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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, my mother, Aretas Brookings, and my late father, Douglas Brookings. Thank you for instilling a lifetime love of learning and always supporting and believing in me with all my endeavors!

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ABSTRACT

There is an underrepresentation of African American head public school principals in the United States of America. The growth of multi-ethnic student populations in cities amplifies this situation. Principals leading diverse schools must function in various roles and require cultural competencies to handle the myriad of issues encountered daily. Most research studies analyze the experience of being an African American principal through the lens of Critical Race Theory, which examines systematic external barriers. This research explored this experience from a different perspective, involving the concept of double consciousness. Possessing a dual sense of self could be problematic but also advantageous. This general inductive qualitative study probed the thoughts and perceptions of eight African American principals in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area and examined how effectively understanding and utilizing their identity can be a beneficial tool for success. The data revealed that the participants demonstrated a heightened awareness of their racial identity and were accustomed to experiences related to the concept of double consciousness in their roles as educators and leaders. Their adept navigation of specific challenges and management of perceptions and expectations cultivated skills that proved impactful, beneficial, and advantageous in guiding diverse schools. The overall analysis of the data identified themes that illuminate the intricate intersection of racial identity and educational leadership.

Chapter One: Introduction

American public schools K-12 contain a more heterogeneous population now than ever before and must effectively educate a diverse student body regarding race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, and physical disability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). However, school leaders do not reflect the same diversity as the student population, particularly with African Americans. Whether it is in the teaching and administrative staff, students should experience interactions with people from all cultures, especially those representing the student body demographics. Research has shown that students of all demographic intersections experience more positive academic, behavioral, and social outcomes when exposed to diverse school staff members (Dee, 2004, 2005; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). Every child possesses a fundamental right to a high-quality public school with a qualified and caring staff, including educators who look like them.

Numerous researchers have conducted studies regarding African American principals. Most studies view this experience through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the external systematic barriers and challenges that Black school leaders must overcome (Alston, 2018; Beasley, 2020; Brooks, 2017; Cramer, 2016; Gregory, 2017; Haynes, 2016; Hill, 2013; Jackson, 2018; Miller, 2019; Monts, 2012; Rice, 2020; Richardson, 2014; Smith, 2019; Thomas, 2018; Tyson, 2016; Vinzant, 2009; Ward, 2020). However, some studies focus on identity and inner conflict in understanding the lived experience of being an African American principal (Cineus, 2018; Griffin, 2022; Jordan, 2018; Martin IV, 2014; Scott, 2022). Double consciousness, a concept made famous by W. E. B. Du Bois, centers on identity. He states, "It is a peculiar sensation,

this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 9).

Du Bois provides a slight sense of hope regarding double consciousness. He did not explain double consciousness as being a total disadvantageous state but rather a barrier that could be constructive. He equates this experience with being born "gifted with a second sight in this American world" (Du Bois, 1903, p 9). Du Bois urged Blacks to merge their two-ness to thrive in American society (Smith-Brown, 2014). Therefore, Black school leaders who experience double consciousness can use this sense as a beneficial tool to succeed in their professional lives.

Demographics of interactions play a crucial role in the lived experience of African American principals in the Oklahoma City (OKC) Metro. There is only one Black superintendent in the region. The rest, along with the vast majority of the district-level administration members, are White. A similar demographic makeup of teachers mirrors the case with principals. There has been a steady decline of African American teachers serving in schools, but the students and parents make up a highly diverse and multi-ethnic group. Ultimately, African American principals are wedged in between White superintendents and White teachers trying to fulfill the needs of a diverse school community. This positioning puts them in a unique situation to utilize double consciousness as a beneficial tool for success.

Problem Statement

According to Hines, Byrne and Byrne (1979), instructional leaders of color must consider how they view themselves with consideration to how their stakeholders view

them. The researchers concluded that even though Black principals seemed academically well prepared, they questioned opportunities to utilize their full talents (Hines et al., 1979). The study explained the differences in the views expressed by Black and White principals and encouraged more research focusing on African American principalship.

Head principals continuously function in a myriad of roles. Those working at racially diverse schools utilize a unique set of managerial skills, cultural competencies, and leadership qualities to address the multitude of issues that regularly present themselves (Brown, 2005). The more effective a school leader is, the more success the school's pupils will achieve (Kafele, 2015). School leaders of color must make sense of who they are in their work lives related to their race and those they encounter in their work (Scott, 1990). This internal phenomenon has not been fully understood or verbalized in professional settings. Cineus (2018) recommended that African American principals understand what double consciousness is concerning their leadership, identity, and practice. This knowledge may also help district administrators support Black principals as they lead schools.

There is an underrepresentation of African American principals employed in the OKC Metro area. This situation is magnified by the growth and diversity of the student population. For this group of school leaders, the concept of double consciousness may serve as a critical phenomenon that shapes their identity and leadership experiences. This dual perception of oneself could be perceived as a barrier to success but could also be perceived as advantageous. This study seeks to address the research problem of how African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders. Through the lens of double consciousness, this general inductive

qualitative study will explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools.

Purpose Statement

This general inductive qualitative study aims to explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools. It is essential to hear the voices of Black principals and learn about leadership from their perspectives. This study will illuminate and encourage discussion on the personal thoughts of Black school leaders, which pertain to their racial identities as perceived through the lens of double consciousness. Understanding the role of double consciousness as it relates to the work of educational leadership may be valuable because Black principals or other principals of color may encounter similar situations in their work. Findings from this study may inform the practice of educational leaders and invite further research and discussion to take place in other districts or with other ethnicities.

Research Questions

The research questions that guide this study are: 1) How do African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders? 2) Do principals have an awareness of double consciousness, if so, do they perceive this as being an asset for their work?

Significance of Study

Previous studies have focused on African Americans leaders in education, predominantly from a lens of critical race theory or the intersection of race and gender. The findings of these studies are essential for multiple reasons. First, it is vital to hear the voices of African Americans who remain underrepresented. Second, it is crucial to focus

on educational administrators who work in ethnically diverse schools. Third, one of the primary tenets of critical race theory is to bring the concept of race to the forefront to uncover what is expected when searching for justice (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

In the past five years, there have been multiple calls for research regarding double consciousness and educational leadership (Cineus, 2018; Thomas, 2018; Wolf-Hope-Briggs, 2021). The ability to utilize double consciousness to navigate the educational system could be advantageous, and this heightened awareness could be considered a vital skill. The information gained from this study may help the educational leadership field to inform practice. Findings from this study may allow system leaders and school leaders to gain insight into Black instructional leaders' day-to-day thoughts and the relationship that double consciousness has on their daily thoughts, as well as the actions that ensue. The impact of the study has many implications for policy, practice, training, and the decision-making process in schools.

This study has the potential to go beyond addressing barriers and starts to examine possible advantages of being an African American principal in a dominant White society. This research will expand the conversation regarding African American principals. The researcher wants to expand on the dominant discourse that has presented a myopic view of a problematic experience and create a counter-narrative that examines the complexities of the African American principal experience in a predominantly White school district. Ultimately, the researcher wants to make this research accessible to current and future principals of color to take advantage of opportunities, while affirming and embracing the power of their individual and collective stories. Lastly, by examining the experiences of this group, this research could reform the strategies that school

districts and teacher education programs employ to recruit, train, and retain African American principals.

Assumptions

This study will be based on the assumptions that the selected participants contributed willingly during the interviews and shared authentic experiences of their lives. Participants will be assumed to be honest and truthful and to believe the narratives they provided would contribute to knowledge about African Americans leaders and education.

The researcher was previously part of the studies' population. Being an African American principal in the Oklahoma City Metro, the researcher possesses an insider's view of experiences, but not the participant's perceptions of advantages regarding double consciousness. To reduce bias, the researcher will remain neutral during interviews. The researcher will be neutral in speech, facial expression, and body language. During the semi-structured interview, the researcher will refrain from telling the participants his answers to questions because he does not want to influence how the participants will answer.

Delimitations

Delimitation are the parameters of a study (Creswell, 2012). This research will focus on African American principals in the two large urban school districts in the Oklahoma City Metro. This study does not investigate double consciousness and the relationship with administrators to other races/ethnicities such as White, Hispanic, Indian, Asian, or Pacific Islanders. The researcher will focus on a distinct group (Black) principal utilizing identity in their work. Additionally, the research will utilize Du Bois' concept of

double consciousness and its perceived asset within the context of school leadership. This study does not include district-level administrators of color. This study does not include school leaders from small urban or rural districts. This research will focus on black school leaders who practice in more diverse and urban settings to gauge a relationship with double consciousness on school decisions.

Definition of Terms

African American: This term refers to the descendants of Africans born in America.

Black/Blacks: This term refers to the descendants of Africans born in America and is used interchangeably with the term *African American*

Double Consciousness: This term was coined by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1903 to describe the two states of being for Blacks in America, being Black and American.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction that details this study's need, purpose, significance, research question, definitions of terms, research-design assumptions, assumptions and limitations, and organization. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature, offering a synopsis of previous research on the impact of double consciousness. Chapter 3 will provide a rationale for the purpose of this study, the research design, a description of the target population and sample, procedures, and how participants were selected and protected. It will also detail the data collection process, provide data analysis, the role of the researcher, an interview protocol, and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 will present data and address results by incorporating data collection and analysis of findings. Chapter 5 will restate the results summary, discuss results in detail, provide conclusions, and compare the findings with the

theoretical framework and previous literature. It states limitations, implications for practice, and recommendations for further research. Lastly, Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review provides the foundation for this study regarding the African American principalship and CRT, double consciousness and black identity, and the asset driven notion of double consciousness. After introducing the previously mentioned concepts, the reader will see the products of recent discourse. The literature review then transitions to multiple examples of empirical research, followed by a review of actual studies on double consciousness involving Black school principals and superintendents.

The African American Principalship

Before the 1954 Brown decision (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954), most African American students attended segregated public schools that African American administrators supervised. Elementary and secondary principals pre-*Brown* were the symbol of authority and the top modeling position in American schools. They were essential to the success or failure of the school and its academic success. For the Black community, the principal and the minister served as critical leadership figures (Adair, 1987). These positions of power were a massive achievement for Black people because so many other career paths were limited or impossible. Principals were proven leaders sensitive to students' and their family's needs, ideas, and aspirations. They facilitated the propelling of young Black minds through the educational process in an anti-black society and system (Adair, 1987).

