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21st Century Transformational Leadership: The Neo-Stereotypical Phenomenon of a Black Female Principal

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21st CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP: THE NEO-
STEREOTYPICAL PHENOMENON OF A BLACK FEMALE PRINCIPAL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Educational Leadership, Research, and Counseling

by

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MEd, Louisiana State University, 2009
May 2016

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the leadership perceptions of a Black female first year principal in a predominantly White private Christian school. For years, educational research and leadership models for school principals were theorized and constructed based on White men. This study is significant in that it sought to explore the perception of the leadership behaviors and disposition of a Black female to determine if there was a correlation between the Transformational Leadership Theory and the emergent leadership style.

In the qualitative tradition, this autoethnographic study used narrative inquiry to explore the phenomenon of my first year as a principal and examine the intersections of my race and gender that affect my leadership perceptions. The findings from the narrative data introduced a leadership model based on the emergence of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader and described the four dimensions; Neo-Mammy, Neo-Jezebel, Neo-Sapphire, and Neo-Matriarch. These dimensions were compared to the four dimensions of the Transformational Leadership Theory. This study identified a strong correlation between the perceived leadership behaviors of a Black female principal with that of the Transformational Leadership Theory.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again and that is what they become. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story... When we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise... for all the people who are eager to tell our many stories; stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity...

Chimamanda Adichie, Nigerian Novelist

Prologue: Through the Lens of the Researcher

In the United States, I am considered a double minority. I am Black and I am a woman. Each of these characteristics relegates me to a position of subordination to the dominant group, described by Goodman (2001) as “White, heterosexual, Christian, middle-aged, able-bodied, non-Hispanic, middle – to upper – class men” (p. 9). Historically, the dominant group appropriated the hegemonic role through which it established the dominant culture (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995) consisting of the norms, assumptions, and behaviors valued therein. Among these norms and assumptions is the belief that White men are the archetype for leadership in all aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political structures (Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). hooks (1981) not only concurred with the description of the dominant group provided by Goodman, but also suggested that there is a pervasive ideology in the dominant culture that privileges the White supremacist, capitalist patriarchy as the standard in society. For me, I view legitimate authority and ultimate power as inherent in being a White male in America.

At an early age, I wanted to identify with all things that represented the dominant culture. I was not and am not a radical, a civil rights activist, or a feminist. I never wanted to buck the system. I wanted to thrive within the system. I grew up wanting to be accepted, to be considered as good as anyone else. I definitely did not want to be associated with any form of stereotypical Blackness. I was a part of what is now referred to as the Black bourgeoisie (Frazier, 1962). Frazier (1962) described the *Black bourgeoisie* as the stable, Black middle-class consisting of white-collar and blue-collar workers. By the time I was born, my family had garnered social position and economic influence in the Black community. They were a part of the early Black society where they were active in civic organizations and social clubs (see Appendix A). In the early 1950s, a prominent White doctor befriended my great-grandfather, a preacher with an affable personality who also had business acumen. This was the era of Jim Crow when it was difficult for Blacks to buy land in the South (Hardin, 1997; Thompson-Miller et al., 2014); however, through his friendship with the doctor, my great-grandfather, affectionately known as Papa, was successful in acquiring 12 acres of land in South Louisiana that was thought to be worthless at the time but became prime real estate by 1970. The acquisition of this land enabled my family to become successful entrepreneurs. During the late 1950s, Papa established and owned a sugar mill and general store that were patronized by both Blacks and Whites. This was not the norm in the segregated South, but was the path by which my family came to enjoy middle-class standing in the Black community.

My great-grandfather also pastored three churches in the Black community. Brown (1994) described the Black church of the early 1940s and 1950s as institutions of power and prestige in the Black community. As a family, we knew we were Black. We did not want to be White. We only wanted what most immigrants were seeking since the first European immigrants

landed in North America. We wanted the opportunity to experience the American dream based on our hard work and the belief that all people are created equal and, thereby, have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. My enduring family legacy and understanding can be summed in the sentiments of my great-grandfather who explained that

There are White folk that will help you and there are White folk that will hurt you. There are Black folk that will help you and there are Black folk that will hurt you – don't concern yourself with the color of the skin – just treat everybody right.

This understanding has remained true over the years. I have been discriminated against numerous times and I have been privileged by White men and White women numerous times as well. I have also experienced harm at the hands of Black men and Black women. Through the example set by my great-grandfather and modeled by succeeding generations, I view each person as an individual and not as the collective representation of their race, gender, or socioeconomic standing, as I so desperately wanted to be viewed.

Over the past twenty-five years, I have had to ignore both the gender based and race based assumptions and stereotypes the dominant culture ascribed to me, to Blacks. As time has passed, I have become a part of a triple minority. I am Black, I am a woman, and now I am the principal of a small predominantly White, private, Christian school. I have consistently transformed myself to mirror the aspects of the White, Christian, male leadership perspective. I have insisted there is no difference in how leadership is understood between people of color and the dominant culture by my acceptance of the authority and my desire to emulate the leadership styles of the dominant group. Yet, I must admit that I often was baffled by decisions that were made by this particular dominant group and observations I made about how members of that group treated people. Over the years, I have also demonstrated by my actions and work ethic that the unspoken assumptions that (1) females are weaker and (2) minorities are inferior are

mistruths and should be dismantled. I purposefully endeavored to become an exception, an example, an individual similar to individuals in the dominant group. In my family, the oral traditions of the Black struggle within America provided parables that suggested that as Black people, we had to work twice as hard to receive an equal measure as White people. At an early age I found these parables to be didactic in nature and they provided the foundation for wanting to escape the stigmatization of Blackness.

Background on My Identity Development

I recognized that one of my most important attributes was my ability to employ the process of assimilation with the dominant culture. In the mid-1960s, I attended newly integrated schools that were predominately White where I was exposed to many aspects of the White culture. I became proficient at “acting White” (Ogbu, 2004), which Ogbu (2004) described as attempts by Blacks to gain access into the dominant culture by adopting the behaviors and values of that culture. I learned to identify with the cultural norms and the societal expectations of the dominant culture. As a Black woman, I became what the dominant culture accepted, what they allowed me to be, what was palatable to the dominant culture. I was cognizant of how I dressed, how I styled my hair, how I commanded the English language, and how I disguised my ambitious, independent, outspoken nature (i.e. never let them see the Black bitch). I learned my place and I stayed in my place. As a social and cultural chameleon, I became adept at altering the hue of my internal persona and inconspicuously existing in the midst of the dominant culture. In reality, I fully believed that my ability to advance into a position of leadership was directly related to the degree to which I was able to successfully “act White”. Only my skin color betrayed me and provided the constant reminder that the dominant culture viewed me as lesser,

as inferior. For me and many other Blacks, this crisis of identity is all too real and escaping the stigma of Blackness is alluring (Brown, White-Johnson & Griffin-Fennell, 2013; Collins, 2000).

The ultimate enactment of “acting White” is for a light-skinned person of color to “pass for White” (Piper, 1992, p. 11). Harris (1995) explained this phenomenon and its damaging effects on the psyche in her essay, *Whiteness as Property*. She described the Black world that existed on the outskirts and in the shadows of the dominant world as she told the poignant story of her grandmother who infiltrated the world of the White majority. Making herself invisible, Harris’s grandmother passed as a White woman to obtain employment as a clerk at a Chicago store whose clientele were “upper middle class” (p. 276). She then made herself visible again when she reentered her Black world at home. Harris (1995) discussed the degree of self-punishment and mental anguish that was involved in the double life her grandmother lived. To maintain her invisibility, the grandmother did not join the daily conversations of her co-workers as they discussed various family issues nor could she defend against the racial slurs that were also part of those conversations; to do so would risk the discovery of her passing for White (Harris, 1995). This invisibility took a toll over the years, finally became unbearable, and the grandmother left her job to seek work elsewhere. For me, this illustrated Whiteness in terms of assets and Blackness in terms of debts.

As I developed the underpinnings for my study, the juxtaposition of how I wanted others to view me as a principal and who I really was created internal conflicts that could not be sustained or ignored. The life experiences that shaped me also created a paradox of duality within me. In 1903, W.E.B. DuBois first introduced the concept of the Black double consciousness in his book *The Souls of Black Folk*. He described a “two-ness of souls, thoughts, and unreconciled strivings, which made it difficult for Blacks to develop a complete sense of

self” (DuBois, 1903, p. 9). One hundred years later, in their book, *Shifting: The Double Lives of Black Women in America*, Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2004) amplified the voices of Black women in describing the process of shifting to accommodate the societal expectations of the dominant culture in order to placate their White colleagues, and then shifting again to reemerge in their Black culture that many times seemed foreign.

I am an imposter, an impersonator, an interloper. For many years, I have camouflaged myself in conservative rhetoric, right wing ideology, and a White is right mentality. For me, God is the head of the dominant group. God is a White, Christian, heterosexual male and any advantages or privileges I received, I credited to my ability to work hard to please God (the Big White Father). Over the years, I have also experienced the maltreatment from other Blacks who viewed me as not quite black enough. I have been referred to as an “Oreo” – black on the outside and white on the inside. Often I have felt the need to apologize for the standards and goals I selected for myself. I have been made to feel guilty by some Blacks for my middle-class values and accomplishments. I have been perceived as a “traitor or a sell-out” to my race by other Blacks (Reynold-Dobbs, Thomas, & Harrison, 2008, p. 143). This is the other side of the double consciousness that many Blacks encounter. It is especially perplexing to me that somehow my desire for upward mobility diminishes the Black collective identity.

Now that I perceive myself in a seat of authority, leadership, and power at this predominately White school where I have worked for 16 years, I find that I am unknown to myself. Where are my true leadership models? Where are those who have gone before me who are like me? I have a unique opportunity to hear my own voice, but that voice has been muted over time and distorted through circumstances. In my new position as principal, I have an opportunity to construct a leadership model that transforms me first, then my faculty, my

students, and my school. As principal, I can no longer pretend to be what the dominant culture wants and expects me to be; yet, I do not know who I am as a leader. I am situated betwixt and between the two worlds. My present leadership dilemma holds; I cannot be part of dominant culture and I have forgotten how to be me. I am a leader in search of an authentic leadership style. I am a leader in search of direction.

Early Leadership Models

I have long been in search of my true leadership examples – those who are like me – those with whom I can identify. This search has yielded a perplexing anamnesis in which I realized that my first leadership examples were from Black women in the Black Baptist church of my childhood. According to Bass and Bass (2009), how we internalize the attitudes and behaviors of leadership when “we reach adulthood is likely to be affected by the earlier patterns and relationships from our childhood and our genetic makeup” (p. 3). They suggested that parents and other important adults may have a deep impact and influence on our conceptualization of leadership styles (Bass & Bass, 2009).

“I grew up in the church”. This statement can only be made by those able to trace their Christian history back to childhood. For me, it implies a certain degree of prestige for I can trace my Baptist history back one hundred thirty-five years. When I was about six years old, I attended church with my maternal grandmother. Every Sunday morning she collected her grandkids and headed off to the Black Baptist Church. Every Tuesday night we attended Bible study and prayer meeting. My grandmother was one of eight children, seven girls and one boy. Their father, born in 1889, pastored three Black Baptist Churches in the Black community and their mother was one of the first church mothers. Each of my grandmother’s sisters had prominent positions in the church and they were respectfully referred to as the Sisters (see Appendix B). They had

positional power and allocated authority in the church as daughters of the pastor. The historical context of the Black Baptist church included social structures founded on hegemonic practices of Black male domination (Brown, 1994; Paris, 2008; Pitts, 1993).

Surprisingly, I experienced Black women exhibiting leadership behaviors that were forged within the parameters of restraint. In their church, the Sisters were vested with the charge of inseminating the rituals, regulations, doctrine, and traditions of the Black Baptist church. Within their Black church, the Sisters could be viewed as the keepers of the faith and the custodians of the Black Baptist ethos (Wallis, 2013). Their primary responsibility was to serve as role models to ensure the traditions were not only taught to children, but also taught to any new members of the congregation. Women within the early Black church were united by a strong esprit de corps and moral purpose. The moral purpose focused on uplifting Blacks within the larger society and the Black church was the primary source of support (Brown, 1994; Paris, 2008; Pitts, 1993). These Black women were responsible for the continuation of their shared vision. For years, I witnessed them operating in positions of Sunday school teachers, secretaries, musicians, ushers, accountants, and stewards in their church. They were heads of varying boards and committees. They worked to support the church and the needs of the people in their community. Each of the seven sisters displayed physical and mental strength as they endured years of Jim Crow segregation and the Black male hegemonic treatment.

The Sisters were nurturing and caring to the poor and those in need both in their church and in their community. They exemplified elements of self-sacrifice as they served in soup kitchens and operated a food pantry out of their church. They were responsible for both the induction of new members as well as providing correction and discipline for members when behaviors were outside the expected norms of their Baptist religion. At times, the Sisters were

extremely intimidating with their no-nonsense approach. At other times, they functioned as sages in the church and their community, offering advice and guidance when needed. I remember a definite hierarchy with the pastor and the male deacons making up the upper layer. However, it was the women of this small Black Baptist church who provided tactical decision-making and strategic organization of protocol and structure. Their leadership was demonstrated as they made decisions on the how to implement the vision of the church. They also planned and organized committees that were responsible for church growth and sustainability. To me, the most revered people in the congregation were the Church Mothers as they provided leadership that was the foundational support for the organization. Brown (1994) pointed out that one of the most important positions in the church was reserved for the older females who had continuous membership. They were referred to as church mothers and were generally over seventy years old (Brown, 1994; Paris, 2008; Pitts, 1993). In some of the Black Baptist churches even the pastor of the church sought spiritual guidance from the Church Mother (Brown, 1994).

In that small unassuming Black Baptist church I learned the customs, values, and beliefs of the religion and the importance of “acting right”, as the Sisters would say. From those Black female role models, I discovered self-worth, self-confidence, and self-determination growing up in a safe haven free from racism (if not sexism). My grandmother and her sisters were also members of private social clubs, Black sororities, and Black society. My grandmother and five of her sisters were entrepreneurs and the other sister held a master’s degree in education. They each owned property and were active within their community helping with voter registration and adult literacy programs. I believed that as a Black woman I could do anything to which I put my mind. But I realized that everyone in my church and in my community outside of school was Black. I viewed them as big fish in a little pond with no real room to grow and further develop.

By the time I was ready for college, I understood the importance of competing with my White counterparts. As a young Black woman, I was self-confident and outspoken. I understood that I enjoyed an economic status that was enjoyed by few Whites in the South and even fewer Blacks. I had matured as a young Black elite in our community (see Appendix C). I soon felt that I had outgrown my little Black Baptist roots and I turned my back on all that I had known and I hastened to the predominately White non-denominational church and the White society. With just a modicum of disrespect, I found the quaint traditions of that Black Baptist church and those Black women in that church to be antiquated. Armed with that sentiment and a strong sense of self, I departed from that little church over thirty years ago, searching for what I believed to be a bigger pond and the opportunity to exist in the midst of larger White society. I also made a break with my family tradition in that I did not want to attend a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). I wanted to take my place and make my mark in the larger White academic society as well.

Identity Reconstruction and the Historical Perceptions

In my family, my generation was the generation of promise. I grew up in the newly integrated South. By the time I was ready for college, I truly believed that the Black struggle for equality and equal rights was a thing of the past. I wanted to attend LSU - the prestigious flagship university. As a Black man born in 1889, my great-grandfather could not attend LSU. My grandmother, born in 1914, could not attend LSU. My mother, born in 1934, could not attend LSU, however, I could. I was to be the one to enjoy the fruits of the Black struggle for equal rights. Bestowed on me were all the rights and privileges that had only been a dream to generations of Blacks before me. In 1979, I enrolled at LSU as a freshmen and expected to experience a post-racial environment on the campus, or so I thought. I remember sitting outside

the library in the area referred to as the Quadrangle between classes. I remember how most of the Blacks sat together and most of the Whites sat close to other Whites. I recall few overtly racial incidences. My family taught me not to worry about the racial ignorance of one or two people. For the most part, the relations between Whites and Blacks in 1979 were civil as far as I was concerned.

The fall of the next year, I noticed a letter to the editor printed in *The Daily Reveille*, the LSU student newspaper. The writer stated that the ratio of Blacks to Whites for the homecoming finalist was not representative of the student population. I was infuriated that in 1980 someone at LSU was still concerned about skin color. I could not believe that this was even something to mention so I crafted my response (see Appendix D) which was printed in *The Daily Reveille* on October 14, 1980:

I am a black student at LSU and this is my second year. Recently it was stated in The Reveille that the ratio of blacks to whites for the homecoming finalists was not representative of the LSU population. All my life I have heard the familiar stereotypes of black people. Often I have heard that "blacks have come a long way." Is that true? Every student at LSU has a common goal to achieve to the best of his ability. But when blacks at LSU try to move up the ladder, they face obstacles that are ridiculously unfair. Why? Blacks have proven themselves academically as well as athletically. Still we are unable to reach a point of social equilibrium. With the large scale of separation and discrimination of the majority rule, we are lucky to get a "token Black" on any extracurricular activity.

It's true, blacks have come a long way but this is 1980 and we have arrived. Still competing with the best of whites, we know we must work twice as hard to reach a point where they have been for hundreds of years. We must continue to prove and shock if necessary to show that blacks are productive human beings.

Blacks are now taking their long deserved place at LSU. I have been fortunate enough to receive the best education at LSU, so that makes me a realist. I know I'm not the first person to question the "system", but I want to bring it to your attention one more time just to raise an eyebrow or two. There is one thing we as students can be sure of; blacks at LSU are moving up.

I had come of age in the newly integrated South and I thought things were different than they had been for my ancestors. I believed that there were two kinds of people; those who were hard working and those who were not - those who had means and those who did not. What an eye opening experience to learn that even the poorest, uneducated, uncouth White person had a greater standing in society than I did. I realized that my middle-class status, my White societal values, and my efforts of assimilation within the dominant culture would not protect me from my Blackness and my perceived inferiority. I had not experienced and did not understand racial rejection. I considered myself an LSU student who happened to be Black, not a Black student who happened to attend LSU. But I was wrong. I was not really an LSU student; I was just another Black girl. My hope for enjoying the social equilibrium that I mentioned in my letter was really a testament to my naiveté. During my time at LSU, I witnessed many incidents of racism and discrimination directed toward Blacks who were adamant about being treated with respect – as were other students who were White. I observed how they were considered trouble makers if they rocked the boat or protested for equal treatment. Blacks could not speak out against injustices for to do so would label them as radicals – we were expected to be content that we were allowed to enroll in the prestigious university. Blacks could not speak out concerning on-campus work opportunities only given to Whites, or not having access to White only sororities and fraternities. I slowly reconstructed my identity from one of a positive self-image to an identity transformed by the negative perceptions of others that were based on their fears. I was ashamed to admit that maybe I was doing something wrong or maybe something was wrong with me. Why was I not accepted? What needed to be changed so that I could fit in and be accepted (by Whites)?

I became just another Black girl stripped of my individuality, stripped of my dreams, stripped of my voice. I learned how to manipulate situations and people of the dominant culture and to give the performance of White accepted Blackness to gain privileges that I would not have otherwise enjoyed. I was well versed in Blackness according to White standards. Fasching-Varner (2009) wrote that, “Whites often attempt to determine what acceptable blackness is, how blackness should be cast, how one gets disqualified or excluded from whiteness through one’s blackness” (p. 818). I had observed my ancestors for many years operating within the sphere of White accepted Blackness. I had watched the half-hearted smiles and false chuckles of my grandmother at the off humor racial jokes of Whites. I witnessed a White man enter the establishment my mother owned and call her “Gal”, all the while knowing he never would have done so to a White woman. I understood that Blacks had to play along to get along. In the company of Whites, my ancestors willingly displayed many stereotypic behaviors that I found embarrassing and yet, I, too, embraced many of those same stereotypic behaviors. While at LSU, I practiced my performances of how to make my “Yes, Ma’am” and my “Yes, Sir” sound sincere and convincing. I learned to be invisible – to work hard – to be quiet – not to express my opinions regarding race and discrimination. I understood what the dominant culture wanted in a young Black female and I transformed myself to comply. I learned to cope in the face of oppression and opposition and not to respond in a combative manner to racist or sexist remarks.

Collins (2000) argued that historically the dominant group has had the power to construct the stereotypical symbols or icons of, the “Others” (p. 77), anyone not part of the dominant culture. hooks (1981) described the most pervasive stereotypes of Black women as the Mammy, Sapphire, Jezebel, and the Matriarch. These stereotypes were born in slavery, nurtured by the popular media, and matured by the need of the dominant culture to maintain social prominence

(Collins, 2000) by minimizing those seen as threatening their hegemony. From slavery, through the Reconstruction and the Jim Crow years, and into the Civil Rights era of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, the dominant culture created what Collins (2000) referred to as “controlling images” (p. 79), stereotypes that served as tools for the marginalization and dehumanization of Black women. These stereotypes and controlling images provided the illusion of oneness in experiences for Black women and suggested that all Black women shared the same thoughts, feelings and beliefs. Collins (2000) argued against this notion, writing that, “There has never been a uniformity of experience among African-American women, a situation that is more noticeable today – there is no archetypal Black woman –no homogeneous Black woman’s standpoint” (p. 32). hooks (1981) suggested that the stereotypes and the controlling images were acrimonious reminders of the pejorative treatment of Black women throughout American history.

One of the most widely recognized stereotypes of Black women is that of the Mammy (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; West 1995). The Mammy image as explained by West (1995) depicted Black women as “nurturing and self-sacrificing” (p. 459). Collins (2000) described the stereotypic Mammy as faithful, loving, nurturing, and caring for White children and the White “family better than her own” (p. 80). Many Black women gave convincing performances of this fictional character as a way to gain and keep employment after slavery and through the Jim Crow years (Collins, 2000). hooks (1981) argued that the Mammy stereotype of the “passive, longsuffering, and submissive” (p. 84) Black woman was admired by Whites because she was asexual and non-threatening to the social order of the dominant culture. Collins (2000) speculated that for many years the Mammy symbolized the “faithful, obedient, longsuffering servant” (p. 80) and the “public face that Whites expected Black women to assume for them” (p. 81). The historical Mammy stereotype depicted Black women who understood and accepted their place of

inferiority and subordination to Whites and she received insignificant privileges as a result (Givens & Monahan, 2005; Sewell, 2013; West, 1995). Freire (1993) made a convincing argument concerning the false generosity of the oppressor that perpetuates the “unjust social order” (p. 3) and contributes to the dehumanization of the oppressed. Although Whites purported to accept and even appreciate Black women functioning as Mammy, this acceptance never translated into any real economic gain or increased social status (Givens & Monahan, 2005; hooks, 1981; Collins, 2000).

Another stereotypic image of Black women was that of Sapphire. The Sapphire image portrayed Black women as “treacherous, bitchy, and stubborn” (hooks, 1981). This stereotypic image of the Black woman was perpetuated by the 1940s and 1950s radio show *Amos and Andy*. The character Sapphire was the wife of Kingfish and she displayed anger and aggression toward her husband and other Blacks (West, 1995, p. 461). The Sapphire image emerged from media and influenced the perceptions of the dominant culture toward outspoken or opinionated Black women (Givens & Monahan, 2005; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). hooks (1981) suggested that the Sapphire image of the Black woman depicted her as “shrewish and ill-tempered” and as the more negative connotation of the controlling images of Black women (p. 85). Freire (1993) also described the phenomenon in which the oppressed have a tendency to become like the oppressor and display attitudes and behaviors toward members of the oppressed group just like that of the true oppressors; yet, without true power they exhibit anger (p. 5). Sapphire is seen as “crude, callous, and argumentative” (West, 1995, p. 461) toward other Blacks which supports Freire’s (1993) assertions that the oppressed tend to create their identity based on the reality of oppression and to emulate the oppressors. The stereotypic image of Sapphire as the mad Black woman has been unpopular in the White society (Collins, 2000) because she is perceived as

unaccepting of the status quo (hooks, 1981) and her inferiority to Whites. In the modern society, Whites have expressed difficulty in working with and for Black women who exhibited the characteristics of Sapphire (Sewell, 2013; West, 1995; Wingfield, 2007).

Black women were also depicted as the Jezebel or Black whore by the dominant culture (Collins, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005). The “image of Jezebel originated under slavery” (Collins, 2000, p. 89) during a time when “White slave owners had complete control over Black women’s sexuality and reproduction” (West, 1995, p. 462) and was designed to categorize Black women as overly sexual beings (Collins, 2000). Perhaps the most damaging stereotypic image, the Jezebel ascribed all Black woman as being “immoral and sexually loose” (hook, 1995, p. 54). The historical Jezebel stereotype portrayed a lighter skinned or mulatto woman as the seductresses and the sexual aggressor (Collins, 2000). Jezebel characteristics included being flirty, overly friendly toward men, and manipulative, and this image allowed Black women to “take the blame” for any relationships between White men and Black women that were considered illicit (Givens & Monahan, 2005; Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008). Jezebel was viewed as a simple Black woman controlled by her passions and ruled by her emotions. Townsend et al. (2010) described social and economic privileges for Black women that became associated with the Jezebel stereotype (p. 274). Freire (1993) cautioned that there is a degree of “fear of freedom” that is experienced by the oppressed, and this fear creates situations that can cause the oppressed to adopt guidelines established by the oppressor (p. 5) and provides a false sense of acceptance. Collins (2000) suggested that the Jezebel character would have to give up certain perceived privileges to achieve true self-actualization and freedom from this controlling image.

Another important and pervasive stereotype that emerged during the Civil Rights era was that of the Matriarch. The Matriarch has been depicted as a strong determined Black woman who

provides support for not only her family, but for the Black community (Collins, 2000). In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan presented a report that suggested that the dynamics of Black families being headed by females was a root cause of economic distress and the problems in the Black society (Collins, 2000). hooks (1981) emphasized that Black women could never really be considered Matriarchs because they were not a part of the dominant culture and had no real power. The image of the Black Matriarch came to symbolize the dual role Black women played in the home, oftentimes being both mother and father, protector and provider for their children (hooks, 1981). She oft-times was the head-of-the-household and she earned far less than White males, Black males, and White women. In addition, the Black Matriarchal stereotype depicted a non-feminine working woman who was tough and domineering while trying to provide for her family as well as offering wise counsel and guidance within her community (hooks, 1981; Collins, 2000). hooks (1981) made a convincing argument that Black women embraced the stereotypic image of the Matriarch as being independent, strong willed, and resilient. The stereotypic Black Matriarch has evolved and the image includes highly educated Black women who are “expected to handle large amounts of distasteful work” (Reynolds-Dobbs et al., 2008, p. 137). The modern Black Matriarch is considered highly devoted to her family and her livelihood. The Black Matriarch is portrayed as women who can do it all...by themselves (Townsend et al., 2010).

These negative stereotypes and controlling images were seared into my mental fabric with the branding irons of racism, sexism, and classism. My very mental schema was marred by the negative representations of Black women. I grew up seeing Black women portrayed in the media as less than human, as stereotypic, as a joke. I did not want to be the Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, or the Matriarch. I did not want to be perceived as an inferior, uneducated, dependent

Black woman. When interacting with members of the dominant culture, I learned to patiently endure ridiculous racist and sexist comments and questions from those in the dominant culture. These racist questions would begin as, “Why do Black people . . . ?” I would outwardly smile and inwardly curse. How was I expected to be the voice of the Black race? I was not like them – the stereotypic Black woman. I suppressed my feelings of anger; I repressed my knowledge and abilities; I depressed my rebellious spirit. I was not angry at the stereotypic remarks, rather I was angry whenever I was considered part of the stereotypic group. The dominant culture seemed to prefer innocuous Black females and I was all too ready to comply. I had internalized the negative cultural stereotypes and perceptions of Black women constructed by the dominant culture and I did not want to be viewed in that manner. I had ingested the poison of the negative stereotypes and fully accepted the devaluation of Black women. Through my socialization process and the media influence on my perceptions, I constructed a reality that consisted of two kinds of Black women – the unworthy stereotypic Black woman and the worthy assimilating Black woman to whom I ascribed. I contributed the perpetuation of the myths and stereotypes of the poor uneducated Black woman as something a little less than fully human - something not like me. I cannot express the imponderable effect these stereotypes have had on my identity development.

The previous prologue, background information, and identity development and historical context are intended to provide the reader and the writer with a deep, unguarded look into the forces seen and unseen that shaped my perceptions as a researcher and as an educational leader. What follows is an autoethnography reported by me as a researcher and as a Black female first year principal at a predominantly White private Christian school who is determined to engage in authentic leadership. This evocative autoethnographic research juxtaposes my skills, knowledge,

and dispositions as the principal with my fears, weaknesses, and insecurities as a Black woman, while investigating my behaviors or theories in action as an educational leader.

This chapter covered the background, historical perceptions, and framework for research on leadership development of a Black female. The next section provides a brief introduction to the small, predominantly White private Christian school, Oakridge Christian Day School, which was a pseudonym developed for the confidentiality of the school where I experienced my first year as principal. In addition, this section contains my introduction to Oakridge Christian Day School.

Introduction to Oakridge Christian Day School

Oakridge Christian Day School (OCDS) is a small, predominantly White private Christian school established over 30 years ago in the southeastern region of Louisiana. The picturesque campus consists of fifty-five acres which houses the sanctuary, the early childhood building, the elementary building, a gym and locker rooms, a football field with stadium seats, and the high school building. OCDS garnered a degree of prestige over the years. In 1985, the school received its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and it has maintained that distinction since that time.

OCDS consists of students from pre-K-12 and is subdivided into three divisions: elementary, pre-K – 3, numbering about 150 students; middle school, grades 4 – 6, numbering about 100 students; and junior and senior high school, grades 7 – 12, numbering about 350 students. For the five years before my principalship, the Headmaster of the school was also the principal for all of the divisions. At the inception of the school, only three percent of the student

population was minority students including 2% international students. Today, the student population contains of 32% minority students from seven countries.

The school has well defined norms and a long cultural history, however, a large number of teacher turnovers occurred in four of the previous five years. The laissez-faire leadership style of those years contributed to a loss of parental confidence. The decline in student achievement scores has also been a factor in the dissatisfaction of parents. In addition, the discipline referrals for Black students in grades 1 through 3 increased by 27% in the last three years. Teachers reported not feeling supported by the administration on discipline matters. In addition, there was been a 3% increase of students with special needs and learning disabilities and the teachers had difficulty reaching these students. White flight was also a real concern for the viability of the school. As the number of minority students slowly increased, the number of White students declined. Any reduction in student population places the school in a vulnerable position. Loss of tuition monies affects the acquisition of needed resources and programs for students and teachers. Under these school-related factors, I entered the school as a new principal.

Oakridge Christian Day School's Introduction to Me

My teaching career began in public schools where I taught for two years before I accepted a teaching position at OCDS where I am now the elementary principal. When I began my teaching career at OCDS 16 years ago, the demographic makeup of the student body was approximately 95 % White. All of the other teachers at the school were White. Everyone in leadership at OCDS was a member of the dominant group; the founder, the board of advisors, the headmaster, and the principal were all White, non-Hispanic, Christian, heterosexual, middle-aged, middle to upper-middle class males.

I was the only Black teacher at the elementary school during my first 8 years of employment at OCDS. The only other Black people at the school worked in the school cafeteria or in the maintenance department. I was not only the new unknown teacher; I also did not look the part of a teacher at OCDS.

There were Kindergarten classes on either side of my classroom. One of the teachers had been teaching at OCDS for over 10 years and she had 16 students in her class. The other teacher had been teaching at OCDS for about 13 years and she had 17 students in her class. For my first year at OCDS, my class only had 10 students – much less than the other teachers. Although I was new to the school, I was aware that teachers preferred to have more equal class sizes. The week before school started, the scheduling administrator called me into her office and I listened with my poker face primed as she tried to explain why there was such a discrepancy in the class sizes. She explained that the parents knew the other two teachers and had requested them for their children. I sat in the chair opposite her chair and I waited for her to say, “It’s nothing personal.” Those words never came out of her mouth, but I heard her metaphorically scream them in my face. I sat mesmerized, thinking about my old family parable that suggested Blacks had to work twice as hard as Whites to receive equal treatment. She tactfully explained the benefits of a smaller class size and all I heard her say was, “They don’t want you!” and “You’re not good enough!” I did not get upset – I did not vocalize my hurt feelings – I made no outward show of my emotions. I left her office determined to be the best teacher I could – determined to be twice as good as the rest. As I recalled that time in my life to a teacher friend, she asked why I did not just leave that school. Leaving for me was not an option. Something within me wanted to prove I was as good if not better than the other teachers. Something within me wanted to receive the approval of those in the dominant culture.

That year I introduced a new audio book reading project to my students. I recorded the students reading their favorite books and allowed them to take home the book and pocket-sized tape players to re-listen and improve their reading fluency. My students also had a garden and each student had their own row of tomato plants, bell peppers, and radishes. I employed best practices and provided many hands-on learning activities. My innovative teaching style did not go unnoticed by the administration, the other teachers, or the other parents.

At the beginning of my second year at OCDS, I was called again into the office of the scheduling administrator. This time she had an uncomfortable look on her face. I sat in the same seat I sat in only a year before and I waited as she nervously danced around her topic. Suddenly, she stopped talking, looked at me and said, “You have to promise not to tell anyone.” I inquired, “Tell anyone what?” She proceeded, “You have to promise not to tell that we have 47 Kindergarten students registered and 32 of those parents have requested you as the teacher for their children.” With a sense of urgency she continued, “Please don’t say anything to the other teachers – it would hurt their feelings.” I agreed not to say anything and I made no outward show of my emotions, yet inwardly I was screaming – internally I was jumping up and down. I was vindicated – I wanted to stand up, raise both of my arms over my head while making a fist and scream, “Yes! I have won!” I did not really know what I had won, but it felt like redemption – like satisfaction – (Now, they wanted me!). I felt that I had done more work that year than the other two teachers combined and that was the price of acceptance. I worked three more years as a Kindergarten teacher at OCDS before I moved to teaching fifth grade.

I felt that I was always being scrutinized, always being judged by those in the dominant culture. They viewed me as some type of enigma. I portrayed myself as a Black woman who understood the right (White) way. They insisted that I was not like other Black people, that I was

different, presuming these remarks to be complimentary to me; I never realized how insulting the remarks were to me and other Blacks. I so desperately wanted to be considered an individual, not defined by race or gender, that I ignored these blatantly racist remarks. In some ways I thought they were right; I did not think I was like some Black people.

At the same time, however, I also scrutinized the leaders at this private, Christian school. For decades, I had observed White male principals, first as a student and then as a teacher. From my limited vantage point, I constructed a leadership perspective based on my observations of the dominant group, a perspective that supported my ambition to become a principal someday. Despite the racism, often blatant, sometimes not, I thrived at this predominantly White, private, Christian school. I believed that my ability to resemble White-ness would allow me to be considered for a position of leadership. I was encouraged to pursue my Master's degree, but I did not inform anyone that my Master's would be in educational leadership. I assumed that members of the dominant group would view my desire to transition into leadership as a threat and I wanted to move into school leadership.

As I pursued my degree, I engaged more earnestly in what Lortie (1975) described as the "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61). I analyzed how the leaders of this school made decisions. I studied the ethos and the practices of the leaders. I wanted to emulate these leaders in every way. I wanted to be in leadership and I was willing to trade on my White-washed Blackness to obtain a leadership position. After I received my Master's degree and was credentialed for the principalship, the opportunity for leadership presented itself and four years ago I became the assistant principal of the middle school. The middle school consisted of grades 4 – 6 and was housed in the building above the gym. I worked for four years as the assistant principal before I became the principal of PK – 6.

Problem Statement and Link to Non-Traditional Leadership

Traditionally, leadership models for school principals were fashioned after the archetype, White males; (Drake & Roe, 1986; Sperandio, 2009; Surface, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010) the kind of school leaders I observed throughout my career. As a non-member of the dominant culture, I found myself uniquely unprepared to be a principal in this private school. I never experienced the positions of power, privilege, or pedigree of the dominant group that provided the archetype for educational leadership. I obtained the position that I desired and I no longer felt the need to placate others or misrepresent myself. I recognized that my life experiences increased the complexity of all of my thoughts, constructs, and behaviors. I have never openly experienced being a strong, educated, ambitious Black woman at any school. I was somewhat afraid to fully expose my disdain for who I am and how I have hidden my true nature. I anticipated being outed, being unmasked, being raw. The question loomed over me; if I am really not a leader from the order of the dominant group, who am I as a leader?

Although the evolution of leadership interest has been complex and diverse, it must be noted that most of the early research studies in the field of leadership were conducted by White males, and were conducted on White males (Sperandio, 2009; Surface, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010) and the generalizations formulated for these leadership studies were related to White males (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Bass, 1990; Bass & Bass, 2009; Burns, 1978). In my doctoral course work, I was introduced to many of the leadership models, styles, and principles that provided the foundational underpinning for the leadership theories of the past and the constructs used today. I investigated the history of classical organizational theory and explored the leadership paradigms and models that evolved over time. In one course, the professor added a commentary to a paper I had composed that caused a paradoxical shift in my thinking when she

inquired if I understood that the early leadership research, theories, and constructs were conducted solely *by* White males and were based solely *on* White males. Until that point, I am not sure I fully appreciated that there was very little research conducted concerning Black, female, school leaders. I just assumed that there was a one-size-fits-all leadership paradigm. It never occurred to me that women and people of color were essentially excluded from research literature in leadership. Her comment disturbed my schema, which I had spent years constructing. This became the genesis of my awakening and the foundation for my research interests.

I spent years mimicking, emulating, and trying to mirror the leadership models of the dominant group that were never intended for me. As a Black woman, I could only vicariously experience the dynamics of leadership of the dominant group. I had never and would never experience the privileges, power, and position afforded to those in the dominant culture. I needed to interrogate a leadership paradigm that would be organic to my own values, dispositions, strengths, and weaknesses. Two years later, that professor asked me to explain my espoused theories of leadership. I was embarrassed; I had no espoused leadership theories. I could only parrot what I had learned from the dominant culture. I could only regurgitate the espoused leadership theories of others. I had not formulated my own espoused leadership theories. I needed to differentiate who I am as a leader and who I am not.

