, 2003). This study gathered counter-narratives within a qualitative methodology framework. The participants were interviewed two to three times, and their stories of professional induction were collected and analyzed. The questions were open-ended, so that participants were free to answer how they wished. Seidman (2006) infers that an open-ended question, unlike a leading question, establishes the territory to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction he or she wants. It does not presume an answer (Seidman, 2006).

Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of rendering the complexity of a situation. (Creswell, 2007, p. 4)

Qualitative research methodology focused on narrative research; the connection to extant work will consider equity, and Critical Race Theory (CRT). The study focused specifically on early years' African American women principals' beliefs about their roles

as leaders, and the influence of external coaching. The study focused on the participants' experiences with coaching and how coaching influenced their journeys as new principals.

Counter-Storytelling

Counter-storytelling is when people of color have the opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge which contradict the racialized ideologies created about them. It is also an approach for researchers to use to co-construct the experiences of those whose voices have been marginalized or silenced by majoritarian narratives (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Delgado (1989) used a method called counter-storytelling and believes that it is both a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose stories are a natural part of the dominant narrative- the majoritarian story (Delgado, 1989). For example, while a narrative can support the majoritarian story, a counter-narrative or counter-story, by its very nature, challenges the majoritarian story or that "bundle of pre-suppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings persons in the dominant race bring to the discussion of race" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 475). These counter-stories can serve at least four theoretical, methodological, and pedagogical functions: (1) they can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practice; (2) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems; (3) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing the possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position; and (4) they can teach others that

by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone (Delgado, 1989; Lawson, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001).

According to the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, the percentage of African American principals in public schools in the United States in 1982 was 12.2%; that percentage increased to 16.4% in 2004 (U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission, 2005). It is fair to deduce that the percentage of African American female principals was much smaller than 12.2%. This case study will inform the practices of other aspiring African American female administrators as well as respond to the need to look critically at the practice of school district officials and the kind of support provided to the new African American administrators. It is important to retain our principals of color. This is possible through systematic external coaching that will allow them to work with someone who is invested in their development.

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to identify four new African American female principals who have received external coaching. African American female principals in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties participated in one-on-one interviews about their coaching experiences from October 2011-January 2012, at their convenience, at a mutually agreed upon location. This study considered new principals defined as 2nd-4th year principals. First year principals were not be included because they did not have external coaching on which to report. Participants were identified through referral from local programs identified by my dissertation chair.

Interview Data

I conducted interviews to explore each female's experience with an external coach. Each participant was interviewed three times except for one principal who was interviewed twice. Follow up interview questions emerged as interviews were conducted. Four participants were interviewed during three different sessions for 60-90 minutes. The elements that emerged from the following interview questions helped form the future interview questions for the research participants. Participants were initially asked:

1. Describe some of the challenges you have faced as a new African American female principal.
2. How has coaching helped you negotiate those challenges?
3. What have we not talked about that you think is important in relation to race, gender, and coaching?

Qualitative data was collected from participants' responses to open-ended interview questions asked from October 2011-January 2012, as well as from any documentation provided by the participants. The interview protocols that were followed included Seidman's (2006) recommendations to: establish the purpose and focus of the interview; practice active listening; show sensitivity to participant's energy level; pay attention to non-verbal cues; consider using digital recording and note-taking; explore, but do not probe; ask open-ended questions and avoid leading questions; refrain from reinforcing participants' responses, and tolerate silence (Seidman, 2006).

Analysis

I analyzed the participants' experiences as early years' principals who received external coaching. Themes or patterns about those experiences were identified and reported from the interview data. Within the sociological tradition, the most widely used means of data analysis is thematic analysis, a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description (Glesne, 2006). Data was transcribed and coded using rudimentary coding schemes. Because the research participants shared their individual experiences through their stories, connections were drawn from the themes that emerged. Glesne (2006) and Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote that coding is a progressive process of sorting and defining and defining and sorting those scraps of collected data (i.e., observations, notes, interview transcripts, memos, documents, and notes from relevant literature) that are applicable to your research purpose. This part of the analysis phase involved categorizing and combining the data that had been acquired.

During the interview phase I asked the principals about their relationship with their coach. Considering the literature presented, it is necessary for the coachee to have positive interactions with the coach. However, due to various personalities, work ethics, race, gender, and one's concept of leadership, there could be reasons why coaching relationships do not develop just as well as reasons why relationships thrive. I analyzed the coach/coachee relationship in my data analysis. Member checking was used during the research process which provided me with the opportunity to test my interpretations and conclusions with the research participants. I felt that it was imperative during the

analysis that data was shared with the participants. Member checking is both formal and informal, and it occurs continuously. Several opportunities for member checks arise daily in the course of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The data collected was analyzed, coded, themed, and anonymized. Respondents' identities were kept confidential. Because the research participant group only had four people, a narrative approach rather than descriptive statistics was used.

According to Glesne:

Ideally, the qualitative researcher draws on some combination of techniques to collect research data, rather than a single technique. This is not to negate the utility of, say, a study based solely on interviews, but rather to indicate that the more sources tapped for understanding, the richer the data and the more believable the findings. (Glesne, 2006, p. 36)

My position as an African American female researcher can also influence the data gathering and reporting. Moreover, Glesne reminds us that validity is critical and that it is wise to consider having a peer review and debriefing; clarification of researcher bias; and/or external audit to question our subjectivity.

Participant Rights

Participants' rights were protected through the protocols established by the Institutional Review Board. The status of researcher and participants was articulated through the protocol and questions, as interviewing relationships are affected by the social identities that participants and interviewers bring to the interview. In our society, with its history of racism, researchers and participants of different racial and ethnic backgrounds

may face difficulties in establishing an effective interviewing relationship (Seidman, 2006). The goal was to make sure that participants were comfortable describing their experiences. The purpose of the study was explained as well as the benefits to the greater population. An informed consent form was distributed. Participants reviewed how their statements were interpreted and offered corrections or revisions as needed. The privacy of the participants was protected and all data was kept in a secure location. Participants' names were disassociated from all responses. The consent form was distributed at the outset of the first interview. Participants only had to answer questions they are comfortable answering. Only one copy of transcripts was available. Participant names were not used; instead they were referred to as Principal A, B, C, and D. The minimal risks of this study far outweighed the benefit of the information to the public. The minimal risks included possible slight discomfort during the interviews based on their experiences as African American female principals.

Materials

The materials needed for the interviews included a copy of the interview questions—one for me and one for the participant. An interview tracking sheet which included the names of the principal, dates and times for each interview, the location of the interview, and whether or not each interview had been transcribed. Other materials were pad and pens for note taking, the digital recorder, extra batteries, and copies of the transcripts from the previous interviews.

Limitations of This Study

The limitations of this study were primarily created by the work life of participants, including: principals not being able to commit to the interview sessions, time limitations, scheduling conflicts and demands of the job of a principal, politics, and my positionality as a researcher. Examples of limitations included arriving at Principal C's school for our scheduled interview time and her having to hurry the interview along because she had a spelling bee at her school site that was to occur in the middle of the interview, thus her time was limited.

This study focused on female principals from one area of the state of California. This study is limited to principals who work in two urban districts in Northern California. While my own observations strongly suggest race may play a factor in successful coaching experiences, this would have to be explored further. The demographic (urban setting) also suggest areas for further study. There was no clear evidence that a female's overall experience would be any different from a male's because men were not interviewed. Looking at a greater number of new female principals or even studying the experiences of seasoned (5+ years) principals may yield different data. The participants' ages in this population average around forty years of age. Exploring the lives of younger or older principals might yield a slightly different understanding of the experience, especially those from the Civil Rights era.

Data Collection

I conducted three interviews with each principal. Each principal answered a series of three to four questions during each interview session. Three principals were able to

complete all three interviews. Due to time constraints, one principal only completed two interviews. The interviews were conducted in-person, at their respective schools, on a monthly basis for up to one and one half hours. One interview was conducted by phone. The same questions were asked of each participant in each interview and follow-up questions were asked on an as-needed basis. The questions for rounds two and three grew out of responses from the previous interview. Interviews lasted from fifteen minutes to one and one half hours based on the principals' schedules. All but one interview was conducted during the course of the school day. Each interview was digitally recorded using an Olympus WS-600S digital voice recorder, with permission of the participants, and the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Questions

The questions asked of each participant are as follows:

Round One

Describe some of the challenges you have faced as a new African American female principal.

How has coaching helped you negotiate those challenges?

What have we not talked about that you think is important in relation to race, gender, and/or coaching?

Round Two

What are/were you able to do as a result of the help you got from your coach?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an external coach versus someone assigned to you from within the district?

How did your coach help you address issues of race and/or culture?

What, if any, effect do you think the race and/or gender of the coach had on your relationship?

Round Three

What would your recommendations be about coaching to your district?

What was the design of the coaching you received? What would have been ideal?

What's unique, if anything, about coaching African American women?

Is there anything you feel people in the field should know about coaching?