Black principals became leaders in the community. In addition to being seen as the prominent figure of the segregated school system, the principal's role was multifaceted. It included that of advocate, role model, chief instructional leader, and liaison (Walker, 2000). The principal communicated the school's needs to the

surrounding community while serving as a role model for students and staff. They provided leadership over community initiatives, were active in the Church, and offered counseling and financial support to those in need (Wolfhope-Briggs, 2021). As a role, the principal mentored teachers modeled the type of interactions teachers should have with parents, attended national meetings, and encouraged teachers to attend and participate in educational panels. As the chief instructional leader, the principal was able to implement school programming consistent with his/her philosophy and function with almost complete autonomy, as well as hiring teachers who aligned with his/her vision and firing those who were unwilling to conform. Finally, in the liaison role, the principal advocated for the school's needs with the White community and shared the disposition of the board with members of the African American community (Walker, 2000).

The researcher utilized the research to make these points because there seems to be a historical fallacy that African American principals did an inferior job leading schools. The segregated school did not possess the same accommodations, or resources as their White counterparts, thus, leading to the Supreme Court's ultimate ruling that separate schools were not equal. In the recently released book *Jim Crow's Pink Slip*, author Leslie Fenwick (2022) adequately describes the position of African American principals pre-*Brown*, and the horrible situation they encountered when many dynamic Black educators were replaced with subpar White counterparts. The author highlights how southern Whites tried to implement *Brown* without the presence of African American administrators and teachers. These Black educators were powerful models of intellectuals who sought and gained exceptional academic credentials as a part of their commitment to equality and full citizenship (Fenwick, 2022).

After the Brown decision, many African American principals in formerly segregated schools lost their positions (Brown, 2005). The shortage of African American leaders can be directly linked to several factors, including shortages of African American teachers who will enter the leadership pipeline, a lack of mentoring of African American teachers for leadership positions, recruitment, and retention of African Americans into leadership preparation programs, and the preparation and appointment of African American leaders (Foster, 2005).

When the school boards and superintendents throughout Oklahoma realized that desegregation was the law of the land, they began to act. First, they fired the Black principals because the schools they administered were usually the first to be closed. These firings led to smaller districts throughout Oklahoma having one or two Black principals (Cayton, 1977). In addition, these types of actions remained a common practice and the State continues to suffer from the legacy.

Tillman (2004a, 2004b) is the seminal researcher who exposed much of the devastating effects of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling on the Black community. Before the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka (1954) case, Black principals were empowered to lead their schools and significantly impacted Black communities. Black principals were dedicated to educating Black children and serving in various roles within the Black community (Tillman, 2004a). During the post-Brown era, Black male principals played critical roles in the desegregation of schools in the south, particularly in helping Black students navigate new norms of integrated schools (Tillman, 2004b).

The principalship is arguably one of the most complex and challenging careers in the American workforce. It often requires the school leader to juggle several

responsibilities simultaneously, such as managing teachers, assisting with disciplinary issues, responding to parental and community concerns, and more, while working to establish and maintain focus on improving student outcomes (Alston, 2018). Principals make crucial decisions daily that impact the culture and climate of schools. They wear many different hats to meet the needs of students and staff.

The principal is an instructional leader expected to provide effective leadership for the school community (Fullan, 2011). The principal is responsible for cultivating relationships with community members, including politicians, business leaders, religious leaders, the school board, the superintendent and district-level administrators, the press, and parents. The roles and responsibilities of principals have increased due to high-stakes testing, growing student racial/ethnic and academic diversity, and options for school choice regarding charter schools. Public school stakeholders, such as parents, and community leaders, expect progress and demand that schools reform (Fullan, 2011). Questions regarding principal leadership often arise during discussions and debates about education reform and school turnaround. With this added pressure and scrutiny, an opportunity to examine the lived experiences of African American principals could provide meaningful contributions to educational initiatives and discussions.

Highly qualified and dedicated school administrators are paramount in maintaining and running high-quality schools. Stakeholders view the principal as the face and central representation of the school and its programs. Day, Harris, and Hadfield (2001) describe the role of school administrators as motivating teachers, school learning cultures, and parent participation. They continue to say that the most effective administrators "remain enthusiastic and committed to learning" and place paramount

focus on "the betterment of the young people and staff who work in the school" (p. 55). As the educational landscape continues to change, the roles and responsibilities of principals and assistant principals also continue to expand (Reddekopp, 2008). Principals are expected to be transformational leaders who can communicate a school's vision, develop systems, and put people in place to sustain it. They are tasked with maintaining the school's vision and are also expected to positively transform and impact the culture of learning and academic outcomes for students (Fullan, 2011).

Principals and assistant principals are also responsible for meeting the social needs of the students they serve, including promoting diversity, social-economic equity, and learning deficiencies. Students are direct benefactors of the principal's leadership. Principals hire teachers to instruct students, create lesson plans, and oversee programs which support and enhance instructional development, advance school-wide scheduling conducive to dispensing the educational plan, and much more.

It is important to note that wide-ranging diversity in school-level leadership positions has a meaningful impact beyond equality and equity. Research supports a positive relationship between minority representation of principals and student outcomes. These previously mentioned academic outcomes are apparent; however, there are practical and symbolic reasons why the presence of minorities in school leadership is essential (Williams & Loeb, 2012). African American administrators have the potential to positively influence the school climate along with achievement. These leaders can help students navigate their school environment and culture by increasing the involvement of teachers and parents. Researchers have also noted Black principals using their shared cultural experiences to inform their practice. African American principals employ models

of leadership that speak to the racial and cultural composition of the school (Brown, 2005; Tillman, 2004a, 2004b).

One of the unforeseen byproducts of being a minority living in a racialized society is seeing the world differently. African American scholar Kofi Lomotey (1987) asserted that African Americans' principals view the world differently and have a thought process crafted by unique cultural characteristics. Lomotey (1987) explained this phenomenon regarding similar characteristics defined as homophily:

When two Blacks interact or communicate, their shared beliefs and values suggest that homophily occurs bringing about greater information usage, attitude information, attitude change, and behavior change. For example, homophily occurs in the communication and interaction between a Black principal and (Murnane, 1975) Black students, as a result of their likenesses. This may be a desirable situation because this homophily may make interaction and exchange of thoughts and messages more effective achievement (p. 175).

For example, an African American principal may rely on their experience as an African American when disciplining a student because their cultural circumstances are different than other cultures in America (Lomotey, 1987).

Two years later, Lomotey (1989) published the groundbreaking book the *African American Principal's School Leadership and Success* which served as the foundation of research for African American principalship. This essential study attempted to fill a significant gap in the educational research and literature as it explored the persistent problem of underachievement by African American students in public schools. This work focused on the impact of the African American principal's leadership, its effect on the

academic achievement of African American students, and the day-to-day activities associated with school leadership. Lomotey (1989) examined the connection between principal leadership and academic achievement. He deemed qualities such as goal development, energy harnessing, communication facilitation, and instruction management as key for successful principals (pg. 31). He also identified other attributes, such as compassion for and understanding African American children and their communities.

Role modeling serves as a consistent theme regarding African American principal leadership. According to Madsen & Mabokela (2002), Black principals possess the need to be role models for minority students and the need to prove themselves worthy of respect through positive actions. Numerous scholars have argued the principles of the leadership of reproduction that it takes a leader to make a leader. In other words, if we seek to produce great leaders, those in leadership positions should serve as role models and mentors to reproduce their greatness. Role models are needed to pass on the torch to future generations. Rice (2020) argues that the lack of African American male representation as role models decreases the likelihood of minority male students pursuing higher education or educational careers. This deficiency results in African American students suffering in school without mentorship and may also account for the achievement gap between Whites and minorities.

The ability to be an authentic role model pays dividends, mainly when a disciplinary issue arises. Brooks (2017) contends that African American principals routinely tap into cultural resources to gain access to Black students and enhance their relationships with Black students and their families. When communicating high

expectations to the students, the principals often referenced African American celebrities or slang that helped them convey a message to students of determination and resilience. African Americans often respond to situations differently than people from other cultures; therefore, Black principals can discipline Black students differently based on cultural norms. In the study, participants felt they might have to discipline an African American child differently but intentionally ended these interactions positively so that the student learned from his mistake (Brooks, 2017).

In a recent study done by Avery (2020) the research revealed that right after being a disciplinarian, the participants shared how being a Black male administrator brought about a responsibility to be a role model for Black students. In one case, a principal mentioned how they think about some of the Black students who come into their office and some of the off-the-record conversations regarding real issues they were facing, especially navigating a White world wherein they are still the minority and probably will be for their lifetime. The participant poignantly noted that “They need somebody who is able to say, ‘do this,’ or ‘don’t do that’ and a lot of the kids don’t get that at home. Sometimes it’s not even in what you say to the kids. Just seeing a Black man in a suit who isn’t going to court sends a message” (Avery, 2020, pg. 41).

Vinzant (2009), with his foundational and heavily cited study, expresses that Black Americans have experienced life in a racial climate that has often been hostile and volatile. Thus, while working within the framework of accepted views of educational leadership, Black principals can be expected to have an altered idea of school leadership. While well-versed in foundational leadership views and ways to think about school change, Black principals are also aware of the stigmas associated with being minorities

within the majority culture. They have beaten statistical odds to become educational leaders, and their experiences could empower a generation of Black students and other students as well who feel they are left behind in the system (Vinzant, 2009). As such, Black principals' insight may be invaluable to the cause of working with children predisposed to falling through the cracks of American education. Suggestions from this study included the inclusion of culture and race-specific coursework in educational leadership programs, increased promotion of diversity in recruitment for educators and academic leaders, and institutionalized support groups for principals of color.

African American female principals must face the challenges of race and intersectionality of race and gender. Sexism and gender role expectations can constrain women's leadership behaviors. African American females who obtain leadership positions in schools face unique challenges as they navigate the racial and gender stereotypes that pervade society (Haynes, 2016). Monts (2012) utilized Oklahoma for an autoethnographic study employing heuristic inquiry, which stems from a meaningful expression of the human experience from a phenomenological approach. The researcher relied on a narrative process of her own personal experience and three other African American secondary female principals in Oklahoma. This study explores the barriers African American women continuously face during their pursuit of secondary school and district administration. Racism and sexism were significant barriers for Black women explorers from leadership positions. One of the emerging points of interest was that "The percentage of minority students should reflect the ratio of minority teachers and administrators" (Monts, 2012 pg.142).

Black principals and leaders are needed to stand against racist societal constructs like the black/white binary, which is the societal construction that places Blacks opposite Whites as the major minority and majority groups in American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Although other minorities are marginalized in society, Blacks are often seen as the binary opposition to Whiteness. Thus, Blacks being seen in leadership positions can serve to break down racist stereotypes regarding the intellectual capabilities of Blacks and other minorities (Vinzant, 2009). Principals working at racially diverse schools require a unique set of managerial skills, cultural competencies, and leadership qualities to address the myriad of issues that regularly present themselves (Brown, 2005). The more effective a school leader is, the greater success the school's pupils will achieve (Kafele, 2015).