My past circumstances and my present situation converged to impel me to construct a leadership approach that would transfigure the future of this small, private Christian school into a school centered on care and social justice (Echols, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010) where teachers were empowered and efficacious. But, questions remained. How would my personal dispositions, my professional ethos, and my life experiences be advantageous as a first year

principal? What changes would emerge in the school and within me as the new Black, female principal? In a school in which the privileged hierarchy had been White male-centered authority, how would my race and gender inform my leadership paradigm as a principal? Recent research studies have explored the non-traditional forms of educational leadership and have suggested that different leadership models may be more effective in different leadership situations. Sperandio (2009) argued that females often display leadership dispositions and behaviors that are vastly different than those of their male counterparts. I preferred not to use my race and my gender characteristics to identify myself, for a part of me has long anticipated a post-racial, post-feminine America. Yet, my race and my gender are the first signifiers to others of who I am. I recognize the vicissitudes within myself and I appreciate my multiple identities.

Purpose for the Study

I am Black, I am a woman, and I am a school principal. I cannot forge an effective leadership style without fully embracing my colorism and my feminism. I must deconstruct my old leadership paradigms based on the assumptions of the dominant culture that had become pervasive in my construction of reality. I must interrogate and even embrace what I have viewed as lesser, weaker, inferior, must understand the strengths of Black women leaders, and must value those strengths as equal and often superior to the traditional, White, male-centered paradigms of leadership. For years I congratulated myself on the social and professional heights I have reached and I have ignored the contributions of Black women pioneers upon whose shoulders I stand. I have discounted and ignored my first true leadership models – other Black women from my childhood. I have distorted and discounted the context of racism and sexism that is integrated into my reality. I have become a traitor to the collective identity of Black women and I have contributed to the dehumanizing process of Black women similar to the

historical treatment of the dominant culture (Givens & Monahan, 2005; hooks, 1981; Collins, 2000) by my silent acceptance of injustices and mistreatment of Black women whom I considered inferior.

The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to use narrative inquiry or “storying” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) as a vehicle to explore the phenomenon of my first year as principal and to examine the intersections of my race and gender that affected my leadership perceptions. My autoethnography investigated the factors, dispositions, and behaviors that informed and shaped my perceptions as a Black, female, first year principal in a predominately White private Christian school. At the forefront of this study are my perceptions of my leadership behaviors relative to the Transformational Leadership Model (Bass & Bass, 2009). My autoethnographic study was exploratory in nature, however, the direction of this study was guided by the research questions.

Research Questions

According to Creswell (2009), the research questions are an important component in the design of any study and the questions guide the methods of data collection. For my autoethnographic research, the questions provided both the direction and the momentum for my inquiry. The following research questions were posed for exploring my perceptions of my leadership behaviors in relation to my race and gender:

1. How will my race, gender, and life experiences impact my perceptions of my leadership behaviors as a first year principal?
2. How does a Black female perceive her role as first year principal in a predominantly White elementary school?
3. How did I respond to the challenges I faced as a Black female from a non-traditional leadership background?

4. How does a first year principal perceive her behavior in relation to Transformational Leadership behaviors?

Foundation and Framework for the Study

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided the foundational support for my autoethnographic study and guided the direction that allowed me to explore the intersections of race and gender as they pertained to the social constructs of identity and leadership development. Contributors to the development and advancement of CRT included scholars in law, politics, education, social science and psychology (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1988; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995) as they have engaged discourse on race relations, racial identity, and the impediments to racial equality. CRT, which is explained in greater detail in Chapter 2, privileges the medium of narratives or storytelling as a viable research tool when exploring life experiences and emotional feelings (Tate, 1997).

In addition to employing Critical Race Theory as the theoretical foundation, my autoethnography utilized Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006) as the theoretical framework. Transformational Leadership Theory, which is explained in greater detail in Chapter 2, is concerned with a holistic identity of the leader and focuses on the behaviors and attitudes of the leader towards the followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Bass, 2009). As a theoretical framework, Transformational Leadership Theory allowed me to situate my leadership behaviors as a first year principal within four basic factors: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Individualized Consideration, and Intellectual Stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Bass, 2009).

If the design for my autoethnographic study could be compared to the building of a house, then the foundation of that house would be Critical Race Theory. CTR provided the

stability and understandings of my perspectives as a qualitative researcher from a non-traditional background. CRT informed the development of my multiple identities and the complexities of my life intersections and historical influences. Likewise, Transformational Leadership Theory represented the frame of the house and the structural supports as it determined the parameters for my study that explored my leadership behaviors and perceptions as a Black female first year principal. Transformational Leadership Theory is generic in nature in that it is not concerned with the physical traits or personal accouterments of the leader. Transformational Leadership Theory was important to my study in that it placed emphasis on the behaviors of the leader toward the followers without making a direct link to race or gender.

Significance of the Study

For the last seven decades, leadership theories and models have become replete in the research field of social sciences and have become prominent in the studies of educational research (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Many of the earlier theories and constructs focused on the traits of the leader (Bass, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Burns, 1978) and inquired about relationships between leader effectiveness and certain physical attributes (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Loder (2005) noted that the majority of the leadership data collected and results reported have focused on the White male perspectives of leadership.

Although these studies have provided insight into leadership behaviors that have contributed to effective principalships (Drake & Roe, 1986; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marks & Printy, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003), few of these studies focused on non-traditional leadership and leader diversity (Loder, 2005; Sperandio, 2009). Researchers,

such as Loder (2005) and Surface et al. (2012), have questioned the existing leadership paradigms and the prevailing educational leadership research and have determined there is an exclusionary practice (Surface et al, 2012). Loder (2005) suggested that women and minorities have been largely excluded from the discourse on educational leadership and this provided a limited vantage by which to understand non-traditional leaders.

The importance of this autoethnographic study lay in the examination of my leadership as a Black female and how my behaviors compare to the behaviors of the Transformational Leader. Many contemporary studies on leadership have suggested that the Transformational Leadership Model is the most effective (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Hallinger, 2003). This study privileged my voice as a researcher, one who is not a part of the dominant group or dominant culture, and is viewed as a non-traditional leader (Loder, 2005). This study enlarges the topic of educational leadership styles as it seeks to discover the perceptions of how the intersections of race, gender, and leadership are understood in the formation of a leadership style. Loder (2005) argued that at the intersection of race and gender, Black female principals have approached leadership in ways that are different from males and White females. Given the scarcity of educational leadership research conducted by Black female principal, my autoethnography fills a gap in the research literature and provides an insider perspective of the leader – follower dynamic. It is my belief that this study, the design, and the findings will be beneficial to future educational leaders who are from marginalized groups, and to future leadership researchers by encouraging more in-depth inquiry into the complexity and diversity of non-traditional leaders.

Why an Autoethnography?

For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and have held myself back.
But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. Isaiah 42:14

When this study was in the embryotic stage of a dissertation proposal, I immediately identified the intriguing phenomenon that seemed to be pregnant with the possibility of exploring the conflicts among the intersections of my race, my gender, my lived experiences, and my leadership opportunity. I appreciated that the qualitative traditions and the autoethnographic methodology would allow me to carry this project to full term. As I birthed my story, I listened for that greatly anticipated first cry – my voice that had been muted over time and through circumstances. For me, this autoethnography required an in-depth look into my past and my cultural heritage that I had ignored and devalued. It also required an introspective examination of the totality of the person I had become as I explored the life events and life circumstances that shaped my identity, my perceptions, and my value system and that ultimately influence my leadership.

For this study, I wanted a process of meaning making that privileged the knowledge and experiences of someone not generally found in traditional leadership research – someone like me. Sluka and Robben (2012) suggested that autoethnography has its foundation in the traditions of anthropology and they positioned autoethnography within the “postmodern perspective of feminist anthropology and privileged the voices of the other” (p. 18). As the maturation of this study progressed, I also developed self-awareness and self-reflexivity that are critical for autoethnographic research (Denzin, 2000; Bochner, 2012), which I related to the internal kicks of a growing fetus. Chang (2008) suggested that a researcher engaged in autoethnography tell her story of her interconnected worlds. As I engaged in this study, I experienced the metaphoric pain

of contractions as I examined my assumptions and my attitudes that I cloaked over time and that I hid by my fears. I did not position myself to tell a story; I positioned myself to become the story.

Why an autoethnography? Because of the layers of complexity within my study and the need to access the inter-core of my inquiry, surgical precision was required to deconstruct the underlying issues during my delivery process. Autoethnography was that tool that allowed for deep probing into the social constructs of race, gender, identity, and leadership. Why an autoethnography? Because there was a story that must had to be felt to understand and knowledge that had to be experienced before it could be shared.

Definition of Terms

For my autoethnographic study I employed key terms to provide clarity, understanding, and insight for my readers. For the purpose of this study the following operational definitions are used:

Blacks: This term is synonymous with African Americans and refers to the people that are descendants of non-voluntary immigrants from the African Diaspora and slavery (Bell, 2004).

Black Bourgeoisie: This term was used to describe African Americans having middle to upper middle class standing in the Black community during the 1930s-1960s, many owing their own businesses and most owning land and other property (Frazier, 1962).

Black Baptist Church: The Black Baptist Church (referred to as The Church) was born after the emancipation of the African slaves in America. The Black Baptist Church became the

early centers of economic support and educational learning. For many African American people the Black Baptist Church offered hope for a brighter future (Pitts, 1993).

Dominant Culture: This term references the White majority in American society that established the societal norms for behavior and language through economic, social, and political power (Goodman, 2001).

Dominant Group: This term references a subcategory of the White majority or the dominant culture. They are White, heterosexual, Christian, middle-aged, able-bodied, non-Hispanic, middle to upper class men. They have power, position, privilege, and favorable social status (Goodman, 2001).

Jim Crow: This term refers to a time period in American History when segregation laws were created and enforced that prohibited certain rights for people of African descent (Bell, 2004).

Passing: This term refers to an African American person with a fair complexion who conceals their identity to gain access into positions intended for White people (Harris, 1995).

Stereotypic Behaviors: This term refers to the over exaggerated, negative behaviors ascribed to all African Americans (hook, 1981; Givens & Monahan, 2005).

Whites: This term references the White majority or the dominant culture in America. They have power, position, privilege, and favorable social status (Goodman, 2001).

Limitations of the Study

Creswell (2009) and Johnson and Christensen (2012) argued that, inherent within the designs, quantitative and qualitative research studies have limitations to the extent to which

judgments and conclusions are formulated. This autoethnographic study has some limitations that must be addressed. First, the idea of researcher biases must be presented because it is understood that the researcher is the subject and the focus of the study. As a researcher, I have preconceived ideas about race, gender, class, and leadership. Second, I present perceptions and self-constructed narrative accounts of events and interactions I had during my first year as a Black female principal. Third, the selection and or deselection of data that are included and excluded from this autoethnography are limited. Fourth, this study was limited by the time restraints of one school year. Finally, this autoethnographic study combines elements of past experiences and earlier memories of the researcher and increases the biases of selected information.

Delimitation of the Study

There are delimitations for this autoethnographic study. This study was designed to consider only the researcher as the focus and subject of inquiry. This study was not an attempt to provide a comprehensive review of all of the events that transpired over the research period of one school year. This autoethnography was further delimited because it made no attempt to be generalizable. This study considered only the perceptions of a Black female first year principal at a predominantly White private Christian school and does not speak for all Black females or all first year principals.

Organization for the Study

My autoethnographic research is presented in an eight chapters and follows a qualitative constructivist format that draws from the interpretivist perspective (Creswell, 2009). Chapter One includes the introduction and prologue, background on my identity development and

background of the historical perceptions, early leadership models, introduction to OCDS and an introduction of the researcher, problem statement, purpose for the study, research questions, theoretical foundation and framework for the study, significance of the study, rationale for autoethnography, definition of terms, limitations and delimitations of the study, and the organization for the study.

Chapter Two presents a comprehensive review of literature as it relates to Critical Race Theory as the foundational support for this study. This chapter includes an introduction, a background discussion on Critical Race Theory. In addition, literature addressing the concepts of identity development, the origins of Black inferiority, and the influence on collective identity are presented. This chapter then provides the background and evolution of leadership theories. Literature exploring the development of the principalship is presented along with a discussion on Transformational Leadership Theory and the four factors of Transformational Leadership as they relate to leadership behaviors. Finally, this chapter presents literature on non-traditional leadership constructs related to race and gender.

Chapter Three presents a description of the methods used for this study. This chapter begins with a short vignette and includes an introduction, qualitative worldview and rationale, methodological framework, narrative inquiry and autoethnography as a method. This chapter also includes the research design and procedures, the research context, and the research setting. In addition, this chapter presents a detailed description of the data collection process and the logical manner in which the data was preserved.

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, the written research data for this autoethnography is presented. By combining elements of an ethnographic memoir with an autobiographic diary (Chang, 2008), I constructed my autoethnographic narrative that provides the reader with the

background information concerning my transition period into the principalship and details some of the challenges I faced as a Black female first year principal at OCDS. I also include my personal perceptions as a non-traditional school leader in a predominantly White school. I explain how I navigated the personal and professional difficulties as I transformed myself into the role of first Black, first female principal at OCDS.

In Chapter Seven, entitled *The Method to My Madness*, I engage the reader with my reflective reasoning process as I analyze thoughts and emotions generated during the research period. This chapter briefly details my state of mind that evolved by the interweaving of my past life experiences with my present life challenges as a first year principal. In this chapter, I also explain the changing patterns within the study and the emergent thematic category of *Establishing a Family Unit*, which became the underpinning for my research findings and data interpretations.

Chapter Eight brings together the narrative essays from chapters four, five, and six in a discussion of the findings related to the main theme that evolved throughout the research process. This chapter also offers insight into my attempt to generate answers to the research questions and discusses the findings. I construct a graphic model that depicts the relationship between my leadership as the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader and the Transformational Leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This chapter also includes the research conclusions and implications for further research into non-traditional leadership behaviors.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To fully delineate and provide the foundational underpinning for my autoethnographic study I examined Critical Race Theory (CRT). CRT provided the support to better understand the confluence of race and gender as factors of identity development as it identifies discrimination and racism in society. In the United States, many theorists contributed to the amalgamation of what has come to be known as the Critical Race Theory. Contributors to CRT included scholars in law, politics, education, social science and psychology (Bell, 1980; Crenshaw, 1988; Harris, 2000; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). The principle tenet of CRT is to reveal the distinctions of marginalized groups and awaken our consciousness towards discrimination based on race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (Crenshaw, 1988; Harris, 2000; Ladson-Billing & Tate, 1995), and it provides the impetus for the (counter) story from silenced voices (Crenshaw, 1988; Harris, 2000).

The first section of my literature review explores the history of Critical Race Theory and examines the factors related to the development of an identity of inferiority based on race. The second section of my literature review provides the background on leadership and the evolution of leadership constructs. The third section provides a brief history of the influence of the early leadership theories on school leadership. The next section provides a discussion on Transformational Leadership Theory and the four factors of Transformational Leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Simulation, and Individual Consideration. The final section provides a review of literature concerning non-traditional leadership constructs and explores the discourse on leadership styles based on the female gender.

Background of Critical Race Theory

Historically, the constructs that informed and legitimized Critical Race Theory (CRT) could not have developed before the end of slavery and the ratification of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments (Bell, 1980). African American slaves were defined by law and considered by society as property and, therefore, had no power, privilege, nor protection under the legal system (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Slaves were not just subordinate in status to Whites; they were considered less than human. Slaves were considered three-fifths human and two-fifths thing to be exploited for commercial gain (Ravitch, 1980). The national dilemma centered on, “What was to be done about the Negro?” (Ravitch, 1980, p. 32). Ravitch (1980) described the idea of the Negro expulsion from North America and colonization of the Negro in Central America. It was unforeseeable that Whites and Blacks and Whites could co-exist as equals (Hardin, 2003; Thompson-Miller, Picca, & Feagin, 2014).

The end of the Civil War also marked the beginning of pejorative treatment of ex-slaves (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Even though ex-slaves were granted all de jure rights and protections of the legal system and by the United States government, the inequitable double standards were pervasive (Bell, 1980; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Ravitch (1980) described that Whites had a sense of fear that the emancipated Negroes would retaliate against their masters or that they would revert into “barbarism” (p. 34). These fears gave power to White supremacists and legitimized the nefarious treatment of Blacks. In the years that followed the Civil War, Blacks endured disenfranchisement, racial discrimination, and segregation (Thompson-Miller, Picca, & Feagin, 2014). Many legal attempts were made by Black leaders to end racial discrimination within America in the early twentieth century. Lawrence (1980) explained that the court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was just one opportunity for the courts to

terminate the American caste system and fully grant Blacks all rights afforded by the Fourteenth Amendment. However, the concept of separate but equal became the embedded law of the land with the defeat of Homer Plessy's case (Lawrence, 1980). These inequities became the precursor to the critical race ideology within the United States.

Identity of Inferiority

The American institution of slavery was the genesis of the stratification system between the White race and the Black race and the prerequisite for the perceptions of Black inferiority (Ogbu, 1986). Watkins (2001) pointed out that many Whites considered slavery as a necessary evil that protected the African slaves from themselves. Blacks were regarded as intellectually inferior and morally bankrupt (Watkins, 2001). The end of slavery gave rise to extreme White supremacy ideology. White supremacists did not attribute the inferiority of Blacks to institutionalized slavery that had existed for centuries. They believed there were scientific reasons that supported the inferiority of Blacks (Watkins, 2001). According to Watkins (2001), scientists conducted research on the size and shape of the African skull. They claimed the results supported the inferiority of Blacks (Watkins, 2001). Many medical doctors also diagnosed the Negro as infected beings, which provided credence to the theory of inferiority (Watkins, 2001). Doctors such as Benjamin Rush considered the Negro's "big lips, flat nose, woolly hair and black skin" as examples of lepers (Watkins, 2001, p. 28). Bell (2004) noted that scientific leaders even published books to verify the inhumanity and inferiority of the Negro.

Scientific racism provided credence to the theory of inferiority of Blacks and ensured Blacks would occupy the lowest rung on the societal ladder in America (Watkins, 2001). The divisive practices of the eugenics movement added to the inferiority discourse (Watkins, 2001). Scientific racism provided a solution to the Negro problem. The Negro, now proven by the

science to be inferior intellectually, biologically, and socially, should be segregated from the superior White society. The concepts of White racial superiority and Black racial inferiority moved from an individual epistemology to a collective societal ideology and gave form to the collective identity of Blacks (Ogbu, 2004; Watkins, 2001) and the united efforts of Black leaders to disprove this notion (Lawrence, 1980).

Lawrence (1980) explained that the newly freed Negro moved from an institution of slavery into an institution of segregation which contributed to Blacks being ill prepared to compete with Whites in the larger society. He explained that the primary function of segregation was to define the subordinate status of Blacks and to preserve the White culture (Lawrence, 1980). Lawrence (1980) stated that Blacks were “kept separate from Whites because the separation classified Blacks as inferior beings” (p. 51). The institution of segregation subjected Blacks to a strict caste system and limited social, political, and economic advancement (Lawrence, 1980), which aided in the perpetuation of inferiority.

The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments altered the illegitimate status of Blacks and identified them as citizens of the United States with all of the rights and privileges as Whites. Blacks and their White supporters worked within the legal system to garner the full benefit of citizenship (Lawrence, 1980; Watkins, 2001). Bell (2004) emphasized that individuals, encouraged by civil rights organizations, challenged the legitimacy of the separate but equal law and were determined to alter the collective identity of inferiority for African Americans. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) “carefully planned lawsuits to challenge the doctrine of separate but equal” (Tate, 1997, p. 205). Southern Whites frowned on these attempts to elevate the status of Blacks (Lawrence, 1980). The separate but equal mantra continued to be the official law of the land with the defeat of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Watkins (2001) emphasized that the Negro problem was addressed and settled. Blacks would remain in America as a segregated “subservient labor force” and Whites would “maintain political, social and cultural dominance” (Watkins, 2001, p. 181).

For the next five decades, the racial narrative within the United States solidified. Blacks were required by law to use “racially segregated schools, trains, streetcars, hotels, restaurants, and other public accommodations” (Tate, 1997, p. 204). The racial segregation and discrimination of Blacks contributed to the concept of the “collective struggle” and helped to form a united identity (Ogbu, 1986, p. 39), an identity of inferiority.

Two schools of thought emerged from the discourse surrounding the development of the Black collective identity. Each was supported by the efforts of men who wanted to advantage and empower Blacks within the American society. They could be viewed as opposite ends of a social and political continuum; each wanted to uplift Blacks within the greater society and change the identity perceptions that had persisted for decades. Booker T. Washington emphasized the advancement of Blacks by skilled labor training and building Black enterprises that serviced the Black community (Watkins, 2001). Blacks were expected to work hard and wait for race relations to eventually improve (Watkins, 2001). Watkins (2001) emphasized the prevailing idea that Blacks “must learn their place in the new industrial order” (p. 23). Washington and other Black leaders favored White political control and racially segregated industrial education for Blacks (Hardin, 1997). Watkins (2001) highlighted the doctrine of accommodation extolled by Washington and the acceptance of White hegemony. It was believed that Blacks were “intellectually weaker and would fill jobs subordinate to and unwanted by Whites” (Hardin, 1997, p. 25). Watkins (2001) suggested that some Blacks took on the public face of inferiority hoping that over time, Blacks could prove their worth in the White society and

gain acceptance as equals. Blacks were encouraged to learn a trade to be used within the Black community and patiently wait for Whites to accept them and someday to allow them entrance into the larger White society (Watkins, 2001).

The second school of thought that emerged from the American segregation dialogue was one of complete integration and was based on the collective ideology of Blacks being equal to Whites in every aspect. Men, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, wanted to alter the landscape of the American society by adding people of color. According to Du Bois (as cited in Watkins, 2001), there was end to racial segregation and the doctrine of accommodation. Watkins (2001) explained that Du Bois and other Black leaders called for Blacks to become a part of the educated citizenry. Watkins (2001) wrote that Du Bois was opposed to Blacks only being trained to occupy menial positions within society and performing the jobs Whites did not want to do. Du Bois viewed classical education for Blacks as the only remedy for racism (Hardin, 1997), and he posited the theory of the Talented Tenth, which suggested that the brightest of the Negro race be educated as leaders (Hardin, 1997). Watkins (2001) contended that many Southern Whites viewed Du Bois as an interloper tried to usurp the concepts of White supremacy and disturb the status quo by suggesting that Blacks were equal in intelligence with Whites. Both Washington and Du Bois advocated for Blacks to prove their worth to Whites. Regardless of the methods employed, Washington and Du Bois were joined in their primary objective of improving the plight of the Negro (Hardin, 1997; Watkins, 2001) and transforming the negative perceptions held by many Whites.

Recreating Black Collective Identity

The twentieth century saw the rise of many separate, segregated schools for Black children. In 1954, the nation witnessed one of the more controversial educational upheavals in the Brown v. the Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas ruling (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This landmark ruling set the stage for decades of discourse and debate that created many fractures in the national educational system. The 1954 Brown decision was considered the most significant legislation for Black Americans since the end of slavery (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). However, school desegregation was met with startling White resistance (Bell, 2004; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1997). White opposition to the court ordered cultural changes was fierce. Bell (2004) suggested that many in the White society viewed Blacks with a xenophobic disdain and did not want their children to attend the same schools. After a year of limited compliance to the court-ordered school integration, the courts issued the 1955 Brown II ruling and called for the desegregation with “All Deliberate Speed” (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007 p. 252). Blacks were naively optimistic that the American society would be a meritocracy. Lawrence (1980) explained that, “the mythology of meritocracy does not jibe with the realities of American Life” (p. 66). Black children were told they had to work twice as hard to overcome inequality, however, for many Blacks, this statement was viewed as confirmation of their inferiority (Tate, 1997) and as a byproduct of racism.

It soon was apparent that the act of desegregation of public schools became a conduit for decades of racism and marginalization of Blacks (Bell, 2004). Whites countered the public school desegregation plans with decreased school enrollment. Bell (2004) described the phenomenon of White flight as an unintended consequence of public school desegregation. He lamented that “today most Black children attend public schools that are both racially isolated and

inferior” (Bell, 1980, p. 91). Crenshaw (1980) pointed out that the highly praised 1954 Brown school desegregation case was never only about schooling. She suggested there were bigger issues at stake for Black leaders (Crenshaw, 1980); Blacks were still trying to prove their worth to Whites (Bell, 1980).

Blacks (American born descendants of slaves and ex-slaves who have at least one drop of White blood) could be viewed as the illegitimate offspring of the White society or as redheaded step-children trying so desperately to be considered an heir, one of the American family. Over the past century, the dominant narratives, stories, and stereotypes of Blacks were created by and controlled by Whites. These stereotypes had a negative impact on the self-perceptions of some Blacks and influenced the behaviors and perceptions of many other Blacks (West, 1995).

In the next section of this literature review, I examine the literature on the background of leadership theories centered on the premise that leaders possessed strong self-identities and other traits that excluded Blacks and women from the early leadership constructs.

Background on Early Leadership Constructs

Researchers have explored the origins of leadership theory as a by-product of organizational theories, management theories, and structural designs (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Drake & Roe, 1986; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Educational leadership constructs can trace their origins to the early organizational and management theories (Drake & Roe, 1986). Bolman and Deal (2003) briefly discussed the implications of authority and leadership in the early feudal system and the changes in authority experienced by the formation of formal organizations. In addition, Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) also described the changing landscape of industry brought about by the industrial revolution and the start of the modern age. The evolution of organization

and management theories that originated with businesses and industries was reformulated and applied to schools (Drake & Roe, 1986).

Early research conducted by Adam Smith in a pin factory emphasized the logistics of dividing the tasks for productivity. It also influenced the modernist views on workplace supervision and leadership. This early research became the precursor for leadership interest that is directed away from completion of a task and directed towards the economic efficiency of a completed task (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). This type of research became the underpinning for the principles of scientific management (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The constructs of scientific management elucidated by researchers such as Frederick Taylor inspired varied and different types of organizations (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Historically, early workers were unskilled and untrained. Early leadership behaviors focused on the management of workers to complete the particular tasks. According to Hatch and Cunliffe (2006), workers were treated “like any other raw material” (p. 29) needed for the benefit of the organization. The primary responsibility of early leadership was to ensure workers would generate profits (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006) and that the organizational goals were reached without regards for the people within the organizations (Drake & Roe, 1986).

Research conducted by Karl Marx examined the conflict of interest between organizational leadership and the workers (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Marx explained this for-greater-profit attitude of organizational leadership that led to what he described as the alienation of the workers (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The theory posited by Marx exposed the suppressive nature of managerial control and what he expressed to be a need for worker emancipation (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Marx considered the exploitation of the worker within the capitalist

organizations to be the springboard for worker dissatisfaction; he argued that leadership contributed to the dehumanization process of the worker (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

By the early 1900s, the evolution of organizations and the changes in society encouraged Max Weber to explore organizational authority and rationality (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Weber posited the theory of bureaucracy and he examined the aspects of organizational authority. Based on this theory, bureaucratic leadership was concerned with the authority to make rational decisions for the good of the organization. Bolman and Deal (2003) explained the theory of bureaucracy and concepts of traditional leadership and the practices of managerial restrictions on workers.

Other researchers constructed theories of leadership within organizations that focused on the people within organizations. Research that focused on the human relations and the importance of the workers moved to the foreground (Drake & Roe, 1986). Trailblazers, such as Mary Parker Follett, considered the ideas of democratic forms of organizational management (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). These principles ushered in research studies that focused on the needs of the workers and the interdependency of the organization and the workers (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006) and changed the focus of leadership constructs.

Early leadership research slowly shifted focus from leadership for organizational management to studies suggesting an archetype for leadership. Early leadership research focused on determining which traits and characteristics were considered advantageous for leaders (Bass, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 2003). Early leadership models, described by Bass (1990), were based on trait theory and employed the assumptions that there are inherent attributes that leaders possess that were not found in other non-leaders. Leaders not only had to possess the expected physical features that included race and gender, but they also had to display characteristics that suggested

a strong sense of identity such as self-confidence, assertiveness, and a drive to succeed (Bass, 1990). The primary construct of the trait theory emphasized that leaders exhibited attributes that differentiated them from others (Bass, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

In addition to leadership trait theories, early researchers have considered the construct of the historic heroes or the Great-Man Theory, and they have examined the leadership impact of such men on other men and on organizations (Bass, 1990). The Great-Man Theory of leadership suggested that there were innate qualities of leaders that were not common to all people (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Based on this theory, leadership attributes were not considered to be learned behaviors but rather inherent characteristics. Other researchers were divided when considering if great leaders were born or made (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006), however, the records from past generation are replete with legends and historical acts of great men. According to the Great-Man Theory, leaders possess qualities such as intelligence, wisdom, and masculinity (Bass, 1990) that represent markers used to determine the qualifications for leadership. Early studies focused on different male leaders and identified specific traits and attributes used to determine their effectiveness as leaders. These attributes included height, weight, physique, age, tone of voice, health, energy, appearance, and intelligence (Bass, 1990). Many of the suggested traits were considered masculine characteristics. The trait theories and the Great Man Theory suggested that leaders had a well-developed self-concept and positive self-image (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Early leadership research labeled many leaders as autocrats who displayed their power in terms of coercion and force and represented White, middle-aged men (Bass, 1990; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Evolution of Leadership Constructs

Although the early research theories of leadership have been complex and diverse, as stated previously in this literature review, most of the earlier studies in the field of leadership were conducted by White males, and were conducted on White males. Likewise, the theories, constructs, and generalizations formulated were based on White males (Bolman & Deal, 2003). As research constructs have evolved over time, the influence of trait theories are still prominent in leadership discourse (Bass, 1990); however, contemporary theories have enlarged their focus to include other leadership factors.

Bolman and Deal (2003) considered more recent studies that described the importance of the interactions between the leaders and the followers. These more recent studies on leadership, highlighted by Michael Fullan (2004), expressed organizations as living systems and he related the importance of relationship building between leaders and followers. Blake and Mouton (1989) presented the managerial grid model that described leadership based on the level of concern for people and the level of concern for production. The managerial grid model of leadership was used to outline leadership styles based on a two-dimensional grid in which the “Team Leader”, one who demonstrated a high concern for both people and production, was considered most effective (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1989) described the situational leadership model in which leaders varied their leadership styles to maximize the situation or respond to the needs of the organization, people, and tasks. Hersey, Blanchard, and Natemeyer (1989) explained that the structure of leadership is contingent on the level of maturity of the people. Situational leadership integrates both the concern with the people and the concern for the tasks. Their theory presents four levels of leadership that require the leader to adjust according to the situation. Bolman and

Deal (2003) expounded on the concept in which all of the leadership styles are comprised into four leadership behaviors of telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Situational leadership examines the readiness of the worker to perform the task successfully (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Contemporary leadership models present a comprehensive view of the multifaceted dimensions of leadership. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) suggested that more comprehensive leadership models have been described in contingency theory. Contingency theory of leadership, as discussed by Bolman and Deal (2003), suggested that there may not be one best way to lead. Different leadership styles are required for differing situations. Transactional leadership is a leadership model that emphasizes the relationship between the workers and the tasks. Leithwood and Duke (1999) expressed “transactional leadership as an exchange relationship between leaders and followers” (p. 53). The transactional model requires an understanding between the workers and the leaders on what is necessary for rewards and what behaviors would constitute punishments (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Burns (1978) described the disposition of the transactional leader that included the following: reactionary to situations, provides rewards and punishments, stress correct actions by workers, and motivates workers to consider their personal needs above organization. Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested that the transactional leadership style can be viewed as organizational quid pro quo that leads to management by exceptions and that can be problematic. Over time, these organizational theories and leadership models garnered wide acceptance and infiltrated the domain of educational leadership and the organizations of schools.

Influence of Leadership Constructs on Schools

In the early 1930s, the research examining school leadership and the principalship became prominent (Lortie, 2009). The concepts and theories associated with business and

industry were retooled and analyzed in relationship to schools and school principals. Public and private school leadership formation mirrored the classical organizational structure. Schools operated, in many ways, as bureaucracies complete with hierarchical authority, centralized top-down decision-making, and vertical communication (Lortie, 2009). Lortie (2009) concluded that the school principal occupied the position referred to as middle management (p. 46). Bolman and Deal (2003) described middle management authority as both being a boss and having a boss. In the modern school system, the principals are suspended between the superintendent over them and the teachers under them (Elmore, 2004; Hallinger, 2003; Lortie, 2009). For years, the responsibility of the principal was largely school operations (Lortie, 2009). Early leadership research of schools focused on the traits of the principals. As stated previously, leadership models based on trait theory employed the assumptions that there are inherent attributes that school leaders possess (Bass, 1990), those of height, weight, physique, age, tone of voice, health, energy, appearance, and intelligence, the considered attributes of White middle-aged men.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) suggested that school leadership was closely related to constructs described in classical management literature (p. 54). Many of the responsibilities and functions of the school principal could be related to theoretical constructs posited by Fayol, Gulick, and Urwick (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 2005). These principal responsibilities included planning, organizing, directing, staffing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) explained the acronym PODSCoRB, put forward by Luther Gulick in 1937, and they associated these activities of the chief executive with the activities of the school principal (p. 35). Hoy and Miskel (2005) suggested that schools are organizations that can be viewed using the machine metaphor and the principal can be viewed as the rational system manager who directs the actions to “achieve

predetermined goals” within the school (p. 9). Hoy and Miskel (2005) argued that schools are organizations with bureaucratic roles and expectations (p. 25). By the end of the 1960s, many researchers focused their attention on the expectations of the principalship for improving student learning outcomes (Lortie, 2009). According to Lane (1992), there was a shift in the roles for principals from that which was “purely managerial” to roles that required effective leadership in the schools (p. 86). Leithwood and Duke (1999) reviewed leadership studies in an attempt to categorize the contemporary educational leadership paradigms.

By the 1970s, the constructs for shaping the American public school system was well developed with discernible structures for the organization, leadership, and instructional practices for both teachers and principals (Lane, 1992). Elmore (2004) emphasized that public school systems consisted of elected school boards and superintendents with broad control over the educational system, while the principals governed the individual schools. The social structure of the individual schools consisted of mostly female teachers being supervised by mostly male principals (Elmore, 2004, p. 45). Lane (1992) suggested that the leadership roles of the principal focus less on management and more on the school environment. Lane (1992) explained that school principals were turning their focus to controlling and protecting instructional time and maintaining an environment that was conducive to teaching and learning (p. 86). Elmore (2004) pointed out that the role of the school principal included providing protection from outside forces and protection for teacher autonomy in regards to the instructional practices within the classrooms (p. 46). Elmore (2004) explained the changing function of the school principal as the buffer from external disruptions. Lortie (2009) concluded that although the principals are “in charge” of the schools, they had little influence over the instructional practices in the classrooms.

By the end of the 1980s, the constructs of educational leadership within the United States were being retooled. Less emphasis was placed on the managerial skills of the principal and more emphasis was placed on the character traits and leadership styles (Lane, 1992). A national call for effective school leadership was made. Strong educational leadership was needed to reform schools (Elmore, 2004). The effectiveness of the principal was considered to be related to physical characteristics such as race and gender (Lortie, 2009), and the idea of a strong principal leadership was associated with White, middle-aged, males (Wolcott, 1973).

Lortie (2009) pointed out that the school leadership style that was common in the 1980s consisted of top-down decision-making and the principal resembled traditional organizational leaders. School principals were evaluated and believed effective based on individual characteristics and their ability to maintain order and control (Lortie, 2009). These prevailing views provided positional power to principals (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). Bolman and Deal (2003) described constructs that support the ideas that leadership is innate and therefore is not a learned behavior (Seyfarth, 2008). These early leadership constructs may explain the high number of White male principals within the United States (Lortie, 2009). Lortie (2009) suggested that the evolution of educational leadership viewed the principal of a school in the same manner as the head of an organization and researchers extended constructs of organizational leadership to the principalship (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Seyfarth, 2008). Lortie (2009) indicated that these traditional views and characteristics are representative of White male school principals and the research studies typically presented data in the context of a singular reality of the dominant group.

After decades of school reform and redefining the roles and characteristics of the principal, evidence showed that student learning outcomes had not improved to an acceptable

level (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Lortie, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Research supported the constructs that the educational leadership and the responsibilities of the school principal needed to be revised (Hallinger, 2003; Mark & Printy, 2003; Wallace, 2006). According to Hallinger (2003), reform of the principalship focused on the concepts of instructional leadership. The managerial responsibilities of the principal decreased in importance and the expectation of the principal to lead learning became the focus (Leithwood et al., 2004). The primary role of the school principal centered on the processes connected with curriculum and instruction (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). As explained by Marks and Printy (2003), the principal is the instructional leader that supervises “classroom instruction, coordinate the school’s curriculum, and monitors student progress” (p. 372). Hallinger and Murphy (2012) concurred with the assertions made by Larry Cuban in 1988 in which he suggested that “embedded in the DNA of the principalship is a managerial imperative” (p. 11), and remained a critical component of the principalship. Instructional leadership encompasses all the aspects of teaching and learning as well as the managerial aspects concerned with organizational operations (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 2004). Wallace (2006) agreed with Leithwood et al. (2004) that instructional leadership is imperative for school reform and improved student achievement.

Leadership characteristics and traits that only support school management were becoming obsolete (Hallinger, 2003; Wallace, 2006). Hallinger (2003) argued that successful schools had skillful principals who demonstrated the three dimensions of the instructional leadership model (p. 332). Marks and Printy (2003) reviewed the relevant studies and concluded that effective instructional leadership practices included: “developing the school mission and goals; coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment; promoting a climate for learning; and creating a supportive work environment” (p. 373). Hallinger (2003)

concluded that the leadership functions that related to managing the instructional components and “required the leader to be deeply engaged in the instructional development of the school” were the most important functions of the principal (p. 332).

The instructional leadership model proved to be problematic because the school principal has many competing responsibilities (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003). In addition, the concepts of instructional leadership were generally more effective in elementary schools than in the context of secondary schools (Hallinger, 2003). Hallinger (2003) pointed out that secondary teachers had more expertise in their subject matter than the secondary principals. Marks and Printy (2003) pointed out that the models of instructional leadership were considered “paternalistic, archaic, and dependent on docile followers” (p. 373). It should be noted that the instructional leadership model supported schools with top-down leadership hierarchy (Hallinger, 2003) and was best suited for principals with an authoritative leadership style and power garnered through expert knowledge of instructional practices (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006).