The Process for Data Analysis

In this study I used Critical Race Theory throughout the literature review, the choice of method, and the analysis. CRT is an intellectual and politically responsive philosophy that allows researcher to study the influence of race, racism, and power. African American women are underrepresented among school principals. Counter-storytelling offers a race and gender sensitive approach to comparing the experiences of these school leaders to others. African American women leaders' potential to address social justice and equity is addressed in their responses to the interview questions.

Qualitative data was collected from participants' responses to open-ended interview questions asked by me from October 2011- January 2012. When I started to analyze my data for elements and themes, I read over each transcript and commented on the elements and themes that emerged. I then put my information into a data analysis grid, coded the data, and organized it into themes that were interpreted from the data under each element. I extracted the themes that emerged from the elements and recorded

my thoughts. I then collapsed and combined the original elements to create another outline with three major elements with themes.

I used different colored highlighters to highlight the main elements (yellow, pink, orange, blue) and letters and symbols to mark similarities. The principals are referred to as Principal A, Principal B, Principal C, and Principal D. The names of all coaches have been anonymized as well as any school sites mentioned. It was important that this was done in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the principals. I did, however, provide raw data in the form of non-anonymized data to each principal of her own data in order to do member checking.

I transcribed five of the digitally recorded interviews, and then I hired a transcriptionist. I made only minor changes to the interview transcript (deleted ums and uhs, but did not delete anything that would change the content, context or integrity, of what was stated during the interview). My decision to transcribe interviews myself offered the benefit of maintaining confidentiality, however, allowing someone else to transcribe the data yielded extra time for me to separate myself from the data and reflect on the findings of previous interviews. Each transcript was read and the data was analyzed and the content outlined by me over a period of three months.

Careful steps were taken to ensure the appropriate methodology would yield very detailed, in-depth information. The participants' rights were respected through the IRB process and my agreements, I strived to ensure their stories were accurately portrayed, and I followed the member check protocol throughout. I believe my relational accountability, positionality as an African American female principal and understanding

the dynamic that CRT's counter-storytelling yielded an abundance of data through the interview process that will be analyzed and shared in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The focus of my study is the impact of coaching on four new African American female principals in Alameda County who received coaching. For the purpose of this study, “new” is defined as years two through five of the principalship. For this multi-participant case study I used interviews as the methodology reflecting critical race theory’s attention to counter-narrative storytelling. The interview data offer an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the four principals. The data collected was analyzed and provided answers to the following research questions. How do new African American female school principals describe the influence of external coaching on leadership? What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an external coach? What can be learned about African American female principals’ experience serving in school leadership roles by using a cultural lens?

Coaching is the focus of the interview questions, so the responses about coaching were analyzed and the following subthemes emerged: design, support, having an internal versus external coach, principal recommendations for their districts, the ideal design of coaching, and principals’ recommendations for those in the professional domain of education. This chapter contains the analysis of the information obtained during the research process. The subsequent analysis of the counter narratives is framed according to the elements and themes which are presented, including the definitions of terms. Responses and synthesis of the participants’ responses is presented throughout all three elements; race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender including the reason for

the study—coaching. In element one, race and the themes: the impact of the dominant culture, marginalization, perceptions, and institutional racism was explored. Element two contains data about gender and the themes: the significance of the gender of the coach, a man's job, and the invisible network. Element three emerged as a result of the overlapping of race and gender in the participants' responses, thus, the intersection of race and gender was further analyzed with a focus on what is unique to African American women.

Elements and Themes

The following emerged from the analysis of the principals' responses to the questions about: Race, Gender, and the Intersection of Race and Gender. The sub-sections for coaching are listed and defined below:

1. Design of coaching received- the frequency of coaching and the construct utilized by each program.
2. Support- the ways in which the principals were assisted by the coaches throughout the process.
3. Internal versus external coach- For the sake of this study, an external coach is defined as someone who is from outside of a school district and an internal coach is one who works in the same district as the principal.
4. Principals' recommendations to their districts- principals were asked for the recommendations they would like to make to their districts about coaching.
5. Ideal design of coaching- the principals were asked to describe the frequency and content of the coaching services that should be provided in an ideal program.

6. Principals' recommendations to those in the field- Principals were asked to provide recommendations about coaching that could potentially be provided to those in the field including the State Superintendent of Education, ACSA, coaches, and policy makers.

Race is defined as the socially constructed meaning attached to a variety of physical attributes including but not limited to skin and eye color, hair texture, and bone structures of people in the United States and elsewhere (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 39). The subthemes for race are listed and defined below:

1. Dominant culture- white people have historically been considered the dominant culture in the United States. Their beliefs are what dictate societal actions and perceptions.
2. Marginalization- the inherent reduction of the intelligence or abilities of a disenfranchised group or groups, (my definition) or the systematic subjugation of a group of people, or population, etc. (M. Pouncil, personal communication, March 17, 2012).
3. Perceptions- thoughts about another person, but for the sake of this study, thoughts about a particular race and gender—African American females.
4. Institutional Racism-racism becomes institutionalized when organizations—such as a school or school district-- remain unconscious of issues related to race or more actively perpetuate and enforce a dominant racial perspective or belief (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 41)

Gender is defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary* as one's identity as female or male or as neither entirely female nor entirely male (<http://ahdictionary.com/word/search.html?q=gender>). The subthemes for gender are listed below:

1. Significance of the gender of the coach- the principals shared about their comfort level with and the importance of having an African American female coach.
2. A man's job (man versus female principal duties) - the perception of the duties that men should have, that female principals are required to do.
3. Invisible network- a network that is dominated by males.

The data collected was reported and analyzed using the above themes and subthemes.

Coaching

According to the participants, all four were positively influenced by coaching. Each participant received coaching during her principal induction through what will be referred to as the Leadership Academy or the Administrator Leadership Training Academy. Actual program names are not used due to the participants' concerns about anonymity and confidentiality. All four participants received coaching from African American female coaches. Their beliefs about coaching are presented in the next section.

Figure 1

Name	Type of Program	Notes
Principal A	Administrator Leadership Training Academy	Received three years of coaching
Principal B	Administrator Leadership Training Academy	Received three years of coaching
Principal C	The Leadership Academy	Received 1 ½ years of coaching. Coaching cut ½ way through program
Principal D	The Leadership Academy	Received three full years of coaching

Design of coaching. The design of the coaching varied between the two programs. Out of the four participants, one had her coaching cut during the middle of her second year of her principalship resulting in only one and one half years of coaching. Thus, she did not have a coach for the 2011-2012 school year and most of the 2010-2011 school year. Principal D indicated that she received three years of coaching from the same person throughout her program. She indicated that there was not necessarily a set schedule, but that she was able to call her coach and her coach would visit her school site on an as-needed basis. She also indicated that her entire cohort received that level of support. All of their coaching began when the participants were assistant principals. The design of the coaching experience allowed all the participants to develop a great relationship with their coaches. The time spent with the coaches varied. Principal D indicated that her coach met with her weekly. However, the time decreased, and she referred to it as a gradual release over time. The first year she met with her coach weekly and then her second year they met every couple of weeks. Principal C had her coaching cut during her second year for program reasons. She was influenced by the decision of

her induction program to cut coaching mid-year, and the possible repercussions of such a decision. This is what she shared:

In the beginning I received coaching only from the Leadership Academy, and that was only for the first year and then they stopped the program a year and a half into the other second year. I don't think that that was ideal. I don't think it was very helpful at all, actually in this particular case, but could have had the potential of being very meaningful and valuable time experienced. I think that this idea that: Well, we hired you to be a principal and if you have problems then maybe you shouldn't be a principal, is very dangerous, and also not reflective of the reality of this job. It's scary when you have this political error that says you're going to be penalized if you ask questions. So I think definitely you would want your principals to be professionally developed, you would want them to be supported. You would want them to know what to do and how to handle all of the different issues that come up in the course of a day and over the course of the year.

Principal D stated that her coach originally visited every other week during her first year, and then over time it changed to once per month and then once every couple of months.

Principal B received coaching once per month. Her monthly meeting consisted of her and her coach examining issues and ways to deal with issues that were specific to her urban school district. Her monthly one-on-one meetings were useful to her because they allowed her the time to talk about issues that were specific to her site. She had these monthly meetings with her coach for two years.

Support. Support was a resounding theme for all of the participants. They expressed appreciation for the time they were able to spend with their coaches as well as the wisdom their coaches brought with them due to their prior experiences as principals. The support received as well as the race and gender of the coaches seemed to all fold together as a group of combined elements that were a part of the reason the participants valued the support they received. The principals spent most of their interview time describing the various ways their coaches supported them and the impact it had on their leadership. I found it challenging to keep some of the information separate and within themes, because most of the time the information seemed all merged together. Principal A explained that having an African American female coach was “extremely powerful” because it was from the inception of her principalship through the Leadership Academy to the beginning of her third year as principal.

Principal A shared: “I really think it is imperative as an African American leader, as a novice leader that we build bridges and the barriers and impediments to change we have to be very mindful of the walk in the way in which we lead.” This principal indicated that her coach is responsible for the leaders she is today because her coach taught her how to be a leader. In regards to the challenges new African American female principals face, Principal B shared that because her coach was an African American administrator, they both [coach and principal] knew immediately whether the challenge was related to race or whether it was related to age. The coaches talked through concerns with the principals, and assisted them with written responses to the community around certain issues.