Taking the research one level higher, Scott (1990) researched Black superintendents regarding their Black consciousness and professionalism. He found that these educational leaders at the top of their districts had philosophical insight and pedagogical knowledge to transform their districts. They were keenly aware that public education in our pluralistic democracy does not yet provide an equal educational opportunity for all, regardless of genetic structure, birth condition, race, color, or previous condition of servitude. (Scott, 1990).

The concept of double consciousness serves as a unique lens to view the African American experience in America. However, from an empirical standpoint, Critical Race Theory is the most often used theoretical framework for research. This theory examines how racism is ever present in society and institutions, particularly the legal and education

systems. Over the past twenty years, researchers have conducted numerous studies regarding African American educators and Critical Race Theory.

Critical Race Theory and the Problem

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an evolving academic discipline focused on examining the intersection of race, law, and power. CRT was developed during the mid-1970s to respond to the failure of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to adequately address the effects of race and racism in United States jurisprudence (Gordon, 1999). It was an intellectual movement consisting of African American progressive law scholars who questioned the sustaining of White supremacy. They were critical of how the law served the privileged and powerful in the U.S. while denying the rights of poor people (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

During the last quarter century, political activists and scholars have used CRT as a catalyst to focus on and analyze race, racial issues, racial tensions, and the oppressive presence of power in the social and cultural arenas of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Advocates of CRT argue that individual racism does not necessarily need to exist to see that institutional racism is pervasive in the dominant culture. This is the analytical lens that CRT uses in examining existing power structures. CRT identifies that these power structures are based on White privilege, which perpetuates the marginalization of people of color (Haynes, 2016).

Like Double Consciousness, CRT places race in the center of the analysis. CRT assumes the belief that certain barriers exist and are present for minorities within the majority culture. In general, CRT recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of the 21st century American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In other

words, the racial experience becomes central to the discourse and not considered something on the periphery. It legitimizes the experiences of people of color in an environment where those experiences (social and intellectual) have long been discredited and discounted, due to the beliefs held by the dominant group/culture.

CRT is built on four central tenets: (a) Racism is normal a part of society and needs to be revealed; (b) storytelling is used to analyze and establish an additional perspective to the normal narrative; (c) liberalism is consciously critiqued to promote social changes; and (d) Whites are the primary beneficiaries of the civil rights movement (Ladson- Billings, 1998, p. 7). Under this theory, one does not have to be a racist to understand and recognize that the primary or dominant organizational structures exercise institutional racism.

CRT appears to be continuously selected as the most appropriate perspective for examining and analyzing race. Key to the understanding of CRT is the assumption that “race” as we know it is a social construct, and racial differences were invented by, and thereby are supported by, societal constructs (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Multiple studies in educational leadership utilize CRT as a theoretical framework in the attempt to explore the systematic barriers of race (Alston, 2018; Beasley, 2020; Brooks, 2017; Cramer, 2016; Haynes, 2016; Hill, 2013; Jackson, 2018; Miller, 2019; Monts, 2012; Rice, 2020; Richardson, 2014; Smith, 2019; Thomas, 2018; Tyson, 2016; Vinzant, 2009; Ward, 2020).

One fundamental tenet of CRT is the permanence of racism. Delgado (1995) claimed that CRT begins with the notion that “racism is normal, not aberrant, in American society (p. xiv), and Ladson-Billings (2003) adds that “it appears both normal

and natural to people in this culture” (pp. 8-9). Scholars of CRT argue that racism has been a part of American history since its inception. Systems such as Jim Crow laws and legal rulings like *Plessy v. Ferguson* perpetuated the legally accepted beliefs that African Americans were to be treated as second-class citizens.

At its core, CRT is committed to advocating justice for people who find themselves occupying positions on the margins – for those who hold minority status. It directs attention to the ways in which structural arrangements inhibit and disadvantage some more than others in our society. CRT spotlights the form and function of dispossession, disenfranchisement, and discrimination across a range of social institutions, and then seeks to give voice to those who are victimized and displaced (Thomas, 2018).

CRT and Education

Our educational system is a microcosm of our society at large. Schools, like most public organizations, reflect the attitudes of the masses. According to Byrd (2009), as a theoretical framework, CRT can expose the injustices existing in organizations and advance social change within the organizational contexts. In addition, CRT assumes the belief that specific barriers exist and are present for minorities within the majority culture. CRT recognizes that racism is engrained in the fabric and system of 21st-century American society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT has become a compelling way to view barriers and explain the reason for the underrepresentation of African Americans teachers and principals. In practice for educational administrators, CRT is a valuable lens to analyze and interpret administrative policies and procedures in educational institutions and provides avenues for action in racial justice (Parker & Villalpando, 2007).

According to Lynn and Parker (2006) CRT is an analytical framework about race and racism in the law and society that helps answer the question, “Why does racism exist?” (p. 258). CRT theorists claim that overt racism has been lessened because of legal practices but recognize that other forms of racism have arisen (Lynn & Parker, 2006). CRT has become the lens through which to see the racism impacting the field of education (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contend that race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequality in the United States (p. 48). From income gaps to overall-policy of Black people, race is a crucial factor in who will succeed in this country. Ladson-Billings and Tate 1995 focus their expiration on racial issues specifically in education. The impact of racism in education can be found in curriculum instructional approaches, assessment practices, and funding.

It is paramount that African American can tell their current stories and share previous experiences in education. In *Critical Race Theory: an Introduction*, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) introduces the theme of revisionist history, which examines American history, replacing dominant White culture interpretations of events with ones that are more accurate with minorities’ experiences. The shift is needed due to the consistent borage of negative depiction of Black people as sambos and coons, sneaky Japanese, and lazy Mexicans. Minority educational leaders must contend with these images of themselves and their abilities, even as they face the challenges of running schools and educational programs. Whites cannot easily understand what it means to be non- White (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) because they have benefited from more positive cultural images which have empowered rather than undermined them. History has proven that Whites can overlook the social emphasis they previously placed on some minorities.

The value in Whiteness has been theorized as a property right. This view is instrumental to educational studies because education in America grants access to property, ownership, and possessions, especially for Americans born into lower classes.

To effectively capture perceptions of African American educators, the trend for researchers is to examine this phenomenon through the lens of critical race theory (CRT). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) stated that “critical race theory in education, like its antecedent in legal scholarship, is a radical critique of both the status quo and the purported reforms” (p. 62). The extant body of research regarding African American principals utilized CRT as a theoretical framework (Alston, 2018). In other words, the racial experience becomes central to the discourse and not considered something on the periphery or secondary. It legitimizes the experiences of people of color in an environment where those experiences (social and intellectual) have long been discredited and discounted due to the beliefs held by the dominant group/culture. CRT assumes the belief that specific barriers exist and are present for minorities within the majority culture (Haynes, 2016).

This theoretical framework examines institutional racism and the role it plays in perpetuating social inequalities between dominant and marginalized underrepresented ethnic groups. CRT is a powerful explanatory tool that can be used to address the sustained disparities that people of color experience in education and to amplify their often-silent voices and perspectives. (Jackson, 2018).

Double Consciousness and the Problem

W. E. B. Du Bois initially described his concept of double consciousness in an *Atlantic* magazine essay (1897) and later published a revision in *The Souls of Black*

Folk (1903). He wrote *Souls* to address the problem of that era, namely, the line dividing Black and White people. Du Bois (1903) described this division as “the color line,” a boundary, a line of separation based on racial characteristics. This separation created exterior and inner identity conflict for African Americans while conforming to the dominant White society. The tension of these identities stemmed from commonly accepted and perpetuated societal stereotypes, images, thoughts, and beliefs that Black Americans were less than Whites intellectually, morally, and spiritually and that they, therefore, could be denied a significant proportion of their human rights (Vinzant, 2009).

Souls revealed a human experience that had laid dormant in the consciousness of being affected by the dehumanization of racism. In these essays, Du Bois poses and analyzes the question, “How does it feel to be a problem?” He then describes how Black people experience the world and everyday life. Smith-Brown (2004) defined the term double consciousness as Du Bois’ way of explaining the development of Black identity in a culture where race influences everything.

Du Bois (1903) believed that double consciousness was a condition that resulted from the African and American experience of Blacks as they lived their lives in America. As such, the dual national identity of the African American was unique and necessary. He asserts that Black people are:

a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world, —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that

looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness, —an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (pg. 9)

In this brief yet powerful paragraph, Du Bois introduces his theoretical construct of double consciousness with three distinct elements, the veil, twoness, and second sight.

Itzigsohn and Brown (2015) outline these elements and provide examples of how they are expressed daily. The veil represents “the color line” that separates Blacks from Whites and impacts how the individuals on each side perceive and experience their social world (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 235). Du Bois described the veil as

Whites project their constructions of Blacks onto the veil; in this way, the veil acts as a one-way mirror: those on the dominating side of the veil see their projections of the racialized reflected on it. On the other hand, the projections of Whites onto the veil become the realities that Black subjects must process in their self-formation (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 235).

The veil, also known as the color line, serves as the hierarchical division of people based on racial categories. The veil functions as a cultural screen on which the collective weight of White misconceptions is fortified and made to manifest (Smith-Brown, 2014). Martin IV (2014) describes the veil as a metaphor for the lens of ignorance through which mainstream Americans view the Black American experience. The veil also represents the perspective of Black Americans known through the messages of hate, shame, and degradation created by the forces of systemic racism.

Twoness originates from the internal processing of the veil (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). "Twoness means that within the process of self-reflection, a Black person takes the position of two different worlds—the Black worlds, which they construct behind the veil, and the White world, which dehumanizes them through lack of recognition" (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 235). Second sight is described as the "ability of the racialized to see beyond the veil" (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 240). It is through second sight that Blacks become aware of their invisibility as well as life beyond the veil (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). Due to this separation, African Americans must reconcile two radically different perceptions of self. The twoness from being Black and American. This form of double consciousness did not stem from distinct cerebral paths and was previously described in psychology as a kind of schizophrenia (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). It is not a biological structure but a socially developed construct of split consciousness that directly affects the color line (Smith-Brown, 2014).