More recent research studies suggested that the principals of schools have only an indirect influence on student achievement (Hallinger, 2003; Marks & Printy, 2003; Wallace, 2006) and a greater influence on the teachers and the school culture. Research into effective school leadership shifted the focus from leadership traits that are useful in management to leadership characteristics that influence teachers. Educational research identified effective school leaders by the amount of importance placed on teachers as stakeholders. Contemporary studies into multifaceted dimensions of leadership focused on the Transformational Leadership Theory and the effectiveness for school principals (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Model can be viewed as an amalgamation of other leadership models (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Leithwood and Dukes (1999), transformational leadership includes attributes of charismatic leadership, transactional leadership, visionary leadership, and empowering leadership. Transformational leaders are nonlinear system thinkers (Fullan, 2004) and they have the ability to motivate teachers and students to strive for the greater good (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Burns (1978) described the effectiveness of transformational leadership in terms of both the leader and the follower being transformed and changed in attitude, performance, and motivations. Transformational leadership has four basic dimensions that include individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealize influence (Leithwood & Dukes, 1999), and incorporates concern for the people and concern for the production.

Individualized Consideration

Based on the Transformational Leadership Theory, one important characteristic of the transformational leadership is individualized consideration. Transformational leaders have genuine concern for what is best for the followers and provide followers with personal attention to help the follower grow. According to Bass and Bass (2009), transformational leaders have the ability to encourage followers to improve their self-efficacy within the organization. Transformational leaders also provide support for individual followers in a manner that is empowering. Transformational leaders communicate well and they understand the importance of open communication with followers. The transformational leader views the follower as an integral part of the organizations and listens to the ideas and thoughts of the followers.

Inspirational Motivation

One of the most important factors in most leadership models is the ability of the leadership to devise and articulate a compelling vision for others to understand (Bass & Bass, 2009; Burns, 1978). According to Bass & Bass (2009), transformational leaders start with clear vision that they present to followers and allow followers the opportunity to share in that vision. These leaders help followers experience the passion for their jobs and for the organization to fulfill their common goals. These leaders optimistically see the follower as part of the team and they express to the followers an important moral purpose in their goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Idealized Influence

The ability of the leader to influence followers is a key component in leadership theories and in leadership models. The transformational leader serves as a role model for followers and is trusted and respected by the followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Followers seek to emulate the ideals of the transformational leader and their high ethical behavior within the organization. These leaders are not considered authoritarian in their leadership style, but rather they adhere to an egalitarian leadership style that is considered more democratic (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Intellectual Stimulation

The success and continued growth of an organization is based on the organization's ability to change and adapt to new situations and different environments. The transformational leader encourages innovation in followers as they collaborate in seeking new paths for the organization. These leaders incorporate problem-solving techniques as learning tools for followers as different ideas are encouraged and shared. Transformational leaders have followers

who take risks and try new innovations in to enhance and grow the organization (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

According to Bass and Bass (2009), transformational leadership moved leadership research from the focus on the leader and the characteristics of the leader to focus on the interconnected relationship of the leader and followers. This allowed researchers to expand leadership interests to include school leadership and the principalship (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In addition, the concepts and constructs of the Transformational Leadership Theory can be evaluated in terms of marginalized groups such as Black and women.

Transforming the Principalship

According to Elmore (2004), the decades following the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* were focused on school accountability and improved student achievement (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Dukes, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004). Although many researchers have moved away from leadership trait theories, Seyfarth (2008) pointed out that these ideas still exist within many schools. The evolution of educational leadership research studies has explored effective models of leadership (Leithwood, 1999). Transformational leadership models found their way into research studies that focused on school leadership. The emphasis was placed on leadership practices and problem solving and not on the traits of the leader (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999). According to Leithwood and Duke (1999), the earlier two-factor theory consisting of transactional and transformational leadership was revised to include seven factors.

Transformative leadership, as described by Leithwood and Duke (1999), inspired and built meaning within an organization. As a leadership model for schools, Leithwood and Duke

(1999) described transformational leadership practices such as, “building school vision, establishing school goals, providing, intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decision” (p. 49). Leithwood and Duke (1999) also included charismatic, visionary, cultural, and empowering leadership concepts in the category of transformational leadership (p. 48). Researchers continued to examine leadership constructs and assumptions to identify leadership dispositions and actions that led to improved teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Lortie, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) and would create an educational leadership utopia.

According to Hallinger (2003), transformational leadership had a significant direct effect on the condition of the school and building schools as communities; however, the study showed that transformational leadership had a weaker effect on “student identification” (p. 339). By the end of the 1990s, Hallinger (2003) and Mark and Printy (2003) reviewed the studies that suggested that the benefit of transformational leadership was noted by the changes produced in the school personnel and not in promoting “specific instructional practices” (Hallinger, 2003, p. 339). This would suggest that within the organization of a school, the principal should place more emphasis on building relationships with teachers.

In an effort to identify principal leadership behaviors that would affect the technical core of schooling, Hallinger (2003) and Marks and Printy (2003) examined the construct of an integrated leadership model consisting of components of transformational and instructional leadership. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003) examined 21 leadership practices and the effect of these practices on student achievement. These leadership practices identified as “a

balanced leadership framework” (p. 13) were a combination of behaviors from both instructional and transformational leadership models (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003). Based on the study by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), the leadership practices with the highest effect size included situational awareness, intellectual stimulation, and change agent, all of which are components of Transformational Leadership Theory. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), school leadership is complex and “crucial to the success of the school” (p. 7). A neglected research area in both school leadership and transformational leadership is that of non-traditional leadership and the differing approaches to leadership by Black female school principals.

Non-Traditional Leadership Constructs

The educational system has faced unprecedented changes over the last ten years (Elmore, 2004; Hallinger, 2003; Lortie, 2009) and traditional forms of leadership have also yielded to nontraditional leadership models and styles (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Lortie, 2009; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) in an effort to meet the demands and expectations of student education. There is a greater sense of urgency among states to be innovative in all areas of education in general and in school leadership in particular (Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). Traditionally, leadership models for school principals were fashioned after the archetype of the White male perspective (Sperandio, 2009; Surface, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). The leadership of the principal was intended to provide the support, guidance, and direction needed to create and maintain an environment that is conducive for both teaching and leading (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2004; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012).

Research within the last thirty years suggests that traditional leadership models were insufficient in meeting the challenges and demands imposed by contemporary school diversity

and an age of accountability (Surface et al., 2012). Fullan (2004) suggested that not all leadership styles are effective in all leadership situations; he explained that establishing innovative leadership paradigms may involve “employing different leadership strategies” simultaneously to be effective (p. 59). He articulated the dilemma in the statement, “Leadership appropriate for the times is scarce” (p. 201).

According to Surface et al. (2012), the “ever increasing diversity within all schools”, public, charter, and private, presents a leadership challenge for leaders that are “European Americans, only English speaking, from a middle-class backgrounds” (p. 117). From their research, Surface et al. (2012) examined the contradictions between the espoused multicultural beliefs of school principals in relation to their demonstrated practices. Surface et al. (2012) suggested that school principals develop positive dispositions in an effort to influence all students within the “ever changing contexts of schools” (p. 117). Dispositions, as defined by Surface et al. (2012), are the “values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence behaviors toward students, families, colleagues, and communities” (p. 117).

The complexity and diversity that are pervasive in contemporary school systems have provided opportunities for nontraditional leaders to contribute to reframing leadership models that are effective in unconventional schools. Fullan (2004) suggested that there is a “new style” of leadership emerging that seeks to create a “culture that is more open and caring” (p. 79). To accept the leadership challenges posited by educational researchers, many minorities are pursuing roles as school principals (Sperandio, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). As stated earlier in this literature review, research studies examining leadership models and styles that focused specifically on Blacks, and Black females in particular, have largely been omitted from the discourse on effective leadership paradigms (Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). According to

Sperandio (2009), all women are considered to be in the minority, both in larger society and in the smaller context of school leadership. Loder (2005) explained that emerging studies on “African American women principals suggest that their race and gender statuses distinguish their leadership orientations and experiences from their male and White female colleagues” (p. 299).

Black females in educational leadership face even greater underrepresentation as school principals (Sperandio, 2009; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). Research conducted by Witherspoon and Arnold (2010) suggested that Black female principals deviated from traditional leadership models and “have moved toward social justice standards and philosophies” in their leadership practices (p. 220). Witherspoon and Arnold (2010) identified the leadership of pastoral care demonstrated by Black female principals as “mothering activities” (p. 222). Recent work on “African American women principals suggests that motherhood and its associated values of nurturing, caretaking, and helping develop children are salient to how they understand and interpret their roles” (Echols, 2006, p. 7). Fullan (2004) argued that effective leadership should move toward positioning care as a fundamental aspect of organizational life. Celina Echols (2006) argued that Black principals understand the important ideals associated with “goodness and caring” (p. 5), and she suggested that these characteristics are not standard in traditional leadership models.

Mark and Printy (2003) underscored the importance of principal leadership behaviors that support positive cultures and builds relationships. Loder (2005) discussed the leadership behaviors of many Black female principals as “community othermothers” (p. 301), termed by Collins (2000), as they shaped their position in the larger context of school leadership and school reform.

Although the study results are promising, Echols (2006) suggested the need for more empirical studies that identify the connections between the behaviors and dispositions of Black female principals with their understanding of school leadership and stakeholders.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Vignette: Papa, this works for me!

It was a steaming August morning. I could feel the sunshine streaming through the slightly opened curtains across the room from where I slept. I eased myself out of the bed trying hard not to wake my younger sister. I glanced at the hall clocked and I knew I was late. It was Saturday morning – August first and I should have been up an hour ago. I knew my grandfather, whom we called Papa, would be waiting for me. I quickly washed-up and I put my hair in two pigtails before running out of the door. Every summer since we were very young, my sister and I spent our summer break with our grandparents. For me, the end of the summer was signaled by the arrival of August first.

My grandfather and I had a vegetable garden and we worked in that garden all summer preparing for our August first routine that he established over fifty years ago. He spent years instructing me. Now at age twelve, I was an expert at what we had to do. “August first is the time of new beginnings,” Papa would say with just a slight glint in his eye. To him gardening was more than just a hobby; it was a religion that had rituals that had to be adhered to and respected. From my grandfather, I learned the rich traditions and I appreciated the rigorous requirements of gardening. He had his own special way of doing everything, from the correct way of holding a shovel, to the best way to make the holes for the seeds, and I was his able and willing apprentice. Just as I had done so many times over the past five years, I hurried to the garden bench where Papa was sitting.

When I arrived, he was putting on his special gardening socks and shoes. He looked up at me with love and said, “Hey, Sleepyhead.” I smiled my widest smile. I stood by, watching him. He took his first sock and placed it on his left foot and then he took his other sock and placed it on his right foot. I noticed the bag of mustard green seeds, which we would be planting shortly, leaning against the wall. I continued watching him as I had done so many times before. He then took his left shoe and put it on and next he put on his right shoe. He sprang to his feet and announced, “Your turn.” I took my seat, where he had sat, as he so proudly stood by watching me as if to say, “That’s my girl.” For me, being accepted and approved by Papa was very important. I wanted him to recognize my value.

I took my first sock and placed it on my left foot and then I picked up my left shoe and put it on. I noticed an uncomfortable look on his face as he observed that I had both a sock and a shoe on one foot and the other foot was bare. I continued. I took my other sock and placed it on my right foot. Before I could put on the right shoe my grandfather barked at me, “What are you doing? That’s not the way we do it!” After I put on my right shoe, I stood next to my grandfather and I looked down at my feet – then I looked at his feet. “Papa,” I said with a baffled tone, “I don’t understand why you’re so upset.” He explained in a disapproving tone, “That’s not how we do it. You should have put both socks on first and then your shoes.” My grandfather lamented, “For years we have been doing things this same way. It is the best way.” I looked at my Papa with great love and great respect and I said, “Papa, this works best for me.” In the end, we each had on our socks and our shoes. The end result was accomplished even though I did things a different way. August first really is a time of new beginnings.

Vignette Interpretation

In the previous vignette, I presented a short parody that represents the conflicts that sometimes exist between the quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The grandfather in the vignette represents the quantitative traditions with emphasis on the scientific method that has dominated the field of social science research over the past five decades (Creswell, 2009) and promotes the positivist perspective. The young girl represents the qualitative traditions that privilege alternative research methods such as ethnography, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry. The qualitative traditions place emphasis on the subjective views of multiple truths (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2009) and express the postmodern perspective (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The socks and shoes from the parody represent assumptions, values, and judgments found in both research traditions and suggest that there are differing procedures and strategies found in each tradition. For my study, I have selected an autoethnographic design situated in the qualitative paradigms. This autoethnographic study represents the first of August for me - a time of new beginnings as a researcher - a time to discover what works best for me.

Philosophical Worldview

For hundreds of years, early historians, scholars, and researchers have attempted to investigate and explain the complexities and phenomena of life (Davis, 2004; Weissman, 1996). As modern scholars, philosophers, and researchers interrogate assumptions and investigate hypotheses, many of them have also embraced the concept of dualism (Weissman, 1996). They have positioned themselves as polar opposites on the spectrum between quantitative research and qualitative research designs (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Lather, 2010). According to Creswell (2009), quantitative and qualitative research designs should not be viewed

as “polar opposites; instead, they represent different ends on a continuum” (p. 3). Johnson and Christensen (2012) agreed that researchers should develop a research design and method that allows full investigation of the research interest.

Quantitative research and qualitative research have established traditions and foci based on delineated worldviews that explain the assumptions, values, and practices (Creswell, 2009). As explained by Johnson and Christensen (2012), a research tradition or paradigm “is an approach to thinking about and doing research” (p. 31). Creswell (2009) discussed the “historical evolution” of both traditions and explained that “from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, quantitative approaches dominated the field of research” (p. 4). Johnson and Christensen (2012) pointed out that the traditions and assumptions that inform qualitative research date back to pre-history and have a well-documented longevity. The differing perspectives of quantitative and qualitative research have their distinctions in the assumptions that are the underpinnings for the “set of beliefs that guide action” (Creswell, 2009 p. 6). These beliefs are the researchers’ perspectives or the researchers’ worldviews.

Qualitative Tradition

Qualitative research traditions are typically designed to adhere to the principles associated with the field of anthropology that governs the processes and procedures found in ethnographic methods. Creswell (2009) described qualitative researchers’ worldview as that of social constructivism or symbolic-interpretive. For researchers who subscribe to the social constructivist and symbolic-interpretivist worldviews, qualitative research traditions are important in allowing in-depth understanding of a study and for the communication of the findings as textural data in narrative formats. The basic assumptions of the social constructivists

include that they embrace the ideas that “individuals seek understanding of the world” (p. 8) in which they interact and have experiences. Social constructivism takes a subjective stance in conducting research studies (Creswell, 2009). For constructivism, the researchers’ focus is on understanding the multiple meanings that are constructed through time, place, and space by interactions with others in a social system (Creswell, 2009).

Qualitative research is considered to use inductive inquiry and it takes a “bottom-up approach” to research in that it starts with the specific and moves to more general concepts (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 17). The fundamental aspects of qualitative research include evolving hypotheses, emerging themes, and non-generalizable findings (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). Open-ended questioning techniques are employed to obtain deep understanding consisting of spoken and written text (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative strategies include “case study, phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative study inquiry” (Creswell, 2009, p. 17). Moreover, qualitative approaches are more subjective in that the researchers locate themselves within the study and data are analyzed to develop themes and patterns (Creswell, 2009). Qualitative approaches have a flexible design that is wholly descriptive with the intent to gain deep understanding and insight into a phenomenon. Qualitative approaches are many times unstructured and informal in the process and product. Qualitative data collection strategies include examining documents and artifacts, participant-observer notes, observations, interviews, focus groups, and detailed field notes.

Qualitative research studies are oft-times initiated with the participants or subjects that are relevant to the phenomenon of interest or the study focus (Johnson & Christensen, 2012). The qualitative researcher sets criteria and boundaries that provide the parameters for the research focus. According to Johnson and Christensen (2012), qualitative researchers engage in

“purposeful sampling” to locate participants with characteristics that meet the criteria for the proposed study (p. 233). Qualitative data interpretation involves an ongoing review of the data and there is no interest in generalization of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Narrative Inquiry

One of the most relevant approaches within the qualitative tradition is that of narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2009). Narrative inquiry is positioned in interpretive hermeneutics and phenomenology (Chang, 2008) and it is a way in which researchers study the lives of others and ask participants to convey this information in the form of stories about their life experiences. In the late 1980s, social scientists explored this research genre that emphasized the telling of rich stories that provided a comprehensive way of constructing “acts of meaning” (Bochner, 2012, p. 155) and converting these stories into research text.

Over the last thirty years, many social scientists have embraced the academic inquiry of self-narratives or personal narratives (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2009). The increased interest in self-narratives can be traced to the postmodern perspective that privileges the voices of common people and explores the life events and life experiences in textual data (Chang, 2008). Self-narratives have different forms and include autobiography, memoir, journal, diary, and personal essay (Chang, 2008), yet each employs an element of storytelling in which self-reflection and self-analysis provide the foundation (Ellis, 2009). In the tradition of self-narratives, Chang (2008) described autoethnography as more than just the writing of self. Chang (2008) argued that autoethnography combines the descriptive mode of storytelling with the analytical and interpretive mode of scholarly research (p. 31).

Autoethnography as Method

Autoethnography is a qualitative tradition drawing from anthropology. In this study, I utilized autoethnography as the research method (Chang, 2008), located in the genre of narrative inquiry or “storying” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013), as the vehicle that explored the phenomenon of a first year principal, and examined the intersections of race, gender, and leadership. I gained reflexivity as I navigated between the professional I and the personal me. My autoethnographic frame allowed me to explore my past life experiences and cultural heritage as a Black female and to consider the influences on my personal and professional identities. Sluka and Robben (2012), positioned autoethnography within the postmodern perspective of “feminist anthropology” (p.18), which privileged the voices of the other. As a researcher, I was in a unique and complex situation to explore the dynamics of my life experiences. Ethnographers stand outside of their study interest and look inside. Autoethnographers stand both inside and outside of their study and they look around (Sluka & Robben, 2012; Bochner, 2012).

The significance of qualitative research traditions in the field of social sciences can be viewed as a force for holistic understanding (Lather, 2010). According to Bochner (2012), narrative inquiry as a research method represents “first-person accounts of life” (p. 157). Narrative inquiry as defined by Clandinin & Connelly (as cited in Bochner, 2012, p. 157) is “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus.” Within the telling of stories and the listening to stories is the strength of the narrative inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). As I examined my assumptions concerning shared meaning making and social interactions, I did not position myself to tell a story; I positioned myself to become the story.

In autoethnography, the researcher herself provides the personal experience data and reflective data that inform the research project (Chang, 2008). According to Bochner (2012), the autoethnographer has a special relationship within the study as she flows between acting as an observer and acting as a participant. As suggested by Reed-Danahay (2009), qualitative research studies are value laden and present the perceptions of the researcher. However, in autoethnography, the researcher develops self-awareness and self-reflexivity that expose feelings, awaken emotions, and celebrate life experiences. When conducting an autoethnography the researcher must situate herself within the social and cultural contexts of the study and become the written narrative (Bochner, 2009). Chang (2008) suggested that researchers engaged in autoethnography should tell the story of the researchers' interconnected worlds and their multiple identities. For this autoethnographic study, my interconnected worlds and multiple identities, including my race, gender, and the life events that shaped my perspectives, were explored as I embarked on a journey to become the first Black female principal of Oakridge Christian Day School (OCDS).

Revisiting the Purpose of the Study

Educational research and leadership models for school principals were theorized and constructed based on White men (Sperandio, 2009; Surface, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). There have been few studies that focused on minorities or women and still fewer studies that investigated leadership perceptions of Black women. The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to use narrative inquiry to explore the phenomenon of my first year as a principal and examine the intersections of my race and gender that affect my leadership perceptions. My autoethnography investigated the factors, dispositions, and behaviors that informed and shaped my perceptions as a Black, female, first year principal in a predominately White private Christian

school. At the forefront of this study were my perceptions of my leadership behaviors in relation to the transformational leadership model (Bass & Bass, 2009). This study explored my perceptions of my emergent leadership style as a non-traditional school leader. My autoethnographic study was exploratory in nature, however, the direction of this study was guided by the research questions. These are the main questions that guided my investigation:

1. How will my race, gender, and life experiences impact my perceptions of my leadership behaviors as a first year principal?
2. How does a Black female perceive her role as first year principal in a predominantly White elementary school?
3. How did I respond to the challenges I faced as a Black female from a non-traditional leadership background?
4. How does a Black female first year principal perceive her behavior in relation to Transformational Leadership behaviors?

Consequently, the focus of this research was to understand how I, a Black female principal, perceived my role as the school leader and how I constructed meaning from my social interactions and the negotiated spaces of the principalship. Both the experiences and perceptions of the researcher were critical to the development of this study and I utilized narrative inquiry to write about the self.

Research Design and Procedures

Traditional quantitative research, which is referred to as the gold standard (Lather, 2010), emphasizes the use of canonical procedures in the research process (Creswell, 2009). Many empirical research studies have attempted to quantify effective school leadership by examining the traits or behaviors of the principals (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, &

Wahlstrom, 2004) as well as the influence of leadership on student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Many qualitative research studies have explored the effectiveness of school leaders by examining the perceptions of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Lortie, 2009; Marks, & Printy, 2003) and the leaders' influence on school culture (Leithwood & Duke, 1999).

As I grappled with selecting a research topic for my study, I examined the existing literature on the perceptions of Black female school principals on their leadership styles and leadership effectiveness. After studying the literature to determine the different foci of other educational researchers, I identified a deficit in the research literature pertaining to Black female school principals. Few research studies that were conducted by school principals placed the focus on how principals view their effectiveness and their role in school leadership. Researchers who examined self as a data source combined the lived experiences with the social and cultural contexts. My research was an attempt to reclaim my voice through introspective scrutiny of my perspective of effective leadership and my perceptions of my leadership as a first year principal from a non-traditional background. Due to the nature and complexity of this study, autoethnographic methods were utilized.

This study depicted my own perspective and perceptions as a Black female first year principal in a predominately White elementary school. This study exposed many layers of the researcher's self that have been hidden, and presented the benefits and the challenges associated with articulating meaning in non-canonical forms. It became apparent that I could not adequately explore my research problem without investigating the social constructs of race and gender. The basic design of this study was my autoethnographic journey to explore my personal experiences and epistemology (auto) while examining my historical and cultural experiences (ethno) by

which to produce written research (graphy) that was evocative and relevant (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2009) to non-traditional school leaders. This study was emergent in its design; therefore, knowledge was constructed from my multiple identities and patterns of meaning were created through my social interactions and perceptions of the interactions.

Research Participant (The Self)

In accordance with the qualitative traditions of ethnography, the participants of a study provide the textual data in the form of personal experiences and perceptions. In autoethnography, the researcher provides the data in the textual forms exploring personal experience, perceptions, and reflections that inform the research project (Chang, 2008). For this autoethnography, I situated myself within the social and cultural context of my experiences and I became the written narrative (Bochner, 2009; Chang, 2008).

For this study, the researcher was a new principal of an elementary school and the subject of this narrative inquiry. A 53 year old Black female, I had worked in the field of education for about 20 years and had taught at my current school 10 years before becoming the assistant principal; after four years as the assistant principal I became the principal. I have taught Kindergarten, first grade, fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh grade. I taught two years in public schools before moving to Oakridge Christian Day School (OCDS) where I am currently employed. I have my master's degree in educational leadership and I have successfully passed the state leadership licensure examination and hold a level one leadership certification.

Research Setting

In most research studies, the research setting is an important element; however, in qualitative studies the research setting is a vital component to the context of space, place, and

time (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). This study unfolded in the natural environment of the Oakridge Christian Day School (OCDS) located in the South Louisiana. OCDS is a small private Christian school that was established in 1981. As described in Chapter 1, the campus consists of fifty-five acres on which are housed the sanctuary, the early childhood building, the elementary building, a gym and locker rooms, a football field with stadium seats, and the high school building. OCDS consists of students from pre-K-12 and is subdivided into three divisions: elementary, pre-K – 3 numbering about 150 students; middle school, grades 4 – 6 numbering about 100 students, and junior and senior high school, grades 7 – 12 numbering about 350 students. OCDS has garnered a degree of prestige over the years; in 1985, the school received their accreditation for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and it has maintained that distinction since that time.

According to the assumptions of social constructivism, places in which individuals interact create social settings. Within this social setting and context, there is the sharing of language, feelings, ethos, and artifacts (Creswell, 2009; Hatch & Cunliffe, 2004). The social constructivist views schools as organizations with socially constructed structures and systems of meaning making (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2004). The value system of the dominant culture was reflected in all aspect of OCDS. At the inception of the school, only three percent of the student population was minority students. Today, the student population contains 32% minority students from seven countries. The school has well defined norms and a long cultural history. The demographics and socio-economic status of the families and the teachers were middle to upper middle class with many of our families having mothers who did not work outside the home.

For the last five years, the elementary school did not have direct leadership. The Headmaster of the school functioned as the principal for the elementary school, the middle

school, and the high school. In addition, I became the first Black administrator of this predominantly White private Christian school and the first female principal.

The *lassiez-faire* leadership style of the last five years contributed to a loss of parent confidence. The decline in student achievement scores was a factor in the dissatisfaction of parents. In addition, the discipline referrals for Black students in first through third grades increased by 27 percent in the last three years. Teachers reported not feeling supported by the administration on matters that pertained to discipline. In addition, there was a three percent increase of students with special needs and learning disabilities and the teachers were not qualified to teach students with exceptionalities. Many of the teachers had difficulty employing effective instructional methods for these students. White flight was also a real concern for the viability of the school. Any reduction in student population placed the school in a vulnerable position as the loss of tuition monies affected our ability to acquire needed resources and programs for our students and teachers. The elementary school, for which I became the principal, consisted of grades Pre-K through 6 and there were two classes per grade level. My faculty in the early childhood and elementary divisions were all White females. Although many changes speak to progress, the influences of White supremacy from the dominant group of school leadership kept the old traditions and old values as the controlling factors for all of the stakeholders at OCDS.

As I recap this section, I must emphasize that this qualitative study was bound by the narrative context in which it unfolded and it includes the observations and perceptions of the autoethnographer interacting within a particular space, place, and time (Chang, 2008). I became the conduit through which all of the factors that influenced my leadership perspectives passed.

In the next section, I outline the procedures for data collection and explain how the multiple data sources were integrated to inform this narrative research process. In addition, the next section describes data coding and data reduction processes that allowed me to develop themes that support this study. I also present approaches employed to analyze and interpret the data. For my study, the emergent nature of the design allowed for negotiated outcomes that are both fluid and overlapping (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011).

Data Collection

From the qualitative tradition, narrative research methods allowed me as the researcher to employ a variety of data collection means to create a rich, viable study “to enhance the content and accuracy of my autoethnographic writing” (Chang, 2008, p. 55). Creswell (2009) suggested that the autoethnographer functions as the instrument for data collection. One important aim of this self-study research was to create a textual representation of the intricacies of my lived experiences, which included both my past and my present (Chang, 2008). Field data are a part of the emotional connection of the autoethnographer with reality (Sluka, & Robben, 2012; Yin, 2011). The various data collection methods I used included: personal memory data, field notes, self-observation notes, personal journal, focus group sessions, and artifacts from the past and present.

Although there are many different sources that speak to the process of data collection (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Yin, 2011), the methods described by Chang (2008) provided the primary source and structure for the data collection section of my study. Bochner (2012) suggested that the autoethnographer develop a systemic process for organizing the collected data into pattern, topics, and themes during the data collection phase of the study. Because this is an autoethnography, I divided the data into categories of emic

knowledge (internal), information that originated from me, and etic knowledge (external), information that originated from other sources. In qualitative research it is imperative to provide detailed descriptions of the data collection procedures and qualify what constitutes data (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). The data collection timeline is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Data Collection Timeline

Data Type	Data Source	Date Collected
Personal Memory Data	Emic – Personal Data Source	Past History / On Going
Self-Observational Data	Emic – Personal Data Source	June 2014 – May 2015
Reflective Field Journal	Emic – Personal Data Source	February 2014 – May 2015
Artifact Accumulation	Etic – Non-personal Data Source	August 2014 – May 2015
Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire II	Emic – Self Rater Data Etic – Teacher Rater Data	June 2015 – July 2015
Focus Group Interviews	Etic – Non-personal Data Source	June 2013 & September 2013

Personal Memory Data

Recalling and retelling of events and situations from the past by informants has long been a practice used by ethnographers; however, in autoethnography, the primary data source is personal memory provided by the researcher (Chang, 2008). For my study, events of the past were critical to providing the historical and contextual understandings and foundation. The process of remembering by the autoethnographer is important in that it connects the personal and public self with the social and cultural realities (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011). According to Chang (2008) personal memory is

a building block of autoethnography because the past gives a context to the present self and memory opens a door to the richness of the past. As an autoethnographer, you not only have a privileged access to your past experiences and personal interpretations of those experiences, but also have first-hand discernment of what is relevant to your study (p. 71).

In the construction of an autoethnography that presents memory text, it is vital to recognize the complex dimensions of remembering the past (Chang, 2008). Recreating events from memory can be problematic because personal memory can be “unreliable and unpredictable” (Chang, 2008, p. 72). To enhance the multi-faceted nature of the remembering process, I also explored photographic data from the past to provide clarity and focus to create vicarious understandings for my readers.

Self-Observational Data

In the ethnographic tradition of cultural anthropology, researchers engage in participant observation as a form of data collection (Sluka, & Robben, 2012) that occurs in “real-world settings” (Yin, 2011, p. 109). Likewise, for this autoethnography, I utilized the technique of self-observation to gather information that described events, thoughts, and emotions that unfolded in the present time (Yin, 2011). In contrast to the ethnographical research where the researcher would infiltrate the culture of the informants, autoethnographical research allows the collected data to consist of the elements from the life and experiences of the researcher herself (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011).

For this study, collected data centered on the challenges I experienced my first year as principal of OCDS and as I identified my leadership style and my perceptions of how others viewed me as the principal. It should be noted that inherent in this study was a degree of subjectivity as I explored the data I privileged and the data I trivialized in regards to my interactions and my decisions. As I collected my self-observational data, I approved and disapproved what constitutes relevant data (Yin, 2011). From my self-observational data, I created a textual representation as a written record which systematically described my experiences.

Field Notes. Compiling ethnographic field notes is critical to the process of collecting self-observational data. Field notes are written descriptive records of what is transpiring in the real-world setting of the study (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011). My field notes provided a means of capturing written descriptions of my daily routines and daily interactions. I employed the initial process of “jotting” (Yin, 2011, p. 161) by which I quickly made notations as events or interactions unfolded at OCDS. I carried a small, index-card-size notepad that I could hide in the palm of my hand. The cover of the notepad had a whimsical pattern with pink, yellow, and green shapes. The informal look of the notepad made it easier for me to collect data without teachers or students feeling that I was writing about them. My field notes were mostly short or fragmented sentences that represented metaphorical snapshots in written form (Chang, 2008). This was not an attempt to provide a comprehensive view, however, it did allow me to create detailed records close to the time of an event or interaction. One or two days after the entries, the hand-written field notes were reviewed and typed into my field journal that include more complete details.

Field Journal. From the ethnographic methods, field journals are detailed, accurate and comprehensive records of the interactions within the research setting (Chang, 2008). For my study, my field journal involved the researcher employing a process of “sense making from the scribbled, handwritten field notes” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 208). My field journal represented the collected data of my actual behaviors and interactions recorded in the natural setting of OCDS. I constructed the field journal by reconstructing the data recorded in my field notebook with time intervals of no more than two days. My field journal captured the physical settings and the social interactions from my observations and it contained commentary of my initial feelings and thoughts. As part of the structure of my field journal, I also employed the process of capturing my self-reflections. This process was adapted from the journal format

presented to me by Dr. Noelle Witherspoon in one of my doctoral courses (see Appendix E). My journal entry reflections were done within one week of the recorded dates. My journal was the representations of the events as they occurred, whereas my reflections were the unspoken and unseen feelings, beliefs, and actions I recorded as the subject of the investigation.

Artifact Appraisal

Collecting external data can also be an important strategy in the data collection procedures (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011). Artifacts are materials secured that help to clarify the cultural and historical contexts of a study (Chang, 2008). Qualitative researchers conducting autoethnography have utilized official documents to create a textural representation of events that transpired in a particular space, place, and time (Yin, 2011). The inclusion of artifacts in an autoethnography enhances the data collection process by supporting the claims with additional information. Throughout the study timeframe, I collected artifacts that included: the teachers' handbook, faculty memos and agendas, parent communicates, email contacts.

Photographic Data. In addition to textual artifact data, I also collected information in the form of photographic data (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2011). The research design of my autoethnography introduces information from my past. As I drew on perceptions from the past and my life history, photographs from that time period provided clarity and understanding (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011). Photographs allow the researcher to re-live past events and experience those events in a fresh new way (Chang, 2008).

Interviews

In the qualitative traditions, interviews should resemble the natural interchange of “spoken communications” (Yin, 2011, p. 135). Interviews are considered a major component in

the data collection process of ethnographic research (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Yin, 2011). When the ethnographer engages in the interview process, a relationship between the researcher and the participants is formed (Yin, 2011) and this relationship allows the researcher to gain deeper understanding into the realities of the participant (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Yin, 2011). As a data collection strategy, the interview tool also requires the researchers to examine their own life experiences in regards to information presented by the participants (Yin, 2011).

As part of a previous research project involving Black women in leadership within the Black Baptist Church, I conducted two focus group interviews. After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix H) from my University Board, I spent ten hours as a participant-observer in the natural setting of the Black Baptist Church. As I stated earlier, my research focus shifted from studying the leadership practices of other Black females to a self-study of my leadership practices. I did not immediately realize that there was a connection between the two studies, however, I discovered pertinent information that I used in the construction of my autoethnography.

The first focus group interview was conducted with my grandmother and five of her sisters at a local seafood restaurant. I used a digital recorder to record the focus group interview and I also took field notes to support the data collection process. The second focus group interview took place in my home and included the same members as the first interview. Again, this interview was digitally recorded and I wrote field notes that included the mannerisms and gestures of the women. The recordings were stored on my laptop computer and were transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy of the data collected. Each of these women was over 80 years old and had a member of the same Baptist church their father pastored. Each of them also held

leadership positions within their church and in their Black community and it was their leadership history that first interested me. These women had rich life histories that I called her-stories (Collins, 2000) that spanned the space and time of segregation, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights movements.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire

As I began this research project, gathering many different data sources was essential to the data collection process. The initial purpose of my autoethnographic study was to examine my perceptions of my leadership style as a first year principal. I explored the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire II (MLQ) by Bass and Avolio (2000) and considered the Full Range Leadership Model as a way to allow me to compare my perceptions of my leadership with that of the transformational leader. Shortly after I finished my first year as principal, I completed the self-rater section MLQ report. As one of the more popular leadership questionnaires, the MLQ has established validity and reliability markers. I also allowed the teachers at OCDS to complete the questionnaire and submit their responses anonymously. Although the MLQ reported statistical data results, I focused on the narrative data generated from the questionnaire (Bass & Avolio, 2000).

Procedures

In an attempt to ensure the validity of my autoethnographic study, I followed Chang's (2008) suggested criteria for data collection procedures. In autoethnographic studies, data are found in many different forms and the gathering of data establishes the parameter for a narrative study. I began gathering data promptly after learning that I would be appointed as the elementary principal for Oakridge Christian Day School. After a meeting with the committee chair of my

Ph.D. coursework, I proposed an initial qualitative study that focused on the leadership styles of Black women within a Black Baptist Church. As I pondered my unique situation that included social, cultural, and historical elements, I realized that my research focus was shifting. I would be experiencing my first year as a school principal and OCDS would be experiencing its first Black female principal. Each of these events offered a rich and compelling story line. I considered the methodology of autoethnography as a research genre for my dissertation with the intent to go beyond statistical data and explore the narrative within this situation.

Data collection began shortly after I was told I would be transitioning from the assistant principal of middle school to the principal of elementary and middle school. I viewed the months from February 2014 to June 2014 as my transition period and I considered those months pivotal to my installation in my new position. I immediately started documenting in a reflective journal my interactions and emotions pertinent to my new leadership opportunity. I understood that there would be a process involved in becoming the principal; my journal allowed me to capture my experiences and my perceptions. At the end of each workday, I completed a journal entry detailing the events from that day. I kept personal laptop, which I kept in my office, to keep my journal entries private. In a summary format, I recorded an overview of my daily experiences. I became the principal of the elementary school starting in August 2014, yet the months leading up to the start of my principalship became the impetus for collecting data.

During the summer months prior to the start of the new school, I recorded self-observational data and used a black and white composition notebook to record my field notes. As a school administrator, my new position began in the summer of 2014. I documented my day-to-day planning meetings, administrative staff meetings, emails, and phone calls as field notes. All of my field notes were handwritten, fragmented entries that included the date the entry was made

and sometimes the time of day. My practice was to review and type the handwritten field notes at the end of each day. This allowed me to capture the details of the day while the information was still fresh in my mind. It quickly became a tedious process for me to take the handwritten field notes and retype them into my reflective journal, but I continued this process because it allowed me time to analyze and reflect on the events of the day once I was removed from situations. I found that by staying after school for about an hour I could sit in my office without interruptions and reflect on my day as I typed my field notes. The data I recorded from the days of summer were mostly devoted to my transitioning into my new role as the principal and the difficulties I faced replacing teachers.

At the start of the new school year, I was comfortable with the process I had established for collecting, recording, and analyzing my self-observational data. I found the black and white composition notebook to be convenient and I decided to continue the process from the summer. At the beginning of the school year, it was my habit to walk the elementary hall after the tardy bell sounded each day. I had my black and white composition notebook and I stopped to jot down my interactions with teachers and staff members, parents, and students. I also made it a practice to speak with teachers as they escorted their classes to and from electives (i.e., P.E., music, Spanish, and art).

Three weeks into the new school year, I noticed that my black and white composition notebook became a distraction to the teachers and students. I observed that the teachers glanced at my notebook and they made sarcastic comments about how I was always writing in my notebook. It was apparent that the teachers were uncomfortable with me jotting down things right after I spoke to them. One teacher jokingly asked that I not write anything bad about her in my little black book. At that, I retired my black and white composition notebook and I found a

small index-card size pad that I could keep in my hands. I also stopped the process of on-the-spot data recording. I kept the pad with me whenever I left my office, however, I did not jot down information until I was in the hallway alone or in my office, which required me to rely more on my memory. There were times that I used the pad to write down requests made by teachers and any suggestions teachers made about policy changes. This seemed to put the teachers at ease with my note taking throughout the day.