The phrase “sounding board” was mentioned several times with each principal emphasizing how helpful it was for her to have someone with whom to talk things through. They referred to their coaches uplifting them. Principal C stated, “She believed in me and had a lot of confidence in me and how I handled things, but sometimes it can get difficult and when I’m having my moment it was nice to have someone there.” She also indicated that the support her district provides in handling certain situations is minimal. Thus, she really relied on her coach to assist her.

Principal D was excited to share how supportive and amazing her coach was. She said,

My first three years I received coaching from the Leadership Academy. My coach was Coach X (not named for confidentiality purposes), who was a district office leader in Northern California and knew everybody, grew up here, and understood the system. You know, I could call her and she’d come by and so I had that kind of, and we all did, my entire cohort, had that kind of support from the Leadership Academy. It’s just unheard of. Someone who just comes in and says, “Oh hey, how you doin’ today? And so have you done some of these things here? And can I help you? You got something you just got to get out? We’d close the door and talk and she was the most supportive person I’ve ever had in any type of job because she knew it all. And she had done it all and she’s like okay so let’s try this and she was just amazing. And she left and that’s why she’s not around but I can still call her and say I need help on such and such and she’ll help me.

Principal B shared that her relationship with her coach was such that if she felt like she needed advice, whether she was still assigned to her or not, she could still contact her and get advice. She felt that she had a successful coaching relationship because her coach is available to her at any time. Principals A and D shared that their coaches provided them with several planning tools and an abundance of resources including protocols. They received plans and/or calendars that showed them how to set up their year and the things that they needed to do month-by-month as a principal. They both shared that this helped them to not feel overwhelmed when they stepped into the role of principal. Often time's principals who do not have coaches share that they were given the keys to their building and told, "Good luck". The experiences of my research participants are quite the contrary. Principal D shared:

I think I'm trying to see if I have it. Here's one of them. I think this is it. This is one of the books for seven days on the job—the first 30 days on the job, what you should be doing. And she gave me like this kind of booklet that kind of—it was set up by all the coaches of the Leadership Academy sort of, and they gave you like, the what, the when, the how, and everything that you needed to set up so that you could prepare yourself for the principalship. And it made a *huge* difference because I was like, so where do you start?! There's so much stuff. And even things like going up to the balcony and looking at your school culture. And I mean, that was invaluable for me, and that's what *she* really helped me do. I couldn't have gotten that from anyone else. She helped me break down exactly what is it that you need to do, and this was through the Leadership Academy too,

but she came in and personally said to me, okay, have you done this, this, and this? If you haven't, let's go back and figure out how you can get this done. So I mean, it was just extremely powerful. This was just a little planning tool. It's a principal's planning tool to develop effective leaders of successful schools.

Fabulous piece of work here. I had a phenomenal coach! She was great.

Principals B and C shared that their coaches helped them deal with difficult teacher situations. They were able to use their coaches as a sounding board and get support with how to approach the situation from an administrator's perspective. They were assisted with the documentation and moving the process forward to disciplinary action. Principal B mentioned that her coach helped her to realize how much influence she could have on a school culture and helped her work through a career decision when it was time for her to seek another position, so she could continue to grow. Principal A shared,

I loved my coach because she really embraced me for who I am. My goal is to be as much as I possibly can an expert about my area of leadership. What I'm thankful for is that my coach has supported me and I have been a part of committees that I have been asked to join as a member of the Association of Principals of Northern California (name changed for confidentiality purposes). I have been asked to mentor new leaders even though I'm not a seasoned principal. Having my coach say that 'You're really operating at a high level and it is due to humility' I arrived this quickly because of this dense network of support.

Internal versus external coach. All of the principals had external coaches provided to them by their coaching program. The principals shared that the benefits of having an external coach included the coach being outside of the district politics, the coach having a clear perspective of site and district matters, and because the coach was not an "insider" who was influenced by district politics, she was able to offer information about good leadership practices. It was also shared that an external coach brings a fresh look and perspective to the coaching relationship, cannot be manipulated by the district, and can give the principal general information.

Some drawbacks to having an external coach were that an outsider might not know the district and/or site politics, including stakeholders and the coachee is left to find out who key district people are on her own. Principals C and Principal D had an external coach who was previously an internal employee in their respective districts. They shared that the benefit of that coaching experience was that the external coach was familiar with the inner workings of their districts, so it was like having an internal coach. Their coaches had access to district people and information that might not be accessible to any other new principal because of the new principal's lack of connections, but was available to the coach. Another drawback of having an external coach who was once an internal district employee was the fact that the coachee had to work toward a level of trust between herself and her coach so that she (the coachee) did not feel like her shortcomings and/or missteps would be shared with other district members outside of the coaching relationship.

While exploring her experience with her external coach, Principal D shared:

Sometimes an external coach is great, but unless they know the policies and rules and regulations of the district, they're not as helpful...so if you were going into that district, your coach was somebody that had worked for the district, so they knew something about the internal working, and so that just helped tremendously because then they knew people, places, and things and that really helped.

All of the principals were in agreement that an external coach was beneficial. There is a justified amount of caution when starting any coaching relationship, however, Principal B recalled:

If the external coach is familiarized with the district that I'm working in and has connections and knows people then it's very similar to having someone within the district. But if the person did not have that experience, background or connection, then I think it would be challenging for that person to be able to fully advise me as a coach, on the principalship in my district.

Principals' recommendations for districts. During the third and final interview, principals were asked for their recommendations they might make to their district about providing coaching. They all communicated the importance of coaching and expressed concern for the new principals who are not currently receiving coaching. Principal B shared that coaching should be required for the first year and that coaching matches should be appropriate matches. Principal C indicated that new African American female principals, specifically, needed to be provided with quality coaching for more than the first year of their principalship. She stated:

I think it's imperative that principals, and in particular, this group of principals, is provided with quality coaching for more than just the first year, but I would say the first three years. The reason why I feel that is because each year you get introduced to a whole new set of issues and problems that arise and what you dealt with in the first year is not what you deal with in the third year, and if you want to maintain the principal work force, especially African American principals, then they need that support.

Principal D shared that more mentors are needed for principals and time should be allotted for coaches to come to the sites to meet with principals directly.

Ideal design of coaching. Principals were also asked to share their ideal design for coaching. One idea expressed by all participants was that coaching should occur once per month so that the coach can help the principal examine site issues. The coach should provide feedback based on the site situation as well as personal feedback about the principal's demeanor, mannerisms, interactions, and communication in order to help the principal grow. The coaching meetings should be monthly for at least two years. As noted earlier, Principal C only received coaching during her first year and half of her second year, and then the program cut coaching. She shared that that was not ideal, nor was it helpful. She originally had weekly meetings, then monthly meetings, and then a gradual reduction of the frequency of the meetings and felt that was sufficient before it was cut. Principal D felt that her coaching situation was ideal and recommended it for other principals.

I had an ideal situation because she [the coach] met with me weekly, so I considered that a real ideal situation. As time went by, we were able to spread it out a little bit more and then there was that gradual release of time. So she started off weekly and then in my second year, I'd say, 'You know, I really would like to not have you here this week' and she'd say, 'Well, we've covered things that have are pertinent for a least a couple weeks, so I'll see you in a couple weeks.' So it was that gradual release of coaching that I think was so beneficial because it was like noticing that I needed less at certain times, so she wasn't here as often.

She had matriculated through the same coaching as Principal C, except that she received coaching for a full three years while Principal C received coaching for one and one half years.

Principal recommendations for other professionals. Principals were asked to share their recommendations about coaching to people in the field. Principal B shared that it is important that coaching is more personal than professional because you cannot randomly assign coaches to principals, but that there must be thought put into the matching process. She also believes that coaching mismatches need to be rectified quickly. Principal B also felt that principals must be willing to be coached and that if they are unwilling, then perhaps they are not ready to assume a principalship. She also mentioned that a person's personality might keep him or her from receiving coaching support. This idea parallels the personality coaching that corporations provide through executive coaching.

Principal C recommended that a coach must be a good listener; a coach cannot come in with her own agenda, and more importantly, a coach must be willing to be a sounding board, and capable of understanding the reason for needing to assume that role. She also felt that coaches should provide resources and tools for principals who might not have access to them and indicated that planning time should be allotted for principals to work with their coaches. She believes that a coach should not use the session to gossip about other coachees or discussing any other irrelevant information. Moreover, a coach should get a sense of the school and get to know the staff. Principal C also mentioned that a coach should challenge the principal's thinking by playing devil's advocate in some situations. Her final comment was that the coaches need to honor the person they are working with. Principal D recommended that coaches need to have the experience of doing the job. It is difficult to coach someone without the coach not having been a principal or a superintendent.