Second sight serves as a vision split and multiplied by double consciousness, a vision that can be perceived and understood by the misrepresentations projected by the veil (Smith-Brown, 2014). Du Bois contends that at some part of an African American's life, they will realize that they are different compared to the dominant class. The challenges arise when a manifestation informs us that this difference can be problematic. For him, his manifestation arose when he was a child. Du Bois (1897) recounted

I remember well when the shadow swept across me. I was a little thing, away up in the hills of New England, where the dark Housatonic winds between Hoosac and Taghanic to the sea. In a wee wooden schoolhouse, something put into the boys' and girls' heads to buy gorgeous visiting-cards—ten cents a package—and

exchange. The exchange was merry, till one girl, a tall newcomer, refused my card, — refused it peremptorily, with a glance. Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil (p.194).

Double consciousness is a complex and constant play between the exclusionary conditions of social structures marked by race and the psychological and cultural strategies employed by the racially excluded and marginalized to accommodate themselves to everyday injustice. This predicament stems from the problem of the color line.

Even though he brought it into great prominence, Du Bois was not the first to use the term double consciousness. Bruce (1992) explained the term and traced its roots to the psychological field, specifically referring to patients with multiple personalities. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a prominent leader of the transcendentalism movement, also used the term. According to Bruce (1992), “Emerson employed the term ‘double consciousness’ to refer to a problem in the life of one seeking to take a Transcendental perspective on self and world” (p. 300). Du Bois took it and made meaning in the conceptual context of race and racial relations. It provides a paradigm for the inner conflict of African Americans living in a White dominated society.

Du Bois created the initial concept of double consciousness over one hundred and twenty years ago; however, research and empirical studies have surfaced within the past two decades. Alan and Bagozzi (2001) examine the structure of African American belief systems and identities across different age cohorts. The authors speculated that African Americans of different ages would possess and share common beliefs leading to double

consciousness because of the current mainstream culture's adverse treatment. The existence of double consciousness was measured by closeness to Black masses, positive and negative stereotypes, closeness to Black elites, and self-esteem. The authors collected data by using an instruction questionnaire with a Likert scale. The results pointed to substantial similarities across cohorts about African Americans and their belief systems (Allen & Bagozzi, 2001).

A challenge arises from being able to measure identity. How can you quantify such a complex process? Lyubansky and Eidelson (2005) identified the relationship between racial and mainstream acculturation and African American beliefs about racial groups. The authors use a General Ethnicity Questionnaire (GEQ) developed by Tsai et al. (2000) to measure levels of acculturation to Black culture in mainstream American culture. The results indicated that there was an existence of double conscience, and African Americans perceived their racial group as more unjustly treated and helpless than their national group (Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005). The use of the GEQ opened the door for future studies needing an instrument to measure double consciousness.

Brannon et al. (2015) utilized the theory of double consciousness among African American college students and theorized double consciousness as a positive coping strategy. The authors theorized that engagement in double consciousness assisted with positive academic experiences by developing two separate self-schemas. The authors further suggest that this duality provides appropriate guides to African American students regarding academic fit and identification and will ultimately promote academic success. This study also found "cultural frame-switching" in double consciousness and suggested positive psychological and cognitive implications of such experiences (Brannon et al.,

2015). This research provided empirical evidence of the possible advantages of double consciousness.

Double Consciousness and School Leadership

Scott (1990) studied how Black school superintendents perceived a relationship between their sense of professionalism and their racial consciousness as Black Americans [double consciousness] as they sought to make positive contributions to the education of the Black students they served. The sample consisted of 62 Black superintendents from the North, South, Midwest, and Southwest states who responded to a survey. Scott concluded that Black superintendents agreed with Du Bois' concept of double consciousness related to their work as district leaders. This knowledge of self granted them the opportunity to work as professionals to create better learning environments for students.

Samuel Thomas Martin IV studied Black male educators through a lens of Critical Race Pedagogy and double consciousness. The results of the study concluded that participants were racially conscious, aware of power dynamics, reflexive regarding their own experiences— professional and personal, and purposeful about accessing their senses. The author suggested that African American leaders be secure in the culture they bring into the school setting and know they are valuable components of maintaining a quality American public school system (Martin IV, 2014). This study concludes that double consciousness at its core is about the experience of otherness. Each of the participants described feelings of otherness—psychologically, emotionally, culturally, and or professionally at various times. Participants were keenly aware of how they were perceived by colleagues and viewed this level of heightened awareness as a necessary

skill. They reported that acknowledgement of the veil directly affected how they communicated with students and colleagues in an administrative role (Martin IV, 2014).

Samuelle Cineus (2018) examined how Black school leaders perceive a relationship between their racial consciousness as Black Americans and their thoughts, leadership, and decision-making. The author used a quantitative approach to measure the instances in their practice where participants reported that they consciously thought regarding their race concerning their work as instructional leaders. The sample population included 35 African American principals and assistant principals from New York City. Cineus (2018) found that most Black school leaders (principals and assistant principals) experienced double consciousness. This phenomenon included interaction with teachers, students, and constituents. The study concluded that racial identity is significant in educational leadership (Cineus, 2018).

Matasha Jordan (2018) conducted a study that provided a unique observation that although double consciousness remains true in the 21st century, its state is only constant when African Americans' lives are intertwined with the lives of European Americans. The African American participants in this study could attain an administrative position in educational organizations that European Americans predominantly managed. All the participants were able to gain positions as administrators because they could connect with mainstream Americans. The participants indicated that African American administrators must know who they are as individuals and how they connect and contribute to the world beyond the veil, in mainstream America, the world beyond their own (Jordan, 2018). Jordan recommended that future researchers could compare the experiences of African American educational administrators in other geographical areas.

Cineus (2018) and Jordan (2018) are two recent studies that examined double consciousness and school administrators. One study employed a qualitative methodology, while the other was quantitative. It can be studied and revealed in multiple ways. Wolfhope-Briggs (2021) found that double consciousness was embedded within the lived experiences of five African American teachers and was considered the prominent theme within this study's findings. While the participants did not use the terminology double consciousness to describe their lived experiences as an educator in a predominately White school, data analysis revealed that all five participants experienced double consciousness and acknowledged that their race significantly impacted their lived experiences (Wolfhope-Briggs, 2021).

The concept of double consciousness serves as a unique lens to view the African American experience in America. However, from an empirical standpoint, Critical Race Theory is the most often used theoretical framework for research. This theory examines how racism is ever present in society and institutions, particularly the legal and education systems.

Black Identity and Nigrescence

The understanding and navigation of racial identity is complex and filled with nuances. Blackness has been examined and discussed in the scholarship from the perspective of race/racial identity and ethnicity/ethnic identity. One of the great challenges of educators and scholars is to unpack and redefine a concept that is convoluted—both in theory and in practice. The research on racial identity was largely influenced by William Cross' Nigrescence model of Black identity development which was created to describe the path that disenfranchised Blacks take in establishing a

positive Black identity in a racialized America (Cross, 1994). The theory of Nigrescence provides a longitudinal examination of the process of reconciling one blackness and using it as an asset. Nigrescence attempts to capture the stages that African American experience when reconciling their racial self-identification. During the early to mid-20th century, the most common discourse of Black identity was reduced to self-hatred, as reflected in children taking racial doll tests. Cross (1994) argues that this was a straightforward yet simple-minded way of viewing Black people's perceptions of self-identity. Starting in the 1970's Black and White scholars started moving to a nuanced and multidimensional perspective.

Nigrescence is a French term that means the process of becoming Black. Since the 1960s, researchers have attempted to develop an empirical and theoretical way of examining how African Americans move from one identity state to another (Cross, 1994). The process is like women going from non-feminist to feminist, and the coming out process for gays and lesbians.

Cross (1991) described the psychological liberation process for African Americans under the conditions of oppression in the United States. He observed and identified a series of stages that African American adults experience before arriving at an empowered Black identity. Cross outlined the five stages: 1) the pre-encounter, 2) the encounter, 3) The immersion emerging stage, 4) the internalization stage, 5) the internalization-commitment stage. He described each stage and what happened as a person moved from the (pre-encounter) stage in which they identify with White culture and deny membership into Black culture. They then discover their Blackness (encounter stage) through an encounter that transforms their thinking, causing them to adjust how they view the world

and become pro-Black (Immersion-emerging stage). This stage is characterized by completely identifying with Black culture and denigrating White. Cross then describes them developing a healthy level of expectancy (internalization) stage of things that were Black and ultimately creating a new self-image in which they can be confident and commit to a plan to change their communities. Cross ended with the implications of this conversion experience on Black scholars whom he challenges to develop a study of this progress of liberation.

In 1991, Cross reconceptualized his model by combining the last two stages to condense the process into four stages. The Cross model has proven beneficial to the study of Black identity and helped spawn numerous subsequent models (Helms, 1993). Cross has continued to tweak the Nigrescence model based on feedback. The model represents a solid foundation for which research can continue to be built (Harris, 2021).

Even though the Cross model describes the process of becoming Black and moving towards liberation, the intent was for Black people to develop a positive concept (Harris, 2021). Some scholars criticized Cross's model because of the linear stage-based approach. One may assume that it is always a linear model. There is also the assumption that all Black people in the US have a negative self-concept to their socialization with internalized racism. This is not necessarily the case. The model is also limited because it only accounts for Black racial identity and White supremacy. It does not account for how races interact with socially constructed identities.

CRT proposes that race consciousness is necessary to examine American institutions and systems because they are engrained with the notion of White dominance and supremacy. Arguably, CRT has employed Du Bois' idea of double consciousness to

define the real implications of being Black and American under the scope of being Black in America. Cross' Nigrescence model provides a process for understanding Black identity. Double consciousness and CRT find value in examining experiences and the reflections of oppressed people to obtain insight into the cultural landscape of America. However, there may be alternative ways to look at things. As Malcolm Gladwell points out in his book *David and Goliath*, there may be some layers of actual advantage in what people may consider disadvantages.

Asset Driven Notion of Double Consciousness

Vinzant (2009) argued that Black principals, like other Black US citizens, are forced to confront Dubois' idea of the "double consciousness" daily (Du Bois, 1903). They must constantly situate themselves as Black people in a world of White privilege. This task is more urgent and difficult for Black educational leaders, who must simultaneously lead their schools toward educational excellence while reconciling their interpretations of others' perceptions of their leadership. Black principals must hold multiple identities and responsibilities without conflicting them in a way that makes progress impossible (Fordham, 1996).

Du Bois provided an insightful meaning of the experience of being Black during the turn of the century. He gave a viewpoint of groups on each side of the veil, i.e., color line. He worked to establish a new way of seeing Blackness as gifted and inherently privileged rather than as a handicap. Herein lies the significance of Du Bois's claiming second sight because of double consciousness and a gift owned by the Negro alone (Dabbs, 2011).