There were times that I was required to stay after school had ended for special events and administrative meetings. It was important to me to use those times as continuations of my day and I waited to enter the previous day's data until the next day had ended. There were several days in which I entered my field notes into my journal in large sections or chunks (Chang, 2008) because of the amount of data that was generated in the course of a day. There were other times in which it appeared that my journal entries were out of sequence. This was due in part to the problems occurred on a particular day and it took me two or three days to resolve the issues. I referred back to earlier entries at the time the problems were solved and I had more knowledge and greater understanding of the situations.

My reflective journal served a dual purpose. First and foremost it allowed me the opportunity to transpose my data from my field notes and include the richness of details about the data I had recorded. Second, my reflective journal allowed me to add commentary on my personal thoughts and my reactions to the events and interactions of the day. I used Saturday mornings as a time to debrief the previous week; this time provided an opportunity for me to evaluate assumptions I made earlier in the week and compare them to what I understood to be reality by the end of the week. My journal was formatted and typed in chronological order in an effort to capture my first year as a school principal of OCDS.

After the first two weeks, it became clear to me that I was also chronicling my perceptions of OCDS' first year with a Black female as principal. My daily field notes became concrete data sources once I made my entries into my reflective journal, for it was at this time that I made any needed changes or corrections. My reflective journal also depicted events and activities that I recorded in my person calendar. I used my personal calendar to provide support and reminders of meetings I attended with both parents and teachers. I treated my calendar as field notes that I reviewed and entered into my journal. In addition to my personal calendar, I also included my work email as field notes as many times discussions with teachers and parents involved electronic data sources. I viewed my email as part of my data collection process and often I copied and pasted the complete exchange into my reflective journal so that critical meanings were not lost in transition.

I jotted my field notes as I perceived an encounter germane to my study. This was problematic as I was not always sure what would be of value to my research. So that I did not exclude relevant data, I took a large amount of field notes. For the first few months, I continued reviewing my field notes and entering them into my reflective journal; this generated 75 typed pages in my reflective journal by the end of December. By January, I realized that this process of daily entering my field notes into the reflective journal was arduous; I had difficulty finding time to retreat from the turmoil of the day to make my commentaries about my day and my experiences. By the end of January, I altered my procedures so that I could more effectively manage the data collecting phase of my project. Although I did not change the process by which I recorded my daily self-observation field notes, I did, however, change the laborious practice of entering my field notes into my reflective journal each day. I established a bi-weekly routine of reviewing and entering my field notes into my reflective journal. This change allowed me to be

more introspective in analyzing events and my interactions during the week. From January 2015 to April 2015, my data gathering was on track and I generated 54 typed pages in my reflective journal by the end of April 2015. I still was not sure which interactions and which of my reactions would prove to be most pertinent to my study; therefore, I continued to make multiple entries in my field notes each day. I also gathered faculty agendas and staff memos to be support documentation for my study. Although I generated many of these documents, I categorized them as external data sources because they were shared with the faculty and dealt with organizational concerns.

In April 2015, the high school division of OCDS was hit with a major scandal involving the arrest of a high school teacher for allegations of sexual misconduct. Although this did not directly affect my division of OCDS, administrative meetings took me away from my duties as elementary and middle school principal. For about three weeks, my field notes and reflective journal were sparse and largely focused on time spent on the leadership team in a support role to the Headmaster, who was also the high school principal. That was a time of damage control as we worked to restore the confidence of our parents.

As the end of the school year approached, I faced many challenges as the principal and I was pulled in many different directions. For the last month of school, I returned to my routine of collecting field notes and typing the field notes into my reflective journal bi-weekly. Although I was not prepared at the time to undergo a complete system of data organization, I began to label and categorize the information into broad subject areas (Chang, 2008). This process of labeling and categorizing my data was the precursor to the data analysis phase of my research.

Data Analysis

In the qualitative research tradition, the data collection process and the data analysis process are closely linked. At the start of a qualitative study, data are collected and analyzed in a “cyclical process” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 517) in which the researcher alternates between collecting data and the analysis of data. For my autoethnography, I followed the data analysis process outlined by Johnson and Christensen (2012) which included multiple data collection points, setting categories for management of data, and re-examining the data for patterns and hierarchies (p. 517).

During the data collection and data management phases of my study, I began my inductive analysis of data. Due to the emergent nature of this study, I engaged in numerous mini-analyses of the data to guide my understanding of what the data presented. Using the process of mini-analysis I created “conceptual categories” (Yin, 2011, p. 184) for my data from my field notes and my reflective journal. Although my conceptual categories did not change, data was moved from certain categories and placed into other categories during the analysis process. The re-reading of my field notes and reflective journal provided opportunities to explore multiple meanings from a single data set and provided more clarity and understanding as I explored the patterns and themes presented in the data. As I analyzed the data, it was necessary to revisit the emotional connections I felt at the time the data was collected (Ellis, 2009). This process of data analysis was difficult for me because as the researcher I was investigating my behaviors, however, as the participant, I understood the motivations and thoughts behind the behaviors. Many times as I re-read the data during the analysis process, I felt as if I was experiencing a narrative saga in which I was anticipating the conclusion to learn how it all worked out.

Data Coding and Reduction

The analysis of qualitative data is as complex as the data collection process due to the amount of data the researcher accumulates (Yin, 2011). Initially, I engaged with my compiled data and examined the categories using a manual system of data management. In my home office, I created piles of email correspondences, memos, and my agenda that I collected over the course of the school year. I sorted these items on the floor in my office and used colored sticky notes to identify and justify the placement of the items into certain categories. There were times that I could not definitively place the data in one particular category. When this happened, I made a copy of that data source and marked it copy and placed the copy in the second category. This allowed me to use multiple codes for a single data source. I considered my reflective journal as my main data source. I printed two copies of my reflective journal; one copy I kept in its whole form printed only on one side of the paper and the other copy was used for manual coding as I searched for themes and patterns. This process involved taking the second printed copy of my reflective journal, cutting the paragraphs by sections, and investigating similarities line by line. This process seemed haphazard at times because there were many unrelated themes that first emerged.

I sorted and classified the data from my reflective journal and re-read my journal in its entirety several times so that I was intimate with my journal and my reflective thoughts. I approached the coding phase similar to someone assembling a thousand piece puzzle without the benefit of seeing the complete picture on the outside of the box. I had a difficult time trying to fit the pieces together to create a true and authentic picture. The autoethnographer's special relationship with her data allows for data collection, data analysis, data coding, and data

interpretation to occur in a concurrent manner (Yin, 2011). Yin (2011) developed five steps in the data organization process that included:

(1) Compiling and sorting the data from field notes and other data sources that have been refined and placed in a logical order. (2) Once data has been put in order, the disassembling procedure is next. This involves the breaking down the complied data into smaller fragments. This step is repeated many times as a process of trial-and-error. (3) The third phase in the process is to generate codes or clusters of codes in a reassembling procedure. (4) The fourth phase involves using the reassembled material to create a new narrative, with tables and graphics where relevant. (5) The last phase may be considered the concluding phase. It calls for drawing conclusions from your entire study (pp. 178-179).

Yin (2011) suggested the use of “Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis”, or CAQDAS, to assist the researcher in coding the data and locating particular themes. Facing a large amount of data, I tried computer assisted data coding as a way to frame and streamline the data I had previously organized. I selected the ATLAS.ti, a qualitative research software, to provide support in the data coding phase of my study as I had worked with ATLAS.ti software in one of my graduate courses. This proved difficult and it was even more unpredictable using the ATLAS.ti software. I used the software to code the two focus group interviews but could not readily determine themes or patterns in the data.

I then re-read and listened again to my recorded data to ensure a holistic understanding of the codes that was presented from the computer software and compared them to the codes from my manual system. As I reviewed and revised the coded data, I realized that the initial codes provided the foundation for sense making. I identified categories that evolved from the coding of my reflective journal and I established fourteen categories that represented my initial perceptions of the principalship. I viewed these fourteen categories as preliminary themes within the data. Table 2 provides the themes that resulted from my initial coding.

Table 2. Theme Category: Diversity of the Principal

Codes	Codes
Principal as a teacher (18)	Principal as a philosopher (5)
Principal as a judge (10)	Principal as a friend (8)
Principal as a facilities manager (13)	Principal as a diplomat (6)
Principal as a counselor (17)	Principal as a coach (22)
Principal as a nurse and nurse-maid (19)	Principal as a mediator (26)
Principal as a cheerleader (9)	Principal as a social worker (12)
Principal as a protector (8)	Principal as a boss (10)

As I analyzed and coded the data, it became clear that there were many areas of blurred lines and overlapping codes. I found that many of the codes could belong to more than just one or two categories. For example, when I reviewed the codes for both the principal as the mediator and the principal as the diplomat, I found that three of the data I used for the mediator were also placed in the category of the diplomat as well. Likewise, data I coded as principal as a teacher was also used in the category of principal as a coach. Although I anticipated having clear and distinct categories, Yin (2011) explained that data coding overlapping is not the exception in qualitative research.

Ethical Stance

All researchers have a degree of responsibility to protect the participants of any research. Ethical considerations were at the forefront of my narrative inquiry. After discussing the direction of my research with my major professor, I applied for exemption approval from my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB); the Board determined that my study did not involve the use of human subjects and, therefore, had no risk of harm (see Appendix I). I wanted to ensure a high standard of ethics during each phase of this study. In collecting, analyzing, and

interpreting data, I ensured the anonymity of those with whom I interacted during the research period.

I created a pseudonym for the proper name of the school where the research was conducted. In addition, the names and identities of the people with whom I interacted were coded and transcribed under pseudonyms directly from my field notes and my reflective journal. I created only one list that correlated the pseudonyms with the names of the participants. Anonymity was especially critical for this autoethnographic project as the narrative was constructed solely on the researcher's perspective and not from those of the participants. Anonymity was also important because that I am currently the principal at the school in which this study unfolded. In addition to the anonymity of the individuals with whom I interacted, I also maintained a high degree of confidentiality during this research timeframe and I limited the number of persons who viewed my field notes, reflective journal, coded data, and interpretations.

Exploring Subjectivity: My Role as a Researcher

Researchers who are engaged in autoethnography must delineate their role as a researcher and position themselves within their studies (Chang, 2008; Yin, 2011). This subjectivity statement is provided so that all life experiences and interactions of the researcher are presented to ensure transparency. This allows the reader to critically examine the truthfulness of the narrative inquiry, which contributes to the validity of the research. As both the investigator and the primary subject of this narrative inquiry, my role in this study was complicated and multifaceted. During this research project, I explored the intangibles that shaped my perceptions and formed the context for my actions and thoughts. These intangibles included my race, my gender, my early childhood and adolescent experiences, and my leadership opportunity.

I am a Black female and I have about 20 years of experiences in the field of education and 16 years of experience in the school in which I collected the data for this study. Throughout this time I have had to negotiate my existence in various positions at OCDS. First, while I was employed in the public school system, I was a parent of OCDS. I left the public school system and became a teacher at OCDS and taught Kindergarten, fifth grade, sixth grade, and seventh grade. As mentioned in chapter one, I was the only Black teacher at the elementary division of OCDS for the first seven years of my employment. I became acquainted with many of the teachers in a limited capacity because I chose to be guarded as a non-member of the dominant culture.

After teaching at OCDS for ten years, I became the assistant principal of the middle school that included grades four through six. The transition from teacher to assistant principal at the same school was not difficult for me, in part because I had not established close friendships with the other teachers. After four years as the assistant principal of the middle school, I became the principal of both the elementary and the middle school of OCDS. During the research timeframe, I formed multilayer relationships that became a part of my life history and the culture of the school.

Summary

Understanding my history with OCDS and recognizing my complex position as the researcher and as the subject of the investigation, it was imperative that I conducted my study in a professional manner. As an autoethnography, it was also important that I reported the emotions, feelings, motivations, and hidden desires that only I was privy to understand. A number of life experiences shaped my understanding of educational leadership and I intend to shed light on my subjectivity as a researcher. Narrative inquiry and autoethnographic research

are not defined by prescribed formats, specific mandates, or particular methods; however, to ensure rigor, I conducted my study based on the recommendations of Chang (2008) and Yin (2011). The data collection, coding, and interpretation phases of this project followed the guidelines of a cultural anthropological study and the methods of ethnographic research suggested by Chang (2008).

At the heart of this autoethnography, I present the personal account of my first year as a principal from a non-traditional leadership background. The field notes, observations, and artifacts that I collected provide the raw data used to construct this narrative research. The analysis and interpretations reflect personal understandings and emotions evoked during the research timeframe. This is not intended to be a comprehensive representation of all of the events that transpired over the one-year timeframe; however, it is a subjective glimpse into my world and the different roles I assumed in negotiating my existence as the principal.

In chapters four, five, and six, I present a narrative account of the principalship of a Black female at a predominately White private Christian school. I employed an autobiographical lens (Chang, 2008) to explore the highly personalized experiences of self and the multifaceted understanding of my leadership behaviors. I used the narrative self as my predominant research tool, which allowed me to construct the storyline that examined the intricacies of the social constructs of race, gender, and leadership. The narrative presented in the next three chapters allows the reader to gain critical understanding and background knowledge of the events and the experiences of the researcher as author.

Trustworthiness of the Results

An important concept in all qualitative research is the idea of trustworthiness of the analytical data interpretations. Different than the positivists approach to establishing validity and reliability in their research, the social constructivists must focus on how to legitimate both the research process and research results (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The process of establishing trustworthiness in autoethnographic research must address two questions, should we believe it and why should we care? (Chang, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). The narrative researcher must construct the storyline that produces credibility and the focus of the researcher is on determining accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2009; Johnson & Christensen 2012). The process for establishing trustworthiness in an autoethnography involves the researcher accurately capturing and expressing the data and sharing the complete understanding and reflections of the phenomenon (Change, 2009). Creswell (2009) suggests that credibility can be increased when multiple sources lead to the same conclusions within the study. I employed techniques to ensure the trustworthiness of my narrative inquiry.

Prolonged Engagement and Persistent Observation

To build trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the researcher engage in prolonged engagement and persistent observation requires a researcher to observe and be engaged with research participants for a reasonably long time, at least several months (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As the autoethnographer, my research timeframe was over approximately a fifteen-month period in which I was immersed in the social and cultural aspect of OCDS. During this research timeframe, I captured the day-to-day events, situations, and circumstances in which I interacted. As both the researcher and the subject, I not only provided

the trace evidence of what occurred, I also exposed my internal thoughts, struggles, and fears associated with the collected data evidence.

Peer Review

Peer review was another technique used in qualitative research to ensure trustworthiness (Chang, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In an attempt to strengthen the trustworthiness of my autoethnography I engaged in the process of peer review of my collected raw data. At the start of my study and during the data collected phase of my research, I allowed my major professor to review the data at the time it was collected. This strategy ensured that the collected raw data was not altered during the data analysis phases of the study. For my autoethnography, the construction of the narrative was done without manipulation of the raw data. This is an important strategy as the researcher seeks to answer the question, should we believe the findings and the storyteller.

Member Checking

In ethnographic research, another technique to ensure trustworthiness is member checks. Member checking involves the researcher allowing the participants to review both the data collected by the interviewer and the interpretation of that interview data. This technique is considered to be “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 314). For this current study, I am both the researcher and the major subject of the study. As an autoethnography, the ability to have member checking was limited. To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, I included a special chapter entitled, *The Method to My Madness*, in which I disclose and expose the deep self-probing of the both the data and my interpretations. This process of internal member checking allowed the true narrative to emerge. For my

autoethnography, this process helped me answer the question, why should we care? The re-reading and re-listening as the internal member allowed new understandings to become salient.

The most critical element of an autoethnographic study is to construct a narrative that is accurate and trustworthy. In Chapters, Four, Five, and Six, I present my narrative tale directly from my collected data. In addition, during the research timeframe, I striped myself of my hidden thoughts and exposed them throughout this study. I have also included in the Appendices photographic artifacts in an attempt to enhance the trustworthiness of my autoethnography and to invite the reader to experience a living story and to share in my emotional journey of discovery.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE COMMISSION OF THE S. S. PRINCIPAL (SHIP)

The Big Secret

I received a call from Mr. Kolfman, the Headmaster of OCDS that he wanted to meet with me. I was in my office in the middle school when he called and he asked if he could walk to my office to discuss some administrative changes. His request was not unusual because he had requested that we meet in my office on other occasions and thus the office staff were unaware. I hurried to clear the mess that was on my desk and put away students' files and tidied up my bookshelves. It was a cool February morning and I knew the walk from the high school to the middle school would take him a least five minutes. I opened the door to my office and waited. When he arrived, he looked sheepish and unsure of himself, not characteristics that I normally associated with him. He was a White, Christian, heterosexual, middle-aged man whom I found to be overbearing and pretentious at times.

Mr. Kolfman entered my office and closed the door. He sat for about 45 seconds without saying a word – I sat and waited and waited. When he spoke, his voice was low and deliberate. “Dr. Robinsky and I met with the board and we have decided to make you the principal of the elementary and middle school.” I was shocked and speechless. I had been the assistant principal of the middle school for four years and this new opportunity was a good one. “Well, what do you think about that?” He was unenthusiastic and I did not know if I should be happy or show any emotion. So many questions ran through my head, and yet I could not articulate my words. Mr. Kolfman's method of presentation made me feel that I could not refuse. It sounded as if the decision was made without allowing my input. I really wanted the opportunity to become a principal but did not know it would happen like this.

After about four awkward minutes, I asked him about Mrs. Pittman, the assistant principal of elementary and why I was selected and not her. Mrs. Pittman was a White female in her mid-sixties and she had been at OCDS for over twenty years. He explained that one of the reasons was based on our last visit for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Team, the accrediting body for our school. The middle school division received the highest rating of our four divisions at OCDS and my leadership was mentioned as a positive influence. Many of my techniques for building the culture of middle school were different than the other divisions. Solemnly, he said, “Mrs. Wallis, for right now, don’t say anything about the changes or your new position”; I agreed not to say anything. The first Thursday of each month we had our faculty development meetings and I could wait three more weeks until March 5th for the announcement to be made. He explained that he would remain the Headmaster and the principal of the junior and senior high. When he left my office, I sat and thanked God for the opportunity, but I felt that this was coming at the wrong time. I was in the process of working on my Ph.D. and I knew the amount of time needed for both would be extremely difficult.

After lunch, I checked my mailbox in the administrative office. Ms. Judy, the school’s secretary, a delightful middle aged, White woman whom was always in the know, asked to speak with me. She leaned toward me and whispered, “Do you know what’s going on?” She quietly told me that there had “been a few private meetings and no one is saying anything.” She looked around to see if anyone was near as if she needed to watch for spies. I smiled and I told her I thought we would know soon. She explained that the meetings included Dr. Robinsky, the school’s founder, the Headmaster, and other members of the board. My heart skipped a beat and I did not want to give any indication that I was aware of anything. I gave my most convincing

performance and said, “I know they will let us know when the time is right.” My excitement was building as I returned to my office, yet I held on to the big secret.

The Big Deception

On March 2, 2014, almost two weeks had passed since Mr. Kolfman informed me that I was selected to be the principal of the elementary and middle school at OCDS. Mrs. Pittman, the elementary assistant principal, called and asked if I could stop by her office to discuss the plans for the Thursday faculty development meeting and to discuss the times for our standardized testing. When I arrived she motioned for me to have a seat; she stood quietly and closed the door to her office as I took my seat opposite her desk. We exchanged small talk about how tired we both were and then she stopped abruptly and stated, “I heard that there are going to be some changes happening around here.” I tried to remain expressionless and responded, “Like what?” She articulated, “Well, first of all, Mr. Kolfman is packing and moving his office from over here to the high school building.” She also said that the maintenance men confirmed that they would be moving Mr. Kolfman. I said nothing and just nodded as I listened. She remarked, “You know, if Mr. Kolfman is moving his office to the high school building, I will probably become the principal of the elementary and middle school.” I had full knowledge that I would be named as the elementary and middle school principal and I tried to be positive as I agreed that her scenario made perfect sense. She had more experience than I did – she had been at OCDS for more years than I. She held a master’s plus thirty hours above that degree. She was right; she was the obvious candidate for the position, in theory. I nodded my head in agreement with a situation I knew would not happen. She spoke to me in confidence about what she thought the possibilities could be; all the while I could not divulge the information shared with me by the Headmaster. I could not tell her that I knew what changes were going to happen. I could not be honest with her.

I was not at liberty to reveal the new direction the school would be charting. Honestly, I do not think I would have said anything even if I had not been told to keep the secret. I found that I was cowardly avoiding mentioning any other possibility; I did not have the boldness to say, “There is another scenario; they could select me to head the elementary and middle school.” I was very uncomfortable. I knew that she was expecting to become the principal and I knew that she felt she was the most likely candidate. I did not want to answer or offer anything to the conversation – I did not want to have to lie to her. I just kept thinking, “What is she going to think when the announcement is made?” I did not want her to be hurt, yet I knew she never considered me as a viable candidate for the position and she never considered my feelings.

When I started teaching at OCDS in 1999, Mrs. Pittman was the assistant principal and responsible for my observations and my evaluations. I appreciated that she had, in a way, paid her dues as a school administrator at OCDS. For years she worked faithfully as the assistant principal and also as the administrative supervisor. When I completed my Master’s in 2009, I became an assistant principal of middle school at OCDS and my duties and responsibilities at OCDS were equal to those of Mrs. Pittman. For the previous four years, she was the assistant principal of the elementary school and I was the assistant principal of the middle school. In my new position, she would become my assistant principal; and already this relationship felt as if it was born in deception.

The day of the March faculty meeting, I received Mr. Kolfman’s agenda in an email. I was perplexed that the agenda did not indicate that the announcement would be made to the faculty and staff so I gave Mr. Kolfman a call to ask why the announcement was not included; he did not have a good explanation for not making the announcement but rather asked that I wait a little longer. I felt slighted. I remembered eight years ago, when he became principal, the

fanfare that was generated and he immediately released an announcement to the teachers, parents, and the local media. Yet, he wanted me to wait.

The Relationship of Mistrust

It was the first week in April and two months had passed since I was informed that I would become the principal of both the elementary and middle schools; I still was unable to tell anyone that I would become the new principal. I was unable to openly communicate my promotion to the faculty and staff as the Headmaster had chosen not to make a formal announcement. I did not agree with his decision and I could not understand why he was dragging his feet. I did not think that I could adequately prepare for the challenges of my new position and its responsibilities without speaking freely with the teachers and looking over school data and documents. I believed the first Thursday in April was the perfect time to make the announcement and would give me the rest of that month and May to meet with teachers in the elementary school and to start forming a foundation for relationships. However, no announcement – our Headmaster felt it best to meet with Mrs. Pittman first, and without me being present. I thought that I should have been included in that meeting; if Mrs. Pittman was going to be my assistant principal, I needed to express my thoughts and allow her to hear my heart.

After Mr. Kolfman met with Mrs. Pittman, I wanted to talk to Mrs. Pittman and see if I could understand what affect this change would have on her. I did not want to antagonize her, so I called for the meeting to be held in her office. When I arrived, she was busying herself at her computer and she did not make eye contact. I walked in and took the same seat as I had two months earlier. I realized that I was more uncomfortable than I thought I would be. I asked how she felt about the changes. She turned from her computer, looked past me, beyond where I was sitting, and said, “I guess I didn’t think about them making you principal; I just want to know

why they picked you and not me.” I suggested that because I had recently finished my master’s program in educational leadership that maybe they hoped that I would bring some of the new ideas and procedures that I used in middle school to the elementary. Middle school was going well – I was directly responsible for the creation and day-to-day operations. Her mannerism and tone indicated her disappointment about the changes so I suggested that we meet the following week to discuss how to move forward. At this time, Mrs. Pittman was the only other person that knew I was the principal.

One week after I spoke with Mrs. Pittman, I passed through the elementary hall into the cafeteria and I noticed that the elementary teachers seemed standoffish with me. In the past, I laughed and joked with them about any little thing, but today, they did not make eye contact and had very little to say to me when I tried to address them. I wanted to meet and discuss my plans and ideas for the elementary school. I wanted to say that I am YOUR principal and I am concerned about you, but Mr. Kolfman asked that I not address the faculty until he made the formal announcement. No one said anything to me about the changes so I was hopeful that no one knew the secret; however, I knew the grapevine at OCDS and I knew how word got around. I also knew that Mrs. Pittman had long-term relationships with many of the teachers and I was sure that there could be at least three teachers in whom she confided and trusted with the secret. I had not trusted anyone at OCDS with the news. It would have been difficult for me to make a statement without having it formally and publically supported by the Headmaster. He and I had not had a close relationship and I wondered if this change was forced on him. I was not a threat to him or his authority. He was the Headmaster and I was careful not to cross him, yet, there were times that I knew he viewed me as an enemy of sorts. I walked on eggshells as I tried to establish my principalship in the cloche of silence and deception.

At the end of the week, Mr. Kolfman called to inform me that the announcement would be made to the entire faculty at the professional development meeting on May 8th. He explained that after the announcement each assistant principal would meet with their division to discuss the close out procedures for the 2013-2014 school year. He asked where I wanted my new office to be located and he informed me that Mrs. Pittman would be my assistant principal. As he spoke, he seemed short on words and preoccupied. I told him that my new office would be in the administrative building and that I would contact the maintenance men concerning the move.

A few days before the announcement was to be made, I reflected on holding the secret so long, and it felt surreal. I felt I had been deprived of the opportunity to celebrate what was a promotion for me and a new direction for OCDS. The upper administration of OCDS must have seen something in me that made them want me to be the principal, yet it seemed that no one wanted to make the announcement public. I did not understand the lackluster manner in which the Headmaster approached the situation.

The Worst Kept Secret

May 2014 arrived; for me the previous three months seemed unproductive. On the first Thursday of the month the students were dismissed at 12:00 p.m. so that we could attend our professional development meeting. My goal was to execute our abbreviated schedule as uneventfully as possible. I could hardly wait for the announcement to be made. By 12:40 p.m., everyone gathered in the high school auditorium. As we took our seats, I wondered how many people were NOT aware of the announcement. Over the last two months, since I learned of the change in February, many of the teachers seemed to behave differently toward me. Mr. Kolfman opened the meeting with a prayer and passed out the agenda. After discussing additions to the end of the year calendar, he explained the new direction in leadership for Oakridge Christian Day

School. He explained how he would remain as the Headmaster of the school and that he had been functioning as both Headmaster and the principal for elementary, middle school, junior and senior high; he admitted that he had been ineffective because he was stretched so thin. He described the new leadership configuration and explained that he would only be the principal for the junior and senior high. He then informed the faculty and staff that I would become the principal of early childhood, elementary, and middle school, and in a forceful tone repeated, “I am still the Headmaster of Oakridge Christian Day School – that has not changed.” He wanted to make sure everyone realized that he was the authority. I was hurt and angry. What a way to start a new position! The Headmaster just communicated to the faculty and staff that the new principal had authority in name only.

When he made the announcement, a silence fell over the teachers and no one said anything; no one even looked around. I sat very still in the front row and I glanced around the room. I was poised as I waited for him to ask me to address the faculty. I waited and waited – but no such invitation was made. I was just announced as the PRINCIPAL and not given the respect of addressing the faculty. “Wow, how unprofessional!” was my first thought. For the rest of the meeting, I sat stoned-faced in the front row. I thought that as a common courtesy I would have been asked if I wanted to say a few words. But no- nothing at all. I could not help but wonder what the teachers and staff members were thinking.

At the end of the meeting, no one said congratulations – not one of the teachers in the elementary school said congratulations or anything else to me. When the meeting was over, each teacher just walked pass me, successfully not making eye contact. I realized that the secret was out before the announcement and probably everyone was aware of the change in leadership for several weeks. All of the elementary teachers had an opportunity to discuss it without hearing

from me, yet I was not given the respect to talk to the teachers and listen to their concerns. I never had the chance to promote myself; it seemed that for weeks the rumor mill had worked overtime producing a perception of me that I was not sure I could live down.

The next day I sat in my office in the middle school and realized that there were now only eight full work days remaining in 2013-2014 school year – only eight days for me to make connections – forge relationships – discuss goals and expectations. I only had eight days to try to assume command of a ship that seemed to be floundering. The elementary faculty did not see me as someone they could trust. They behaved as if there was something to fear in this change, and it did not help that the change was not promoted or celebrated by the Headmaster.

Really, It's Not You, It's Me

I quickly realized that the elementary teachers had an unexplained fear of me as the principal. Ladies that I had seen over ten years were fearful of me becoming their principal. I thought that since they had not had direct supervision in over four years that maybe they were concerned with how this change in leadership would affect them.

It was May 18th and the last week of school for our students. I had been busy verifying grades and preparing the honor roll lists. Mr. Kolfman called and asked if I could meet him in his office. When I arrived, he informed me that Mrs. Chaison, one of the Kindergarten teachers, would not be returning next year. He explained that she had obtained a job in the Central School District that was closer to her home and provided more money. I was disappointed as it would be difficult to find another teacher who understood OCDS and the expectations of a private Christian school. I said that I was hoping not to have to make many faculty changes since I was coming in so late. He commented that this was to be expected at the end of each school year;

teachers do not return. He looked unconcerned when he said, “Every year this happens. Don’t worry about it.” I knew he was right; every year we lost one or two teachers.

Two days later, Mr. Kolfman called and informed me that we were losing Mrs. Roper, the other Kindergarten teacher. For a few seconds, I could not speak. When I did speak, I was not sure if I was coherent. I could not believe I lost both Kindergarten teachers before I had a chance to speak with them. . . I was extremely angry - I was spitting mad. Then Mr. Kolfman said, “Look, Mrs. Wallis, don’t take it personally. Teachers leave – new teachers will come.” As I replaced the phone on the receiver, I felt a little hurt and I wanted to know the reason this other Kindergarten teacher was leaving. I asked the middle school lead teacher, Mrs. Booker, to assist the teachers with the close out procedures and I rescheduled my meetings for that morning. I wanted to go to the elementary building to talk to Mrs. Roper before she left. I walked into the elementary building and I passed the assistant principal, Mrs. Pittman (or I should say my assistant principal – that would take some getting used to). She looked as if she was privy to information and wanted me to inquire, but the head of steam I had worked up along with my pride would not entertain her gloating. I just kept walking. For the last five years, these teachers had been HER teachers. Now it appeared that the two Kindergarten teachers would not stay and work for me. Of course that could have been my paranoia, but I did not want to talk to her right then.

When I reached Mrs. Roper’s classroom, I took several deep breaths and I went into the classroom with a smile on my face. I looked at her and I said, “I heard the bad news. I am so sorry to see you leave. You were such a blessing to the students and our school.” I immediately noticed that she kept moving around the classroom busying herself – never making eye contact with me – picking up items and placing them into boxes. I forced myself to sound compassionate

and understanding; I suppressed my anger. I asked where she would be working. She turned and looked at me and said she had not found a teaching position as yet. I looked perplexed and said, “You don’t have a job? Why are you leaving?” I could tell my anger was building. She looked around sheepishly and said that she would be getting married at the end of July and wanted to find a job closer to her home. I was dumbfounded. I was angry. I was amazed. I could not believe that in this economy someone would leave a paying job and not have a new position. I did not know how to respond to what I perceived to be stupidity. There had to be more to the story. I continued to question her. “Will you be moving to a new home once you’re married?” She responded, “No, we have been living together for the last year.” So now nothing made any sense to me and I said, “You have been coming to this job for five years and now you want to leave?” It really was a rhetorical question, but my voice did have an inflection. I knew I should not say anything further so I walked closer to her, gave her a hug and I wished her all the best in the new marriage and in her new teaching position. I explained that I knew things would work out great because I had heard really good things about her as a Kindergarten teacher. As I turned to leave the classroom, I noticed that she had a tear in her eye. She said, “I’m really sorry, Mrs. Wallis.” I just replied, “Please don’t worry. Things will work out for everyone. I really believe that.” I said it but I was not sure I believed it. I could not understand why she was about to cry – she was leaving a paying job – she was leaving a place she had been working for the last five years. If anyone should be crying, it should have been ME! Was working for me such an unknown that not having a job seemed better? At some sub-level of my emotions, I felt as if I was in an unhappy romantic relationship and being dumped. I was waiting to hear her say, “It’s not you; it’s me.”

My first task was to replace both kindergarten teachers. Fear crept into my thinking. There would not be a Kindergarten teacher next school year who was familiar with the routines and idiosyncrasies of OCDS and I would have two new Kindergarten teachers. “Don’t take it personally.” Well, let me see - in the last seven years we had not had both teachers in one grade level leave our school at the same time. To me, it was personal! I realized that teachers who are new to an environment have a difficult time with the induction process and now, with both teachers leaving, there would not be an experienced Kindergarten teacher at OCDS to help in the transition and this could be problematic. I wanted to SCREAM! I was starting to feel that it was definitely personal.

My Reputation Proceeded Me

I was disturbed at the news of losing both Kindergarten teachers. As I passed through the office, I saw Mrs. Pittman sitting at Ms. Judy’s desk. She said, “I wanted to tell you something I heard”; her tone told me it was not good news. She said that she heard that Mrs. Bloomberg, the other first grade teacher, would be leaving OCDS and moving to Texas as her husband had taken a job there. When I mentioned that Mrs. Bloomberg assured Mr. Kolfman that she would finish this next school year, Mrs. Pittman quipped, “Well, I don’t think she’ll stay if her husband is gone.” I realized that she was probably correct, but I had to go on Mrs. Bloomberg’s word that she would be returning. I felt put out; none of the teachers had spoken to me, their new principal, about their plans to leave. It occurred to me that they did not see me as THEIR principal. Both of the Kindergarten teachers went to the Headmaster to discuss leaving and I received the information second hand. I felt disrespected and that they showed a lack of common courtesy.

As I went through the motions of closing out the school year, I reflected over the last few days and I felt disturbed. Was it I? It must be me. Was it because I was woman? No woman had

held the principalship. Was it because I was said to be demanding, among other things? Was it because I was Black? I knew OCDS had not a Black principal and I was hoping that it was something other than that. I had been at this school for over 15 years and I had always been Black. The question of “WHY? WHY?” reverberated in my head.

I reflected on my first two years as the assistant principal, and as I honestly looked at my leadership over the past four years as the assistant principal, I found areas in which I had grown. My first two years were difficult and I was authoritarian in my leadership style. I was demanding and inflexible in my approach to leadership. One of the teachers referred to me as a “hard ass”. I accepted this as a badge of honor as this meant that I was just like the other principals whom I observed at OCDS. During my first two years I was not concerned about the ideas or expectations of the teachers. I recalled trying to make changes and I did not understand how difficult change is for people. I miscalculated the threat that change was to the teachers. I misunderstood the idea that when you require people to change the way they have been doing things, that it could suggest to them that you think something is wrong or bad in how they were doing things. I had five teachers leave middle school within my first two years as assistant principal because of my inability to remove the fear associated with change.

I realized that I was not comfortable in that role of the “hard ass”. I realized that I never appreciated the authoritarian style. I reinvented myself. I transformed my thought process about what makes an effective leader. During my last two years as the assistant principal, things improved. I hired new teachers and communicated to the existing teachers that I wanted to help the middle school change and that the biggest change was going to be within me and with my leadership style. I spent the next two years building relationships with my teachers, my students, and my parents. I changed the schedule and created collaboration time each week for all of the

teachers to meet. Every Monday morning from 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., we met to discuss our students' progress and ways in which we could improve our teaching practice. I allowed the teachers to engage in decision making and encouraged them to help solve problems. I realized that I was not the only person who was concerned about our students or our school. I began viewing the middle school teachers as leaders who shared the responsibility for educating our students and who were the most important component in the educational process. It was not the programs; it was not the schedules; it was not the curriculum. My teachers were the most important factor in the success of OCDS and I wanted them to know that I understood and appreciated that fact.

I started realizing that the elementary teachers only knew me as the “hard ass”. Mrs. Chaison, the first Kindergarten teacher who resigned, also left the middle school four years earlier when I was appointed assistant principal. I underestimated the power of rumors and the fear generated from partial knowledge. I learned the hard way that the hardest things to live down were my past mistakes and failures. I was aware that my first two years of leadership as the assistant principal were a direct link to why teachers left OCDS. I thought that the lack of openly announcing the leadership changes caused the rumor mill to churn. I was looked upon as someone who only wanted to change the way things were working, whereas nothing was further from the truth. I did not want to change things that were working; I wanted to change the things that were not working well. I had to live down my reputation as a gunslinger - someone cold and calculating – someone gunning for their jobs.

Glimpse of Glory

On the twenty-first of May, the last day of school for our students, a parent of a third grade student approached me as I was leaving my office. She introduced herself and asked to

speak with me about the difficulties of the third grade school year. She explained that she was not sure if her child would be returning to OCDS, and described some of the classroom problems and how the teachers did not communicate well or solve problems well. She was also frustrated because there was only the Headmaster to address concerns and he was often unavailable and uninformed. I listened, I waited, and I listened. When she finished, I explained that I had heard that there were problems and I assured her that middle school would be very different. I guaranteed that if she was not 100% pleased with middle school, I would refund her tuition and release her from the contract. As I said the words, I knew I had over stepped my authority, especially if she was a hard to please parent. I counted on middle school to provide academic excellence and a sense of community that parents had appreciated over the years. I was out on a limb, but I knew I had to take measures to save this family. She looked unsure and a little doubtful, but she agreed to stay and give it a try. She said she would complete the registration forms and stop by the accounting office. I was pleased; this was my first real act as the principal and then reality hit me – I made a promise. I realized that I did not control the factors that make parents unhappy with schools. But, I was the principal – the buck stops here – that parent wanted a leader to reassure her that all would be well – that parent needed a leader who could communicate a vision and encourage the followers to join in – that parent needed to believe that I was that principal.

On the last day of school for the teachers, I knew that I had one more task to complete. My first priority was the third grade teachers and addressing the problems related by the Headmaster. I walked to each of their classrooms and asked them join me in the conference room so that we could get acquainted. At 1:00 p.m., I was sitting in the conference room at the oblong cherry wood table with two wingback chairs at the two opposite ends and three barrel-style

chairs on each of the shorter sides. At first I sat at the head of the table in the large wingback leather chair waiting for the two third grade teachers to arrive. I thought about my position at the head of the table and some of the rumors I had heard about myself: Mrs. Wallis is hard to work for; she is demanding; she is unreasonable; she is driven and she expects too much from teachers. I changed my seat to one of the side chairs and hoped that, seeing me seated in a collegial position might put the teachers at ease. I also removed my portfolio and only placed my planner on the table. I tried to imagine how I would feel if I learned that the new principal wanted to meet with me. I waited anxiously.