Unbeknownst to them, all four principals shared many of the same sentiments regarding coaching and the in-depth, invaluable support that their coaches provided. Eller (2010), believed that in schools where problems are becoming increasingly complicated, there may be little or no time to prepare or plan for the succession of brand new principals into leadership positions. New principals are in desperate need of support and guidance as they take on the role of school leader (Eller, 2010). The coaches were credited with strengthening the practices of each leader, guiding them through rough patches, and teaching them how to be successful leaders. The participants shared their thoughts of having an external versus an internal coach, and provided recommendations

to leaders in their district and those in the professional domain of education about the ideal design of coaching. The consensus was that new principals need coaching.

According to Wise and Jacobo, (2010), Knight, (2008), Reiss, (2006), and Roberston, (2008):

There is mounting evidence in the business world on the effectiveness of coaching and it has become a well-established intervention that offers opportunities for educational leaders. Furthermore, recent research in the education arena indicates that leadership coaching leads to increased effectiveness on school practices as well. (Knight, 2008; Reiss, 2006; Roberston, 2008; Wise & Jacobo, 2010)

The participants' responses included more than just their thoughts about their appreciation for coaching, they also discussed race and why it was imperative that new *African American* female principals receive coaching.

Race

The topic of race was prevalent throughout the interviews. Participants referred to the dominant culture multiple times, and made it clear that they were referring to white people. When asked about the challenges they faced as new African American female principals, all four principals responded with a reference to race during their responses. Principal A shared,

Being an African American school leader has been daunting in that you are the pillar of the race, even as a skillful person as an African American school leader. You are never deemed an expert only when your peers who are not of color deem you an expert or being skilled ability or the data showing that you then have to

champion and PR your community as an effective learning community that is caring and competent. Various measures to be seen, and even in that level of success you are marginalized, and so in my experience as an African American principal and really trying to be a supporter to my colleagues and African Americans there is this interesting dichotomy and so there are some principals who are allowed to sit at the table sometimes there are some principals who are allowed entry when it is convenient sometimes.

She felt that as an African American she feels like she is the “pillar” of her race as she spends time negotiating dominant culture. When she said she has to be the pillar of her race, she further explained that since there are not many African American principals, male or female, she feels like she has to represent her race and make sure that she sets a good example in order to debunk myths and stereotypes.

Principal B shared that she serves a minority community, but has a white staff and she has had to work hard to make them feel comfortable. Because of this she arrived at her school site feeling like she had something to prove because of her race and age. She mentioned that the dominant culture in administration in her district is white, as there are not many African Americans. She also shared that she has had to listen to shocking responses to equity, social justice or race situations where her colleagues claim to not be racists.

Hmmm. (long pause) because I’m African American and my coach is African American we had similar experiences. I won’t say similar life experience, but because we share the same cultural background, kinda knowing where the road

bumps might be. It was a lot easier to have those open discussions in the beginning. Whereas (pause) I've worked with people not in a coaching capacity, but others who were trying to be helpful and helping to develop me become a good leader but we didn't share the same cultural background, and um, I wouldn't have felt comfortable having the discussion specifically about race and culture and my own what I was personally experiencing because of that with someone other than a black person. It just is what it is. I think the reason for that is as I do this work and I work with people from many different cultures and many different backgrounds that no matter how hard you try to understand someone else's existence or someone else's experiences, without actually having experienced some of it or at least the types of challenges, no matter how hard you try to understand you still can't relate to it so it's more of a relational aspect than an understanding aspect. And so I think that was the difference. So in terms of addressing issues of culture, um, yeah. If you know the culture that you are serving you have fewer issues. And because my coach could identify with their issues and my issues, it was easy to address things.

Principal C works at a predominantly white school and has had to deal with the racial perceptions of teachers and parents in the community. She also mentioned that the previous African American principal was ousted by the dominant culture at her site. She shared that walking into such a toxic environment caused her to be fearful. Principal D shared that she works at a school where the dominant culture is Latino, and they challenged her by questioning her reasons for being at the site and spread rumors that she

was only going to focus on her own kind, which are African American students. Her white predecessors were not scrutinized or questioned like she was.

Marginalization. Some of the principals spoke of being marginalized by the staff, parents or surrounding community. Principal A believed the following:

And so the challenges... there are a myriad of challenges. One, uh, just negotiating dominant culture. Two, negotiating dominant culture and how it is the bastion of power in any organization that you exist in in the United States. Three. Becoming savvy enough that you are able to build alliances across race and social economic stratum. Um, and four, how you create a global community.

Principal A shared that they (African-Americans) are never deemed an expert unless the dominant culture deems them an expert. She shared that even if site data and events indicate success for African American principals, they are still marginalized until they are deemed worthy of actually knowing what they are talking about. Principal C felt marginalized when she was asked if she was selected to lead a predominantly white school because of Affirmative Action. She shared:

My first year here I did have a family who did not like the way that I was having to evaluate a teacher whose behavior was disruptive, and one of their methods of dealing with that situation was to question my capability as principal, in that they asked the PTA board president whether or not I was hired based on affirmative action.

When I asked Principal B what effect, if any, did she think that the race and/or gender of the coach had on her relationship, she quickly replied,

The level of comfort was immediate. When I meet with someone professionally, I have to be a professional first and African American second, but for example, you come in, my coach comes in, I can immediately relax, put my guard down, and be in my own skin, professionally. And so, that's huge, because (pause) other people who I encounter like in the Administrator Leadership Training program who are not African American I could never get comfortable with. I could be professional. We could work professionally. We could have discussions, but, I couldn't do it in my own skin.

Perceptions. Another challenge presented by the participants was the fact that they have to deal with society's perceptions of them as African American women. As a result, Principal A worked hard to be mindful of her positionality and the perceived power that comes with it. She shared that principals are in a fish bowl, but African American female principals are under the microscope even more because the dominant culture is waiting for them to make a mistake. Her coach helped her to navigate some of the perceptions by encouraging her to be vocal but appropriate at district meetings, and other formal functions. She said her coach helped her to dispel some of the myths about African Americans through her actions. Principal B shared,

Because I serve a minority community I think that I have not faced challenges that would have come about if I serviced a different population so in terms of my school community I don't feel that there's been many challenges but in terms of the staff with the staff being majority white middle-aged females I felt like coming in I had something to prove not only because I'm African-American but

also because I'm young so I guess the biggest challenge with the staff was just getting them to a space where they were comfortable with me at the lead.

Principal D shared,

Oh my goodness there's so many challenges. First of all uh I um came into a school that is 62% Latino and um it was at the time 20% African American and so the first thing that I faced was the fact that I was an African American coming to a school that had um had white principals before and both spoke Spanish. So, it was kind of you know that things that I kind of heard in a roundabout way was oh well, she's going to be for the African American kids. She's not going to be for my kids. That was my first major challenge that I faced as a principal in this school.

Institutional racism. Institutional Racism was a challenge for all four principals.

Those who have a predominantly white staff or work at schools with predominantly white students felt that challenging and disrupting institutional racism by their mere presence was difficult.

Principal A shared,

So those are just some of the great difficulties but um, institutional racism is always at the forefront, um, structural impediments to change and dismantling the status quo and doing so in a [Northern California] context has been rather perplexing on one level this is the sea of liberalism and progressive urban reform and on another level because the belief that many have arrived because this is the

progressive area and liberal area, covert racism and oppression has to be unearthed. And that too has been the challenge.

Moreover, she has had to challenge deficit-model thinking about students at her site in order for teachers to understand how to deal with her and the students of color they serve.

Principal B shared,

On the district level sometimes in those meetings with things come up, hearing other people's comments and answers to questions that come up that has to have to do with issues related to color um one challenge for me has been respecting other colleagues after hearing how they respond to issues because the first thing that comes out of people's mouths is I'm not racist but I believe such and such and there have been at least three occasions where I've had to look it colleagues and say are you serious is that really which you believe, and so I realize that some of our educational leaders within this district are kind of still stuck and their minds aren't as open as they should be.

Principal C shared that her coach advised her to be diplomatic, not take it personally, remain professional, and keep everything in perspective when dealing with the deep-rooted institutional racism at her site.

You know my struggles as a principal is more so probably what a lot of our principles are dealing with, and me being particularly African American, however I think that because I am African American; I am actually mixed-race, I'm able to have that lens when I'm in my school community, in terms of the practices in the classroom, curriculum choices that I see teachers use the way that we interact with

students who are of African American descent versus non-African American descent, and I've been able to use that experience and background and lens to interrupt what I feel are the misbehaviors by parents, by teachers, by staff members. So, I don't feel necessarily that I've been threatened or anything like that by the community although the previous principal who was African American as well, did have a lot of pushback, in particular of because of her race and there a lot of racist comments made in this community about that principal. So coming into a community where I knew that happened was a little bit scary and troubling I but I do feel that I'm a strong person. I have strong ethics and a moral compass, and I've been able to use that to interrupt what I perceive to be in slice racism what I perceived to be institutionalized racism on some level at this school in particular.

When I asked her if there was anything unique about coaching African American women, Principal C pondered about the question and thoughtfully responded as such:

Well, you know, I think that one is like—just like President Obama stepping into the position of being a president in a community that's controlled and ran by Caucasians, as an African American in a white community, you know, we have to deal with additional issues of questioning a person's credentials, questioning a person, how did they get the job—is it affirmative action? Can they do as good of a job as a white principal? So we have those layers that are not probably the same layers that a white principal has to deal with, but a person of color does have to deal with that reality in a community.