Second sight serves as the ability of the racially excluded to see beyond the veil. For Du Bois, second sight emerges in Black people's consciousness as they become aware of their invisibility. The veil has a doubling effect. It creates a barrier of recognition between the Black and the White world that may lead a Black person to misrecognize themselves. It can also provide a unique glimpse into the other world. (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2020). Second sight thus enables views with the veil to see the cultural production of both Blackness and Whiteness (Smith, 2005).

A useful example of the ability of second sight comes from the twelfth chapter of *Souls* entitled "Of the coming of John." Du Bois (1903) tells the story of a student at a fictional college growing up in the South. John Jones is critically unaware of his position in the world and the White people in town view him as "good-natured" (p. 181). They were surprised and upset when his mother sent him to college. During his first year, his lack of study habits and poor performance leads to a suspension for a term. When he came back, he worked hard and struggled at things that he did not find easy. His new focus and dedication to learning allowed him to grow not only in book knowledge but the ways of the world at this time. Du Bois described that he grew in body and soul with a new sense of dignity in his walk.

He had left his queer thought world and come back to a world of motion and of men. He looked now for the first time sharply about him, and wondered he has seen so little before, He grew slowly to feel almost for the first time the veil that lay between him and the white world: he first notices now the oppression that had non seemed oppression before, differences that erstwhile seemed natural, restraints and slights that in his boyhood days had gone unnoticed and been

greeted with a laugh. He felt angry now when men did not call him “Mister,” he clenched his hands at the “Jim Crow” car and chafed at the color-line that hemmed in him and his. (p.184).

John’s access to education and his encounter with the White world prompted the emergence of second sight, this unique, and gradual revelation allows him to see the structures of the racialized environment in ways he is situated and restricted in and around the veil (Itzigsohn and Brown). Certain real-world situations and barriers, such as being forced to sit in the back of a Jim Crow car; however, he is aware of the condition due to second sight. He learns how to utilize what is now known as cultural capital.

In his 1986 essay, “The Forms of Capital,” Bourdieu broke down the concept of cultural capital into three parts, the embodied state, the objectified state, and the institutionalized state. First, he stated that it exists in an *embodied state*, meaning that the knowledge people acquire over time through interaction and education exists within them. The more they obtain certain forms of embodied cultural capital, for example classical music, the more people are primed to seek it out. As for norms, mores, and skills such as manners, language, and communication skills, people often act out and display embodied cultural capital as they move through the world and interact with others (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital also exists in an *objectified state*. This part refers to the material objects individuals own that might relate to their educational pursuits, such as books, computers, clothing and accessories, and other goods found in the home. It can be expressed by even the food they purchase and prepare. These items can reflect socio-economic status. Finally, cultural capital exists in an *institutionalized state*. This portion

refers to how cultural capital is measured, certified, and ranked. Academic qualifications and degrees are great examples of this, as are job titles, political offices, and social roles like husband, wife, mother, and father (Bourdieu, 1986).

The research suggests that both second sight and cultural capital are assets that can be acquired. Lareau and Weininger (2003) argue that the dominant interpretation of cultural capital as knowledge, interest or competence of “highbrow” cultural resources could be expanded. One could argue that with the acquisition of second sight an African American could then “see” and utilize the benefits of cultural capital. When examining the three categories of Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital (Institutionalized, Embedded, and Objectified) in conjunction with the basic journey of an African American principal obtaining a head position in OKC, certain correlations of cultural competence emerge.

Embodied: Simply going through this process to be considered for a head principal position takes a level of ability and awareness of values considered necessary within the dominant culture and educational system. Effective speech, language, personality, and communication skills must be displayed.

Objectified: A principal must possess certain material objects. For example, appropriate clothing and dress must be worn to be considered for a position.

Institutionalization: To obtain a Standard Education Administrator Certificate, an applicant must possess a master’s degree and successfully complete a state-authorized building-level leadership skills program in education administration. Pass the school principal test examination and possess at least two years of teaching experience in a public or private school under a Standard Certificate.

Being an African American and a principal in a White dominated school district requires an understanding and command of cultural capital. The important aspect is through second sight, they must see beyond the veil and recognize the cultural skills that are important to the dominant society. Cultural capital is the currency used to promote advance in society. With second sight a Black principal may have the opportunity to see what is important in the dominant culture to use it to their advantage.

The obvious advantage is the utilization of second sight for an African American principal to assist with leading a multi-ethnic school. The prominent research reiterates the cultural benefits of having a person of color as a school leader. (Adair, 1984; Hess & Leal, 1997; King, 1993; Stewart et al., 1989; Egalite, 2015). It is advantageous to have a cultural leader to assist with navigating students to success. Yosso (2005) contends that educators should expand the view of capital to include social, aspirational, navigational linguistic, familial, and resistant capital. These are all forms of capital students bring from home. It is then up to the leader to show them how to merge with the mainstream culture.

(Cole) 2020 argues it is crucial to acknowledge and value cultural capital. It is not simply reserved for the elites. Ways of acquiring and displaying knowledge vary among social groups. Consider the importance of oral history and spoken word in many cultures. Knowledge, norms, values, language, and behaviors differ across neighborhoods and regions of the US. In urban environments, for example, youth must learn and adhere to specific street codes to survive. Everyone has cultural capital and deploys it daily to navigate society. All forms of it are valid, but the hard truth is that they are not *valued*

equally by society's institutions. A person needs to learn the currency of the dominant caste.

Du Bois is apparent in his notion that developing second sight allows African Americans to possibly understand the world constructed around the veil but does not change their position. He speaks of a “gift,” of second sight, terminology that has positive connotations—there’s no such thing as a “gift,” being an unfortunate or negative circumstance (Du Bois 1897 p.194). By expressing second sight in positive terminology, he sets the stage for a message that there is a benefit to being different. He describes this gift as knowledge that is the exclusive benefit of the African American, creating a message radical even to Blacks of the time (Dabbs, 2011).

Dabbs (2011) examined double consciousness through the lens of literature and popular culture. The researcher provided an example and attested that Du Bois's usage of the concept asserts that only blacks have the ability of second sight and correlated it with the television show *Star Trek, The Next Generation*. Dabbs contends that the show's creator uses second sight to promote the idea that blacks are biologically inclined towards the ability. Additionally, Dabbs notes that *Star Trek; The Next Generation* depicts second sight as a black privilege and that something desirable manages to come from something undesirable. (Dabbs, 2011). While these are fictional examples, another study speaks volumes of the limitation of potential talents.

According to Hines & Byrne (1979), instructional leaders of color must come to terms with how they view themselves and how their respective institutions and constituents view them. After conducting a study on Black principals, Hines & Byrne (1979) concluded that “An analysis of the data indicates that Black principals as a whole

are academically well-prepared and experienced, but they question their opportunities to fully utilize their talents within the educational system” (p. 73). The researchers went on to explain that there are differences in the thought expressed by Black and White principals, and they urged that there was a need for more research that focuses specifically on the Black principalship. This limitation could include the skills associated with second sight.

Second sight is a gradual development that people of color can possess. While looking at the world through a veil, there are different levels. Second sight correlates with what Helms considers the internalization stage which marries the personal identity with the ascribed identity. In this stage, Blacks can accept their individual identities while realizing that being Black does affect their identity (Helms, 1993). The stages also allow Blacks to identify with Blacks rather than Whites as a reference group, granting them the perspective to realistically evaluate Whites and White culture. Thus, Blacks in the internalization stage can reject racial oppression, yet still maintain and establish relationships with deserving Whites. The eventual outcome of this stage is the formation of a positive Black identity (Helms, 1993).

In the groundbreaking book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, author and scholar Beverly Daniele Tatum describes how adolescents go through a form of Nigrescence. She utilizes a more contemporary title calling the theory the racial-cultural- ethnic identity model (REC) (Tatum, 2017). She speaks about the challenges of coping with and understating racial identity for African American youth. Tatum also suggests that informed adults can constructively assist with the identity development process of Black adolescents. Race-conscious adults who try to teach

children to navigate multiple racial spaces can find that "their children become bicultural, able to move comfortably between White and Black communities." (Tatum, 2017, p. 154). This book provides a resource on how African American educators could utilize racial consciousness and second sight to be cultural translators for African American students.

There is a great possibility that if put in the right situation, a person could utilize their identity for the good of the educational community. Wolfhope-Brigg (2021) noted that she was not expecting the theme of double consciousness from her research. It was evident that African American educators experienced increased pressure and expectations because of their visibility as an African American educator in a predominately White urban school; however, more research is needed that explores how African American educators cope with double consciousness.

African Americans who are most successful in America are adept at adapting physically, culturally, mentally, intellectually, and emotionally in an environment dominated by a White- dominated value system (Rath, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Of course, the ease with which everyone can adapt is influenced by circumstantial factors including, but not limited to, formal schooling, socio-economic background, and professional experience. Cultural capital recognized through second sight represents a vantage point of the Black experience through the lens of a dominant culture. It takes a massive amount of skill to see oneself as a competent and functioning human being while also seeing oneself through the stereotypical eyes of those in power in an oppressive system. However, it is necessary to survive in an environment made hostile by the forces of institutionalized racism. This constitutes the riddle of the Black existence in America (Martin IV, 2014).

Double consciousness does not demand a resolution to the identity crisis. It requires a skill set that will allow individuals to successfully navigate while coping with two identities (Rath, 1997). To succeed in mainstream America Ciccariello-Maher (2007) suggests that individuals have two perspective responses when confronted with the veil. One can choose to assimilate into the mainstream, or one can choose to evolve beyond the constraints of the veil. This study will provide an opportunity to examine how African American principals in OKC perceive this dilemma.

Chapter 2 Summary

This chapter contained a review of literature related to the historical aspects of African American principalship and the complexities of leadership, particularly viewed through the traditional CRT lens, the concepts of double consciousness and black identity, and the assets-driven notion of double consciousness. Previous researchers have shown how African American principals view the world differently and have experienced life in a climate that has been, at times, hostile (Lomotey, 1987; Vanzant, 2009). Understanding and navigating racial identity is complex and filled with nuances.

Ultimately, research comprising school leadership must be representative of the multiple perspectives and experiences that make up the current workforce (Avery, 2020). The investigation of the experiences of African American principals in the Oklahoma City Metro and the incorporation of their perspectives into the current body of research and literature will assist in providing a larger lens of diversity in schools.

As a natural consequence of circumstances, African Americans have been “gifted” with a second sight, a double consciousness, allowing them to see themselves through a double lens (Du Bois, 1903, p.7). Chapter 3 provides the methodology used to

explore the lives of African American educational administrators, gather their thoughts and perceptions regarding their interactions with administrators, colleagues, and subordinates, and examine how they understand and utilize their identity as educational leaders in highly diverse schools.