After about five minutes, both of the third grade teachers entered the conference room. They slowly walked in and appeared to be unsure about where they should sit. I motioned for them to take a seat. They sat in the middle chairs opposite my seat. I started by thanking them for coming, but I wondered if they thought they had a choice. I wanted to discuss the issues of which I had been informed, but instead, I asked them about their concerns and what they expected from me as their principal. This seemed to put Mrs. King at ease and she explained the difficulties she was having with the parents and how many times the parents had gone to the Headmaster with complaints. Mrs. King also stated that perhaps she was at fault and she indicated that she was not very flexible. She thought that the parents were discussing events with each other and that complicated issues even more. She then said that she wanted a principal who would support her. I engaged in active listening and did not interrupt, which was difficult for me. When she finished, I repeated to her what I heard her state, saying, "I understand the importance of having a principal who supports you." I clarified and set the stage for my leadership philosophy and style. I explained that I did not view our relationship with our parents as taking sides. I explained that we are not against our parents but rather we work for our parents. I explained that we had to

see things from their point of view. I wanted her know that she could expect my full support, not just with parents, but also with the academics and professional development. Mrs. King said that she would really appreciate that.

I turned my attention to Mrs. Williams, the other third grade teacher, who had been sitting very quietly during the meeting and had said nothing. I tried to gauge her personality and I understood that she did not want to be placed on the spot. I looked at Mrs. Williams but I phrased my question in a way that either teacher could answer. I asked what they thought was the biggest issue they faced this year. Mrs. King replied that she thought the parents compared the two teachers and their different teaching styles and methods. I looked again to engage Mrs. Williams in the conversation, and she said that she agreed with Mrs. King. I felt excited inwardly. I proposed my idea about changing from self-contained classes to two departmentalized classes and as I began my explanation, Mrs. Williams interrupted me and stated that she thought that would be a great idea. I asked them to think about their strengths as teachers and their strongest subjects; Mrs. King stated that she felt comfortable with the math and science and Mrs. Williams agreed that Mrs. King was stronger than she in math and science. Mrs. Williams stated that her best subjects were reading and language.

As I explained the schedule, they listened and asked questions. They wanted to know about lesson planning and I explained that they would plan only for their subjects and teach them to both their homeroom and the other class; less planning seemed to help sell the idea. I asked if we could review the standardized test scores from the last two years and see what the data showed; since the data was a small part of student achievement, I wanted to see if a trend existed. The secretary brought in the scores and the data indicated that Mrs. King's class had done much better in math than Mrs. Williams's class and only slightly better in science. The reading subtest

did not have a significant difference. Armed with this information, I asked if the teachers wanted to try this new arrangement. I stated that Mrs. King would teach math and science and Mrs. Williams would teach the reading and social studies. They seemed happy at the close of the meeting. I told them that I would meet with them to discuss the logistics of these changes in about two weeks. After the teachers left the conference room, I sat in silence thinking that maybe I could do this; maybe I could be the leader.

As I headed down the elementary hall, I noticed Mrs. Perkins, one of the first grade teachers, in the hallway. She held a master's degree and had over 30 years of experience teaching, 19 of those years were at OCDS. She taught first grade when I started in 1999 as a Kindergarten teacher. She had always demonstrated her love for teaching and for her students and I decided to ask for her opinion on students' placements. A few students had difficulties academically and I wanted her opinion on what she thought would help these students. She seemed pleased that I asked her opinion and explained that one of the boys had been diagnosed with ADHD and had started taking medication. She had suggestions for the teacher on how to engage him. I could have placed the students without her assistance, however, I wanted her to know that I trusted her as an educator and that I would look to her as a leader in this new leadership structure. The last two days of meeting with parents and meeting with a few teachers reassured me that I could lead. I was behind in my planning for the new school year, but I was pleased with the glimpse of glory and the feeling that I was the principal.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE VOYAGE OF THE S. S. PRINCIPAL (SHIP)

The Calm before the Storm

I took off the first week of June 2014 to refocus and to prepare a plan for transitioning into the principalship. Many of the teachers were unavailable or unwilling to meet during the summer break and I understood that. I wished that the announcement had been made in March so I could have established myself as the principal and set my agenda.

My first day back in my new office felt strange. Most of the faculty and staff were on summer vacation and the building felt peaceful when I entered, but internally I was on edge. The Headmaster had moved his office in March and he was settled into his new role. As for me, my stuff was still in boxes and I had no idea where anything was. I needed to concentrate on starting school – I needed to review last year's school improvement plan – I needed to review the SACS report and look at their recommendations for the elementary school – I needed to prepare my ninety day plan – I needed to find my pens and pads – I needed to get a chair for this office – I needed . . . I really didn't know where to start. I felt like a leader in crises. I was the lost or confused leader. I was a goose in a hailstorm, as my granddad would say. I was in a storm – a perfect storm. I found an old chair in the teacher's workroom and that would have to do for the time being. In my email I read that Mrs. Pittman would be out of town for three weeks visiting her daughter who was expecting a baby. I knew that she should be with her family at such a time, but I wondered if she would have taken those three weeks off if she had been named principal instead of me. She also detailed the rest of her plans for the summer and she indicated that she would be returning the week of July 4th. That was no help to me as our school offices would be closed during that time; additionally she would be gone for two weeks' vacation starting July

14th and she would be back in the office on July 28th. “Right, don’t take any of this personally,” was my thought as I sat in my calm office. I felt like she was unwilling to be helpful. I tried to understand how she must have felt and I asked myself how I would I have felt if I thought the principalship should have been given to me and it was given to someone else – someone whom maybe I deemed as less qualified.

Navigating Rough Waters

I resigned myself to the loss of both Kindergarten teachers and started the interview process. I had very few applicants who had experience in teaching and even fewer who had experience teaching Kindergarten or early childhood education. Checking the resumes, I found a familiar name, Jenny Martin. She worked for us previously and left to take a position in a neighboring district. I called the Headmaster and he confirmed that she wanted to return to OCDS and that she wanted to teach Kindergarten. I was excited because she had teaching experience and she was familiar with OCDS; in fact, her two girls remained at our school after she had resigned. I hoped that she would take the position although she did not have experience with Kindergarten; however, I knew her love for children and I believed that her teaching style would make her perfect for our Kindergarten students.

In mid-June I met with the Headmaster to discuss how things were progressing. He seemed nonchalant about what I described as setbacks and impediments to my full instatement as the principal. He had been the principal for both the elementary and high school and I did not want to give the impression that I thought he was ineffective. I just wanted to go in a different direction and wanted to know why I was selected and what was he hoping to see me accomplish as principal. I also knew that I needed to approach him carefully with my questions. In the previous year Mr. Kolfman came to my middle school office and he explained to me that things

were difficult for him wearing so many different hats and we discussed the challenges with the job. I encouraged him and he made a statement I found disturbing; he said that I would understand when I become Headmaster. I said I had no desire to be headmaster. With a slight smirk on his face, he looked at me as if he did not believe me. I told him I was not gunning for his job. I did not want to be perceived as a threat and wanted him to feel at ease as I ran the elementary and middle school divisions. I had heard both White and Black parents say that they thought I would make a good Headmistress, but I wanted him to know I did not want that position. I explained that I only wanted to finish my Ph. D. and then to get a principalship at a different school. Mr. Kolfman often commented that he did not have my educational background. He did not have a degree in education nor was he a certified teacher. He taught French for over 10 years and then he became an assistant principal at OCDS. After the high school principal retired, he became the principal of the high school. I thought that it would have been impossible for me to be appointed to that job with his same credentials. I did not flaunt my educational background or the fact that I was a certified teacher. I did not mention that I had my master's in Educational Leadership or that I passed the Louisiana Leadership Licensure Exam. I believed that these things would only increase his distrust of my ambitions.

As we spoke, I had to ask him, "Why me, and why now?" Reluctantly, he explained that based on our SACS review and their recommendations for improving, the elementary school needed drastic changes. He also shared that the middle school, which I headed for the previous four years, had received the highest rating of all the departments. I did not show how excited I was to hear the news, as I did not want to demonstrate my emotional side nor did I want to suggest that his areas of the school were ineffective; I simply nodded and tried to stay on topic. He then explained that he wanted me to re-create the elementary school as I had done with the

middle school. He also stated that both he and I knew that there were problems in middle school, however, the SACS committee noted the changes I made that created a culture of caring and responsibility. Yes, I had to admit I had my share of problems in establishing the middle school. It took four years to see what I envisioned when I restructured the classes and formed the middle school. I was being asked to do that again – as if I could re-create a perfect storm. How could I be expected to take a school from start-up to turn-around in such a short time? The teachers in the middle school were loyal to me after the old teachers left and were replaced. The new teachers were loyal to the collective vision of OCDS middle school. I had not had a conversation with some of the elementary teachers and many of them looked at me as the outsider.

I was still concerned about what he was not saying. I did not want my best qualification for this new position to be the color of my skin. I hoped that the merit of my education and my work ethic would be the only considerations, but I had to face the facts. Many of the complaints from the parents of elementary students came from Black parents. Additionally, there was not one Black teacher in the elementary school. I really did not want to think that my race somehow held more clout than my educational background or my work experiences. I was determined to be the principal of OCDS, not the *Black* principal.

Rats on the Sinking Principal (Ship)

Mrs. Pittman entered my office the first week in July and said that she received a call from a school district in Texas inquiring about Mrs. Bloomberg, one of the first grade teachers. This was the second call from Texas for a reference on Mrs. Bloomberg, yet she continued to deny that she was leaving this school year. I sensed a slight smirk on Mrs. Pittman's face; I did not know how much she was in my corner and I felt like she was happy to be right. Mrs. Bloomberg had not come to her classroom at all this summer and had not stopped by to assess

what she would need for her classroom. I was concerned that she would not be returning and that she was stringing us along. I called her and she confirmed that she would not be returning to OCDS. I think I knew that she would not be returning when I called, but I needed closure so that I could move forward. I now needed two Kindergarten teachers and one first grade teacher.

I did not think things could get worse. I felt as if I was aboard a sinking ship and I was the only one trying to keep it afloat. The next week, Mrs. Doath one of the second grade teachers walked into my office and resigned. Mrs. Doath explained that she thought it would be best if she did not teach the upcoming year, as she wanted to stay home with her young son; I did not believe her. Her son was four years old and she had been working all this time, and now she wanted to stay home? Paranoia started to set in. I lost both Kindergarten teachers, one first grade teacher, and now one second grade teacher. I wondered if this was a conspiracy. Did they each decide that they would not work for me? Two of these ladies are leaving and they did not have other teaching positions. Had they discussed this in a group and all planned to leave at one time? I thought that I must be paranoid – I must be crazy.

After Mrs. Doath spoke and explained her reason for leaving, I thanked her for all she had done over the summer getting the classroom ready. She had purchased the classroom supplies, cleared out the old files, and organized the teaching resources. She looked like a teacher planning to return – maybe that was why the Headmaster waited so many months to inform the faculty that I would become the principal; I wanted to believe that he did not intend to leave no time for me to forge relationships and communicate my vision and demonstrate my leadership style.

When Mrs. Doath finished speaking, I asked her if I could pray with her; I really did not think I wanted to pray, but I knew it was the correct thing to do. She agreed, reluctantly, and I

placed my right hand on her shoulder and I prayed for her and her family. I prayed for direction for her and I blessed her decision and let her know that if I could ever do anything to help her, she should let me know. I was trying to be the principal – I was trying not to be what was expected of a Black woman. I was trying to stay professional and keep my Christianity intact. I was the principal – I must behave like the principal.

After she left, I was stunned and hurt and so self-absorbed I could not think. I sat in my office feeling unprotected and vulnerable. It had been a long time since I felt like others viewed me as not quite good enough. I was bothered by another teacher's resignation – another White teacher. I knew teachers leave – but without a job? It seemed personal. I felt angry because I felt unwanted. At that moment I wanted to prove them wrong and I was determined that I would distinguish my principalship.

Principal (Ship) Blown off Course

With only a few weeks left before the start of school, I panicked as I looked to my first year as a principal. I so wanted this year to be productive and I wanted to work on improving our school. All of my time and energy during the summer had been spent searching for and securing teachers and I realized that my focus would have to change. I had many new teachers who did not understand the culture of the school, but there was a bright side. The SACS report suggested that major changes needed to occur in the elementary division of OCDS. Maybe it would be easier for me to make the needed changes with new faculty members and I could build a staff who was loyal to me and understood and wanted to share my vision and their visions in building our school. Time was short and a problem; I was unsure that I would be able to find highly qualified teachers to fill so many openings. I did not want to have just warm bodies in the classrooms; I wanted qualified teachers who wanted to be at OCDS.

The interview process went slowly and I was not impressed with the applicants. I found our biggest issue was being competitive when OCDS could not provide the competitive salaries and resources of larger school districts. When I did find an applicant who would be a wonderful addition to our faculty, our pay differential of \$10,000 to \$12,000 less per year than other schools in our area was too great. Quality teachers could make more money elsewhere. Clearly a small private school had some disadvantages. I spent the next two weeks interviewing applicants and checking references. By the last week in July I had found both of my Kindergarten teachers and I was conducting the second interview with a first grade teacher. I still needed to find a first grade teacher and a second grade teacher and hoped to have all of my teachers in place before August first.

On July 30, 2014, I interviewed a lady who was recommended to me by Ms. Judy, the secretary. Ms. Judy had informed me that she was an OCDS graduate and I also noted that she was a LSU graduate with a degree in Elementary Education. I really believed that she would be an asset to our school; as a graduate OCDS, she would understand our vision and she would be familiar with the culture of the organization. She also had five years of experience teaching at another private school in town and I thought her experience would provide her with insight into working with our students and communicating with our parents.

When she arrived, I heard the ladies in the office greet her as if they were greeting an old friend. Ms. Judy called my office phone and I came out to meet Mrs. Marne. She was about 40 years old, about 5'7", a darker skinned Black woman with her hair in long dreads (ethnic braids). Her dress was average- not flashy and not too plain- and she wore comfortable shoes. I remembered thinking that she was the first Black woman whom I interviewed. She was well

spoken, had a pleasant disposition, and was knowledgeable about elementary teaching strategies. I liked her and I wanted Mr. Kolfman and Dr. Robinsky to meet with her.

Mr. Kolfman and Dr. Robinsky interviewed Mrs. Marne at the high school office for her second interview. After about forty minutes, Mr. Kolfman stopped by my office and explained that he was not sure Mrs. Marne would be a good candidate. I was shocked and confused; Mrs. Marne was an OCDS graduate, had a degree from LSU, and was a certified teacher with five years teaching experience. I could not understand why he felt Mrs. Marne would not be a good fit for OCDS. My only thought was that Mrs. Marne was a darker skin Black woman and she wore her hair in braids. Although a certified teacher with experience and sterling qualifications, I was not surprised that she was not hired. The upper leadership at OCDS was extremely conservative White middle-aged men. Mrs. Marne's darker skin and long braids played into a stereotype of Blacks. Neither Dr. Robinsky nor Mr. Kolfman gave me a real reason why Mrs. Marne would not be an asset to OCDS; I thought that maybe she was just too Black. I was reminded of how limited my power really was as the principal. It was still the "Good Ole Boys" in charge. If I could not hire the people whom I felt were qualified, then I did not know how to make the changes that needed to be made. I was frustrated.

Later that day, Mrs. King, one of the third grade teachers, informed me that her friend Mrs. Barey was looking for a teaching position. The next morning, Mrs. Barey arrived at my office. She was a White woman in her 40s, about 5' 3", with long black hair that reached midway down her back. She had experience working in private Christian schools and she had been teaching for about six years. She was vocal about the problems she experienced at the charter school in which she was currently employed and expressed that she thought that the students were not well disciplined. I was concerned because I knew that 85% of the students at

the school were Black, and I was unsure if she would not be compassionate with young Black students; she had worked in predominately White private schools before the charter school. I expressed my concern that all of our students felt that they were loved; she agreed and shared her heart about teaching. Mr. Kolfman met with her and he hired her on the spot. Despite my reservation, I welcomed Mrs. Barey; I had my first grade teacher.

The Principal (Ship) in Uncharted Waters

Later that Friday afternoon, I received a call from my sixth grade science teacher who wanted to stop by my office. She was a teacher who planned ahead. Each year she took her students to NASA in Houston, Texas, and also planned the yearly science fair for her students. I thought she wanted to discuss her budget and plans for the year, but when she arrived, she was not her normal talkative, bubbly self. She looked at me sadly and said, “I have some really bad news.” I knew that her father had been ill and I asked how things were with her family. She put her head down and said that all was well. I asked about the bad news and she explained that she had accepted a teaching position in another district and that she would not be returning to OCDS. I looked at her and unintelligently uttered, “What?” School was to start in nine days and I was learning that this critical science position would be vacant; finding a qualified science teacher at such a late date would take a miracle. I looked at her with disdain and anger. She had applied for the other position weeks earlier and knew there was a chance she would be leaving. Why did she not just give me a heads up? She said how very sorry she was and how much she loved working at OCDS, but that she needed more money. I was angry and blinded by my own needs and the needs of the school and students. I could not show her compassion and I did not speak because I knew if I did, I would regret it. She said, “I love you, Mrs. Wallis.” The only thing that would have been worse was if she had kissed me on the cheek. My emotions included feeling like I had

been sucker punched, slapped in the face, gut-wrenched, stabbed in the back. There were no words to explain the depths of my despair. I felt BETRAYED! I had nominated her for OCDS teacher of the year and given her special duty schedules because of a sick grandmother; she wanted time off to attend a workshop in California, which I granted. What could I say? She had recently remarried and had two children and her new husband did not want to pay for private school. I could not offer her more money because she was at the top of our pay scale. I hugged her and parroted, "I love you too." I believed that my students would suffer this year.

When she left, I wondered who gave her a reference. I was her direct supervisor for the previous four years and did not understand how she secured the new job without my reference. That was strange and perplexing to me, but I did not have the luxury of pondering the options. I found myself lost without a sextant or a GPS satellite and my principalship was adrift and in jeopardy of failing before it began. The start of my principalship was far removed from what I had envisioned.

Land Ho!

School was to begin in one week and I felt a sense of despair. I had been unable to find teachers whom I felt would support my vision. Mr. Kolfman believed he needed to step in and assist in the interview process. We opted to hold group interviews on a Sunday afternoon to expedite the hiring process and fill the open teaching positions. After church on Sunday I met with Mr. Kolfman and we waited for the applicants to arrive for the interviews. We sat in the conference room and met with Mrs. Pembert. She explained that she was familiar with our school because her son attended OCDS for two years, twelve years previously. I did not remember her or her son, but she had fifteen years teaching experience and the last five years she had worked at the Marville Youth Discipline Center as an instructor of boys who had aged out of

the regular educational system and were studying for their GED exam. I did not think she would be a fit for us because her work had been with males who had been kicked out of school or had dropped out; however, we did not have many options. Mr. Kolfman also had reservations, but he wanted to give her a try.

We also interviewed Ms. Raltel. She was a younger White woman in her late 20s with long, straight hair that touched the middle of her back. She had a degree in psychology, but she did not have experience teaching nor was she certified. Mr. Kolfman often commented that he did not think being certified was a hallmark for being a good teacher. I agreed in part, but I thought that being certified at least suggested the training and understanding of pedagogy needed to be a good teacher; certification ensured that the teacher addressed the knowledge of the learner and their needs.

During the interview with Ms. Raltel, I was unable to ask questions about how she would handle certain classroom situations or what methods she would employ to teach a difficult concept as she was not a teacher and she had not been in a classroom. She had only worked with kids in a summer camp environment and I wanted her to know how different it would be working with kids when fun was not the priority. I could not understand Mr. Kolfman need to entertain an interview with this young lady; I learned that Ms. Raltel had an older sister who had worked at OCDS fifteen years previous. Mr. Kolfman remarked that if Ms. Raltel was half the teacher her older sister was, then she would be a good teacher. I did not understand that statement- as if the ability to know the subject matter, the knowledge of the learner, and how to use instructional techniques to convey a lesson was something that could be inherited – like blue eyes that run in the family. I knew I did not want Ms. Raltel and I did not think she was a match for us.

I still could not understand why the Black lady, Mrs. Marne, would not have been a better choice. She was a certified teacher with a degree in Elementary Education and had experience teaching in a private school; she was also an OCDS graduate. After the interviews, I expressed my concerns to Mr. Kolfman about hiring people without an education degree and no teaching experience. I asked about Mrs. Marne. He seemed to search my face for acceptance and approval and said, "I don't think our parents would understand the way Mrs. Marne styles her hair." I waited for my own response; I had been at OCDS for over fifteen years and I had never responded in a manner indicative of being a Black woman. I had just heard him say a most prejudicial and racist remark and he knew he could say it to me without fear of protest. He knew that even though I was a Black woman, he was safe in his rhetoric. I said nothing. I did not respond. I guess I knew what he was thinking and what was worse was that I felt the same way. I admitted to myself that I was taken aback when I first saw Mrs. Marne and her braids. I had worked at OCDS so long that I thought that I understood what the majority of the parents would think about a Black woman who looked so ethnic. I was disgusted with myself. Who was I? What had happened to me? Something within me died that day, or maybe it was reborn. I realized that an unqualified, White woman had more clout than an experienced, credential Black woman. As I reflected on these events, something within me rebelled. I questioned my core beliefs about identity and value. I had judged a woman based on racial stereotypes and appearance. The only bright side was that I had all but one of my teachers in place and I anticipated an end to this journey.

Mutiny aboard the S. S. Principal (Ship)

With just one week before school was to begin, we prepared for our annual faculty retreat where we spend three days and two nights bonding with the teachers. At the end of May, I selected the book, *The Passion Driven Classroom* for faculty summer reading. I had read the book earlier in the year and I was impressed with the focus. I purchased a book for each teacher and my assistant principal and asked that they be ready to discuss the concepts and instructional strategies presented in the book. I prepared a power point presentation and I created a bookmark souvenir (see Appendix F) for each teacher as a reminder of our direction and focus for the year.

I found out the hard way that it was difficult to lead without consensus and without followers. At the retreat, none of the teachers had read the book and I was told that my assistant principal told some of the teachers that she was not going to read the book. I was in a power struggle and I did not want to alienate the teachers or Mrs. Pittman; I believed that I needed her. I knew I had to approach my teachers differently to gain their cooperation and allegiance.

When we returned from retreat, I collected resources and ensured that the teachers had everything they needed to start school. I had not found a second grade teacher, however, I asked a parent who had been a long-time substitute teacher the previous year to fill in until I found a teacher. She agreed and I was set with all of my teachers in place.

I began trying to be all to all. I wanted the teachers to see me as a resource and as someone they could trust. I wanted them to know that I was knowledgeable about the priorities needed to be successful. I met with teachers individually to allow them to share their concerns and I wanted them to feel that they had my ear, and the teachers seemed at ease around me. Mrs. King's first science unit for third grade was on life cycles and she wanted to know if I had any

ideas. I suggested that we order a butterfly larvae kit and allow each student to observe and monitor his or her own butterfly life cycle. She was excited and explained that she had never attempted this with her students. As I turned to walk out of her classroom, she stopped me and asked me back into the classroom so that we could talk. I went back into the room and she closed the door and looked at me and said, “You really aren’t as bad as they say.” I felt uncomfortable and responded with a simple, “Thank You.” The inflection in my voice sounded as if I was asking a question. She explained that Mrs. Pittman had told some of the teachers that I was a “Total Bitch” and that it would be difficult to work for me. She said no one wanted to work for someone who did not care about the teachers and that some of the teachers decided that they were not going to stay. I heard her, but I could not respond. I had thought that there was a reason why so many teachers left at one time and now it all made sense. I understood that my assistant principal had undermined me. She promoted fear and mistrust of me before the school year started. I thought I would have been furious, but I was not; I was hurt, deeply hurt in a place that I had buried. I thanked her for being candid but I did not know what to do with that information. Could I trust what Mrs. King told me? Did I think Mrs. Pittman would do something so despicable? I decided to say nothing. I felt that I could only control my actions. I decided that since I knew what everyone was expecting, I had an advantage – I would become the unexpected.

As I walked back to my office, I saw Mrs. Phillips in the hallway. She was a 40ish White woman. She had been a long time parent of OCDS and had been a long-term substitute teacher in second grade while a teacher was on maternity leave. She had agreed to fill in until I found someone to hire. As we spoke I became extremely emotional. I did not know if my hormones were raging or if I was just tired of trying to fill all of the open positions. I explained to Mrs.

Phillips that it was important to me have someone who cared about our students and someone who was familiar with our school and our procedures. I was, in fact, begging this lady to stay on. I hated to beg for anything. As I spoke, tears ran down my face – I did not know where the tears came from – but there I was, begging someone to take a job – and crying! It had been a long difficult week. I thought that she looked at me with pity; she said she would think about it and let me know. I did not like being vulnerable and her hesitation about accepting the position made me wonder if it was because of the rumors about me.

Principal (Ship) Dropping Anchor

August 7th was Orientation Day and just two working days before the start of school. For the first time many of my parents would hear me share my vision and heart as the new principal and I wanted to represent myself as a confident, professional, educational leader. I knew that the parents' first impression would set the stage for the rest of the year. I ensured that I was dressed impeccably and that my power point presentation for the parents was informative and engaging. I had a brief meeting with the teachers that afternoon to go over the faculty handbook and lesson plan responsibilities. I wanted the teacher to have time in their classrooms before the orientation and I worked in my office on my power point. I left school around 2:30 p.m. so that I could go home, shower, and return for 6:30 p.m. I thought I would be nervous, but I was excited instead. I looked forward to addressing the parents and the teachers in the capacity of the PRINCIPAL. I wanted to show my ability to chart a new course as the leader.

I considered my demeanor – the face I would allow my parents to see – I needed to be professional – gracious – knowledgeable – caring – and approachable. All eyes would be on me. As the parents arrived for orientation, I greeted them in the foyer of the sanctuary and was put at ease when I noticed so many parents whom I knew from past years. I smiled and laughed and

laughed and smiled as parents talked about summer vacations and summer sports. I was charming in my conversations, funny in my quips, and knowledgeable when questioned. I connected with parents at many different levels. I was mindful of whom I was speaking with at all times; I wanted to meet and even exceed the expectations of my parents. I was comfortable speaking with both White and Black parents— longevity at OCDS had some perks. I had taught many of the older siblings of these students and I had formed relationships with parents. As a teacher, I attended sporting events and birthday parties and even attended a baptism of a White student because he invited me. I have forged both relationships and a reputation for not only being an excellent teacher, but also a person who deeply cared about children. Many parents expressed to me that they had been waiting for me to become principal. For the ones who were waiting for me to fail, I would have to prove myself. OCDS had never had a Black principal in its 30 year history, nor had there been a woman as principal. I was setting a precedent and I was cognizant of what acceptable Blackness looked like and sounded like.

The evening went well. I discussed the new leadership structure with the parents and I introduced the faculty. I provided the parents with an overview of the curriculum and discussed the daily schedule. I included information about our PTO, hot lunch, and carpool. Things could not have been more perfect and I concluded with a chance for parents to share their concerns. I shook hands and shared hugs. A middle-aged White man approached me and I turned and gave him my toothy grin. He introduced himself and explained that he had a son that would be in second grade. I was about to begin my spin into how wonderful things would be in second grade when he stopped me and he asked, “Are you from up North?” I smiled and said, “No, sir, I was born and raised in South Louisiana.” He had a look on his face of disbelief and he said, “You really don’t seem to have an accent.” I did not know if he was just making conversation or if he

was implying that he had a preconceived idea of how a Black woman should sound. I was not put out by his comment because I had heard it in the past and I was pleased with myself; I was pleased that my years of trying to be the unexpected Black woman had paid off; I had succeeded in my attempts at mimicry. For me the night ended on a high note. I presented the new principal to the stakeholders at OCDS, and I felt that I had been successful creating an acceptable Black female principal who looked, walked, and talked right (White).

The Maiden Voyage

August 11th was the first day of school at OCDS and my first day as the principal. I arrived about 6:45 a.m. as I wanted to get an early start and wanted to be visible as the parents arrived on campus for carpool; I wore my navy blue suit with a silk white blouse. I also wanted to make sure the class assignments were available for students who registered late.

As parents arrived, I met them at the carpool drop-off spot. The parents waved and smiled as they arrived. The students were dressed in their new uniforms and everyone seemed excited. As I helped the teachers at carpool get the students out of the cars, I noticed a tan SUV. I opened the door and saw a Black woman driving and a Kindergarten student trying to unlock her car seat. When the little girl saw me she shouted, “Look, Mommy! It’s the boss.” I glanced at the mother and she looked a little embarrassed. I could not help but think about the conversations that had taken place at their home. The little girl did not say, “It’s Mrs. Wallis” or “It’s the principal”. She said, “It’s the boss!” I smiled and helped her out of the car. She seemed surprised to see me opening the door just as I was surprised to hear someone refer to me as the boss. All of my elementary teachers were White women and I wondered what they thought of this little Black girl boldly proclaiming that I was the boss. I also wondered how important it was

for little Black girls to see a Black woman as the boss. I was not sure that I understood that at an early age.

The first day was filled with questions- how, when, what, where, and who. At times of uncertainty, everyone needed to know that I was not shaken – I was not flustered – I had the answers – I had a plan. One of the first grade teachers needed two more desks. One of the third grade teachers had three students in class that were not on her roll. A fifth grade teacher needed three more social studies books. One of the second grade teachers could not sign on to the computer to take roll. One of the sixth grade teachers could not sign on to the computer because her login was invalid. These concerns were important to each of the teachers and I wanted them to know that I shared their concerns and that I would take care of their issues. As I headed back to my office, an upset parent of a Kindergarten student confronted me. She was not happy because she wanted her child in a different classroom. Other parents in the office complained about how slow carpool went on the first day and there was a cacophony of sounds and emotions swirling around the office. To me, it was like sweet music – I smiled and took it all in stride.

The parent of a first grade student entered the office in a huff and wanted to discuss how we would ensure the safety of her child. She wanted assurance that the father never be allowed to pick-up the child up from school. I explained that I needed a court order indicating that she had sole custody or that she had some type of restraining order. She was not happy with me as I explained that school law required me to have proper paper work to enforce her request. I needed to be firm – knowledgeable – professional. As she raised her voice, I wanted her to see a compassionate Black woman who was also a mom, and I wanted her to know that I understood that she wanted me to protect her child; I also needed her to understand that if the father had a legal right to pick-up his child, I could not prevent him from doing so. I encouraged her to seek a

lawyer and I explained that if the child's father showed up, I would give her a call. I marked the child's file and I flagged the computer so that if anyone other than the mother picked up the child, we would call and notify the mother. She calmed down, but she was still unhappy. I needed her to know (as a White woman) that I was knowledgeable and I had to hold my ground. I sensed something in her tone of voice that suggested she did not view me as the authority.

Friday finally arrived. It was the end of the first week of the new school year. It seemed we had experienced a good start. I was trying to learn the names of the elementary students, as it was important to me that I speak to the students by name. I spent much of my time the first week in the hallways and in the classrooms. I also walked outside on the playground to establish myself as the leader. I wanted to establish a family community with the students and the teachers. It was important to me that they understood my heart and my vision for leadership and for our school.

At about 10:15 a.m. I was on my way back to my office when Mrs. Bruchel, a White woman in her late thirties who was one of the second grade teachers, asked to speak with me. She seemed standoffish when we first met in the summer, however, I spent a great deal of time with her talking about her ideas for the year and new teaching strategies she wanted to try. She had been at OCDS for three years and had a reputation for being a good teacher. I invited her to come in and sit down and when she took her seat, she started to cry. I offered her a tissue and I asked if there was something wrong. She explained that she had accepted a teaching job at another school closer to her home. I could hardly make out what she was saying through the tears and her sobbing. She expressed to me how sorry she was that she would be leaving OCDS. I could not speak; I was dumbfounded. We had only been in school one week and she was leaving. Then I realized that she had applied for the job much earlier and the other school was just getting

back to her. I could not understand why she was crying; she applied for the job – she wanted to leave. She explained that she did not know she would like working for me so much and said that she liked the way I allowed the teachers to have input into school matters. She explained that she liked that I asked the teachers for their ideas and their advice about curriculum and policies. I could not comprehend what she was saying at the time; I was a mad Black woman – I wanted to scream. I had to be the bigger person so I thanked her for the kind words and I wished her well. I told her that we would miss her and I knew it would be difficult for her students to lose their teacher. I asked how much time could she give us and she said that she could work three days the following week while I tried to find a replacement. I thanked her and asked her to provide a narrative of what she observed about the students, believing that the information would be helpful for the new teacher and provide insight on the students. She stood and hugged me, and I reluctantly hugged her back.

So many teachers jumped shipped without really knowing who I was as a leader. I felt betrayed, but that suggested that I had a relationship with these people and I did not. They did not know me. They only had rumors. But it still hurt. I felt that this was personal. I thought about what Mrs. King, the third grade teacher, had told me that Ms. Pittman had said. It was farfetched to think that she initiated panic in the minds of the teachers. It sounded like some kind of conspiracy theory, and I was feeling just a little paranoid. I could not believe that another teacher was leaving after the first week of school. I had to prepare a parent letter to notify them of this change. Losing a teacher after one week of school made OCDS look unstable and made me look like the un-leader. There were so many teacher transitions this year and once again I had to hire someone and I prayed I would find a good teacher at such a late date.

I really did not know whom I could trust. I had lost half of my workforce and I did not know what to do; I felt lost and lonely. I knew that not many parents were aware of the number of teachers who had left. I knew that any compromise in education would be considered a failure of leadership and, as the new principal, it would be directed toward me. I had to find a way to salvage this school year and communicate to the teachers that they were my top priority and that I was there to support them. I had to retool and reshape the negative image of me that had been concocted by fears and prejudices. I had to reclaim my identity or at least recreate a more pleasing identity.

Our first pay period arrived and I had the honor of handing out paychecks to the teachers. I wanted a chance to speak to each teacher and thank each of them for a great start of the new school year. I also was anxious to find out how much more I would be making, as Mr. Kolfman and I never talked about salary when we met in February about my appointment as the principal. I closed the door to my office and prepared to open my paycheck. When I opened the envelope, I was not sure I had the correct paycheck, but it had my name printed on the outside. It was my paycheck and the amount was the same as before I became principal. I thought that it was an oversight and I would speak with Mr. Kolfman to straighten it out.

I met Mr. Kolfman in the office and I asked if we could talk about my paycheck. I explained that there must have been a mix-up in the accounting department because my paycheck was the same as my previous ones. He looked at me and said, “Dr. Robinsky was not giving raises this year.” I laughed a nervous little chuckle and said, “I understand that, but this is not a raise; this is a new job position.” When I looked into his eyes, I knew that he had no intention of getting a salary increase for me. I was upset; I knew that they would never have done this to a White man. I was making the same salary that I did when I was the assistant principal of

only three grades. I said, “Someone would have to be crazy to take on more headaches for no more money.” He said that he would speak to Dr. Robinsky about my salary.

I was faced with my own dilemma of what was I going to do if there would be no increase in my pay. I felt foolish because it did not matter that I had the educational degree to be the principal. It did not matter that I had successfully passed the leadership licenser exam. I would not receive the salary that my predecessors had enjoyed. I had waited for this opportunity to gain what I believed was useful experience. I decided that the experience as a Black female principal at a predominantly White private school was worth receiving less compensation even if it was unequal to that of my White male contemporaries. I also decided that no one would know that I was essentially doing extra work for nothing.

The next day there was an administrative meeting in the conference room of the school. This was not a planned meeting and I was not sure what the main focus would be. I cleared my schedule for that afternoon in anticipation of a lengthy meeting. I was informed that the meeting would begin at 11:30 a.m. and I arrived promptly at 11:30 a.m.; however, when I entered the room, it was clear that I was late. All of the chairs around the oblong Cherrywood table were taken and I had to pull up a wooden chair from the corner of the room. Everyone in the room was a White male. I felt a little uneasy when I walked into the room; I contributed that uneasy feeling to the fact I was the last to arrive for the meeting. After a few pleasantries, the Headmaster asked that I provide the board members with my assessment of how well things were going. I was startled when I heard him refer to me by my first name. I had been working for him for over fifteen years; first as a teacher and then as an assistant principal and he had never addressed me by my first name. I listened and watched – I did not know if this was protocol or the norm for the upper administrators. I soon realized that they were still addressing each other by Mr. and their

last names. Each time one of them would address me, he would use my first name. I was not sure what to make of this. Why was it acceptable to refer to me by my first name after all these years?

CHAPTER SIX: BURN YOUR PRINCIPAL (SHIP)

Landing on Uncharted Territory

The third week of the new school year was “Back to School Night”, our open house for parents. This was an opportunity for parents to come to school and learn about the plans and classroom procedures from their child’s teacher. It was also an opportunity for the new, Black, female principal to make a positive impression. I held a brief faculty meeting with the teachers after school to explain my expectations for that night. I wanted the teachers to discuss their policies, their curriculum, and their expectations for their students. This was the time for the teachers to express the culture of our school, which I believed was a reflection of the principalship, and I needed them to be professional and personable. Parents arrived at 6:30 p.m. in the auditorium. I was in the auditorium foyer, where I met and greeted parents with a smile. I desired to be the consummate hostess and make my guests feel welcomed. I had a short power point presentation to address concerns such as students being tardy for school, the importance of communication, and our new Parent Portal, which was a computer system that allowed parents to have direct access to grades and homework assignments. I was confident and poised, light hearted yet professional. I felt great and the event was a success. I was confident and clear while explaining the points I wanted to cover and I knew I had given my best performance.

When I finished speaking, the parents and students applauded. I smiled, waved, and blew a kiss to the students as they called my name from the audience. I walked into the foyer to continue to meeting new parents and to hug familiar parents. Then an older 60ish White woman introduced herself and said that she was the grandmother of a third grader named Stanley. She told me that Stanley was really enjoying school. Although I did not know all of my children very

well, I did know Stanley. He was a cute little red headed boy with freckles and a bright personality; he always hugged me when I passed down the elementary hallway. I smiled and said that Stanley was a sweet little boy and I was very happy he was with us. She smiled and then she said, "This is my second time hearing you speak. I was also here for the orientation night and you really spoke well." I was unsure how to respond, but my wit was quick and I smiled and thanked her. She then said, "Yes, you really do speak well." At that, I smiled, turned, and continued to greet other parents. I did not think much about her compliments.