As a result, she was able to do the following:

I've moved the community from where it was, which was basically self-imploding and it was a lot of hatred, and you know, that uppity nigger stuff about the principal, and they ousted her, so I was able to come into that environment, which was pretty toxic and it could have gone either way.

The counter-narrative provides people the opportunity to share their experiences, especially ones where they are marginalized and their words counter the established and deep-rooted views of the dominant culture. According to Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003), "As painful as it may be to acknowledge, the lives of African American women are still widely governed by a set of old oppressive myths circulating in the white-dominated world" (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003, p.2). All four principals discussed race during each interview. The questions were created so their responses could be analyzed using the critical race theory's counter storytelling narrative. Each principal shared the challenges she endured as a result of her race which included her credentials being questioned, her placement and leadership abilities being challenged, and having colleagues who unfortunately had racist view points and deficit-model thinking.

Gender

African American women are already challenged by their racial identity and for many, their gender is a challenge, if not a hindrance to future job opportunities in certain careers. African American women have to reconcile both their race and gender on a daily basis. One scholar, Simmons (2007) wrote about her own experiences as an African American female in order to bring attention to the incidents and events with race, class,

and gender and how they influenced her career and life. Her experience reveals the debilitating effects of race and gender (Simmons, 2007). Although the participants in this study refer to both race and gender their responses were more about race. The following is a summary of their responses about gender.

Males versus females. All four principals referred to the differences they experienced from male principals. They felt that gender is a factor when it comes to promotions and the invisible network. Principal D believes that male principals are promoted more than females. She shared the following thoughts, “We have been the backbone of raising children, of cooking, you know, lots of different areas you can think of, but males tend to still dominate and so that’s also, you know, an unspoken kind of network within education.” Principal B shared that four years ago, there were not that many female African Americans in her district. There was less than 25% and now they have more than 25%, so she sees that as a positive in relation to female representation in her district. She also felt that teaching was dominated by females, but the males seem to have more confidence, like they know it all, and she struggles with that.

Principal C had a similar stance about gender, stating,

For women you know, it’s a tough job. Thinking about my colleagues, and you know, having to deal with basically the discipline level at the high school level or elementary school, you know, kids are smoking weed, they’re stealing, they’re bullying, they’re gang-war faring, they’re threatening people, they’re aggressive at school, so you know, that kind of is more like a man’s job, so a female has to step up and really be present, and manage all those different aspects of school.

You know, I find myself having to do everything in the school, so if it's custodial work, if it's crossing guard work, I'm the school supervisor, campus officer, so you know, I'm now trained on how to flip switches when the heater goes out, you know what I mean? So some of those manly things are expected by the women as well.

Significance of gender of the coach. All four principals shared that having an African American female coach mattered to them. They indicated that they felt connected and comfortable. Principal B shared that she related with her coach because she was an African American female. She felt that they had a lot in common and it was easy to communicate with her. Principal C had mixed feelings about having a female coach. She later shared that she did not think it should matter the race or gender of the coach in this particular profession. She felt that it was nice to have that experience with her African American female coach, but that a male coach of a different culture or race would have been equally beneficial for her. When I probed deeper about her mixed feelings, I asked her if this was her sentiment because she is bi-racial. She shared that that might be a reason because she is able to navigate many different cultures for that reason, and because she lives in a house full of males. She said a lot of her support has come from men and that she has a good relationship with men, women, and people of different cultures. This reflection is an example of the ways race and gender converged throughout the data.

Invisible network . The invisible network was described by most of the participants as a fraternal order in the realm of education that only males were invited to. It consists of a group of men that are always looking out for each other and even though education (teaching) is female dominated, men have privilege and as a result, are promoted more often. Principal A, for example, felt that African American males have cultural cache in her district because they are almost an extinct breed, so when a few males finally come along, they are treated much differently than females are. Principal D shared, “Males are promoted more often than females....and males tend to still dominate, and so that’s also an unspoken kind of network within education.”

A study conducted by Hoff and Mitchell (2008) revealed that both women and men believe that an invisible network still exists which in essence, marginalizes women. At a time when making a good impression is important, especially at the start of the job, the data showed that women are placed at a tremendous disadvantage as far as learning how to deal with cultural norms and possible landmines which could potentially weaken their positionality. The men in that study reported no such hindrance (Hoff & Mitchell, 2008). The research bares out the participants perceptions about the invisible network. Moreover, it speaks to the intersection of race and gender.

Intersection of Race and Gender

The study was organized to address participants’ experience with coaching, but the participants were chosen because of their race and gender. While analyzing and reporting data, it was sometimes difficult to characterize responses by race or gender related concerns. I realized that race and gender intersected many times during the data

analysis. The support received as well as the race and gender of the coaches folded together as a group of combined elements that were a part of the reason the participants valued the support. Three of four participants responded that it was important to them that they received coaching from an African American female. Their counter-narratives highlight the cultural relevance of having someone who can speak to the experience of the new African American female principals' because she (the coach) has experience being an African American female. They can speak to what institutional racism feels like and give guidance as to how the principals should navigate the dominant culture and to avoid missteps in order to be successful.

Principal A described the importance of a colleague who “could see me and hear me,” when she stated:

That was powerful to have a seasoned African American female leader to kind of guide me and to see me and to understand me and to prepare me for things that were unseen and seen. Words can't express my heartfelt gratitude and just their gracious time and attention of saying the things that no one else had the will to say, the ability to say, or I mean just like your aunties that warn you to not 'do that' or you cannot 'do that' and even as a strong African American female, I would defer to them because of their wisdom.

In the African American culture people defer to the wisdom of their ancestors and/or matriarchs, and Principal A acknowledges that their wisdom is greater than hers as she bestows the highest level of respect for her coach and other African American mentors. She continued by sharing,

And I was always thankful that wisdom was in the room as they moved me through my process of the steep learning curve in negotiating spaces. I am forever grateful and touched and honored to have been able to learn in their presence, and that they took the time to really care about my growth and ascension. And I am forever touched because my success is their success and their success is my success. And that powerful interchange and that co-construction within my development was nothing that a graduate book, manual, or professor could have taught me, but in the trenches, they gave me the playbook. They were amazing strategists around how to maneuver landmines without walking away maimed because they were my cloak. I would be a very different person had I not had their hand in some of my successes that I have been able to check off. I kind of understand this a little bit better. They always kept me humble and connected which is important.

The interviews with Principal A were extensive as she had a lot to share about her experience and was very expressive. Principal C made similar observations about the importance of having a coach of the same race and gender as she described:

My first year as a principal I did have a coach provided through the Leadership Academy. Her name was... and she was also an African American female who was a principal and educator for many years, so she was able to come in and check in with me, and talk me through situations, and even assist me and maybe how I responded in writing to the community around certain issues, but basically it was very helpful to have someone to talk to. She believed in me, and had a lot

of confidence in me and how I handled things, but when it became difficult, it was nice to have someone there.

Principal D responded about her coach,

She knew the race and culture issue that was here in this district, and we had many conversations about it. She would tell me that I needed to share my story with my staff. She heard my story and said, “That’s the strongest place you can come from. Start with your own story.” So she really put me on the path about really talking about myself and my experience. It was so powerful that there was very little that could be fought against because then I got the research that would back up my own story. So she was African American too. An African American female. So it was like the best of both worlds. The best of both worlds.

In a later interview, Principal D reiterated, “Again, having that African American female made a difference. It was a strong—we developed a strong bond from the beginning. It made a big difference for me.” Principal D explained that having an African American female coach was “extremely powerful” because it was from the inception of her principalship through the Leadership Academy to the beginning of her third year as principal.

Unique to African American women. Three of the four principals were asked if there was anything unique about coaching African American women. They shared that African American women get pushback from the dominant culture; they need assistance with dealing with the dominant culture; their credentials are questioned; how they obtain their administrative position is questioned; they have a lot of challenges because they are

African American women; sometimes parents and teachers do not see them as efficient, and that as African American women they are sometimes looked at as not being effective or proficient. Principal C shared,

I know a lot of African American women principals who get pushed back. From you know... what we're dominated by white, middle-aged teachers who, in a lot of cases, have many more years' experience in education than we do. And some principals I feel would benefit from getting some expertise from an African American administrator coach on how to best deal with those circumstances without alienating or creating issues with those faculty members. That basically depends upon what experience you come from. And somehow, in this coaching effort, background has to come into play.

As I watched and listened to each of the principals, their body language and facial expressions appeared to indicate frustration at even having to deal with such treatment, however, they realized that by telling their stories and sharing their thoughts that someone might actually hear them. Principal A stated, "I really know the power of the counter-narrative and ethnographic studies unearths that for leaders where our stories aren't told, and so because of that, it is exciting to be a part of your journey [research]."

My research questions focused on African American women principals' experience with professional coaching. The participants were chosen because of their race, gender, and professional role. Their narratives about professional socialization during their early years in the profession in the context of receiving coaching, portrayed the complexity created by race, gender, and role expectations.