Chapter Three: Methods

This study addressed the problem of how African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders. This general inductive qualitative study explored the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools. Chapter 3 of the study includes information on the general inductive qualitative model (GIQM) used for this research. In addition, the chapter presents the chosen sample, instrumentation, data collection, and analysis, assumptions, and limitations.

Research Design

Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to perceptions. (Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2016). Qualitative research clarifies the understanding and meanings people have constructed regarding how they make sense of the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The priorities lie in effectively representing the views and perspectives of the participants. Therefore, the ideas emerging from qualitative research constitute the meaning given to real-world events by people who live them, not the value of preconceptions held by researchers (Yin, 2016). The research process involves emerging questions and procedures, data collection from the participants, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the research making interpretations of the meaning of data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study focused on how African American principals understand and utilize their identity and the perceived impact of double consciousness while leading diverse schools, making a qualitative approach appropriate.

A quantitative research method would not be suitable for the study. A quantitative methodology is a scientific approach to research, using measurements and statistics to test hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In a quantitative study, the researcher attempts to answer a research problem by establishing the overall tendency of responses from individuals and how this tendency varies among people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Because this research did not involve testing hypotheses or examining numerical tendencies, the quantitative approach will not be practical. Further, the quantitative approach would not allow the researcher to collect data regarding participants' views and experiences. African American principals' perspectives were the primary data collected, thus necessitating qualitative methodology.

The research methodology appropriate for this study was a general inductive qualitative approach using interviews. A general (generic) qualitative study targets people's reports of their opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on these experiences (Percy et al., 2015). General qualitative inquiry allowed for flexibility in exploring and gathering data from each participant involved in this study. It provided an opportunity to gain knowledge, insight, and awareness of African American principals' perceptions of the impact of double consciousness. A general inductive qualitative study allowed the participants to draw accounts from their personal stories and how they view the world around them as African Americans and educational leaders. The investigation enabled participants to describe how identity and their awareness of double consciousness impact them positively, negatively, or not at all. Answering open-ended questions allowed participants to reflect on their experiences as Black educational leaders and give deeper insight regarding identity and double consciousness.

General Inductive Qualitative Model

The mode of inquiry utilized by the researcher within the qualitative methods is a GIQM. A general (generic) inductive qualitative study allows for flexibility in exploring and gathering data from each participant in this study. General inductive qualitative inquiry refuses to claim allegiance to established methodology (Kalhke, 2014). Rather than being forced to single out a specialized type of research, a researcher can exercise the option to conduct qualitative research in a generalized form (Yin, 2016). Generic methods provide space for researchers to advance by deviating from strict methodology while seeking to understand how people interpret, construct, or make meaning from their world and experiences (Kalhke, 2014).

The GIQM has gained recognition as a suitable approach within the realm of qualitative research. Numerous scholars and educators endorse this model, adding weight to its credibility. Robert Yin, in his 2016 book *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* asserts that robust studies can be conducted under the broad umbrella of "qualitative research" or "field-based" studies without relying on specific variants. This broad form of qualitative research is consistently featured in top academic journals and university presses" (p. 66).

The most significant advantage to the GIQM is the freedom to complete a study involving a local problem of practice pragmatically. In the 2013 book *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, Maxwell continually mentions and supports the design and what it can bring to research. He defends these freedoms and the autonomy of the researcher when he states, "less structured approaches, in contrast, allow you to focus on the particular phenomena being studied, which may differ between

individuals or settings and require individually tailored methods. Less structured methods trade generalizability and comparability for internal validity and contextual understanding" (p. 88). Because of the researcher's pragmatic worldview, the GIQM allows the most authentic voice of the participants to speak, be heard, and shape the direction of the study.

Pieces of phenomenology underlie most qualitative research, considering studies investigate a phenomenon. Phenomenological research assumes that there is an essence of a shared experience. The research study will attempt to gain insight into pieces of the experience, for example, identity and leadership, not necessarily the experience as a whole. Multiple studies involving African American principals utilize a phenomenological approach (Alston, 2018; Brooks 2017; Haynes, 2016; Hill, 2013; Jackson, 2018; Miller, 2019; Rice, 2020; Richardson, 2014; Smith, 2019). They answer the question of, what is the lived experience of African American Principals? General inductive qualitative inquiry explores human participants' subjective opinions, attitudes, and beliefs (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Percy et al., 2015). There may be overlapping discoveries and interpretations between exploring the essence of a shared experience versus making sense of an experience and the opinions, attitudes, and beliefs of the target population. Given the latitude and freedom, a generic approach seems more feasible.

While utilizing a GIQM, the researcher incorporated aspects of a phenomenology study, particularly epoche or bracketing. A phenomenologist engages in bracketing or withholding of judgment until there is evidence in the research to support what is real, along with identifying reality as it is related to one's consciousness and the meaning of the experience to everyone (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The role of bracketing is essential to

phenomenological research. It allows for a researcher to acknowledge personal biases brought to the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher served as the primary data collection instrument in the proposed study, and personal experiences will be examined before observing the experiences of others. The researcher approached all semi-structured interviews with participants having an open mind. Personal experiences, understandings, and worldviews were considered throughout the data collection and analysis.

According to Kahlke (2014) there is a pragmatic claim that established methodologies are more complicated than a GIQM because they require an expanded knowledge of the appropriate methodological literature. However, one can counter this claim due to the nuanced methodological understanding needed for researchers using generic approaches. General inductive qualitative studies require researchers to know the methodologies well enough to not only apply them to context but also to manipulate and blend methodologies and justify the choices made in the relative absence of existing arguments (Kahlke, 2014). As a result, individual researchers employing generic qualitative approaches must read and think broadly about their studies. Ultimately, the purpose of qualitative educational research is to improve our practice. The GIQM is particularly well suited to obtain an in-depth understanding of the local problem of practice.

In the utilization of interviews as a method of gathering data in qualitative research, well-designed questions and a consistent approach were imperative to ensure and maintain rigor or trustworthiness, which determines the credibility and transferability of the study. Similarly, utilizing the GIQM provided an in-depth inquiry into authentic,

true-to-life perspectives that focus on complex social issues (Percy et al., 2015). General inductive qualitative inquiry is also valuable when the researcher has a preunderstanding of the topic and investigates this understanding further from the participants' perspectives (Kostere & Kostere, 2021; Percy et al., 2015). As such, the researcher was a former African American principal of an urban Oklahoma City majority-minority school.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative inquiry is to design open-ended interview questions aligned with the research topic. Through face-to-face interactions with the research participants, the researcher was able to observe the participants' behavior while collecting data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Understanding and meaning are the essential goals of qualitative inquiry. Having a human as the key instrument of data collection and analysis allowed for the collection of both verbal and nonverbal data. A human instrument allowed for the immediate processing of information in the event clarification was needed, the ability to check for understanding, and the ability to inquire further into responses that may not have been anticipated (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While there was much responsibility for the role of the researcher in the qualitative inquiry process, it was essential to ensure that biases were identified and monitored so as not to influence the data collection and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Researcher Bias

Maxwell (2013) contends that bias is a vital threat to the validity of qualitative research. The goal of a research study is to learn more about a topic and contribute to the current body of knowledge on the topic. For a study to contribute to the current body of research on a given topic, the study must be free from researcher bias. Though researcher

bias is often unintentional, it can skew the results of a study rendering the study invalid. Explaining the biases and addressing how to deal with it is vital to a research proposal (Maxwell, 2013).

I was interested in understanding the experiences of African American principals in majority-minority urban schools. The researcher intended to learn how these individuals utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders. The use of accurate, concise, and bias-free terms within the researcher's focus field was used (Creswell, 2013). For this study, the researcher adequately collected, recorded, and stored all participants' interview responses. In addition, the researcher journaled personal feelings and perceptions throughout the data collection and analysis process to guard against biases and pre-understandings of the data discovered during the study.

Instrument

The researcher was the primary instrument used to collect data for this study. As an instrument, the researcher was immersed in all phases of the study, including defining the research problem, developing the research question, outlining the research methodology and design, collecting, and transcribing data, analyzing, and verifying data, and reporting relevant findings. Additional instruments such as a recording device were used to assist with an accurate summary of findings; semi-structured interviews were designed to encourage discussion with the prospect for the researcher to investigate responses further, and a pen and pad for taking notes.

Target Population

A target population is a group of individuals with identifiable characteristics (Creswell, 2012). The target population for this study was African American head

principals in OKC. Black as an ethnicity is the demographic term used for this study, as it is the demographic classification used by the Oklahoma Department of Education for demographic purposes (Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2022). The participant sample was obtained from two large urban school districts in Oklahoma City. The Black principals employed lead majority-minority schools, thereby providing the researcher more access to targeted participants. There was a total of thirteen African American head principals in these districts. These participants' experiences allowed for greater investigation of the concept of double consciousness as it relates to educational leadership. The study explored the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools.

Sampling

The concept of purposive sampling is for the researcher to center on persons with specific properties who may best contribute to the research (Etikan et al., 2016). On average, purposive sampling is used in qualitative research, allowing the researcher to select plentiful and information-rich cases to learn the most regarding the purpose of the inquiry (Etikan et al., 2016; Yin, 2016). Purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative studies and therefore, generally used in the generic approach (Kostere & Kostere, 2022).

In qualitative research, the sample size may vary from one study to the next. The researcher's ability to provide an in-depth picture can diminish with the addition of new individuals (Creswell, 2012). A prime objective of qualitative research is to present the complexity of the information provided by participants. Etikan (2016) notes that Total Population Sampling (TPS) is the best sampling method. TPS is a technique where the

entire population that meets the criteria (e.g., specific skill set, experience, etc.) is included in the study. TPS is more commonly used where the number of cases being investigated is relatively small. Since the population of African American principals in OKC is relatively small, with only thirteen total, TPS sampling was ideal. However, according to Kostere and Kostere 2022, the recommended sample size for a general inductive qualitative dissertation is 8-14 participants. The researcher attempted to interview as many participants from the population as possible.

Data Collection

The study was designed to answer the research questions: 1) How do African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders? 2) Do principals have an awareness of double consciousness, if so, do they perceive this as being an asset for their work? For generic qualitative dissertations semi-structured interviews are recommended. The data collection process seeks out rich descriptions (Kostere & Kostere, 2022). The study utilized interviews seeking rich data regarding the thoughts and perceptions of the participants. In these qualitative interviews, the questions were pre-structured based on the pre-knowledge of the researcher, although there may be opportunities for “tell me more” types of questions (Percy et al., 2015).