I continued to be charming and gracious. I wanted the parents to feel welcomed and assured that they had selected the right school. While the parents were visiting I walked around the neat, well-organized classrooms. Students' work was displayed on the walls and each teacher had created a power point presentation for the parents. Everything went well but as the night wore on, I was tired and ready for it to end. I was pleased with all of the comments coming from parents and I continued to smile and laugh, laugh and smile until 8:45 p.m. when the last parent left. When I reflected on the night, I realized that the air of insincerity in my mannerisms. I was so consumed with having them (the White parents) like me that I was unrecognizable. For years, I had despised phony, pretentious people yet I found that I had spent the majority of the evening panhandling for the approval of people who were scrutinizing my every gesture. This was new territory for me and I was unsure how to proceed; I only knew that there was no turning back.

Exploring the New Land

The next morning, after what I thought was a successful open house, I wanted to get an early start on the day. When I got to my office, Ms. Lisa, a parent of a sixth grade boy, was waiting for me. I met Ms. Lisa three years ago when her son was in third grade and was having difficulty with reading comprehension. A middle-aged, divorced Black woman who was an

operator at a local chemical plant, she was a single parent with one son named Ty. I was surprised to see her in the office as I had spoken to her from a distance the previous night and she seemed happy. I asked that she follow me to my office and I motioned to her to take a seat. She was well dressed with beautiful high heels and her hair was perfectly styled. As she took her seat I asked if all was well. She commented that her son Ty was really doing well in his classes and then she looked at me for a second without saying a word, as if there was something difficult she wanted to say. I smiled and asked what was going on and how could I help her. Her eyes were cold and focused when she said, “I heard what that White lady said to you last night.” I was at a loss. I did not remember what she was recalling. She continued, “When you finished speaking, you walked outside the sanctuary and an old White lady came up and said that you spoke well for a Black woman.” I felt stunned; I did not know that anyone was close to us while we spoke. I smiled and said, “No, that’s not what she said.” I explained that the lady had only said that she had heard me speak two times and that I spoke very well. Ms. Lisa looked upset and said, “I know what she was meaning. That White lady was saying that you spoke well for someone that is Black.” She was disturbed and offended by what the lady had said and explained that she felt that the White lady was shocked that a Black woman could be so professional – so well spoken. I understood how Ms. Lisa felt, as I knew what it meant to receive an insult disguised as a compliment. I was too familiar with that kind of treatment – but that was not a platform from which I wanted to protest. I needed the White community to view me as competent, professional, and knowledgeable. I guess I needed to feel accepted. I wanted them (White parents) to view me as an equal. I had a need I did not understand – I positioned myself to be the exception to what I believed Whites thought about Blacks. I really did feel that I was special – different than other Blacks. I looked at Ms. Lisa and smiled and explained to her that I had heard what the White

woman said. I wanted her to know I was acknowledging her feelings as a Black woman, but I also explained that the woman was about 70 years old and that she was from a different generation. I explained that she was at a predominantly White private Christian school and she was not accustomed to hearing an articulate Black woman command a room and hold them captive. I needed Ms. Lisa to understand that I accepted that White people from a past generation needed to feel empowered and that allowing her that luxury did not diminish me. I looked at her with compassion and said, “The way I change minds and hearts is by being different from what they expect. I have the power not to react to stupid comments.” The look on her face revealed that she was not happy with the reality I presented, but I could tell she understood what I was saying. Over the years I had learned it is better to be practical and prudent (for I am a pragmatist).

Winning over the Natives

The rush of the new school year ceased by the second week in September. Following my morning routine of walking the halls speaking with teachers and students, I headed back to my office and received a call from Mr. Kolfman while I was checking my emails. We had not spoken on the phone in about a month and I was surprised to hear from him. He started the conversation with small talk about how busy he had been and he alluded to some problems he was having at the high school. As we exchanged pleasantries he said, “You will not believe who called me today.” Curious, but not anxious, I replied, “Who?” He said, “I got a call today from Mrs. Roper. She wanted me to know that she had taken a job in a public school and that it was different – very different.” I detected a chuckle in his voice, but I was unsure of his mood over the phone. He explained that she wanted to know if we had any openings and that she wanted to come back to teach at OCDS. He said that Mrs. Roper told him that she had spoken with some of

the teachers and they told her how well things were going this year. I did not know what to say; something within me wanted to have revenge on her or to hurt her and I was not sure why. Mr. Kolfman waited for me to respond and I did not want to gloat, but I was happy that she realized that sometimes things are not what they are thought to be. I was a little happy that things were not working out for her and was happy that the teachers who stayed with me recognized the differences my leadership style had made in a short amount of time. As he spoke, I expressed how happy I was that my teachers spoke favorably about how things were going. Although my mind was made up, I wanted Mr. Kolfman to think I was considering rehiring Mrs. Roper. After what I thought was a respectable amount of time, about forty-five seconds, I said, “I don’t think I have anything at this time.” I did not want to take her back. She never worked for me and when she left, she never contacted me; she spoke with Mr. Kolfman. She was one of the teachers who left OCDS in an attempt to hurt me or not to work for me. She was part of the so-called conspiracy and I did not think I could trust her.

I was so busy trying to win over my teachers and demonstrate my unique abilities and knowledge of education that I forgot about the conspiracy. I spent much time creating an illusion of a caring, considerate, hands-on, helpful, and supportive leader. I constructed a leadership image that was the antithesis of the rumors about me. I spent my time collecting resources, getting funding for projects, and sending teachers to workshops. I tried to create the image of the perfect leader and I found that it worked. My teachers spread positive rumors about my leadership and our school. They came to me for work related and personal advice. The teachers stopped in the morning to pick up coffee for me and they left sweet treats on my desk. We bonded in a way I did not think would happen. I had created a familial environment at our school with the teacher, students, and parents.

Staking My Claim

One particularly warm October morning I arrived at the office a little later than usual. Ms. Judy was frantic as she explained that a parent had been calling to speak to me. As she spoke in her usual coded language, the main office line rang and she motioned for me to go into my office. Pointing to the receiver and whispering in a raspy voice she said, “Mrs. Wallis, it’s him – the parent I was telling you about.” Ms. Judy rang the call to me in my office. The call was Mr. Simmons, a parent of a sixth grade girl. His was professional and abrupt and he indicated that he wanted to meet with me. From his tone and Ms. Judy’s coded messages it was clear that he was upset. I asked if he could come into the office the following morning.

When Mr. Simmons and his wife arrived at the office, I escorted them into the conference room and I offered them a seat. The Simmons were an upper middle class Black couple; Mrs. Simmons was well dressed and her hair and nails looked as if they had professional treatment; Mr. Simmons was also well dressed and well groomed, his beard neatly trimmed and his nails manicured with a clear polish. Mrs. Simmons seemed cold toward me and she tried not to make eye contact with me as she took her seat. I did not take the seat at the head of the conference table but rather I sat directly across from the Simmons. I smiled and asked what could I do for them. Mr. Simmons started, “Mrs. Wallis, I must tell you I am very mad right about now.” His voice started to tremble as he spoke. “I picked my daughter up from school yesterday and she informed me that Ms. Renee, the cafeteria manager, put her hands on her.” Ms. Renee was a White woman about 45 years old who had been at OCDS for about seven years. I asked him to clarify. I asked, “Are you saying that Ms. Renee physically touched your daughter?” Mr. Simmons trumpeted, “That’s right; she grabbed Nickie.” This news disturbed me, as I had heard nothing about this incident; no one had reported this to me. He explained that Ms. Renee’s

daughter Jenny and his daughter had been having some girl trouble. He said that his daughter told the teacher that Jenny skipped the other students when they were in line in the cafeteria. He explained that Jenny got mad at Nickie and they exchanged words; the teacher called both of the girls out of class and discussed procedures for the lunch line and she told both girls to stop talking about this matter. He continued, “The next day Ms. Renee confronted Nickie in the cafeteria.” Mr. Simmons told me that Ms. Renee walked up to Nickie and grabbed her on the shoulders and poked her in the chest, telling her to mind her business. He explained that Ms. Renee told Nickie that she was the boss of the cafeteria and nobody could tell her daughter what to do.

I listened patiently without interrupting – I just listened to what he had to say. When he finished speaking, I asked if I could have Nickie come over to the office and give me a chance to speak with her. They agreed and I asked Ms. Judy to call the teacher and have Nickie come to the conference room. When Nickie arrived, I told her how sorry I was that this had happened to her and that I was sorry that I did not protect her from this kind of treatment. I then asked her to tell me what happened. She recounted the events that her father had explained. I explained to Mr. Simmons that I did not like to discuss problems or conflicts unless all parties were available and I asked Mr. and Mrs. Simmons if I could have Ms. Renee join us. They were reluctant, but they agreed; Mrs. Simmons looked at me and that was the first time that she acknowledged that I was in the room.

I asked Ms. Judy to call Ms. Renee to join us in the conference room. While we waited, I made sure that the parents knew that I was listening to what they said and the unspoken things that their body language communicated. Mrs. Simmons then said, “I am pissed that this White woman thought it was acceptable to put her hands on my daughter.” I said, “Mrs. Simmons, I

know how you feel. This would make any mother upset.” I wanted to connect with her maternal emotions and communicate the universal bond of motherhood.

When Ms. Renee arrived, she walked into the conference room with her eyes diverted toward the floor and took a seat next to my seat, which was across from Mr. and Mrs. Simmons. I asked her to explain to the parents what had happened. She related the same story Nickie had told and was remorseful as she explained that she was only trying to take up for her daughter. Ms. Renee explained how she poked Nickie in the chest and told her not to worry about what goes on the cafeteria. Mrs. Simmons interjected, “I would like to know how you would like it if I put my hands on your daughter?” I took that to mean what if the situation was reversed – a Black woman grabbing a White child. Ms. Renee looked dejected and put her head down. Mr. Simmons said, “My daughter felt bullied and it was an adult that had done this to her and she could not do anything or say anything to you.” I sat quietly and allowed them to have their say and to be heard. I also wanted Ms. Renee to understand that she should never touch a Black woman’s child. Mr. Simmons said that he felt some disciplinary actions should be taken with Ms. Renee and they looked to me to vindicate them and provide a resolution.

I wanted to restore and repair the conflict to everyone’s satisfaction. First, I apologized to Nickie. I explained that I was sorry that this happened to her and I was sorry that the people at our school did not understand that we should treat each other with respect. Then I looked at Ms. Renee and said that I thought that what she did was the stupidest thing I had ever heard. I wanted the Simmons to hear me address this matter in their presence. I also told Ms. Renee that, although I was not happy about the poor decision she made to put her hands on a student and her equally poor decision to get involved in the misunderstandings of children, I did not think she acted out of hate or any racial motivation. I repeated my statement, “That was the stupidest thing

you could have done.” She just put her head down. I continued to talk to the parents about how I felt and that this was an unfortunate mistake and not a deliberate racial act. I also assured the parents that this kind of thing would never happen again. Mr. Simmons agreed and thank me for handling everything. I stood to shake his hand, but he took my hand and pulled me close to his chest for a hug. I motioned to Ms. Renee to extend her hand to Mr. Simmons and he gave her a hug as well. I approached Mrs. Simmons with open arms; I could tell she was still upset and I tried to reassure her that this would never happen again.

As everyone moved toward the door, I asked Ms. Renee to wait for me in my office while I walked Mr. and Mrs. Simmons out. I wanted Mr. and Mrs. Simmons to hear me request to see her in my office. I walked the family to the door and I went back to my office to speak with Ms. Renee. I closed the door and said to Ms. Renee, “I must say, that was just dumb – dumb.” She looked at me and said, “I know, Mrs. Wallis. I just got caught-up in the mess of the middle school girls.” She said that she had never done anything like that before and that she would never put her hands on another child. I cut my eyes at her and I lowered my voice and replied, “If I thought this was anything but STUPID, I would let you go today.” She realized that I knew she had not acted in a racist way. I let her know that I was going to place a write-up in her file and that would be the end of it. I also cautioned her to make sure she treated Nickie with kindness every time she came into the cafeteria and I cautioned her not to retaliate in any way. She assured me that she would behave professionally. As she left my office I thought how stupid it was for her to grab a child and I wondered if she would have grabbed a White student. I believed that it was my responsibility to repair this racial breach and to demonstrate leadership that required members to act like family and to forgive each other.

Planting My Flag

I was unsure what to expect for our first Grandparents' Chapel Service. The PTO president pitched the idea of having a day to recognize our students' grandparents. Our new children's pastor headed the event that was scheduled for the first week in November. The Headmaster arrived a little before the start of the program and he informed me that the children's pastor would open the program and that he would address the audience at the end of the program and that I would not be on the program. I was aware that Mr. Kolfman liked to address the public because he thought that he was the face of OCDS. I put on my nice professional smile and said that that would be just fine. I was not happy as I was the principal and I thought that I should at least address the guests at my school, however, I did not protest.

Pastor Jim seemed little nervous, but this was his big day and one might expect the jitters. About 100 grandparents took part in the event. The program started out with music playing and the children singing. Then, things took a wrong turn. Pastor Jim's speech was awful. He was unprepared and it was clear that he had little experience addressing large crowds. After about 10 minutes of speaking, in what appeared to be the middle of his message, he called for the Headmaster to the stage. I knew that the Headmaster thought he only would be giving closing remarks and he was not prepared to deliver a message. Sitting in the audience I could only think of a train wreck, however, I was not gloating – I was troubled.

Suddenly, the Headmaster called me to the stage. For a brief second, I did not move and sat like I did not recognize my own name. Mr. Kolfman had informed me that they would not need me for this event; he made it clear that he wanted to be the one on stage with so many (White) grandparents in attendance. There he was, with the microphone in his left hand and

extending his right hand toward me in the audience. As I made my way to the stage, the students clapped for me, their principal. They had not clapped for Pastor Jim nor did they clap for Mr. Kolfman, the Headmaster; I knew this would be my defining moment. Pastor Jim and Mr. Kolfman could be unprepared and no one would care but I knew I had to deliver something of value. I had to establish myself as the leader. I addressed the grandparents and explained the importance of building a legacy for their grandchildren. I discussed how they were responsible for helping to place God in the lives and memories of the next generation. I talked a little about my grandmother and the powerful influence she had been in my life and the spiritual guide she was to her family and to her community. I thanked them all for taking the time to join us and for sharing their wisdom and experiences with the next generation.

There was a great applause as I left the stage. I reminded the grandparents that we had refreshments prepared and that there would be fellowship time in the cafeteria. I had been unprepared to give a speech; in fact, after I saw the number of older White men and women in attendance, I was sure I would not even be introduced as the principal. I was grateful that all went well, yet I could not help think that this was my *début*. As I walked around laughing and smiling, I was inspired that so many people visited, yet I was aware that most of them were older White men and White women. I wanted to be charming, respectful, and personable. I was staking claim to my territory, to my principalship. I was not wanted for this task, however, I was needed.

An older White gentlemen approached me as I headed to my office. He had silvery grey hair and his shoulders were stooped as he walked. His smile was warm and friendly and put me at ease. In a rather gruff voice he stated, “Missy, I really had a good time today.” I flashed my pearly whites and I thanked him for coming. “You are not from ‘round here, are you?” He barked. My smile turned into a smirk and I could not help thinking how tired I was of that

comment. I wondered if here meant from this city, this state, this country, this planet? I was a little irritated. I had just finished being brilliant – I had just delivered a great performance and I get, “You are not from ‘round here, are you?” I smiled and said, “From here?” with a slight inflection in my voice. He said, “From the South?” He said that he did not hear an accent in my voice. With just a little smirk, I asked if he was from the South, and he proudly responded, “Oh, yes, I am – born and raised in Woodville, Mississippi. Most of my folks are dead and buried there.” I smiled and, playfully, said, “You know what, I can barely hear your accent either.” I laughed light-heartily and placed my right hand on his shoulder in a benign manner to indicate I was kidding.

To console myself, I thought that I was not what they, the White grandparents, expected. Apparently my speaking style caused people to think that I was from the North or, at best, not from Baton Rouge. I realized that the older White gentleman was trying to be polite and trying to give me a compliment in his own misguided way. I had to remember that he was from a different generation and what he expected from a Black woman was certainly not what he received from me today. I went to the reception and continued to accept the compliments from the grandparents. I found myself laughing and smiling at off humor comments and weak attempts at politically correct jokes made by White men and women in their late sixties and seventies. I stood toe-to-toe and eye-to-eye with people whom I thought viewed me as an enigma and yet I was not disturbed by their patronizing tone. Their willingness to interact with me demonstrated that I was successful at creating an image of an acceptable Black female principal.

The Last Frontier

At the end of September it was apparent the new middle school science teacher was having a difficult time. My second classroom observation in November confirmed my fears; Mrs. Crandon seemed to be all over the place in her classroom instruction. She was not well organized and the students did not appear to know the classroom routines. Mrs. Pittman also informed me that Mrs. Crandon had not turned in lesson plans in five weeks. After my observation, Mrs. Crandon explained that she was nervous with me in the room and that she was concerned that her observation did not go well. She explained that she had not taught in a classroom in eight years. I told her that I was there to support her, not to find fault with her teaching. Mrs. Crandon looked smug and in a rather short tone said, “Well, I know this is your first year as a principal and I’m sure you have a lot to learn.” I was not sure if she was trying to retaliate for her poor observation or if she was suggesting that her poor observation was a result of me being a novice principal. I did not react defensively and just agreed with her that I had a lot to learn about being a principal. Then, without any thought I said, “I do, however, know a great deal about classroom management and active student engagement, both of which you seem to be having trouble”; she was not happy with my remark. I mentioned that I had not seen her lesson plans for the previous five weeks and she said that she would get them to me.

Mrs. Crandon was the last of the resistance. When she previously worked at OCDS, I was a teacher and now I could tell she did not want to work for me, but there were no openings in the high school. I also realized that the situation could become unpleasant because of her relationship with the Headmaster. I did not envision how I could have leadership autonomy as the principal in the situation, but I knew that my students were not receiving the instruction they needed and deserved, and that our parents knew they were not getting the instruction for which

they were paying. I knew that the blame would fall on me as the principal and that I would have to answer the parents' calls and account for the lack of ability of the teacher and the knowledge in my students. I felt like my hands were tied and I would have to have documentation if disciplinary action was to be taken.

The first Friday in December I met with Mrs. Crandon about helping her with her lesson plans. She refused my assistance and said that she would try to get her plans done soon. She then asked, "Are the lesson plans more important to you than me doing the work of teaching?" I was taken aback as no teacher had asked such a question. I explained that the work of teaching was integrated with the planning of the lessons and I had to have lesson plans. She became irritated and explained that she was not happy working for me and she indicated that she preferred the leadership style of the Headmaster to my leadership style. She did not like her schedule and she was not pleased at my schedule changes for special events or special programs. It seemed that Mrs. Crandon did not respect me as her direct administrator or as the new principal. I also thought that she had a problem with me being a Black woman. She had gone to the Headmaster several times for what appeared to be simple problems or needs. I thought at first that this was because she had worked with him in the high school and that she was comfortable with him. I was unsure but what I was sure of was that I would not be disrespected in front of the other teachers. I believed that her actions could cause the other faculty members to question my authority. I knew that I would have to let Mrs. Crandon go and find another middle school science teacher.

Two weeks later before the Christmas break, I spoke with Mrs. Crandon about the parent complaints I had received and that she had not been able to follow the policies, procedures, and responsibilities of a middle school teacher. I tried to be patient because of the relationship Mrs.

Crandon had with the Headmaster and the school founder. I knew that normally I would not put up with incompetence and rudeness; my intuition told me that she had a problem with my race and my gender. As I was speaking with Mrs. Crandon, trying to set up computer software times training and helping planning hands-on science activities, Mrs. Crandon raised her voice and said, "I am tired of you trying to change how I teach. I have been teaching this way for years and I'm not about to change now." She turned and walked off, leaving me standing in the hallway. Without thinking, I followed her, angrily. I arrived at her classroom door, entered, and slammed the door behind me; the slamming door was so loud that the walls trembled. I said, "Don't you ever turn your back and walk off while I am talking to you." My rage was kindled and my venting continued, "I have put up with your inability to be effective in the classroom. I have put up with your snide comments. I have put up with your constant complaints about my students and my leadership, but this is the last straw. If you are not able to function within the parameters I have set, then this may not be the position for you. I have gone out of my way to show you respect and to assist you in this transition back to teaching. I was understanding and I wanted you to know that teaching strategies and techniques have changed a great deal in the last ten years; however, I always showed you respect! You were stuck in your old ways and were not trainable." She looked frightened as she began to speak; I focused on her face and she looked as if she thought I might strike her. In a solemn voice she said, "I'm sorry, Mrs. Wallis. You have been very understanding with me." She explained she had taken Lithium for the last five years and when she lost her job last year, she was without insurance to get the medication she needed. She said it was difficult for her to function without the medication. I calmed myself from my rage and thought about my students. I felt sorry for her; her admission explained much of her inconsistencies. She explained that in another month she would be able to get insurance and she

would get her medication. I said that I could not allow the students to be subjected to her unstable behavior and lack of teaching preparation and that I was sorry, but I would have to let her go. I was not sure what the Headmaster would think about my decision, but I had no choice; I had to do what was best for the students. Mrs. Crandon was the last of the resistance and I believed that I could start moving forward in developing my principalship.

The Brave New World

I arrived on campus about 6:45 a.m. to have a moment of peace and quiet before the buzz of the day began. It was the first day of the week, first week of the month, first month of the New Year and although I had two weeks off, I did not feel rested. Only trace reminders of the past Christmas season were packed away in boxes stacked in the file room of the office. I realized that my focus was on the significance of the new year and a time of new beginnings. Ms. Judy flew into the office in her usual bubbly, vivacious manner. She greeted me with a huge smile and she asked me three questions before I could give her a reply: “How was your holiday?” “What did you get for Christmas?” “Did you stay home or did you and Lionel go out of town?” I recounted my holiday activities and reminded her that I would need help setting up the meeting room for the faculty meeting after school.

As I passed down the elementary hallway, Mrs. Smith’s Kindergarten class was lined up heading to the playground for their morning recess. Three of the students ran out of the line to hug me. Mrs. Smith tried hard to have a set line routine, so I gave the students a big group hug. Alex, one of the students, asked if I could have lunch with them today. Mrs. Smith mouthed that their lunchtime was 10:30 a.m. so I agreed to meet them in the cafeteria at 10:30 a.m. As the three students returned to the line, I took out my phone and set an alarm for 10:30 a.m. So many things could pull at me in a day, but I never wanted to break a promise to my children.

When I return to my office, the light on my phone that indicated a message was glowing red. I closed the door and proceeded to check my messages. The caller left the following message: “Terri, this is Mr. Morare and I wanted you to know that the duty teacher was late starting the carpool today. Please handle this because when carpool is late, I’m late for work.” I immediately pulled up the duty schedule on my computer to ascertain who was on duty. Even though I wanted to get to the bottom of the carpool problem, I was slightly upset that this parent addressed me by my first name. I really did not understand why this parent would address me by my first name at the same time referring to himself as Mr. Maybe I was reading too much into this call. Maybe he felt comfortable with me and used my first name. All of the years I had been teaching at OCDS no parent had addressed me by my first name. I did not understand why now that I was the principal this happened.

After lunch, I had a meeting with Mrs. Ainsworth, my computer lab teacher. She had agreed to fill in as the middle school science teacher until I could hire someone. Over the Christmas break, I thought about asking her to finish the year as the science teacher. I knew she would not be happy about leaving the lab so I had to present this change in the best interest of our students. When I presented my idea, I explained that I did not want to hire an unknown person to work with our students. I complimented her on how well she worked with the students and how well she communicated with the parents. I persuaded her to accept the position as it was best for our students. She was the best choice for me because she had demonstrated her willingness to assist me and support me as the principal. I felt that things were settling.

At the end of the day, Ms. Judy arranged the chairs for the faculty meeting, placing the chairs in rows of four across and five deep with the podium in the center. As I surveyed the room she asked if it looked okay. I hesitated and replied, “Yes, but I was thinking of doing things

differently today.” I asked her to help me place the chairs in a circle. She looked confused but we made the change.

After carpool ended, the teachers gathered in the meeting room and stood, looking around. I took a seat in the circle and four teachers asked if there were special places to sit. I explained that they could sit any place they selected. For about ten minutes, the teachers commented on the seat arrangements to which I replied that I wanted everyone to be able to look at each other as we discussed school related issues; this seemed to please the teachers. I did not mention the dynamics of everyone feeling as an equal as I wanted them to come to that understanding on their own. Mr. Kolfman appeared as I started the meeting; he greeted me and said that he noticed on the calendar a faculty meeting was scheduled and wanted to know if he could join us; he had a strange, uncomfortable look on his face. I forced a smile and motioned for him to take a seat. As I began to speak again, he interrupted me and said, “I really don’t like sitting like this.” The teachers laughed at his remark and I explained that I wanted each teacher to be able to see the faces of the teachers as we discussed issues. He said, “I don’t like this at all. I like it when I am in front and I can see all of the teachers’ faces.” I was struck by the realization that leadership was a social construct and that power and authority is given to a leader in a large measure by the followers. I attempted to explain why I formed the circle and the teachers chimed in and expressed how much they liked seeing the other faces. One of the teachers commented that it made her feel like we were a family and that we were pulling together. I decided not to defend the circle to Mr. Kolfman. I waited for the teachers to express the importance of being treated as equal and being respected for their opinions. That was the first time I considered creating a family circle with the people upon whom I depended every day to ensure the success of my principalship. The circle of chairs became a metaphoric circle of unity between the

teachers and me and they symbolically transferred some of the authority from the Headmaster to their principal.

I spent the next two weeks preparing for our January 19th professional development day. At the end of November, I had suggested that the teachers engage in peer observations. The teachers were hesitant about allowing the other teachers to observe their classroom practices. After two months of suggesting the importance of peer observations, five of the teachers opened their classrooms and invited their fellow teachers to observe. I wanted to give those teachers a chance to discuss their experience so when I opened the January professional development meeting, I asked Mrs. Perkins, a first grade teacher, and Mrs. King, a third grade teacher, to describe their experiences. They explained the benefits of observing another professional teach and then having the opportunity to engage in dialogue about the observation. This process became the hallmark of our job embedded professional developments. The teachers became the primary support system for other teachers and formed a close bond. I focused on attending the debriefing meetings in which suggestions were made about how to improve our practices. Conversations from teachers toward teachers began with the phrase, “I like how you . . .” and “I would have never thought to . . .” We informally created a professional family where professional trust was the foundation. In this newly established professional family, I was the mediator, the coach, and as the cheerleader. I impressed upon the teachers that all of their observations were formative and that we would celebrate successes and work to improve shortfalls. My attitude encouraged teachers to enlist my assistance in their efforts to improve their professional practices. I became the understood go-to-person on the campus.

As I returned to my office from the middle school building the day after the professional development meeting, Ms. Judy stopped me. She and Mrs. Pittman were at her desk, snickering

as if someone had told a private joke. When I inquired about what was so funny, Ms. Judy said, “Little Brianna sent a message that she needed you to help her wipe her butt”, and they both laughed. The look in my eyes made it clear that I was not amused. Ms. Judy apologized, “I’m sorry, Mrs. Wallis.” She lowered her eyes and said, “Brianna is in the girls’ restroom calling for you to come and help her.” Mrs. Pittman said, “Well, I went down there to see what was wrong, but she told me she only wanted Mrs. Wallis to help her wipe herself.” I felt upset, a little embarrassed, and confused as to why this little White Kindergarten child thought that I would wipe her butt. Did she view me as the maid or the hired help? I was sure that she would not have asked Mr. Kolfman to wipe her. I chose not to show my anger in front of Mrs. Pittman and calmly replied, “I’ll go and see what’s wrong.”

As I left the office, I heard laughter fill the air. When I reached the hallway, the Kindergarten teacher was standing half in the classroom and half in the hall as if she was waiting for me. She attempted to explain what happened but I interrupted her and said that Ms. Judy gave me the rundown. I entered the restroom and the stall door was opened and the little girl was sitting on the toilet. She said, “Hi, Mrs. Wallis, I need help wiping. I don’t know how to do it by myself.” She was a cute little blonde with a full round face and her innocent expression reduced my anger to concern. I was wondering if there was someone at her house who looked like me that was responsible for wiping her. I turned my thoughts to the real issue; she was five years old and needed help wiping her butt. I explained to her that I was not going to wipe her butt. She made a whimper as if she was starting to cry and I said, “You are a big girl and you can do this yourself.” I grabbed a fist full of paper from the next stall and told her to do the same. She pulled the paper from the dispenser and showed it to me. I said, “That’s great, Sweetie. Now stand up and reach behind you and wipe.” I stood in front of her and demonstrated the motion. She

mimicked my gestures. I then said, “Now put that paper into the toilet and get more paper and do it again.” She smiled as if she was happy to be doing it herself. As I walked toward the door, she said, “I did it; I did it all by myself!”

As I walked into the hall, I realized that every adult on the hallway was White and yet this little girl wanted only me to help her. It dawned on me that my students had come to trust me in ways that only those in a family could trust. When I returned to the office, Ms. Judy quizzed me with, “Well, what happened? Did you wipe her butt?” I smiled and said, “No, I taught her how to wipe her own butt.” At that moment, I redefined leadership. For me, leadership was not about solving problems and cleaning up messes for others. Leadership is the ability to teach, coach, and model for others how to wipe their own butts.

The End of Dystopia

After a restful week off for February winter break, I arrived on campus at 7:15 a.m. I briskly crossed the campus in the crisp Monday morning air and entered the building in a rush to escape the cold air. I was greeted by the maintenance director Mr. John and Ms. Judy. We exchanged our good mornings and Mr. John mentioned that he was glad that we were back. I realized that the maintenance men and housekeeping women had not enjoyed the week off for winter break. Mr. John was about my age, a middle aged, White, Christian male. When I was a teacher I realized that if I wanted to have my maintenance requests bumped up the priority ladder, I needed to treat the maintenance director with respect. Mr. John also supervised the transportation department and all bus and van requests went through him. Even though I had known him for many years, I always referred to him as Mister. Addressing men as mister was also a part of how I was raised. I was taught to show people respect not because they were White, but because we respect ourselves. It cost me nothing to be polite, but the gain to me had

become invaluable. My charm and light-hearted conversations went a long way in making Mr. John feel a certain connection with me.

In my office, I placed my coat and bag behind the door and signed on to my computer to check my emails. At 7:40 a.m., I greeted the students as they arrived in carpool and was met by six students passing through the office. Each of the students had a big smile and an enthusiastic hello. Addison, a cute little blonde six-year-old girl, ran up to me and grabbed me around my legs. She looked up at my face and said, “Miss Wallis, I really missed you.” I took her hands and twirled her around and I replied, “Addison, I missed you very much.” It amazed me that these children had become so important to me and in such a short time we had become family.

I walked down the hall to spend a few minutes with the teachers, inquiring about their break, talking about their families, laughing about being together again. I thought, “What great women I have as teachers!” At 8:00 a.m. I greeted the students and teachers with the morning announcements and Kenny, a third grader, led the pledge over the intercom. At 8:10 a.m. one of the Kindergarten teachers stopped by to speak with me, but before she could begin, two Kindergarten students popped their heads in my doorway and said, “Here is Miss Wallis.” They led a young lady to my office who was fully dressed as the Tooth Fairy with white leotards, white tutu, and white wings. I was speechless. The young lady explained that she was there to speak with the early childhood students. When I told her that I was the principal and that I had no knowledge that she was coming that day, she explained that she had talked to Mrs. Pittman. I felt upset at Mrs. Pittman because she had not informed me, the principal that a speaker was coming to our school. Mrs. Pittman was not at school and I was faced with the challenge of what to do. Should I ask the young lady, dressed as the Tooth Fairy, to reschedule or should I go to the teachers and interrupt their day? I went to each class and asked the teacher if they would gather

the students for a short assembly and a visit from the Tooth Fairy. None of the teachers had any idea that presentation was scheduled for that day. Mrs. Pittman should have informed me and she should have placed the event on the master calendar. Three of the teachers were on break and I did not want them to miss their breaks, so I asked the elective PE, Library, and Spanish teachers to bring their students to see the Tooth Fairy. The teachers were grateful that I understood that their break was important to them. I stayed with the students to add extra supervision as the Tooth Fairy spoke about dental health and healthy food. It was a good, interactive educational experience and the students had an opportunity to learn how to make healthy choices.

When I returned to my office I reasoned Mrs. Pittman and I would probably never function as a unit. She seemed limited in her understanding of the big picture. I had hoped that she would understand that functioning as a team member was part of the newly created OCDS family. She did not comprehend that if I looked “bad” she looked “bad”. I believed she realized that the teachers and I provided for each other more than just professional. The teachers had become my faculty and my work family.

In February, our PTO planned a special event to honor the mothers of our students. Moms and Muffins had become one of the most important traditions at OCDS and it was a great public relation event in which our moms and grandmothers came to school to enjoy breakfast with their students. I arrived at school at about 7:00 a.m. and when I went into the cafeteria, I noticed that the set up looked different from previous years. Instead of having a box of muffins on the tables for the moms to come in sit and eat, a buffet table was set up and it was beautiful. There were fresh flowers on the tables and pastel colored tablecloths. Although it was pretty, it was not practical. By 7:15 a.m. there were about twenty moms and their children in the buffet line and things were moving slowly. There was no one to serve the food so the children fixed

their own plates. By 7:25 a.m. the line at the buffet table had grown to about sixty moms and students and the trays with the food was getting very low. I found two of the middle school teachers and asked them help out with the serving; they immediately went behind the table and started serving. I asked the PTO president if the trays could be refilled because the line was growing. She said that they did not have any more food. I was shocked; about seventy-five people were standing in a line and we were running out of food. Worse yet, some of the students had not eaten at home as they counted on having breakfast at OCDS. I explained to the PTO coordinator that we needed to get more food and she said, "I planned for eighty people." I explained that we had 270 students and that food for eighty people was not acceptable. She responded, "We need to treat this like a party and when the food is gone, it is gone." I was upset and thought that this must be like a party for White people because for Blacks, running out of food is a serious faux pas. I believed that this mistake was a reflection of my leadership and me. The PTO coordinator did not care that some of the children had not eaten and, in good conscience, I could not send the children to class without having had breakfast. I thought, "This will be a PR nightmare if we do not get more food." I tried to contain my anger, but my voice was raised when I said, "You are going to have to go and get more muffins or something. Listen, there is no way that we can expect these moms to leave their children here knowing there is no food. I need you to go and get a few things." She was agitated but reluctantly agreed, and moved slowly. I felt angry and I noticed Mrs. Sanders, a Black parent, sitting across the room. I said, "I have a big problem; I need you to go to the store and get more food, right now!" She asked what I wanted and I told her to get muffins, coffee cake, whatever she saw, and I needed it fast. I noticed that the other PTO coordinator was speaking with other PTO members and I knew that she was not happy with me, but I did not care. I could not understand how they planned to feed

only eighty people when they invited every mother in the elementary school. The PTO coordinator left for the store after about three more minutes but her heart was not in it. I asked the people still standing in line to take a seat at a table and announced that more food was on the way. I walked around the room smiling and talking to mothers and grandmothers, posing for pictures and meeting family members of the students. I relied on my charm and my ability as a gracious hostess to take their minds off the lack food. Ten minutes passed and I knew that the parents were tired of waiting and many of them had to get to work. I called Mrs. Sanders and she indicated that she was turning into campus and would arrive in about three minutes. Relieved, I grabbed a box of muffins when she walked in and butlered them around the cafeteria, serving the moms and the remaining students. I felt like the hired help. Me, the principal carrying muffins from table to table asking, "Would you like to try one of these or would you prefer a donut?" I smiled and served, making sure that everyone who waited was satisfied. I noticed that the PTO coordinator had not returned and I asked Mrs. Sanders if she had seen her at the store. Mrs. Sanders shrugged and replied, "Yea, I saw her in the store. She was walking around the store talking to someone - she didn't look like anybody in a hurry." As I ran out of food again, the PTO coordinator appeared with three boxes of muffins. I passed them out until everyone was fed. It seemed to have all worked out; however, I was still angry.

I thought that if Moms and Muffins was not handled well it would reflect badly on my leadership and me. Moms and Muffins had been a tradition at OCDS for many years and we had never run out of food. I thought the White parents would think that the year a Black woman became principal would be the first time in twenty years that food ran out. Interestingly, the White PTO coordinator responsible for the food was not interested in how I perceived these events. Also interesting was that Mrs. Sanders could read my expression and knew that running

out of food was a grave social no-no; culturally, for many Blacks, running out of food at a planned event is laughable. As the moms and grandmothers were saying their good-byes later, Mrs. Sanders said, “I know you didn’t want your first year to go like this. But everything turned out okay.” She was correct. Everything turned out just fine.

The PTO president passed by my office later and peeked in and asked if she could have a minute of my time. I stood at my chair and ushered her into my office. She said, “Mrs. Wallis, I just wanted to say thank you for taking control of that situation earlier.” She appeared sincere and continued, “I didn’t know that the coordinator only purchased enough food for eighty people.” She looked at me with a humble expression and said, “I know that you really cared that all of your students had something to eat.” I smiled and I explained that I did not want to take over, but it was important that we keep our word to our parents and to our students. I explained that for twenty years the event had been well received by parents. We sent out parent letters and invited them to join us for breakfast and we needed to provide. She apologized and gave me a hug as she left. I felt happy after she left my office. It meant a great deal to me that she understood my level of care and concern for my students. I also realized that when I showed my strong personality and my ability to forcefully make decisions, some people became disconcerted. Although I had a valid reason for my anger, I thought that some of the White women only saw a mad Black woman. I wanted to ensure that they understood that my anger was kindled out of concern for my students.

The New World Order

I arrived at school a little late on the second week in March. As the end of the third nine weeks was coming to a close, I needed to send the teachers their instructions for posting their grades. Mrs. Booker was waiting for me in the office. She informed me that the fifth grade

language teacher was having a problem with classroom management; she had screamed at the students and parents had complained. Mrs. Pembert was one of the teachers who was a late hire and she did not learn my vision and see the culture of OCDS. I also knew that spring was usually a time when teachers could become fatigued and students could more restless. I needed to speak with Mrs. Pembert and rather than calling her to my office and possibly sending the message that I was displeased, I wanted her to feel comfortable with me and to ask for help; I decided to go to her classroom while her students were at P.E. I wanted to be honest and support with Mrs. Pembert and I wanted her to know that other teachers and I had heard her screaming at the students. I suggested a few simple techniques that could be used to get the attention of the students without screaming; I emphasized to her that a teacher is a leader and a leader must stay calm even if things were not going as planned. She admitted that when she became upset that she screamed, but she also wanted me to know that she was not stressed or overwhelmed; she just could not redirect the students who were off tasks. I shared that sometimes lowering the voice turns students and helps them to focus. She admitted that she was not sure if the age of her students was right for her since she had worked with high school students for the past seven years. I wanted to encourage her, however, I did not want teachers screaming at our children. I suggested that I could teach a mini-lesson to her class and demonstrate techniques of active student engagement. She seemed happy and worry disappeared from her face.