Through the one-to-one interviews I found that the research participants were positively influenced by the coaching support and design they received. Having an African American coach was culturally relevant for the participants and made them feel comfortable talking about racial issues at their sites. The participants shared that having an external coach was helpful, but that an ideal external coach would have insider knowledge about the district. All of the participants stated that the bond created between them and their coach was so strong that they can still call their former coach at any time.

The participants felt that being an African American school leader was challenging because they represent they felt they carried their race on their shoulders. They reminded me that African Americans are never deemed experts at anything until the dominant culture confirms that notion, and even then, marginalization still occurs. They also lamented on having to negotiate dominant culture at all times as an African American principal.

All four principals referred to the differences they experienced from their male principal colleagues. They felt that gender is a factor when it comes to promotions and the invisible network. They felt that having a female coach was beneficial to them during the coaching experience. Three fourths of the participants felt that it was important to them that they experienced coaching from an African American female. Their counter-stories highlighted the cultural relevance of having someone who can speak to the experience of being an African American female.

The principals not only had to deal with the issue of race, but they had to deal with gender as well. Their experience as principals did not just lend themselves to being

African American principals, but African American *female* principals. Initially the responses from the principals did not seem to address gender as much as race, however, after multiple stages of data analyses, the data revealed that participants shared their thoughts about males being promoted more than females in the professional domain of education; the significance and benefits of having a female coach and the invisible network that they felt men were a part of. This more subtle emergence of the gender piece will be discussed further in the conclusion, as I reflect on my earlier assumptions that my study would be “less about gender, more about race.”

There was rich thematic material in which participants described experiences that reflect the “intersection of race and gender” and that were borne out of experiences through their principalships. The participants indicated that they benefited greatly from having an African American female coach who was able to help them navigate issues that they felt were unique to African American women.

The narratives that each participant provided were very descriptive. The interview protocols supported the development of detailed counter-stories and presented me an opportunity to learn their true thoughts about race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender. They needed someone to “hear” them talk about what it is like to be a new African American female principal, and based on my positionality, I not only “heard” them, I “understood” them. The analysis of the abundance of data I collected allowed me to identify key findings, determine implications, and provide recommendations in the next chapter. In the next chapter, I will also reference data from my own experience as a new African American female principal.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to learn more how new African American female principals were influenced by coaching. The findings come primarily from four courageous participants, although the study was prompted to some degree by my own experiences as a new African American principal who was influenced by coaching. In this chapter I will cite some of my own experiences as they relate to the findings from the participants.

The rationale for this study was the need to describe the experiences of African American female principals with their coaches. This study was also prompted by a pilot study I conducted with four new principals in my previous district in Northern California. They had received one-on-one coaching provided by the county office of education for the Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII) training program. In the pilot study I learned that the new principals felt that coaching was helpful and had suggestions for what would make it better which included the frequency of the coaching experience and the content of the sessions. I wanted to learn more about the impact of coaching on new African American female principals in other school districts.

The present study is unique in its focus on the impact of coaching on new African American female principals; a focus that is not evident in the literature. Most prior studies considered the benefits of coaching or principal induction programs, but none that I found focused on the counter narratives that detailed the impact of coaching and coaching design on new African American female principals. The Jones and Shorter-

Gooden study (2003) identified some of the themes that emerged from the participant interviews about how they were influenced by race and gender at work. The results of the research in this dissertation study offer a substantial contribution to the body of research on African American women. Thus, the focus and scope of my research remains largely unexplored in academic research.

One of the most prominent features of the power of the counter narrative revealed in this study is the opportunity to discuss race without hesitation or apologies. The participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to share their stories. They were open and honest about the impact of their race and gender as African American female principals. Their stories as presented through their words can be considered an attempt to create an opportunity for future studies on or related to the research topic. Given the small amount of literature focusing on African American female principals, their counter narratives contribute to a greater cause: Making our stories visible and supporting the movement for more funding for coaching for this population.

This study offers a number of answers to the overarching research question posed at the beginning of this study. Namely, how are new African American female principals influenced by coaching? The overarching question included the following sub-questions: How do new African American female school principals describe the influence of external coaching on leadership? What are the benefits and drawbacks of having an external coach? What can be learned about African American female principals' experience serving in school leadership roles using a cultural lens?

I chose to do this research because prior to this study I was a brand new principal in a challenging situation with multiple coaches. As a new African American female principal, I knew I had a lot at stake when I assumed this role. There are not many African American female principals in practice. Because our numbers are low in the professional domain of education, I was delighted to have earned a principalship and was determined to do the best I possibly could. The essential role of coaching became evident when I realized that my best was not good enough because there were so many complexities to the job of principal and the support was lacking.

After I endured an interesting first year as a principal with multiple coaches, I wanted to know how my sister African American female principals were influenced by having a coach. The results of my pilot study initially sparked my interest and then I decided to research this phenomenon through a racial and gendered lens because my previous district had a high rate of attrition of African American female principals without the proper support system (coaching) in place. This chapter explores the key findings, and implications of my study. This section synthesizes coaching, race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender. I offer recommendations based on the analysis of my findings and my own personal experience and provide suggestions for further research and conclude by sharing the limitations of this research study.

Coaching

The key findings from this study were that coaching was important to all four participants in multiple ways. Specifically, having an external African American female coach helped them to make important decisions and work with issues pertinent to their

individual sites. There are a lot of politics surrounding being a new principal. A coach can help a new principal navigate those political landmines and help to strengthen the principal's positionality at her site through observations and recommendations.

There are several implications of not providing new African American female principals with a coach. These include lack of skills in addressing staff and community bias, a lack of success in understanding the political nature of the role, difficulty establishing themselves as leaders at their school sites and an overall lack of guidance that new principals desperately need. The implications for providing them with coaches is that they will be more successful; they will receive strategic guidance; the individual attention will provide time with a coach to enhance their leadership skills and the ultimate impact on student achievement.

I recommend that all new principals, regardless of their race and gender, receive systematic coaching during the first three years of their principalship because they need to be monitored for more than their first year. Each year of the principalship presents new and different situations. By year two a principal will have experienced the first year trials and triumphs and can be prepared to implement what they learned from their mistakes, however year two will present something different and maybe more complicated. Thus, a coach should be provided for the first three years of the principalship.

Based on the data acquired from the participants, I recommend that all new principals receive one-to-one coaching. If the new principal matriculated through a program that did not provide coaching like Administrator Leadership Training Academy or The Leadership Academy, then I recommend that school districts fund coaching. This

is my recommendation because from an equity stand point, each principal should have an equal opportunity to be a successful principal. A one-to-one coaching relationship could be the solution which would make it an equitable opportunity for all principals. Principals who received coaching felt that the support was beneficial. The design of any coaching program or relationship is an important element. At best, coaching should be provided for new principals for a minimum of three years. The amount of time can change from one year to the next, but it is important that funding it utilized for principal development through coaching.

On a personal note, I sought my own coach out through a prominent administrators' organization for California principals because I was uncomfortable with the lack of support I was receiving as a new principal. When I first arrived at my district I was provided with a support provider who was an African American female, however, she had never been a principal, and the match was not helpful. It was difficult to establish trust with this inexperienced district administrator, as she was "internal support", and her role as a support provider would have been considered a "mentor.". Either way, I found that the coach I was assigned through the administrators' organization was much more beneficial, as she had to go through a rigorous training program and be a former principal in order to qualify to serve as a coach for new principals.

My experience with my coaches was that they provided guidance and were sounding boards, so I understand the importance of having someone check on me and be willing to discuss things that were challenging me. Like the participants in my study, the support I received from my external coaches was invaluable. The advantage of having an

external coach was that I could be supported without the internal bias of the district. They provided me with resources like how to close out a school year and do class placement cards. Unlike each principal I interviewed, I had two external coaches. One was African American (Coach A) and one was Chinese-born American (Coach B).

The participants believed that an external coach was beneficial thus, I am recommending based on their experience and mine that districts employ external coaches instead of internal coaches. Since external coaches do not always know the district politics and key people, a principal should feel comfortable being able to ask questions of designated district members that an external coach might not have the answer to. My coaches were external, thus they did not necessarily have insider information, but I chose to exercise the power of networking and found the answers for my colleagues in the district.

The research participants responded with various suggestions as “recommendations” for their districts. Based on that information, I too agree and recommend that external coaching be required for new principals during their first three years of principalship. I received coaching after the start of my principalship and felt that I would have benefited more if I knew there was a commitment to me receiving more than one year of systematic coaching with just one coach. By December I was juggling two external coaches, and a support provider who had never been a principal, and that was not helpful because she could not provide guidance for me as a new elementary school principal. The term “chaotic” is an understatement, and should never represent the first year of a new principal.

Although the participants suggested that coaching occur once per month, I recommend that new principals receive coaching weekly for at least the first three months. With a gradual release of time, they should meet with their coaches twice per month. Along with a reasonable time allotment for coaching, I strongly recommend that district officials work to make sure that the coach selected is a good match for the principal. Coaches should not be randomly assigned. A district official should take the time to make sure that the new principal is appropriately matched to an effective coach by paying attention to the needs and leadership style of the coachee. A participant profile questionnaire should be provided to both the coach and coachee.