According to Merriam (2009), the primary data collection for a generic qualitative inquiry comes from face-to-face, semi-structured interviews to acquire information from the study sample and to draw upon their experiences, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants in this study were part of the target population identified by the researcher. Interviews were held in person, and times were centered around whichever times are most comfortable and convenient for interviewees (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). All

participants confirmed their willingness to participate in this study and were provided a code name to protect their identity. This process was explained to the participants, so they felt comfortable sharing their stories and experiences.

Each interview was recorded using a recording device to offer interviewees undivided attention and assist with a precise summation of findings. Upon completion of each interview, the researcher opened a dialogue to answer any questions. The researcher's contact information was provided to participants in case any questions arose following the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kostere & Kostere, 2022; Percy et al., 2015).

Interview Questions

Open-ended and semi-structured qualitative interviews allowed participants to respond directly and elaborate. An interview protocol assisted with directing the discussion on the specific subject matter. The protocol provided structure to what sequence to follow in asking the questions and the appropriate placement of follow-up questions. An interview protocol was divided into multiple sections to cover all topics. The first section included background information about the participants. The second focused on identity and the third centered on understanding the perceptions of African American principals on the perceived impact of double consciousness while leading diverse schools (See Appendix A).

Data Analysis

According to Merriam & Tisdale (2016), "data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data" (p. 202). I believe this description captures the overarching goal of the data analysis process. Making sense of the data involves consolidating, reducing, and

interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher has seen and read. Data analysis is a complex procedure involving moving back and forth between concrete bits, data, and abstract concepts, focusing on themes and interpretations (Merriam & Tisdale 2016; Hood, 2007). Creswell & Creswell (2018) describe it as "like peeling back layers of an onion, as well as putting it back together" (p. 191).

The initial stages began with properly and accurately preparing all data for coding. For interviews, this consisted of transcription. The researcher utilized modern software such as Rev to assist in transcription. For accuracy, the researcher cross-referenced the transcriptions by listening to the recorded interviews and ensuring the transcribed texts were aligned. The preparation for data processing also included a final compilation of all post-interview comments or observations.

Once the data was prepared, the researcher was aware of his role and influence in the processing. The coding and theme assignment steps commenced. The importance of coding and theme discovery of the data was paramount to understanding as they were the mechanisms by which sense is made, and understanding can begin to form as it relates to the problem of practice. Steps should not be skipped or overlooked. Maxwell (2013) provides an excellent explanation of the necessity of coding when he states, "in qualitative research, the goal of coding is not primarily to count things, but to "fracture" the data and rearrange them into categories that facilitate comparison between things in the same category and that aid in the development of theoretical concepts" (p. 107). These codes may arise when the researcher reads the transcriptions or text, and certain elements stand out or are of specific interest to the problem of practice or research questions. The researcher categorizes all relevant portions of the obtained data by

systematically reading and reviewing the text, looking for bits that stand out, and assigning identifying codes. Codes were focused on patterns and insights related to the research purpose and questions (Merriam & Tisdale 2016). All data was reviewed. Further providing clarification on what coding is, Creswell & Creswell (2018) state, “coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins” (p. 193). Coding, in the general sense, is the systematic review and analysis of all obtained data to identify and sort, by tagging a classifying word as a label, all relevant information for further review or thematic assignment (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Following the coding of all data, the next step was the formation of themes. Themes form by reviewing, sorting, and organizing all the common or similar codes derived from the first data analysis step. The goal was to let the data speak through the common elements identified by codes and to capture the evolving themes, representing large-scale similarities between participants. These became the significant findings of the study. Creswell & Creswell (2018) describe theming as “using the coding as well for generating a small number of themes or categories- perhaps five to seven themes for a research study” (p. 194). They should display multiple perspectives from participants. These emerging themes should represent the major discoveries, perspectives, or conclusions that relate specifically to the research questions and serve as the foundation for analysis of the project compared to the literature on the topic. The themes serve as synthesized findings; yet they are supported and defended with the correlated data framing portions of the research. The goal is the interpretation of rich data (Hood, 2007). As a scholar-practitioner exploring the thoughts and perceptions of African American

principals in Oklahoma City, these themes assisted in informing the practice of educational leaders, invited further research and discussion, or advanced new leads or direction that point to the practical application of knowledge (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Assumptions

This study assumed that the selected participants contributed willingly during the interviews and shared authentic experiences of their lives. Participants were assumed to be honest and truthful and to believe the narratives they provided would contribute to knowledge about African Americans leaders and education.

The researcher was of the population being studied. Being a former African American principal in OKC, the researcher had perceptions of their experiences but not the participants' perceptions of the asset value of double consciousness. The researcher remained neutral during interviews to reduce bias. The researcher was neutral in speech, facial expression, and body language. During the semi-structured interview, the researcher refrained from telling the participants answers to questions to avoid influencing how the participants would answer.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the parameters of a study (Creswell, 2012). This research focused on African American principals in two large urban school districts in the Oklahoma City Metro. This study did not investigate double consciousness with administrators to other races/ethnicities such as White, Hispanic, Indian, Asian, or Pacific Islanders. The researcher focused on a distinct group (Black) to see how they understand and utilize their identity and were aware of double consciousness and perceived it as

being an asset. This study did not include district-level administrators of color. This study did not include school leaders from small urban or rural districts. This research focused on Black school leaders who work in diverse schools in urban settings.

Ethical Considerations

A key component of qualitative research was ensuring that ethical issues and concerns are addressed and harm to the participant is eliminated. In the approval process of this study, consent forms were completed to describe the purpose and steps of this study and gave participants, committee members, and the Institutional Review Board a specific idea of what this study would entail. Each level of review confirmed that the conditions of this study were appropriate and ethical for participants to be recruited.

When confirmation was made that each participant was interested in participating in this study, the informed consent form was reviewed and discussed with each participant in person. The steps taken during this process ensured the participants were fully aware of their rights and the ramifications of their participation. It was intentional that the informed consent form provided sufficient information so the participant could decide whether to be involved in this study. Also, the language used in the informed consent form was clearly written and easy for the participant to understand to avoid coercion or undue harm.

Concerns

With the advent of House Bill 1775, Oklahoma is in some racially tumultuous times. The researcher possessed concerns that some African American principals may not choose to participate due to the fact they do not want to receive any backlash or be involved in a study discussing race, leadership, and their jobs. For this reason, the

researcher did not disclose the names of the two districts, and the principals' names remained anonymous.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter 3 offered insight into the preferred research design and data analysis approach. The researcher spoke to why the GIQM best served the purpose and could respond to the research question presented for the study. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the researcher's role and bias. Chapter 3 also contained information about how and why the distinct participant population was selected and how the researcher ensured that the study was carried out ethically. Chapter 4 centers on the results from the actual study. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes with the researcher evaluating the work and offering subjective perception to interpret the researcher's study results.

Chapter Four: Findings

As previously stated in the first chapter, the purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals as they lead diverse schools. I wanted to hear the voices of Black principals and learn about their experiences as educators from their perspectives. I was particularly interested in investigating the aspects of understanding and utilizing racial identity and double consciousness in the field of educational leadership. The study was conducted as a generic qualitative examination of Black principals in two large urban districts in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan area.

The research design was qualitative and provided opportunities for rich data regarding the thoughts and perceptions of the participants. Data were collected using open-ended semi-structured interview questions developed to draw upon experiences, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs. A specific interview protocol was used to elicit participant responses (See Appendix A). The interview protocol questions were aligned to the following two research questions.

1. How do African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders?
2. Do principals have an awareness of double consciousness, if so, do they perceive this as being an asset for their work?

A total of eight African American principals were interviewed and recorded, using a Zoom audio recorder. All interviews were transcribed using REV transcription software, followed by manual accuracy verification by listening and checking for errors or any inaccuracies. Upon the completion of all interviews and after verifying accurate transcripts, the coding and theme assignment process commenced. Each interview

transcription was reread, examined line by line, and manually coded. Data was coded inductively to identify patterns and themes. Inductive analysis through the GIQM was selected because it is data-driven and does not attempt to fit the data into any preexisting categories (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The coding process resulted in first, second, and third-level codes. Certain aspects of codes stood out and created patterns. Clusters of codes from multiple participants and perspectives developed into themes. The thematic development of the data provides a better understanding of the problem of practice and research questions.

Participants

This chapter begins with brief profiles of eight participants. The pseudonyms were the names of All-Black towns in Oklahoma. The choice was symbolic because these towns possessed schools where African American educational leadership played a prominent part in their communities (Adair, 1987). I introduce each of the participants in the section below and provide pertinent background information regarding their initial awareness of racial identity and educational career motivations. The following sections provide the thoughts and perceptions of the participants. A picture emerges of the elements in their lives that shaped their racial identities.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Years in Education	Level
1. Boley	26	Elementary
2. Langston	26	Secondary
3. Vernon	14	Secondary
4. Rentiesville	29	Secondary

5. Clearview	28	Secondary
6. Tatums	15	Secondary
7. Grayson	23	Secondary
8. Brooksville	16	Elementary

Note. Table 1 represents the participant’s demographic information found in the study. It outlines the years of education and the K-12 level of administrative leadership.

Boley

They are an elementary principal with 26 years of experience as an educator and 11 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 53% Black and 19% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first time they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I felt like I always knew I was African American or black. When I was raised, my dad had really high standards, and he used to tell us all the time, you're a female and you're black, so you have to work twice as hard as anybody else. So, I mean, it was a part of our daily dialogue.

Boley possessed early influences regarding education. When asked what led them to become educators they stated “I remember when I was in fourth grade, I had a really great teacher. She gave me a love of reading. She wasn't super nice, but she was big on books, and I liked the way she taught, and I was like, man, I could probably be there someday.”

Boley also mentioned,

I think my dad was my teacher, and so that's what was modeled to me. I didn't learn to add and subtract at school. I knew before I got there. And so, my dad was

an educator who wasn't in the field of education. So, I think that's always what's been modeled for me, and it was an easy step for me.

Langston

They are a High School principal with 24 years of experience as an educator and 15 years as an administrator. They served at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 69% Black and 14% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first time they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I think it was, I was really young in elementary school. I went to a private school that is no longer in existence. I'm looking at class pictures and along with maybe one or two others, it's not a lot of kids that looked like me. There weren't kids that kind of spoke differently or had different views on things and I got along with everybody, but just not seeing a lot of people that looked like me at my elementary school is probably one of the first memories I have.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

And so, I loved love music. I have always been around music, but my mom was like, wait if you are going to come out of college, come out with a degree with something where you are going to have a job, have a career, and you can grow. And so, my counselor was a musical performer and she said, that there are a lot of talented people playing on street corners everywhere. and they are holding out their hats or holding open their cases for money. She said you can do that, or you can be a teacher and you can always have a job.