When I returned to the office, Ms. Judy was waiting to tell me that Tre, a sixth grade student who had created trouble, was waiting for me. Tre started to explain what occurred and I put my hand on his shoulder and said, “Calm down, calm down. Let’s go to my office so that we can talk.” He followed me to my office and I motioned for him to take a seat. He pursed his lips tightly, folded his arms across his chest, and diverted his vision to the floor. I said, “Whenever

you calm down I'm listening." He dropped his arms and explained that he was not the only one playing in class. I stopped him and I asked that he start from the beginning. He recounted, "Well, we were all in class working in groups and Justin and Ben started throwing eraser caps across the room at me, Timmy, and Joshua." I narrowed my eyes on him and said, "And you, what were you doing?" He lowered the tone in his voice and said, "I threw the eraser back at Justin and the teacher only called my name." He sat up straight in the chair and folded his arms again and said, "It's not fair. I was not the only one throwing erasers; she didn't say nothing to them." I pondered for a moment, unsure of what to say, however, he struck a nerve with me. I said to him, "Now let me get this straight; you were throwing erasers in the classroom, right?" He nodded and I continued, "Was this right or wrong?" He whispered, "It was wrong, but I was not the only one." "Your teacher sent you to the office for throwing erasers and you are upset?" He began to protest louder, "They were throwing erasers too. Why am I the only one in trouble?" I said to him. "Maybe you were the only one she saw." That remark upset him and he said, "Miss Wallis, you act like you like them more than me." I looked at him and said, "Now you let me tell you something. All of the boys you named were White and I bet you think that since the teacher is White, she was only picking on you." I moved closer to him and continued, "You see, you are not telling me you didn't do it. You are saying I did it and it was wrong." I asked him if I was stopped by a policeman for speeding and I told him that yes, I knew I was speeding, but I was not the only one, what do you think he would do? He reluctantly said, "He would give you a ticket." I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Listen to me, there may be times that as a young Black man things may seem unfair. I need you to know that acting a fool in the classrooms is not what I expect from you. In life you can't always do what the White boy is doing." As the words came out of my mouth I realized that I loved him, the little Black boy, more than the little White

boys because I knew that if he did not see himself as different, he would never rise to his potential. I hated that I had to tell a young Black boy in 2015 that things might never be fair for him. When I finished speaking, Tre stood and gave me a hug and said, “I’m sorry Miss Wallis. I’m gonna work hard, okay?” I smiled, but my heart was hurting.

After Tre left my office, I needed a minute to process the gravity of my position as the principal. I sat at my desk with a feeling of hopelessness that I had not felt in a long time. I sat in peace and prayed: I prayed for wisdom, courage, and compassion; wisdom like King Solomon, courage like David, and compassion like Christ. Sometimes I forgot that I could not carry the load alone - sometimes I forgot that my faith is my strength. I had to stay grounded and true to my beliefs. So many people looked to me to be strong and they had no idea of my weakness and flaws.

Changing of the Guard

The second week in April I had been out of my office for a week assisting the Headmaster and the board with handling a problem with a high school teacher. As I passed through the elementary lunch room, the third grade students were having lunch and I noticed a parent sitting in the back of the room. I greeted the parent, Mrs. Taylor, who stood as I approached and informed me that it was her daughter Lauren’s birthday. Mrs. Taylor was an attractive light skinned Black woman in her mid-30s. She was well dressed and her hair and nails were professionally done. She asked if I would like a cupcake; I had perfected the art of accepting cupcakes and candy treats without ever eating them. When she handed me the cupcake, she said that she had made them. I smiled and realized that I would have to take a polite bite and then make an excuse to leave. The cupcake was tasty and moist. I complimented her on how good it was. She explained that she had once owned her own bakery in Houston, Texas; I

was impressed. She went on to say that after Lauren was born she wanted to be a mom and the bakery kept her away from home a great deal of time. She looked at me and started to tear up as she said that she did not think she would ever have her own shop again. I finished the cupcake and I looked at her with my firm expression and I said, “You will have your bakery again. God has given you a gift and He has allowed you to know what it’s like to have your own shop. Family comes first – take this time to raise your daughter and when the time is right, I know you will open your bakery” She smiled, hugged me and said, “I was wondering what you thought about me being a stay at home mom.” I laughed and said, “I think for now you have chosen the best occupation.” She was young, intelligent, talented, and Black, but she needed someone to validate her. She needed to know that I did not judge her or look down on her for being a stay at home mother.

The next day, Ms. Judy informed me that Mr. and Mrs. Richard had arrived for their 2:00 p.m. appointment and were waiting in the conference room to speak with me. A Black couple in their mid-40s, they had a son in third grade, a son in first grade, and Mrs. Richard was about six months pregnant. I could tell that they were not happy, offered them both a seat and asked what was going on. Mrs. Richard explained that her son’s first grade teacher was recommending that he repeat first grade. She was unaware that the teacher and I met several times about her son’s classroom challenges. She explained that she had taken her son for learning disability evaluation and wanted me to know the doctor’s recommendation. She handed me a copy of the evaluation report, which I read it and said that I did not see anything different in the report than what the teacher had observed. I pointed out that the report said that Troy had a difficult time focusing, which was also the teacher’s comment. The report also said that Troy would benefit from more down time and less structured lessons, again echoing what the teacher said. I described the extra

stress and structure of second grade. Mrs. Richard was not satisfied and asked that I pull his grades to see how he was doing in the class. I checked his grades on my tablet and I noticed that Troy had a “D” in reading, “C” in language, and a “D” in math. I took my professional stance and explained that he had the lowest grades in the class and that he could benefit from another year in first grade. She raised her voice and said that she did not want him to repeat first grade. I raised my voice and said, “Troy has not done first grade work and most of his work showed incompletes.” I also informed her that the teacher said that Troy cried every day because the work was too difficult for him.

Mrs. Richard asked that the teacher make accommodations for him; she said that when he gets tired, he could use a little down time. I explained that in Kindergarten they take naps, not first grade. I said adamantly, “Troy will not be allowed to go to second grade at OCDS.” She was upset and said that she would leave OCDS and find another school. I pointed out that the teacher allowed Troy to only have 10 words for spelling when all of the other children had 20 words, and that Troy only completed half of the assigned math problems. I explained that if she wanted to change schools, he would have to do the same the work that the rest of the first grade students did. I explained that his records needed to reflect the grades of a first grade student when they were sent to another school. I suggested that she try a Montessori school. I told her I knew a principal and I could get information about that program. I wanted her to know that I understood how she felt and that the White teacher was not singling him out. I offered to tutor Troy three times a week from 3:15 to 4:00 p.m. at no cost to them. I said, “It won’t cost you one dime. I’ll take my time and I’ll work on his math and reading comprehension.”

As I spoke, I could not believe what I said. Why did I offer to stay after school and tutor? Why did I say I would do it for free? But it was done; I had said it and I would have to keep my

word. Mr. Richard said little in the meeting and I asked one question. I asked them to explain how well Troy did at home when he is doing his work. Mr. Richard looked away and then he said that sometimes it was hard for him. Mrs. Richard said that sometimes he cried when he was doing his homework, but if he was allowed to rest for a little while, he was able to get back ready to his work. I set up the days and times for tutoring and I described where I would place my focus. I said to her, “If he was my child, I would not worry about what people would say if he repeated first grade. I would be more concerned about what people will say if he cannot read.”

After they had left, I realized that I was different when speaking with Black parents than White parents. I respected Mr. and Mrs. Richard and I appreciated that they wanted to do what they thought was best for their son, but I realized that I did not want to back down. I was willing to let a good Black family leave my school and take the older son as well before I would allow them to promote that boy to second grade. I did not want them to leave OCDS, but I did not want to see another Black boy start down the path of limited comprehension with an inability to read fluently. The meeting was stressful as I tried to be the educational parent to my school parents.

Defining Utopia in the New Land

As the end of the year rapidly approached, I could hardly believe that my first year as a principal was coming to a close. May proved to be more hectic than August with many end-of-the-year events to prepare and the anticipation of the spring achievement test results. I felt like I had run out of time and that I did not accomplish all of the things I wanted to accomplish, however, I was relieved that this school year was coming to an end. I met with the Kindergarten teachers to discuss a graduation ceremony for the students. This would be the first Kindergarten graduation and it was something that I wanted to do for the students and their parents. Both teachers were thrilled and they made suggestions about how to proceed with a program. Each

year, the sixth grade students had their graduation ceremony as a culminating event preparing for junior high.

After lunch, I received a call from Ms. Judy about a problem at recess involving two of the second grade girls. I did not have time to deal with that, but I could tell from her tone she wanted me to handle it. I noticed Lilly and Emma waiting for me at Ms. Judy's desk. Ms. Judy said to the girls, "Now tell Miss Wallis what you did." Lilly looked scared and she started to cry. I looked at Emma and asked, "Pickle, what's going on?" She just stood there without responding. Ms. Judy said, "I'll tell you, Miss Wallis. These girls told Breanna and Tori (two Black girls) that they could not play with them because they were brown girls." Ms. Judy seemed more offended than I was as we had spent the year developing a family environment and this was hurtful. I looked at Ms. Judy and said, "I can't believe my sweet girls would have said something so mean and ugly." Both girls started sobbing loudly and I said, "I guess that means that I can't play with you either." Emma looked at me as her long red hair flowed over her face and said, "Oh, no, Miss Wallis, you can play." I stopped her and said, "No, I can't play because I am a brown girl." At that moment, I was a little brown girl in the second grade and realized that just being brown excluded me from the group. I looked at the girls and I said, "When I hug the students, do I just hug the brown students?" Then Lilly looked at me through her tears and said, "Miss Wallis, we didn't mean it." I asked Ms. Judy to call Breanna and Tori to come to the office. When they arrived I asked them about the game they wanted to play and I told them that it was up to them to decide when Lilly and Emma would play again. To my surprise the two White girls hugged the two Black girls and all four of them cried. I wanted to empower the Black girls by allowing them to decide when they thought the White girls should be allowed to play. What I found amusing was that after all of the girls hugged each other and then hugged me, the Black

girls took the hand of the White girls and went back out to play. My heart was warmed by only wanting them to be kind to each other.

I woke up a little late on the last Monday of the last week of my first year as principal. As I parked my car, I noticed that carpool had started. I walked toward Mrs. Martin, the teacher on duty, who greeted me and said, “My, Miss Wallis that’s a big bright smile on your face this morning.” I knew the kind of smile she was referencing- my standard go-to smile that allowed me to hide my emotions and conceal my feelings. As I continued up the sidewalk, Mrs. Templeton, a Black parent, waited to speak to me. We entered the building and as I approached my door, I noticed there were three post-it notes taped as notification that I was running late. I removed the notes, opened the door, and motioned for Mrs. Templeton to have a seat. As I made my way behind my desk, I asked, “What can I do for you today?” She explained that she was having trouble with Mrs. Jackson, another Black parent. She told me that both of their daughters were on the volleyball team and that she thought that Mrs. Jackson acted “ghetto” at the games. She said, “There is only a handful of Blacks on the team and all of those other White parents look at us like we are crazy.” I understood that she was trying to convey that the White parents would see Mrs. Jackson as the example of all of the other Black parents. She continued, “I know that you would not want her to be acting like that at the games.” At that she stood and closed the door to my office and said, “I want you to know that I have your back”; she spoke as if we were part of a secret group of Blacks responsible for critiquing the actions of other Blacks. I did not want to offend her, but I wanted her to know that what Whites think about Blacks is not my concern. I asked, “Are there any White parents at the games who act ‘ghetto?’” She looked at me, baffled, and she admitted that, yes, there were White parents who behaved in a manner similar to Mrs. Jackson. I understood how she felt and the feeling of not wanting to be associated

with Blacks who deviate from White accepted norms. I understood, but I could not bring myself to agree with what I viewed as a one-sided judgmental attitude. As I thought about that meeting, I realized that Mrs. Templeton wanted to assure that the first Black principal was not associated with the kind of Blackness that was not valued by Whites.

May 22nd was the last day of my first year as a principal. I planned to provide an end-of-the-year luncheon for the teachers and I intended to serve the food and make a short speech to express my appreciation and my gratitude for a wonderful year. In just a few months, I had successfully created a professional persona that capitalized on my race and gender. I often asked myself if I was strong enough to sacrifice my pride, prestige, and position to become an effective principal.

After the luncheon, Mrs. Martin asked to say a few words during an informal time of fellowship and I welcomed her to speak. As she spoke, tears came to her eyes and she described me as “an educational leader who cared more about the students and the teachers than power and positions.” I was overwhelmed and full of emotions. A lone tear lingered in my eyes as the teachers presented me with a gift. Then, Mrs. Pittman hugged me and whispered, “I love you, Miss Wallis.” I hugged her tightly and replied, “I love you too.” For me, this was vindication – this was success. After a year of resistance and conflict, my assistant principal became a part of the OCDS family. I never told her that I was aware of the harmful and hurtful comments she made about my leadership ability and me. I had spent the year trying to earn her admiration while overlooking her half-hearted effort as my assistant principal, but it was worth it. It was worth it to me for the teachers to see her embrace me as the principal.

Summary

In chapters four, five, and six, I presented a narrative of some of the events, interactions, and emotions of my first year as a Black female principal at a predominantly White, private, Christian school. In keeping with the ethnographic traditions, I privileged not only my voice, but also my thoughts, emotions, and perceptions as I employed elements of the narrative genre that includes characters, setting, plot, and theme. Chang (2008) discussed the importance of the researcher placing herself in the midst of her autoethnographic study in which the data is grounded in reality and the interpretations reflect the researcher's perceptions.

In chapter four, I reconstructed my narrative to provide my readers with background knowledge germane to the understanding of the study. I presented data representing the events through timeframes leading up to my first year as principal. This chapter also detailed the emotional challenges I faced as I was unable to fully and openly embrace my new position as the elementary and middle school principal. In addition, this chapter described how the leadership identity crisis I faced became the impetus for my emergent leadership style. Using situational satire, the title reflects the idea of a nautical ship being commissioned for a great adventure, paralleling my inaugural year as principal of OCDS.

In chapter five, I presented the lived story including the events of a new principal in transition. In this chapter, I chronicled my experiences starting in June because that was my planning period before starting the new school year. This chapter explored the unexpected situations I faced when forces outside my control interrupted my transition into the principalship. In addition, this chapter exposed my disillusionment associated with the best laid plans of mice, men, and a Black female principal. The chapter title and the subsequent subheadings depicted the

voyage of a ship in search of a new land and described the challenges faced by such an expedition as I established my leadership.

In chapter six, I removed my veneer and exposed my vulnerability in accepting my role as a Black female principal performing on a continuous stage of what I believed to be White approval and scrutiny. This chapter was arranged in a sequential format in which I presented selected events in a monthly timeframe. In this chapter, I became a leader who was both the protagonist and the antagonist in this narrative story as I conformed to the expectations of my followers. In this chapter entitled *Burn Your Principal-(Ship)*, I depicted the wartime strategy of Alexander the Great and the idea that if I burned the ship, there was no turning back – no retreat. I presented the dangers and perils of discovering new lands as a first year Black female principal.

In the subsequent chapter, I presented the contextual outline that informed my reflexive leadership preparation. I provided a detail description of the general thought process I used to justify my alternative leadership development. I explored the contradictions within my professional persona that were in direct opposition to my personal desires. I also present the unorthodox mental transformation that led to my emergent leadership style.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE METHOD TO MY MADNESS

Discourse on Method

It became apparent early in my principalship that it would be unlike the leadership experience I had envisioned. I held a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, a master's degree in Educational Leadership and Administration, and I had completed my Ph.D. course work in Educational Leadership. In addition, I had passed the Louisiana educational leadership exam and held a level one certificate. I had the necessary de jure credentials to be a principal. However, from the unset of the weak, emaciated announcement that I would become the principal, to the gossip and rumor-mill that sabotaged my start, nothing seemed to go as planned.

During my academic pursuits, I studied the major leadership theories, models, and styles, and their evolution over the past century. I considered the trait theories, critiqued the behavioral theories, and evaluated the claims of the contingency theories, yet I was unprepared to become the principal of a school in which over half the workforce left within a three-month period. I was well acquainted with the concepts of adult motivation and the suggestions purported by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, yet I had to overcome the fear and suspicions of the teachers who remained. I was a Black female first year principal at a predominately White private Christian school and I was scared; I did not know how to proceed.

I identified with the writings of Rene Descartes in his *Discourse on the Method* as I began my journey as a first year principal. He wrote:

But like one who walks alone and in the twilight I resolved to go so slowly, and to use so much circumspection in all things, that if my advance was but very small, at least I guarded myself well from falling (p. 12).

I thought that there were many people that wanted to see me fail, and being viewed as a successful principal was more important to me than being an effective principal. I formulated my unconscious strategy for leadership development based on the Descartes's outline for creating a method. I doubted everything pertaining to my knowledge and understanding of leadership. Descartes explained, "The first of these [steps] was to accept nothing as true which I did not clearly recognize to be so" (Weissman, 1996, p. 13) I developed my leadership schema by dismantling the academic knowledge of leadership I acquired that was based on the members of the dominant group. I became bankrupt in my leadership understandings because they were not applicable to my situation as a Black female first year principal. I then followed three maxims presented by Descartes (Weissman, 1996):

1. The first was to obey the laws and customs of my country, adhering constantly to the religion in which by God's grace I had been instructed since my childhood.
2. The second maxim was that of being as firm and resolute in my actions as I could be, and not to follow less faithful opinions the most dubious, when my mind was once made up regarding them.
3. The third maxim was to try always to conquer myself rather than fortune, and to alter my desires rather than change the others of the world, and generally to accustom myself to believe that there is nothing entirely within our power but our own thoughts (pp.16-17).

After I resigned myself to the fact that I would not have a textbook leadership experience, I considered the leadership models from my childhood and remembered the customs and values I learned from my youth. I focused on the Descartes's first maxim and I revisited the interview data and my field notes taken from the discussions with the Black women who served as leaders in their Black Baptist church and their community. One of the prevalent and repeated sentiments from the interviews was the idea that "Whites did not like Negroes that were uppity." As mentioned earlier, my grandmother was born in 1914 and her five sisters, each of whom was born before 1925, lived through some of the darkest times in Negro history. When I asked them to describe the challenges they faced dealing with Whites, they expressed the importance of Negroes knowing who they were and what they wanted to gain in this life. In keeping with their Christian traditions, they explained that they were taught to respect others and to allow "God to fight our battles." My grandmother said, "Y'all worry too much 'bout what people think about you. It never mattered what Whites thought about me or what they said 'bout me, I kept a smile on my face and my head high." The ladies explained to me that they did not always speak their minds, yet sometimes they used their "good manners to win over White folks."

During my first year as a principal, I redefined myself based on what I believed would be acceptable characteristics for a Black female principal. Shakespeare coined the expression, "All the world's a stage and all the men and women are players" (Beer & Odell, 2008, p. 324), and as a first year principal in a predominantly White private Christian school, I became the director, producer, and the leading lady on a real life dramatic stage. Like my ancestors, I obeyed the customs of a by-gone age and chose the social path of least resistance in establishing my principalship. I believed that my professional survival as a principal was predicated on my ability

to embrace elements of the old stereotypic myths about Black females (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981) and incorporated them into my emergent leadership style.

Considering Descartes's second maxim, I became firm and undeterred in my actions as principal and I displayed no acrimonious speech or behaviors even when I encountered mistreatment. I resolved to become the "School Mother" similar to the concept of the "Church Mothers" I admired in the Black Baptist Church of my youth and focused on the concepts of serving my stakeholders. In a deliberate and calculating manner, I embraced what I perceived to be many stereotypic behaviors. The second maxim also suggests the importance of locating the subjective truths and supporting them with a made up mind. For me, the first of these truths was based on the research of Collins (2000) and hooks (1981) that suggested members of the dominant culture have preconceived ideas concerning Black females. The second of these subjective truths was based on the research of Leithwood et al. (2004) and the data that purported that leadership is second only to classroom instruction in school related factors. If this research has credence, then teaching and teachers are the first and most important factor to improving schools and learning. I resolved to make my first priority building positive relationships with my teachers so that my professional influence and my vision for the school would be supported.

In Descartes's third maxim, I found the greatest challenge to my professional maturity as I assumed an anomalous position as principal in which I ignored my personal desire for recognition, monetary gain, and power, and I focused on being accepted as the leader. My cathexis centered on altering my personal aspirations and behaviors rather than trying to change the minds and hearts of those in the dominant culture. From the third maxim, I came to understand that the only true and real power I possessed as a Black female principal was the power to control my own thoughts. Once I surrendered to the idea that my thoughts and

perceptions were wholly in my control, I transcended the actions and perceptions of others. My emergent leadership style hinged on my ability to create the image that I believed members of the dominant culture found acceptable. I believed that I controlled the image; the image did not control me.

I re-examined my initial theme and codes that were generated from the data collected during the research period. After further analysis, I altered my perception of the preliminary codes presented in chapter three (Table 1, p. 87, this dissertation). I found that my interpretations of what I believed the data presented deviated slightly from my initial understanding and a new theme emerged and became salient. My thematic category was revised and suggested my view of the Principal as a Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader. As a Black female principal, I became adept at altering my behavior and performing the role of a Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader. Over the years, many Black women have demonstrated the ability to assume multiple identities and function in a variety of roles that have their foundation in the realm of ever-shifting dynamics of racism and sexism (Brown, 1994; Collins, 2000; Howard-Baptiste, 2014; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004). The changes to my initial thematic category reflect the emergent nature of this autoethnographic research. Table 3 depicts the changes and relationship associated with the collected data.

Table 3. Theme Category: Principal as the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader

Neo-Stereotypes	Codes	Neo-Stereotypes	Codes
Principal as Neo-Matriarch	Teacher (18)	Principal as Neo-Sapphire	Philosopher (5)
Principal as Neo-Matriarch	Judge (10)	Principal as Neo-Jezebel	Cheerleader (9)
Principal as Neo-Sapphire	Manager (13)	Principal as Neo-Mammy	Servant (6)
Principal as Neo-Sapphire	Boss (10)	Principal as Neo-Matriarch	Coach (22)
Principal as Neo-Mammy	Nurse-maid (19)	Principal as Neo-Matriarch	Mediator (26)

I realized that each of the earlier codes (e.g. Principal as a teacher, Principal as a mentor, and Principal as a nurse, etc.) could be associated with the concept of the principal as a stereotypic Black female-like character and for the purposes of this study, I refer to those Black female-like characteristics as the *Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader*. In the next chapter, I expound on my emergent leadership style of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader and I describe the four dimensions I associate with my leadership style. I rediscovered an overarching theme of *Establishing a Family Unit* that reoccurred in the data and was supported by the data interpretations and findings presented in the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter represents the skeletal thought process of a Black female first year principal in search of the comportment she believed necessary to be the principal of a predominantly White private Christian school in south Louisiana. Although brief, this chapter speaks volumes concerning the concatenation of my race, gender, and lived experiences as I formed my perceptions of my non-traditional leadership style. Furthermore, this chapter was the precursor to my discussion of the research findings and the analysis of my autoethnographic narrative. In this chapter, I delineated my attempt to purposefully create my leadership equanimity as I internalized my role as the principal of OCDS. This chapter eluded to the internal transformation I experienced as I assumed what I believed to be many stereotypic behaviors in an attempt to placate those in the dominant culture at OCDS, and to facilitate my acceptance as the principal.

In the next chapter, I present the findings of my autoethnographic study and the discussion in a holistic fashion. The primary goal of this chapter is to consolidate my analysis, findings, interpretations, and discussion based on the collected data and to organize them according to the research questions that were the impetus of the study; thus the research problem

and the research methodology are revisited. This chapter also engages the reader in a culminating understanding into the perceptions of my behaviors as a Black female first year principal. Moreover, this chapter presents a graphic depiction that compares my leadership behaviors as a first year principal with that of the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass, & Riggio, 2006).

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this autoethnographic research was to examine the behaviors and dispositions of a Black female first year principal at a predominantly White private Christian school and to understand her perceived role as an educational leader. During the research timeframe of approximately a fifteen-month period, the researcher, as the main subject of the study, collected data that included field notes, a reflective journal, personal observations, and artifacts. The primary research centered on my professional and personal journey as a principal from a non-traditional leadership background.

Revisiting the Research Problem

As stated in chapter one, traditional leadership models for school principals were fashioned after the archetype of the White male perspective (Echols, 2009; Sperandio, 2009; Surface, 2012; Witherspoon & Arnold, 2010). This autoethnography chronicles the leadership journey from the perspective of one not readily found in traditional leadership literature. By using narrative inquiry or “storying” (Lincoln & Guba, 2013), I explored the phenomenon of my first year as principal and examined the intersections of my race and gender to determine how they affected my leadership perceptions. The leadership of a school principal is intended to provide the support, guidance, and direction needed to create and maintain an environment that is conducive for both teaching and learning (Elmore, 2004; Fullan, 2004; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). This study reflects how a Black female first year principal internalized her role in creating an environment conducive to teaching and learning. In addition, this autoethnographic study

describes the transformation process over the research period, which effected my dispositions and behaviors as I became the principal.

Within the last thirty years, there has been research to suggest that traditional leadership models were insufficient in meeting the challenges and demands imposed by contemporary school diversity and the age of accountability (Echols, 2009; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Surface et al., 2012). Fullan (2004) suggested that not all leadership styles are effective in all leadership situations. He explained that establishing innovative leadership paradigms may involve “employing different leadership strategies” simultaneously to be effective (Fullan, 2004, p. 59). Fullan (2004) articulated the dilemma in the statement, “Leadership appropriate for the times is scarce” (p. 201). Loder (2005) explained that emerging studies on “African American women principals suggest that their race and gender statuses distinguish their leadership orientations and experiences from their male and White female colleagues” (p. 299). My autoethnography investigated the factors, dispositions, and behaviors that informed and shaped my perceptions as a Black, female, first year principal in a predominately White private Christian school.

Revisiting the Methodology

From the qualitative research tradition, the methodology selected for this study was an autoethnographical narrative of a Black female first year principal. The qualitative tradition places emphasis on the subjective views and the concept of multiple truths (Chang, 2008; Creswell, 2009) and expresses the postmodern perspective (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). I employed autoethnographic strategies due to the complexity associated with the social constructs of race, gender, and leadership, as I explored the overarching research interest being posed: *How did the researcher perceive her leadership role during her first year as a principal?* In addition, this

study sought to determine if there was a parallel between the Transformational Leadership Model (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and the dispositions and actions of the researcher as a first year principal. As the main subject of this study, the researcher kept field notes, a reflective journal, and a professional calendar throughout the transition period and during the first year as principal. To provide a deeper understanding of my professional and my personal journey, external data was also collected through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire II (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 2000), which included a self-rater component for data collection, as well as an anonymous survey completed by the teachers at OCDS. Written interview data was also collected from two focus groups with the Black female leaders from a Black Baptist Church and provided greater insight and understanding. I combined the elements of an ethnographic memoir with an autobiographic diary (Chang, 2008) in a research process that promoted a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of my perception of the social constructs of race, gender, and leadership, and how they shaped my principalship.

Revisiting the Research Questions

At the inception of this autoethnographic study, the following research questions became the focus of the study and guided the direction of the data analysis:

1. How will my race, gender, and life experiences impact my perceptions of my leadership behaviors as a first time principal?
2. How does a Black female perceive her role as first year principal in a predominantly White elementary school?
3. How did I respond to the challenges I faced as a Black female from a non-traditional leadership background?

4. How does a Black female first year principal perceive her behavior in relation to Transformational Leadership behaviors?

As I explored the answers to the research questions and formulated conclusions to my autoethnography, it became apparent that there was a monolithic nature associated with the four questions. I determined that I could not expatiate on the meaning of the questions by treating them in isolation or fragmenting them. This autoethnographic study proceeded in a non-linear format that represented the unpredictable and exploratory elements of qualitative research. In addition, it should be noted that the numeration of the research questions does not suggest a hierarchy or order of importance. In a recursive manner, through reflective and reflexive processes, I interrogated the meanings of my research questions and present the findings and discussions in the next sections.

Research Findings and Discussions

Research Question One

The first research question was formulated as follows: How will my race, gender, and life experiences impact my perceptions of my leadership behaviors as a first year principal? The transition period for new principals is considered a critical time in the process of establishing the identity of the leader (Drake & Roe, 1986; Lortie, 2009). New principals are encouraged to acquaint themselves with the culture of the school and to understand the social context in which the stakeholders interact (Drake & Roe, 1986; Lortie, 2009). As outlined in chapter four, my transition period was marred by secrecy and postponed by fears. I was not afforded the benefit of the time needed to build relationships with my faculty before the school year began. The analysis of data I collected demonstrated that I viewed the lost opportunity as a professional disadvantage and a threat to my success as a principal. Based on my visceral fears of not being accepted,

which I had experienced in my past, I constructed my leadership identity by reverting to familiar stereotypic behaviors of Black females (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981).

The data suggested that I experienced an initial identity struggle as I prepared to establish my principalship. I was a Black female first year principal and within the first few weeks, I perceived each negative interaction with others as a personal affront toward me. My paranoia began when the announcement date about my principalship was delayed for over two months, causing me to assume that the delay was because I was a Black female. When over half of the teaching workforce resigned shortly after the announcement was made, I viewed that as a personal insult. Those two events triggered memories of rejections that I had experienced during my lifetime and I viewed the rejection to be related to my race and gender. I understood that I had been successful and accepted (as much as any minority could be) when I assumed many stereotypic behaviors (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981).

I focused on displaying behaviors that I believed were desirable and acceptable to those in the dominant culture. By my behavior, I wanted to remove any idea that I, a Black female, should be viewed as a threat to the value system of the dominant culture. New principals are encouraged to establish and maintain a positive school culture (Hallinger, 2003; Marks, & Printy, 2003; Lortie, 2009). I needed to establish my interpretation of school culture in a way that I believed was universal and understood by both Whites and Blacks. When I revisited my field notes and my reflective journal, the emergent theme of the elements of a family unit surfaced. I regarded the concept of a family as the most universal model for an organizational culture and the most advantageous concept based on my race and gender.

Research Question Two

The second research question was as follows: How does a Black female perceive her role as first year principal in a predominantly White elementary school? As I internalized the primary theme of *Establishing a Family Unit*, I assumed the self-defined image of a mother-like character as the foundational part of the family unit. The family unit represented OCDS and a mother-like character represented the principal; in an attempt to relegate the negative connotations I perceived my race and gender to have in the position of a school principal at OCDS, I functioned in the role of the “School Mother” or, as explained previously, the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader. This was not a role or image I found to be demeaning to my position as the principal. In my estimation, it was the most pragmatic way to embrace what I believed to be the perceptions of those in the dominant culture.

From the analysis of the data, I identified my role as, what I have termed, the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader. In my attempt to create a leadership role that I thought would be acceptable to the Whites at OCDS, I employed a modified interpretation of the historical stereotypical behaviors. From the data patterns presented in my study, I define the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader as a multifaceted leader comprising four basic dimensions. As a school principal, the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader displayed a range of behaviors and dispositions in a fluid and flexible manner. The four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader include Neo-Mammy, Neo-Jezebel, Neo-Sapphire, and Neo-Matriarch. In the next section, I describe each of the four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader.

Neo-Mammy

The first dimension of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader is that of the Neo-Mammy. As stated in chapter one of this dissertation, the stereotypic Mammy was an image of Black women that was well accepted by those in the dominant culture (Collins, 2000). As with any stereotypes, the historic Mammy represented negative characteristics that had been associated with Black women. In assuming the role of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader, I internalized many of my behaviors and thought processes in what I viewed to be an empowering manner. As the Neo-Mammy, I displayed behaviors that included self-sacrifice, nurturing, caring, and devotion. From this vantage point, I thought I controlled the image I wanted others to receive concerning my principalship. I established professional kindness and unquestioned acceptance with my teachers, students, and parents at OCDS. I purposely established personal and professional relationships that centered on trust and loyalty.

Neo-Jezebel

The second dimension of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader is that of the Neo-Jezebel. Historically, Black women had been perceived by members of the dominant culture and by popular media as overly sexual and manipulative (Collins, 2000). The stereotypic Jezebel was a negative image of Black women that over time created erroneous assertions about professional Black women as being low on intellect and high on sexual desires (Givens & Monahan, 2005; hooks, 1981; Howard-Baptiste, 2014; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004). I re-conceptualized the negative attributes of the Jezebel character into a Neo-Jezebel image. As the Neo-Jezebel, I assumed the empowering leadership characteristics that included being charming, friendly, persuasive, hospitable, and outgoing. As the Neo-Jezebel, I employed positive aspects of the

controlling image (Collins, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005) of the past and retooled those attributes into socially acceptable mannerisms.

As the Neo-Jezebel, I was cognizant of how and when I demonstrated my charm. When speaking with White males, I employed a bright smile and lighthearted laughter as disarming tools that allowed me to gain acceptance. I believed that as the Neo-Jezebel, I appeared harmless to the White males in upper administration at OCDS. I used my charm to establish relationships which allowed me to build consensus on difficult issues. Moreover, through the Neo-Jezebel dimension of my emergent leadership style, I developed an overtly passionate persona. I was deliberate in displaying my passion for every aspect of my position as principal. I became well-known for my hugs and nicknames. As a physician used medications, I employed my hugs to just about any educational diagnosis. Most misunderstandings between students ended with hugs. Most conflicts with parents ended with hugs. Most of my interactions, positive or negative, ended with hugs. In addition, I also developed nicknames for my students based on grade levels. My research findings suggested that I referred to the early childhood students as “chickens”, the elementary students as “pumpkins”, and the middle school students as “pickles”. The findings also suggested that the use of these nicknames supported the primary thematic category of *Establishing a Family Unit*. My displays of passion and my use of non-sexual physical touch were important components of the Neo-Jezebel dimension of my leadership style and it also supported the thematic category of *Establishing a Family Unit*.

Neo-Sapphire

The third dimension of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader is that of the Neo-Sapphire image. The historical Sapphire stereotype was considered the more negative of the stereotypes assigned to Black women. Based on the prevailing characteristics of the Sapphire

figure, many Black women were viewed as overly aggressive and angry (Collins, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004). This negative controlling image allowed those in the dominant culture to view intelligent, outspoken Black females as hard to work with. In my role as the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader, I internalized this dimension of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader in a more professional manner.

As the Neo-Sapphire, I promoted my assertiveness through my knowledge of school curriculum, policy and procedures, and teaching best practices. I re-imagined the behaviors of the Neo-Sapphire as beneficial to the operation of the school and the support of the teachers. As the Neo-Sapphire, I communicated high expectations for myself, my teachers, and my students. When working with the all-White male advisory board at OCDS, my Neo-Sapphire attributes were beneficial in promoting my agenda for the school when securing finances. The research findings suggested that I demonstrated controlled anger only to promote social justice or equity among the student body. I became the champion for the underdog at OCDS. I was cognizant to never display my anger in a personal manner –never wanting to appear as the mad Black woman; however, at times when my students were being mistreated, my righteous indignation would surface. As the Neo-Sapphire, I also was careful when I conducted professional development or training workshops to display professional confidence and a strong personality.

Neo-Matriarch

The fourth dimension of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader is that of the Neo-Matriarch. The traditional view and understanding of the Black Matriarch was one of the controlling images that was well received and accepted by many Black Females (Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981). The Matriarch was understood to provide foundational support for the Black family and the Black community (Collins, 2000). As a new principal, assuming the role of the

“School Mother”, or the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader, I incorporated the positive aspects of the Black Matriarch into my leadership style. These characteristics included being a role model, being stable and determined, and empowering others.

During the research timeframe, I considered my role as both a protector and provider for the stakeholders at OCDS. As the Neo-Matriarch, I protected and buffered my teachers from negative outside forces. I made it a priority to sit in on parent-teacher conferences when the parents were irate. In addition, as the Neo-Matriarch I perceived my role as a provider. During my first year as principal, there were times that I used my personal monies to provide resources for the classrooms. As the Neo-Matriarch, my behavior endeared me to the teachers and students and my research findings suggested that as the Neo-Matriarch I was viewed as a confidant, someone whom the teachers trusted with their personal and private matters. Many times during the research timeframe, teachers came to me for advice on matters unrelated to teaching. I conferenced with teachers concerning issues with their husbands, children, and their career goals. The research findings also suggested that as the Neo-matriarch, the parents at OCDS also sought me out when they needed advice. I embraced this important role as I forged relationships at many different levels.

Answering the second question in my autoethnography exposed the complex nature of leadership identity. As a Black female first year principal, I perceived my role as the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader and I understood that role to be pivotal to the success of the school. I incorporated the characteristics from the historical stereotypes used to describe Black women (Collins, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005; hooks, 1981; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Sewell, 2013) and I combined my observational data to construct the four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader. They are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader and the Four Dimensions

Neo-Mammy	Neo-Jezebel	Neo-Sapphire	Neo-Matriarch
Self-sacrifice	Charming	Knowledgeable	Role Model
Nurturing	Passionate	Driven	Values and Beliefs
Devoted	Friendly	Innovative	Mediator
Family Minded	Persuasive	High Expectation	Coach
Caring	Hospitable	Visionary	Empowering others
Servant	Manipulative	Risk Taker	Determined

I considered the characteristics of the historical stereotypes of the Mammy, Jezebel, Sapphire, and Matriarch used by the dominant culture to refer to Black women (Brown et al., 2013; Collins, 2000; Givens & Monahan, 2005; hooks, 1981; Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Sewell, 2013; Wingfield, 2007). In Table 4, I reconstructed the controlling images (Collins, 2000) to represent my theories in actions as a Black female first year principal at a predominantly White private Christian school. From my observational data and my reflective journal, I conceptualized my role as the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader which was a deliberate creation of a leadership caricature I perceived to be accepted by those in the dominant culture.