I know myself well enough and I knew that I needed an external coach. I was assigned a retired Chinese-born American female elementary school principal who met with me at my school site once every other week from October until the end of the school year. She was my saving grace. My office staff enjoyed her when she visited because she was so friendly and knew them by name. She was my “sounding board!” She allowed me to vent, she offered advice when I might have started to venture off the beaten path, and she too recognized when I was dealing with racial issues, instructional issues or management issues. She was also available to check in with me by phone, e-mail, or text message whenever necessary. She brought joy to my toughest days. Her kindness moved beyond her role as a coach. She also brought me lunch when she came to visit. She was a nurturer and wanted to make sure that I carved out some time to eat. She kept a coaching log and provided feedback on an official document that was just for my eyes only. She had no ties to my district, thus I found that her being an external coach was beneficial.

During my principalship when I searched for a coach, I completed a profile and I must say that Coach B was a great match for me. Thus, it helped solidify the coach/coachee relationship because I was comfortable. On the other hand, Coach A was assigned to me by a district official, however, it was challenging having to juggle two retired principals as coaches who had two different leadership styles and had worked in two different types of districts. The literature on coaching is sparse; however, Bossi, (2007) Silver et al., (2009), and Laine (2006) state that new principals need strategic and systematic coaching for a minimum of one to three years.

The Role of Race

The purpose of this study was coaching of a specific race and gender of principals; race, therefore, played a key role in professional socialization and during the interviews. My positionality as an African American principal and researcher as well as the positionality of all four participants as African American principals was critical to the process of obtaining counter-narratives about professional socialization. The purpose of focusing on race and gender was to obtain counter-storytelling narratives from each of the participants. We were able to connect during the interviews because we shared our African American heritage and were able to communicate our experiences dealing with race issues in the professional domain of education.

The key findings were that the influence of race was mentioned by each participant in the majority of their responses. I learned that each principal endured instances where her credentials, knowledge base, administrative placement and successes were questioned by the dominant culture. Participants determined that the skepticism was

because they are African American. These experiences highlight the marginalization of them as an under-represented, disenfranchised population. No one had become accustomed to such treatment; however, each principal was supported by an amazing coach that gave her strategies to endure such judgment. These principals might stand with conviction, but that does not mean that their spirits were not influenced. They spoke of these injustices and unfair treatment with frustration, but as they weighed their successes, the look on their faces had Maya Angelou's poem "And Still I Rise" written all over them. Some of us had "high five" moments or were able to give each other that all too familiar "I know what you mean" look, as if we all had experienced racism and marginalization often enough.

The perceptions that exist about African American women were experienced by my participants and I shared my experiences with them as well. We are not all loud, angry, smart-mouthed Black women. We are eloquent, educated, and passionate; however, each participant seemed to take responsibility for debunking those stereotypes. One participant summed it up for all of us by stating, "We are the pillar of our race." African American women endure a lot and the expectations are high. Sometimes the dominant culture sets us up for failure by providing us with little or no support as new principals or by not understanding our needs as African American women through a cultural lens.

One implication of not providing African American women principals with coaching by a professional with cultural competence may be that we are set up for failure. The African American female principal, who was ousted from her school by angry racist

white people as described in the aforementioned blog, was not supported by her district as she should have been. She was not provided with a coach until it was too late. Yes, she was provided with an African American female coach at the end of the school year, but she would have benefited from having an external coach at the start of her year as a new principal.

All participants referred to institutional racism noting that institutional racism is still present within the hallways of their schools or districts. All four identified it and no one indicated that they believed it was going away any time soon. It guides the politics of most districts and it is something that all four principals were accustomed to facing. The key recommendations regarding the role of race are that it is recognized as a significant factor in the experience of African American principals. District officials should be cognizant of this and ensure that racial sensitivity training occurs frequently, so that the conversations are on-going about the experiences of African Americans and the racial situations they encounter in this position.

Final thoughts: The most important part of this study was to have been able to capture their stories through the interviews. The experience presented a voiceless group of women who were vulnerable, and yet comfortable enough, an opportunity to share their experiences with me. In turn, I shared mine with them. Every one of the principals was taking a risk by agreeing to meet with me and share her real feelings. I promised them anonymity; they let down their guards to varying degrees, and supported my study by offering the truth about what they endure as African American women and what they know their Caucasian colleagues do not have to endure.

As vulnerable as participants were with me was as vulnerable (probably more) as they were with their assigned coaches. As vulnerable as I was with them, was as vulnerable as I am with my family. It was important to hear their stories so a counter narrative could be presented to the dominant culture that sit on the school boards as well as the superintendents, their cabinet members, and other policy makers. It is my belief that the lens of Critical Race Theory supported the methodology leading me to invite the counter-storytelling narratives. Participants' experiences counter all of those who believe that racism does not exist and that African American women all fit a certain negative mold. Their stories needed to be told. Our stories needed to be told. My prediction was that race was going to be more prominent than gender, however, the participants talked about race, gender, and the intersection of race and gender.

I recommend that school board members and district officials move beyond the recruiting phase when it comes to African American female principal candidates and really take the time to consider the impact that the individual's race might have on how they are accepted and perceived. Considering the perceptions and acceptance issues is the minimum that should be done. If the hiring parties or decision-makers are unable to make that assessment, a phone call would need to be made to a professional administrator organization or to a local African American sorority graduate chapter in order to figure out how to connect the new African American female principal to an external African American female coach or coach of color.

Based on the data, the participants felt that having an African American female coach was an appropriate and beneficial match, and they echoed those sentiments

throughout the interview sessions. I was very supported by a female of color, and she was not African American, but she was very effective. She had an understanding of what I was experiencing with regard to race, marginalization, perceptions, and the institutional racism that was apparent in the district I worked in at the time. She provided strategies and shared some of her experiences, so I could understand that I was not the only person who had endured racism, but she validated my feelings and was a “sounding board” for me. These recommendations are supported by the results of a survey done by Jones and Shorter (2003) which found that the following strategies are frequently used by African American women which include: “Battling Myths; Scanning, surveying and scrutinizing the environment, and Retreating to the Black community which indicated that African American women often return home to the Black community for relief and solace” (Jones & Shorter, 2003, p.66), which parallels the comfort level that my participants had with their African American coach. It was a familiar and comfortable relationship.

The Role of Gender

The focus of the study was coaching and participants were selected to learn more about the role race and gender play in professional socialization. While I believed race would be a more powerful socializing element than gender, gender was referred to numerous times throughout the interviews. The key finding was that most of them felt that men were promoted more often than women. As hard as they all work on a daily basis, it seemed to be a topic of contention when they referred to their male colleagues. It never feels good to be overlooked for any position or promotion, however, the general feeling was that men have it easier than women; they have more confidence than women

and are promoted more often than women. There were no positive remarks about men except for Principal C who shared that she has always been well-supported by men; has always had great relationships with men and then finally revealed that she lives in a house full of men, so perhaps that is why she is accustomed to feeling supported by men. She did not mention that she felt they were promoted more often, she just shared that the type of work she has to do sometimes as a principal is men's work. "So some of those manly things are expected by the women as well" which included custodial work, crossing guard work, and being trained on flipping the switches when the heater goes out.

The implications for not ensuring gender equity in districts and educational organizations are disempowered female principals and limited opportunities for women in every role. Another implication could be that district officials are not aware of the dissatisfaction of their leaders, leading to or sustaining an unhealthy district climate. Women may hold more than half of elementary principalships, but the same sentiment was echoed by the participants regarding men being promoted more often was very telling. Their counter stories challenge these practices and revealed that a change is needed.

I have not worked in the same districts as my participants, and our experiences with women in formal leadership roles vary. The district in which I started my administrative career had a female superintendent at the helm. When she retired, a female was named as interim superintendent, and eventually earned the superintendency. The district was female-dominated and all but two principals were female. The two male principals worked at the elementary level. At the next district in which I worked, there

was also a female superintendent, assistant superintendent of human resources, and two female executive directors. Thus, I have experienced multiple instances of seeing females being promoted or leading the district. With respect to the experiences of these four participants it is my recommendation that districts pay attention to and highlight the accomplishments of the female principals and consider promoting them to positions such as coordinator or director (Date-Bah, 1997).

The Intersection of Race and Gender

The intersection of race and gender became prominent during the data analysis phase. All four principals constantly referred to their African American female coaches and how comfortable they were with them. The comfort level was beneficial for them to be able to establish trust and be open to the suggestions of their coaches in order to become effective leaders. As African American women, we have been taught to give the utmost respect to our elders, especially the females who tend to take on that mother/auntie role. By doing this, we acknowledge that we know they want us to be at our best at all times and will not hesitate to pull our coattails or be frank with us. I believe that sometimes it is helpful to have someone who is the same gender but it does not have to be someone who is the same race because of my own, positive experience with a non-African American coach.