Research Question Three

The third research question was as follows: How did I respond to the challenges I faced as a Black female from a non-traditional leadership background? Being a new principal has many expected challenges that range from understanding the existing school culture to implementing the vision and mission of a school (Drake & Roe, 1986; Lortie, 2009). Many researchers agree that leadership should focus on building and sustaining professional relationships (Bass & Bass, 2009; Burns, 1978; Drake, & Roe, 1986; Hallinger, 2003; Lortie, 2009). There are also many unexpected challenges that new principals face (Drake & Roe, 1986;

Lortie, 2009). My greatest challenge as a Black female first year principal was reducing the fears among the faculty and replacing a large of faculty members at one time. As a non-member of the dominant cultural, I believed that I needed those in the dominant culture to identify with me as the principal and the school leader. I soon realized that most of my responses to the challenges I faced were rooted in issues related to my race and my gender.

During the research timeframe, I identified specific strategies for creating effective leader-follower relationships. The data revealed that I purposed to become the tangible representation of what I perceived was expected in a Black female principal. I retooled the controlling images of Black females (Collins, 2000) and created a new myth for the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. As outlined in Chapter 7, I ignored my personal and professional desires for power, recognition, and monetary gain. I re-envisioned the controlling images (Collins, 2000) and oppressive myths (Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2004; Sewell, 2013) to create a fictional leadership persona. I became a leader who adopted a pseudo-family mind-set. I perceived myself as a strong leader who advocated for the needs and concerns of the teachers and students. I became the Neo-Stereotypic Black Female leader and I faced challenges in an accommodation approach. I relied on my Neo-Stereotypic leadership style to ingratiate myself to those in the dominant culture at OCDS. As I described previously, I operated within the four dimensions of the Neo-Mammy, Neo-Jezebel, Neo-Sapphire, and Neo-Matriarch. I become what I perceived to be a familiar and acceptable Black female principal. Through my acceptance by my teachers, students, and parents, I became a conduit for innovation and problem solving by involving my faculty in most levels of decision-making. When challenges were presented, I employed the Neo-Stereotypic dimension that I thought addressed the issue as well that which was acceptable for a Black female in leadership.

The findings from my research suggested that my primary focus as the principal was on establishing a pseudo-family unit at OCDS while inventing a leadership style that employed neo-stereotypic behaviors that would be accepted by the stakeholders. I met the challenges during my first year as principal by my coping strategy of embracing the role of the fictional character of the neo-stereotypic leader. The four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader had a degree of fluidity. As the Neo-Stereotypic leader, I responded to the challenges through my inclusive leadership style that focused on respecting others, open communication, and shared values. During the research timeframe, my strategy of establishing collaboration and collegial interactions became the hallmark of how I responded to my leadership challenges.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question was as follows: How does a Black female first year principal perceive her behavior in relation to Transformational Leadership behaviors? As I mentioned previously, the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009) provided the theoretical framework for my autoethnographic study. I hypothesized that my behaviors as a Black female principal would be closely related to the behaviors and dispositions associated with the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009). In Chapter Two, I discussed the four dimensions of the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009) that include: Individualized Consideration, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Idealized Influence. For leadership to truly be considered transformational, both the leader and the followers are changed in mind-set and behaviors (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass, & Riggio, 2006). At the end of the research timeframe, I requested that my faculty complete the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire II (MLQ) and rate my leadership. In addition, I also completed the self-rater component of the MLQ. The data suggested that my faculty viewed my leadership as

transformational (see Appendix G) and that my self-rating was very close to the faculty rating. As my research findings suggested, professional leadership beliefs and dispositions were altered during the research timeframe. The greatest part of my transformation as a Black female leader was demonstrated in my willingness to embrace what I once thought to be negative stereotypes in order to achieve the best leadership outcomes at OCDS.

The Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass, & Riggio, 2006) became the underpinning for my consideration of my leadership behaviors. I considered the characteristics of each of the four dimensions and I compared them to my emergent leadership style as the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. Furthermore, I reviewed other research on Transformational Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2000; Bass, & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, & Duke, 1999; Marks & Printy, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) and I organized the leadership behaviors and leadership dispositions of the four dimensions of Transformational Leadership Theory that I present in Table 5.

Table 5. Transformational Leadership and the Four Dimensions

Individualized Consideration	Inspirational Motivation	Intellectual Stimulation	Idealized Influence
Servant Leaders	Enthusiastic	Competent Leader	Role Model
Concerned	Charismatic	Innovative	Trusted
Supportive	Self-Actualization	Problem Solver	Empowers Followers
Considers Needs	Forward Thinking	Encourage Ideas	Persistent
Available to Help	Relational Minded	Experienced	Admired
Supports Growth	Team Spirit	Collaborative	Determined

The findings and interpretations presented are in response to the fourth research question, which represents the amalgamation of my perceptions of my leadership behaviors in relation to the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass, & Riggio, 2006). I considered my leadership behaviors as the Neo-Stereotypic Black female and the four

dimensions which are listed in Table 4. I also compared my leadership behaviors with the four dimensions of the Transformational Leadership Behaviors listed in Table 5. Additionally, I reviewed the rater data from the open-ended questions from the MLQ II (see Appendix G). Using a one-to-one comparison technique (Johnson & Christensen, 2012), the leadership behavior of the Neo-Mammy was compared to the leadership dimension of Individualized Consideration; I compared Neo-Jezebel with the leadership dimension of Inspirational Motivation; I compared Neo-Sapphire with the leadership dimension of Intellectual Stimulation; I compared the Neo-Matriarch with the leadership dimension of Idealized Influence. Based on my observational data and my interpretations, I found that there was a strong correlation between my emergent leadership style and that of the Transformational Leadership Theory. My research findings and other research that described characteristics of the Transformational Leadership Theory were used to construct a comparison depiction that is presented in Figure 1.

To answer the fourth research question in my autoethnography, I juxtaposed each of the four elements of the Transformational Leadership Theory with the four dimensions of my Neo-Stereotypic Black female leadership model. Figure 1 provides the comparative representation of the culminating understanding of my autoethnographic research. The data suggest a multifaceted paradigm of leadership, which posits constructs concerning the complex array of abstract ideas that describe tangible behaviors as perceived through the lens of a Black female first year principal.

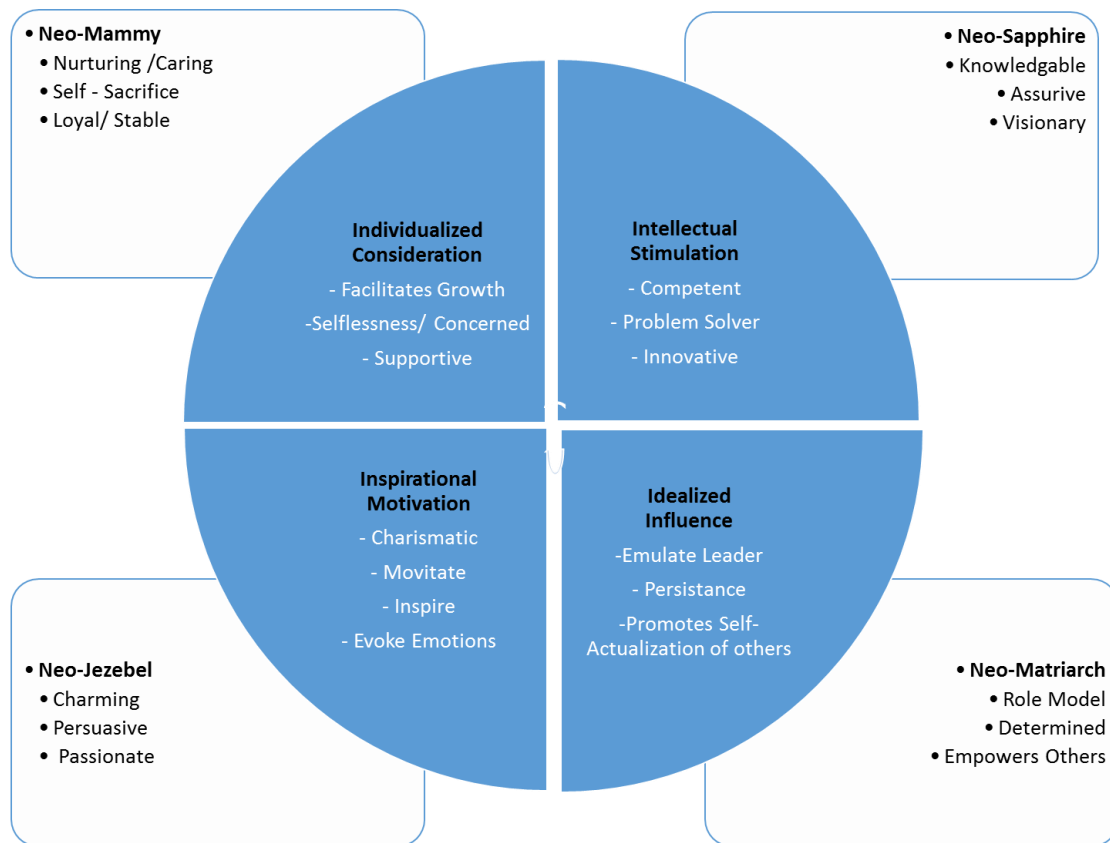


Figure 1. Transformational Leadership vs. Neo-Stereotypic Black Female Leader

This lens brings my historical and cultural contexts into focus and provides the underpinning for my leadership interpretation. This lens also provides the sense making needed to deconstruct the White male-dominated leadership perspectives that are pervasive in the research literature.

In the next chapter entitled *Conclusions and Implications*, I present the consolidation of the perceptions formulated by the researcher. Conclusions about the findings and the data interpretations are also outlined. The chapter includes implications for further research concerning Black female principals.

The final section of my autoethnography ends with an epilogue that expresses the level of difficulty and complexity associated with self-study when one has been conditioned not to vulnerable or exposed.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

This autoethnographic study followed a qualitative format for an evocative narrative inquiry (Chang, 2008; Ellis, 2009). This study presents the highly contextualized perception of a Black female who was experiencing her first year as principal in a predominately White private Christian school. This study privileged the voice of a non-traditional research subject as it explored the leadership perspective of a Black female. The purpose of this study was to take an introspective look at how a Black female principal perceived her leadership role and contributions during the research timeframe. In addition, this study examined the unique challenges which were presented at that particular time, in that particular space, and through that particular circumstance. In the qualitative research tradition, this study is grounded in the intersubjectivity discourse that examines multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths. (Lincoln & Guba, 2013).

The autobiographical characteristics of this study allowed for a deeper look into the social constructs of race, gender, and leadership from the point of view of the researcher. During the research timeframe, I provided a personalized account of the transformational process I experienced while I documented my emergent leadership style. The aim of this study is to encourage educational leaders to reflect on their own dispositions and praxis. Moreover, this study hopes to encourage Black female principals to develop their own understanding of the complexities and challenges associated with their race, gender, and leadership opportunities. As previously stated in this dissertation, few studies on leadership have been conducted from the perspective of school principals (Leithwood, & Duke, 1999; Lortie, 2009; and still fewer studies

have been conducted from the perspective of Black female principals in predominantly White schools (Echols, 2009; Sperandio, 2009; Surface et al., 2012). The goal of this research is to add to the body of knowledge in the area of race, gender, and leadership by the unique perspective of an autoethnographic study.

Autoethnographic research involves examining oneself within a social context and should include the honest scrutiny of one's past circumstances and present motivations (Chang, 2008; Denzin, 2000; Bochner, 2012). For this study, the social context is a predominately White private Christian school that had not experienced the leadership of a Black female. The researcher provided a rich perspective concerning the contradictions between the personal self and the professional self while developing an authentic leadership style. To better understand the contradictions, the researcher used a Critical Race orientation (Bell, 1980; Bell, 2004; Hardin, 1997; Lawrence, 1980) as the research foundation and explored the attitudes which led to the development of the multilayered identity of Blacks and more specifically Black females. In addition, the researcher also examined the contradictions found in leadership theories that were based on the dominant group and were not germane to my leadership style. To better understand the intricacies of race, gender, and leadership, my autoethnography connected the personal to the cultural (Chang, 2008; Reed-Danahay, 2009). This study provides a non-traditional look at leadership through the eyes of a Black female and furthered the development of the leadership genre.

Chapter Analysis

Chapter One

In Chapter One, entitled *Introduction*, I presented the beginning of my labyrinth journey of self-discovery and self-development in leadership. As I embarked in autoethnographic research, it became imperative that I explore the realities of my past family history, social, and cultural circumstances and their influence on my leadership identity development. In this chapter I exposed the readers to my first leadership models which became my archetype for Black female leadership. As I mentioned previously, there is research that suggested how we internalize the attitudes and behaviors of leadership when “we reach adulthood is likely to be affected by the earlier patterns and relationships from our childhood and our genetic makeup” (Bass & Bass, 2009, p. 3). The leadership patterns demonstrated by my grandmother, her sisters, and the other Black women in our Black Baptist church had a profound influence in shaping my leadership dispositions and behaviors.

In Chapter One, the research setting and research situations are also pivotal in the understanding of the mindset of the researcher. During the study timeframe, the researcher sought to learn who she was as an educational leader. In addition, the researcher used a constructivist purview to understand the impact on leadership development of someone who grew-up under stereotypic attitudes and pressures. The purpose of this autoethnographic study was to explore the phenomenon of my first year as principal and examine the intersections of my race and gender that affect my leadership perceptions. My autoethnography investigated the factors, dispositions, and behaviors that informed and shaped my perceptions as a Black, female, first year principal in a predominately White private Christian school. The original hypothesis was that my leadership behaviors as principal of OCDS would correlate to the leadership

behaviors outlined in the Transformational Leadership model (Bass & Bass, 2009). This chapter also detailed the description of the negative historical stereotypes for Black females that became vital to my leadership development.

Chapter Two

In Chapter Two entitled, *Literature Review*, I examined the literature on Critical Race Theory as the theoretical foundation for my study and I explored the concept of collective identity development among Blacks. This chapter outline the major leadership constructs and the evolution of the leadership paradigms over the years. I reviewed the literature on the leadership for schools which focused on the White male perspective. This chapter then turned to examine the constructs of transformational leadership which provided the original framework for my study. In the last section of this chapter, I reviewed the literature on the non-traditional leadership represented by Black females. This chapter was essential in the formulation of the underlying assumptions that provided the research parameters and boundaries.

Chapter Three

In Chapter Three entitled, *Methodology*, I began with a brief vignette to explain to readers the background understanding of why I selected a qualitative approach and autoethnographic methods for investigating my research interest. This chapter consisted of the philosophical worldview that governed qualitative traditions. In addition, this chapter continued with a discussion into narrative inquiry and the use of autoethnography as a method for examining complex social and cultural issues. Included in the chapter are the research design and procedures used to conduct this study and a detailed description of the research setting. As part of this chapter, I described the data collection process and outlined the various forms of data I

privileged in this study. The last section of this chapter provided the data analysis and data coding and reduction step. In this chapter, the preliminary research codes are also presented.

Chapter Four

In Chapter Four entitled, *The Commission of the S. S. Principal (Ship)*, the researcher provided the narrative account of the events that transpired before the research timeframe. Viewing this chapter as critical to the understanding of my leadership identity development, I transport the reader through my chronological journey which began when I learned I would become the principal of OCDS. The subdivisions in this chapter are narrative essays constructed from the raw data of my field notes and my reflective journal. As part of the process for establishing trustworthiness of the research, I extracted the data in its purest form to engage in the elements of storing (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). This chapter became central to the research project in that it described the unpredictable elements of qualitative inquiry and how the researcher responded to what was believed to be a shift in the research framework. The initial purpose of this study was to determine if I perceived my leadership behaviors to correlate with the leadership behaviors of the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Chapter Five

In Chapter Five entitled, *The Voyage of the S. S. Principal (Ship)*, I presented an analogical narrative of a Black female, who is represented as the ship and my first year as principal of a predominately White private Christian school is represented as my maiden voyage. This chapter depicted the first few months of the principalship and related them to the nautical explorations of the early expeditions to unknown lands. The subheadings and each of the narrative essays presented in this chapter are intended to describe the challenges I faced as a new

principal in search of a leadership identity. Through the narrative process, I exposed my shift in attitude, beliefs, and values. I detailed the process of destructing my professional leadership schema and replacing it with my leadership ideal which I perceived would be readily acceptable by the members of the dominant culture at OCDS.

Chapter Six

In Chapter Six entitled, *Burn Your Principal (Ship)*, the researcher continued the narrative concatenation of the events which transpired during my first year as principal of OCDS. As I mentioned previously, this chapter presented the mind-set of the researcher and demonstrated my leadership resolve to become what was expected and to do whatever was needed to ensure my principalship would be successful. Through the narrative essays presented in this chapter, the reader is introduced to the leadership transformation of a Black female principal. As the researcher, I invite the reader to envision a ship landing in a new land. I continued to unfold the storyline through each of the subsections and introduced the multilayer dimensions of my emergent leadership persona. For example, in the subheading entitled, *Landing on Uncharted Territory*, I introduced the leadership characteristics I later referred to as Neo-Matriarch and the Neo-Jezebel. Likewise, in the subheading entitled, *Winning over the Natives*, I introduced the leadership characteristics I referred to as the Neo-Mammy. From the subsections entitled, *Staking My Claim* and *Planting My Flag*, I introduced the leadership characteristics I referred to as the Neo-Sapphire. Throughout this chapter, I constructed my narrative directly from the raw data based on my field notes, reflective journal and self-observations. As mentioned, in an attempt to establish trustworthiness of my research, I presented large amounts of the raw data that I collected during the research timeframe (Chang,

2008). In the subsequent subsections of Chapter Six, I reveal the fluid nature of my emergent leadership style.

Chapter Seven

In Chapter Seven entitled, *The Method to My Madness*, the researcher exposes the calculated decision to pursue self-discovery. I previously explained that from the inception of my leadership charge, I was faced with unpredictable circumstances and situations I believed was directly related to me being a Black female. I believed that the main focus of my autoethnography, which was to compare my behaviors to that of the transformational leader, had been derailed. During the research timeframe, I engaged in a form of leadership survival where I created a leadership persona that I believed would be acceptable to the stakeholders at OCDS. I engaged in the deliberate reification of the mythical stereotypic characteristics of Black females. The Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader became the role I assumed as principal to meet the challenges and demands of leadership.

I reviewed the writings of Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method*, and I reinvented myself based on the three maxims of Descartes delineated in Chapter Seven. After my leadership disenchantment, I underwent a process of professional and personal manipulation of my leadership understands. In Chapter Seven, I realized that events and situations from my past had an influence on how I expected to be received as a Black female principal. In this chapter, I exposed the conundrum of how I felt about the old stereotypes while attempting to create a stereotypic character. This chapter also suggested the emotional struggle I faced as an educated Black female in allowing others to view me as the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader.

Chapter Eight

In Chapter Eight entitled, *Findings and Discussion*, I presented the results of the study and I provided the narrative support that answers the four research questions that guided this study. The findings of this study obtained through analysis of all data sources revealed that there was a definite shift that was explored during the data analysis phase of my study. The primary theme of this study suggests the importance of Establishing a Family Unit within the organization of OCDS. Inherent in this theme of family is the concept of a maternal figure as the leader of the family. In Chapter Eight, through the findings and discussions, I introduced that maternal character of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. She is a multidimensional character who provided guidance, assistance, support, resources, and care for the members of the OCDS family. The four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader included; the Neo-Mammy, the Neo-Jezebel, the Neo-Sapphire, and the Neo-Matriarch. The research findings suggest that as the principal, I operated among the four dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. I perceived my leadership to be on a continuum and at times the data confirmed that there was overlapping characteristics among the four leadership dimensions of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader.

In this chapter, I delineated my attempt to add to the scholarly knowledge on Black female leadership of principals. Chapter Eight demonstrated the findings of this study suggested that there were parallels between the stereotypic behaviors of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader and the behaviors described as transformational. In Figure 1 of this chapter, I presented the pictorial representation of the correlation of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader and the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass & Bass, 2009).

Implications

My autoethnography is intended to compliment the avant garde research centered on the Black female leadership perspectives. My study added to the body of knowledge and research related to non-traditional school leadership and may serve to help Black female principals in identifying more effective and authentic leadership styles as they prepare to lead schools in the twenty-first century. Through reflective analysis of the research findings, a number of implications emerged as a result of this study. The first set of implications concerned educational leadership theory and the second suggested areas for future research. It is my hope that this current study enlarges the conception of transformational leadership in regards to Black females and other non-traditional leaders.

Implications for Leadership Theory

The research findings from this current study validated the assumptions presented in the conceptual framework. Although it could not have been perceived by the researcher at the start of the study, the epistemological understanding of non-traditional leadership were salient. The results from this study suggested that the fundamental ethos I experienced as a Black female became the underlying leadership strategies I practiced as a Black female principal. My ways of knowing as a Black female emerged clearly during my leadership development as the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader.

For over a century, Black women have been negatively portrayed in stereotypes and as caricatures by hegemony or misguided ignorance (Beauboeuf, 2008; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1981; Howard-Baptiste, 2014) The stereotypes have persisted and thrived in America even with direct evidence to the contrary (Howard-Baptiste, 2014; Givens & Monahan, 2005; Reynolds-Dobbs,

Thomas, & Harrison, 2008). As I considered the implication for leadership theory, it must be noted that these pervasive stereotypes assigned to Black females have never been associated with White males, Black males, or White females. The looming question becomes why? Why is it that these other groups (not individuals) have never been associated with the concept of self-sacrifice which is a hallmark of the transformational leader? Is there something peculiar in the beliefs, values, and dispositions of Black females? As mentioned in Chapter One, there is not one singular Black women's thought or idea; however, there is a familiarity and kinship of observable behaviors of Black female leaders (Howard-Baptiste, 2014; Loder, 2005; McCray et al., 2007; Sperandio, 2009).

Over the years, I have seen Black females assumed positions of mothers, church leaders, caregivers, teachers, doctors, executives, and community organizers. From my perspective, Black females interact in leadership roles in ways that are highly relational; this is also another hallmark of the transformational leader. Black females have demonstrated a heightened sense of concern and care for others which is also another important component of the transformational leadership model (Bass & Bass, 2009). They have displayed behaviors as a collective group that have been considered stereotypic. Black women wear self-sacrifice as a mantle that they pass on to the next generation of Black females. Why have the stereotypes of Black females persisted? Do Black females contribute to the perpetuation of mythologies? Do Black females, either deliberately or unconsciously, display leadership behaviors that are vastly different from other people groups? I theorized that at the fundamental level these self-sacrificing and relational behaviors and dispositions of Black females have always represented leadership and that these same behaviors and dispositions have had the ability to transform hearts and minds for decades. Although this area of inquiry is beyond the purview of this current study, it does suggest the

importance of evolving leadership theory in regards to Black females. The question remains, what if the negative stereotypes ascribed to Black females were misunderstood leadership characteristics that I am now being identifying as transformational leadership.

Implications for Future Research

The qualitative research traditions involve emergent processes of meaning-making. Distinct from quantitative research, many times qualitative researchers make discoveries and findings that are unintended and unexpected (Denzin, 1969; Johnson & Christensen, 2012; Yin, 2011). During my research timeframe, I interrogated the data I had collected along with the initial story I believed would be present and I found a change in the narrative. My perception of my leadership underwent a double shifting and the parameters of the study were broaden wider than I previously anticipated. The meanings that surfaced from my research reflections and from telling my story provided new knowledge and altered my viewpoint.

Originally, I anticipated my story to be about a Black female experiencing her first year as a principal and how her leadership behaviors correlated to the leadership behaviors outlined by the Transformational Leadership Theory (Bass, & Bass, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006). However, through the difficulties of social interactions and the complexities associated with race and gender, I realized that I would be experiencing an unorthodox leadership journey. The double shifting in my leadership perception can really be viewed as a shift and re-shift. As my new understanding emerged, I shifted away from my initial hypothesis and developed the innovative leadership model Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. Later as I reflected on the data analysis and data interpretation, I discovered a re-shifting back toward the Transformational Leadership model as I identified parallels between the two models.

My autoethnography has accomplished the preliminary goals of using narrative inquiry to explore the perceptions of leadership behaviors and dispositions of a Black female first year principal serving in a predominantly White private Christian school. In addition, this study has also made a connection between the newly developed leadership model of the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader with that of the Transformational Leadership model (Bass & Bass, 2009; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Yet, there are still unanswered questions that could suggest future research directions and that would provide deeper understanding of the internalization of leadership by other Black female principals.

Firstly, future researchers could consider conducting longitudinal studies of Black female principals in an effort to determine their perceptions of their leadership styles. Longitudinal studies would allow for more time of intense observations of the research participants. In addition, longitudinal studies would allow for an increase in the sample pooling and inquire about the generalizability of the findings. Unlike this current study that intended on determining the perceptions of the researcher, a longitudinal study could offer multiple-perceptions and could provide a baseline for new leadership understandings.

Secondly, future researchers could also consider the importance of conducting qualitative inquiry and presenting different narrative methods. The underlying foundation of this current study involved allowing the voice of a non-traditional leader to tell her story. Future research should look to empower the storytellers to speak and write about their world in non-canonical forms. As the researcher of this current study, I experienced a liberating force as I privileged my epistemological stance that is not recognized by traditional researchers and many times not respected when compared to traditional research methods. Future leadership research in the qualitative tradition could encourage multiple ways of knowing to be more respected.

Lastly, the research findings in this current study suggested an innovative leadership model and introduced the Neo-Stereotypic Black female leader. This multidimensional leadership model represented the emergent and unexpected understanding produced from this current study. Although this current study presents a novel idea in understanding the leadership perceptions of a Black female, continuing in this research vein could be beneficial to the future advancement of leadership understandings. The findings in this current study left me with many unanswered questions that I presented in the previous section on implications for theory. Future research which considers the social constructs of race and gender and how they affect leadership can enlarge the scope of leadership diversity.

EPILOGUE

We Wear the Mask! By, Paul Lawrence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,--
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
We wear the mask!

I selected this poem as my final thoughts because of the clarity for which it speaks. As a Black female in America, I can readily identify with the concept of hiding ones true identity and feelings from others. During my autoethnographic study, I also experience the mask which allowed me to hide my emotions as the leader from my teachers, the followers. At times during my research timeframe, I felt uncomfortable as I removed my mask. I struggled with how to remove the mask because it also provided a certain degree of protection for me. Now that I have

completed my self-narrative research, I must decide if I will replace my mask. Although while I am contemplating not replacing my mask, my own fears will ensure the mask is all of me that others will see. I will continue to wear the mask because those around me can neither comprehend nor fully appreciate the reality of a Black female principal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Photos of Early Social and Civic Events



My Grandparents, center
Social Club



My Grandparents
Civic Gala

Appendix B. Photos of the Sisters



Appendix C. Photo of Me Attending My First Ball



Appendix D. Blacks – Article in *The Daily Reveille* on October 14, 1980

Letters

Reagan

On the Ronald Reagan... Thursday night in... I stepped the movie... I stepped the movie... The... sponsored the... the more minds off... personalities... Jimmy... like to talk about... he asks if to the... to talk about the... of the day. Benson... it best. Jimmy... turning in his record... (S) of his record... the Jimmy Carter... Carter has... percent to 10 percent... more people are... than were when... Interest rates... and young... his bosses took. We... we are stronger... our military... we did kicked... every third rate... the world. Fifty-two... been held hostage... a year now. It... end... but that is going to... number of people... and... he refused time and... Reagan. Carter... to defend his record... it's the worst... president this... The SGA has refused... a truck election and the... has refused to co... Both groups know... and won in a landslide... went for Ford in 1976... fall. LSU students... conservative and... but the... is trying to hide... the students... to get the attention in... of personalities... issues and Jimmy... disastrous four year... time to make America... It is time to elect a... who will solve our... It is time for Ronald... elected president.

HEIDI DAVIS
Sue Chairman
Way Republics

Blacks

Black student at LSU... and... second year. Recently it... the Reveille that the... blacks to whites for the... finalists was not... of the LSU... all its life I have... similar stereotypes of... people often I have

heard that "blacks have come a long way." Is this true? Every student at LSU has a common goal. To achieve to the best of his ability. But when blacks at LSU try to move up the ladder, they face obstacles that are ridiculously unfair. Why? Blacks have proven themselves academically as well as athletically. Still, we are unable to reach a point of social equilibrium. With the large scale of separation and discrimination of the majority rule, we are lucky to get a "token Black" on any extracurricular activity.

It's true, blacks have come a long way, but this is 1980 and we have arrived. Still competing with the best of whites, we know we must work twice as hard to reach the point where they have been for hundreds of years. We must continue to prove and shock if necessary to show that blacks are productive human beings.

Blacks are now taking their long deserved place at LSU. I have been fortunate enough to receive the best possible education at LSU, so that makes me a realist. I know I'm not the first person to question the "system," but I want to bring it to your attention one more time, just to raise an eyebrow or two. There is one thing we as students can be sure of: blacks at LSU are moving up.

TONY THOMPSON
(C)

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Appendix E. Sample Page Reflective Journal and Note

Journal Entry	Reflections
<p>February 2014</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••

Appendix F. Artifact - Faculty Bookmark Retreat 2014



Appendix G. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire II (MLQ)

Terri Wallis

5. Full-Range Leadership Profile - Aggregate Scores

Section 5 presents your aggregate ratings and your self-rating. Use the key below for interpretation:

Frequency
0 = Not at all
1 = Once in awhile
2 = Sometimes
3 = Fairly often
4 = Frequently, if not always

The number of raters is shown below in parentheses.

Transformational Leadership



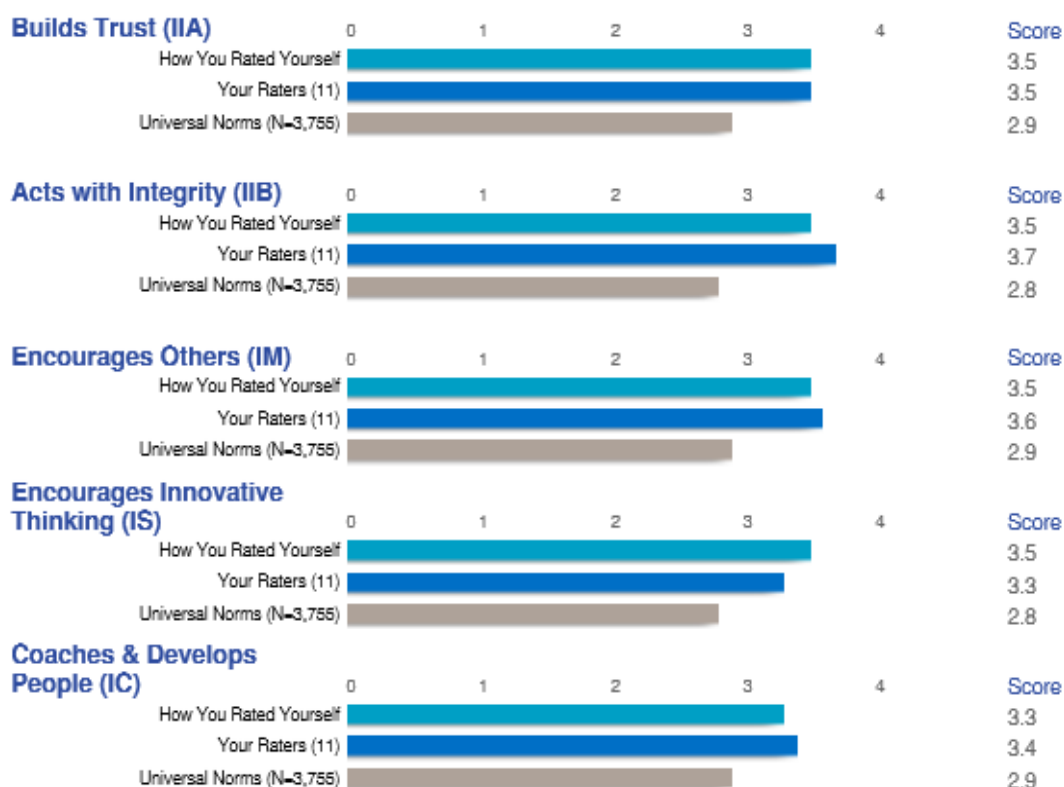
*According to the Research Validated Benchmark, the ideal frequency of all five Transformational behaviors should be a "Fairly Often" rating of 3 or greater.



*According to the Research Validated Benchmark, the ideal frequency of all five Transformational behaviors should be a "Fairly Often" rating of 3 or greater.

7. Comparison with Norms: Transformational Leadership

The graphs below show the frequency of your leadership behaviors as perceived by you and your raters vs. universal norms. Simply put, norms are group averages and **N** (in parentheses) is the number of leaders included in the norm.



11. Rater Feedback to Open-Ended Questions

The rater comments below are provided unedited and do not represent any order of relative importance.

What Can Help the Leader Be More Effective

What are two or three things that would help Terri Wallis be more effective?

I can not think of anything.

Delegating, training new teachers by leading, mentorship program

1. Communicate with all team members equally. At times communication seems to be between a few people and others are left out of the loop. 2. Give more positive reinforcement when it is due.

Expand her vision by expressing it to others whenever possible. Many people will be drawn to her vision and purpose and they will be motivated to follow and help.

1. office support staff 2. (after new office support staff in place) being about to delegate to someone who with get the job done correctly.

Im not sure.

Be more organized , respond a little quicker to parents concerns

1. At the present time, Mrs. Wallis is stretched very thin due to circumstances at our school. Mrs. Wallis would be more effective if some of her responsibilities were delegated. She is very effective motivating others and could easily transfer some duties.

Rater Feedback to Open-Ended Questions (cont.)

What Is Admired About the Leader

What I admire most about Terri Wallis's leadership is:

Terri is direct and honest. She confronts situations immediately. I always know where I stand with Terri. She is encouraging without making me feel like I have made a mistake. Her approach is always encouraging leaving me feeling supported, respected, and professional. Terri's professional interactions and leadership skills are EXCEPTIONAL. I have had many supervisors and she is by far the best. She makes me want to be a better teacher and I know that she is always available.

Her ability to transform any situation into a positive one.

She is very effective at communicating her vision and what she expects of people as a teacher and as students. She is a good motivator.

I believe that Terri Wallis is an extremely effective leader. She always puts students and teachers first. She is honest with those she is over. She always helps through offering advice, demonstrating, and sending resources. She is very encouraging! She is extremely passionate about everything she does. She is very knowledgeable, but continues to educate herself.

I admire Mrs. Wallis in so many ways. She is very devoted to family, friends and teachers, but I admire her most for the confidence she displays. She has proven to be a successful teacher and administrator. She is not prideful--she is confident! As a teacher under her leadership, I felt like her confidence rubbed off on me. (She leads by example.) She complimented my teaching methods and made me feel very validated as a professional. I aspire to be like her one day!

her ability to treat everyone with a great amount of respect. She treats all of her staff as professionals.

Her ability and desire to continue to focus on the students' needs and address them herself. The students love that they can go to her, she is approachable and visible.

Complete dedication , loves teaching and always gives 100 percent

Terri Wallis is the most flexible person that I have ever met. She is very good at adapting to whatever the situation is or whatever arises.

Appendix H. Study One Institutional Review Board Approval

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This Form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

– Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at <http://research.lsu.edu/CompliancePoliciesProcedures/InstitutionalReviewBoard%28IRB%29/Item24737.html>

– A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts B thru F.

(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)

(C) Copies of all Instruments to be used.

*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.

(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)

(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)

(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<http://research.lsu.edu/files/Item26774.pdf>)

LSU

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
131 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu
lsu.edu/irb

1) Principal Investigator: Terri Wallis

Rank: PhD Candidate

Dept: ELRC - Ed Leadership

Ph: 225-281-4041

E-mail: terri.wallis@gocrusaders.com

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each

*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

Dr. Kathe Managan; Anthropology; 225-578-3451;
kmanagan@lsu.edu
Office: 108E Howe-Russell

IRB# E8175 LSU Proposal # _____

☒ Complete Application

☒ Human Subjects Training

3) Project Title:

Leading from Behind: African American Women Leaders in the Church

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-8692 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 3/3/2016

4) Proposal? (yes or no) ☐ no

If Yes, LSU Proposal Number _____

Also, if YES, either

☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant

OR

☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

African American Women in a Baptist Church in Leadership roles

*Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Terri Wallis

Terri Wallis

Date 2/02/2013

(no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted ☒ Not Exempted _____ Category/Paragraph 2

Signed Consent Waived?: Yes ☐ No ☒

Reviewer Mathews

Signature

Robert C. Mathews

Date 3/4/13

Appendix I. Study Two Institutional Review Board Approval

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts B-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit the completed application to the IRB Office by e-mail (irb@lsu.edu) for review. If you would like to have your application reviewed by a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee before submitting it to the IRB office, you can find the list of committee members at <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/consent/human-subjects-screening-committee-members/>.
- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
 - (A) This completed form
 - (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
 - (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
 - *If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
 - (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
 - (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)
 - (F) Signed copy of the IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/consent/files/2013/07/Security-of-Data-Agreement.pdf>)

LSU

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

1) Principal Investigator: Rank:

Dept: Ph: E-mail:

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If the Principal Investigator is a student, identify and name supervising professor in this space

Kenneth J. Fasching-Vamer, PhD
Shirley B. Barton Endowed Associate Professor
School of Education - College of Human Sciences and Education
office 225-578-291 | mobile 225-916-7615 vamer@lsu.edu

3) Project Title:

4) Proposal? (yes or no) ☐ If Yes, LSU Proposal Number

Also, if YES, either

☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant

OR

☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)

*Indicate any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children < 18 the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Date (no per signatures)

**I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action:	<input type="radio"/> Exempted	<input type="radio"/> Not Exempted	Category/Paragraph <input type="text"/>
Signed Consent Waived?:	<input type="radio"/> Yes or <input type="radio"/> No		
Reviewer <input type="text"/>	Signature <input type="text"/>	Date <input type="text"/>	

Continue on the next page

VITA

Terri Valentine Wallis, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, received her bachelor's degree in elementary education in 1997 from Southern University, Baton Rouge and her master's degree in educational leadership in 2009 from Louisiana State University (LSU). She taught multiple grade levels in elementary and middle school subjects in public and private schools in Baton Rouge. She received her Louisiana leadership licensure in 2010 upon which time she began working in building level administration as an assistant principal. After four years as an assistant principal she began working as an elementary and middle school principal. In the summer of 2009, she decided to pursue graduate education and enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Educational Leadership and Research Counseling at LSU. She continued working as a school principal while pursuing her Ph. D. She expects to receive her doctorate degree in May 2016 and plans to teach at the college level focusing on teacher and principal preparation programs while pursuing her research interest in non-traditional leadership and social justice in education.