The key finding was that it was considered of great value to the principals to have an African American female coach because of cultural similarities they shared. All four principals felt that they are a part of a disenfranchised group. They are African American *and* women, and their successes and failures will be judged by the dominant culture. It

was important to them to have an African American female coach who understood the complexity of the role and the biases they face. Coaching provides support for them to endure and succeed.

Professionals in the education field must acknowledge the implications of race and gender discrimination within schools and districts. Professional socialization of women of color, and African American women in particular, must be embraced proactively and not left to chance. There is nothing wrong with looking at how powerful the intersection of race and gender can be. It can positively impact any district or educational organization. Intelligent, energetic, empowered African American female principals can be a powerful asset in the professional domain of education. Based on the participants' experiences, there are implications of not having an African American female coach because not everyone can speak to the themes of race and gender. Those experiences are only privy to the African American women. A concern expressed by the participants was a lack of opportunity for African Americans to tell their stories.

I had two female coaches of color. One was African American and one was Chinese-born American. I had positive experiences with both coaches and did not find race to be a factor in these two relationships. For me, my coach did not necessarily have to be an African American coach. My Chinese-born American coach was great. I want to reiterate that I had two coaches, which resulted in me having one coach too many. However, I felt that it was important for me to have a female coach; thus, having a female coach of color was of great benefit for me. It made me feel comfortable. She helped me to negotiate the pushback I was receiving from a group of white teachers because she

understood the challenges of a young female of color supervising white women. Both coaches equally understood the trial I endured under their tutelage. Overall, the experiences of the participants were parallel to mine.

It is my recommendation that educational organizations consider matching principals with coaches on the basis of race and/or gender, as a starting point in considering appropriate matches. My recommendation is supported by a study completed by Silver et al. (2009) which revealed the following: “To ensure the [coaching] relationship was beneficial, the program engaged in a unique matching process...based on their leadership philosophy, type, level of school, and the nature of the challenges they [coachees] faced” (Silver et al., 2009, p. 18).

This research has the potential to change district policy if leaders are open to providing funding for coaching. The benefits to the district and principals will far outweigh the costs. I suspect that there are more African American female principals who have had similar marginalizing experiences because of their race and gender, and are in need of a coach. This research demonstrated that the specific professional socialization needs of this population must be addressed. This study affirmed that counter-storytelling is important to the process of the development of African American principal development.

Suggestions for Further Research

Another area ripe for exploration is exploring the experiences of African American female principals’ experience with male coaches of color or African American male coaches. It also might be helpful for future studies to compare experiences of those

who receive coaching without a racial and/or gender match with those that do. One could also explore the experiences of new African American male principals; the experiences of male principals in comparison to female principals; the rates of promotions and/or demotions of African American male and/or female principals in California.

The principals in this study were passionate about sharing their experiences with me as evidenced in the interviews. The counter narrative proved to be a powerful opportunity for these four African American women to challenge the notion that coaching cannot be afforded or is not as necessary as it truly is. In a previous chapter, it is noted that the California Education Code details information about mandatory funding for beginning teachers, however, the information regarding funding for new principal development is vague and can be interpreted by individual districts in a way that suits them.

There is a shortage of African American female principals and many do not get a second chance if a misstep occurs during their careers. Coaching would enhance the success of these new principals. The leaders who care about the results of this study are state superintendents, assistant superintendents, or directors of human resources, certified coaches, and districts where there are not many African American female principals or principals of color, as well as aspiring African American women teachers who desire to become principals. Their counter-stories were more than I could ever ask for. The information presented in this dissertation is meant to challenge the thinking of policy makers, state superintendents, and human resource directors so that new African

American female principals can be fully and effectively supported through coaching during the first years of their principalship.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions (Round 1)

Describe some of the challenges you have faced as a new African American female principal.

How has coaching helped you negotiate those challenges?

What have we not talked about that you think is important in relation to race, gender, coaching?

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions (Round 2)

What are/were you able to do as a result of help you got from your coach?
(Give me an example of an action you took or decision you made because of your coach's influence).

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an external coach versus someone assigned to you from within the district?
(Can you characterize the differences, if any, between your relationship with your external coach and your internal coach? The "if any" will not be necessary if the person already described some differences.)

How did your coach help you address issues of race and/or culture?

What, if any, effect do you think the race and/or gender of the coach had on your relationship?

APPENDIX 3

Interview Questions (Round 3)

What would your recommendations be about coaching to your district?

What was the design of the coaching you received? What would have been ideal?

What's unique, if anything, about coaching African American women?

Is there anything you feel people in the field should know about coaching?

APPENDIX 4

Survey Questions from Professional Residency

1. How have you used the time and insight when you meet with your RTI2 Technical Consultant?

#1 I've used the time with my consultant to plan professional development regarding RTI2 with my staff.

#2 I used the time examining the Tiers and designing my binder.

#3 We have discussed implementation of RTI at our site this year. We have discussed student progress and monitoring, and my tech consultant has helped me organize my binder. She has also observed and given feedback on an intervention training my teachers received.

#4 I have spent the time listening to her experiences as a former principal, a current coach, and trying to map out how to implement some of the RTI2 strategies. I've been able to talk with her about coaching and she has provided the titles of numerous articles on coaching.

2. How often do you meet with your RTI2 Technical Consultant?

#1 I meet with her once a month.

#2 Once a month.

#3 We meet about one time a month, sometimes one time every other month.

#4 I meet with my RTC once per month.

3. Would you want more time?

#1 Yes!

#2 No.

#3 I think the time has been sufficient for my site's needs.

#4 Yes! I would like to meet with her weekly.

4. What, if any, are the drawbacks of the coaching?

#1 It's a lengthy amount of time to meet and it happens during the school day when there is so much going on.

#2 I would rather spend the time having her work with what I have in terms of my site/district limits and have her design a workable model.

#3 Time

#4 There is not enough time.

5. What other support are you getting as a new principal?

#1 I have a support district director as my support provider who I meet monthly. For specific questions, I have to reach out to get support. Just recently I was asked if I wanted a principal mentor.

#2 I have a support provider that I meet with once a month.

#3 In the past I was paired with a partner principal who was another principal in the district. She provided support and feedback monthly, and we arranged our own meeting times.

#4 I have an ACSA Coach, a district provided support provider, and another coach. We also have the Superintendent's Breakfast once per month where new administrators are able to sit with the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. Then there are those veteran principals who take you under their wing and are available to you.

6. How has coaching helped you?

#1 Coaching has helped me see the "big picture". When stepping back, I recognize themes and can focus on certain areas in my leadership that are strong and areas to improve.

#2 It allows me to brainstorm ideas with a neutral party.

#3 Coaching is an opportunity to share professional discourse around principal practices and to problem-solve, trouble-shoot ideas.

#4 Coaching has helped me to manage my time a little better. My coach empowers me. Her ideas are realistic, so when she leaves, I breathe a sigh of relief, because her practical ideas seem do-able. She gives a refreshing perspective on things, so it is helpful for me when I need to figure out what is important and what is not important.

7. What is the value of outside coaching from someone who is not in your district?

#1 I had an outside coach my last two years as an assistant principal. It was helpful to have someone with a different perspective on how things are implemented at other districts.

#2 There is no judgment.

#3 I have found that perspectives from outside of the district give a more global view of practices that are happening outside of our district.

#4 I do not feel like anything I say will be held against me. She is not looking over my shoulder, and she recently set a goal and told me she'll check in on me. The goal was to benefit my staff and me. I know that my conversations with her will not get back to anyone else. It is easier to build trust.

8. What does it take to make coaching of benefit?

#1 It takes a principal's open-mind and a non-judgmental coach. Coaching is helpful when reflection takes place and action steps are established until the next meeting.

#2 It takes someone with insider knowledge.

#3 A coaching partner that is knowledgeable about current practices and issues that relate to our roles as site administrators. And had experience with site administration.

#4 It takes a coachee who is willing to listen and learn. It takes the coach to be able to read the coachee and provided a specialized session just for them. Not a

cookie-cutter experience. It also takes the coach to figure out what works for the coachee without making the coachee uncomfortable.

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience with the RTI2 Coaching?

#1 no response

#2 Not at this time.

#3 I have appreciated our cohort meetings as a group because it helps to hear what other site principals are doing.

#4 I have been fortunate to have been matched with my person. She works with me like I am a team member, and not like an authoritative figure. If she thinks I am off the beaten path, she figures out how to help me get back there. I think she has a knack for working with new principals. Her responses are so well thought out, and I feel like she empowered me from day one. I feel like she reads me well and she is okay if we do not cover RTI2 stuff, because she realizes that that is just a part of the pie.

FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS FROM SURVEY FOR PROFESSIONAL

RESIDENCY

As I reflect on the impact coaching has had on me, my question to the Superintendent or Cabinet is *What is your role in ensuring that coaching within our district is implemented effectively?*

The information above is what I collected from the surveys I distributed. The administrators all had similar experiences with their RTI2 Technical Consultants. 50% preferred to have more time and 50% did not want more time with the RTCs. 100% of the administrators found benefit in having a coach for RTI2. The limitations of my research include the fact that if I did do an interview, I might have gained more information from the respondents.