Vernon

They are a Middle School principal with 14 years of experience as an educator and 11 years as an administrator. They served at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 44% Black and 22% White. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I can't tell you an exact day or time or age, but it probably has to do with starting school, how comfortable I felt being with people that looked like me versus when going to school and going to places in public when I wasn't with people that looked like me. And just the intrinsic feeling of how you feel as far as the comfort level. So probably around, I would say between ages four and six.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

I had transitioned from college and grad schools working in a corporate job cubicle, and I would see articles that kept saying that, needed more male teachers, needing more black male teachers. And seeing those articles made me think back to a time when I worked in retail, and I got to train other people not that much younger than me in how to do jobs at a grocery store. And that plus where I was so dissatisfied with my life in corporate because I got to a point where I wanted to do something more meaningful, something more than money.

Rentiesville

They are a High School principal with 29 years of experience as an educator and 11 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 33% Hispanic and 27% Black. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

My mother is Caucasian, and I was living with my mother and my dad had moved away when I was three. So, it was really before my formative years, and so I just would look at my mom and the rest of my family, and I assumed that I was the exact same as them. So, I would say that it probably wasn't until I was five when I went to school that I realized that I did. I was not the same as everybody else in my family.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

The person who influenced me most in my life was a teacher both bad and good because I had this counselor telling me all through high school that I was never going to amount to anything. And so, I wanted to prove myself to her. Then I had a ninth-grade English teacher who was the opposite and inspired me as far as everything that I wanted to be. And so, I decided that I was going to become a teacher to be the opposite of what that school counselor was for me. I wanted to show kids that it does not matter where you come from, what you look like, or who you are, you can succeed.

Clearview

They are a High School principal with 28 years of experience as an educator and 23 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 46% Black and 30% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they disclosed,

Probably was late elementary, or early middle school. I don't remember the exact age incident at an amusement park in which I was spit on. I've heard a lot of

people talk about the experience, but to actually go through it yourself was enlightening and interesting.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

I had some black educators who were very direct and pushed me to my maximum potential and didn't settle for less. And it was through that experience that I gained a passion for education. And the power that you could have as an educator that you had to influence future generations.

Tatums

They are a High School principal with 15 years of experience as an educator and 3 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 69% Black and 14% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I tell you what, I guess the first time I really felt like I realized the real differences was when I got to college. Because up until I got to college, elementary school was pretty much all black. Middle school was pretty much all black. High school was pretty much all black. And that's when finally, that's when that was probably the first time, I ever had experience with being educated with somebody who wasn't like me.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated “So my first major was, I was a PE major. And then it was hard for me to get a PE job in high school because I wanted to coach. It was hard for me to get a PE job. So, I went to an alternative route to special ed, and became a special ed teacher.”

Grayson

They are a Middle School principal with 23 years of experience as an educator and 7 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 67% Black and 11% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I think I was around three or four years old, and I had a single mother, my parents were divorced, and my brother was able to either go to school or a daycare. And so, she was like, hey, stay at the house. I'll be back, blah, blah, blah. I got to go do this shift. She was a waitress at the time. And so, I went exploring. Now, I didn't stay at the house. I went exploring and I was running through some alleys. I ran across this young lady, this girl, and she was like, hey, come play. I was like, cool. So, we started playing ball. We were kicking it around doing all this stuff, and her dad had owned a barn, it wasn't really a barn, it was kind of a barn where he had some chickens or whatever. I don't know what it was. So, we were running around, and we were chasing stuff. We're just having fun. Then he comes out, the dad. She was a white girl, and he said, hey, what is this nigger doing here?

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

A frat brother was like, hey man, you could be a teacher. And I said, I never wanted to teach and never even thought about teaching. And then he said, but you owe God. And I said, what do you mean? He said you caused so much trouble. You did so many things in high school. Imagine if you could help kids like us. And I said, man. And so, I looked up how to get an alternative certification. And one Saturday I went and took the test, and it was cool. I didn't immediately get a job. It took about two, or three years.

Brooksville

They are an Elementary principal with 16 years of experience as an educator and 6 years as an administrator. They serve at a majority-minority school with the two largest student groups consisting of 67% Black and 12% Hispanic. When asked to describe the first they realized they were African American or Black they responded,

I guess I've always known I was black or African American. It wasn't something that we didn't talk about in my household, so I guess I just kind of grew up knowing who I was as a person. And I guess there wasn't any shame in that either, just in my house.

When asked what led them to become an educator they stated,

I feel like education was probably in my blood. I probably should have been a teacher. I think I was always discouraged. Most people say teachers don't make a whole lot of money. My mom would say that too, even though she was a teacher. And she always said she knew early on that she wanted to be an educator. She said ever since she was in elementary, she knew that's what she wanted to do. So, I think as a kid, I always watched my mom teach and I would emulate her. I mean, I can remember probably as early as being four or five. So, I always tell people I grew up in the classroom and I'm a public-school product, but then my aunt was an educator.

Presentation of Results

This section analyzes the interviews and the qualitative data to address the research questions and highlights the emerging themes. The findings from the interview sessions are organized and correlate to the research question they answered. This generic

qualitative study aimed to explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools. Throughout the data analysis, five themes emerged. The emerging themes were 1) navigating challenges, 2) impact beyond race, 3) benefits of racial identity 4) managing a dual perspective, and 5) advantages to double consciousness. Table 2 represents the key themes that emerged from the data along with supporting subthemes to provide context for the theme.

Table 2. *Themes & Subthemes Emerged from the Research*

Theme	Subtheme
1. Navigating Challenges	Isolation, Overcoming Stereotypes, Code Switching, Job Acquisition
2. Impact Beyond Race	Best Interest of All Kids, Support for All Kids, Creating Inclusive Spaces
3. Benefits of Racial Identity	Connection, Empathy, Relatability
4. Managing a Dual Perspective	Perceptions, Expectations
5. Advantages of Double Consciousness	Awareness, Navigation, Relationships

Note. Table 2 displays the themes and supporting themes, that emerged from the data collected in the research.

These five concepts were identified as emerging themes because the participants consistently discussed them. The researcher identified five key themes along with subthemes also reflected as a pattern in the data. The subthemes are highlighted throughout this section and will be incorporated in the detailed description of the key themes, which are linked to the research questions.

Themes for Research Question 1

1. How do African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders?

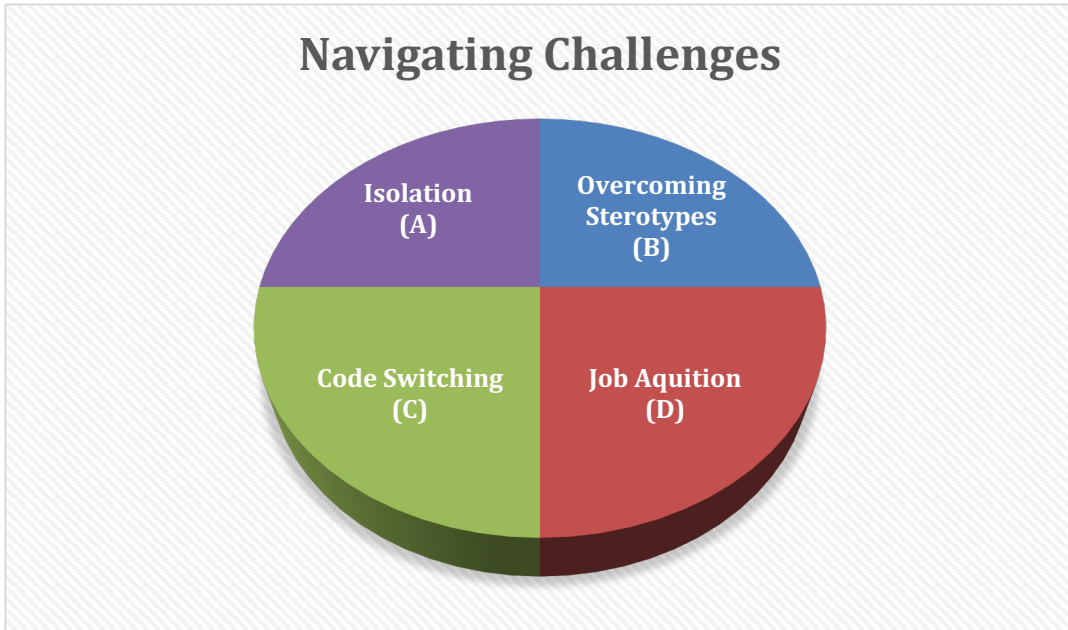


Figure 1. The first theme is Navigating Challenges. The subthemes include isolation, overcoming stereotypes, code switching, and job acquisition.

In understanding their racial identity as they work as leaders, participants had to learn to navigate and or negotiate around the perception of others. They experienced solitude, negative bias, and limitations on employment. While these professionals attempt to provide quality education to their students, the participants speak of barriers that can stymie their success and progress.

Isolation was mentioned by multiple participants. Boley stated, “I knew there were no black people on the staff, but I didn't know I was the first. Tatums commented, “Man, it is lonely at the top.” and provided a story about a recent professional development trip in Virginia. There were around 240 principals, district leaders, and superintendents, with only three being black males. Many at the gathering want to go to

Thomas Jefferson's home for one of the get-togethers. Tatums responded, "Well, I'm not going to see Thomas Jefferson's house. He has 600 slaves. So, I'm not going to do that." They ultimately sat in the lobby until an Uber came and rejoined the group six hours later. Unfortunately, this type of occurrence is all too common. It serves as an example of an eventual component of the professional experience when there is such an underrepresentation of African American principals.

The dilemma with the underrepresentation of black administrators not only produces isolation due to a lack of peers but also affects the opportunities and prospects for mentors and mentees. Many black principals, particularly in the OKC metro, are not able to readily see what excellence looks like from a person who looks like them and who might be going through a similar experience. Brooksville stated, "I'm really big on on-site visits and going to other schools and mentorship. And I think those are things that, a lot of times, Black administrators don't have. And so, then you struggle, what am I supposed to do?" Multiple participants mentioned or eluded that it was lonely achieving a degree of success that few in school build have obtained, but the ordeal is exacerbated by being African American.

Overcoming Stereotypes was a subtheme that explained the participant's understanding and handling of biases particularly from other ethnicities. Vernon stated "It helps a lot of people get past perceptions, especially the adults. You're talking about parents and colleagues getting past what might be just stereotypes and false expectations they might have upon first meeting me." Rentiesville mentioned,

Then sometimes with Caucasian parents, I am very careful to make sure that I come across as an educated, educated person so that they understand that this is

not affirmative action, that I actually did work my way up to this job that I do know what I'm talking about.

Tatums stated, "I'm going to say change the negative narrative that's associated with us as a race. And so, I'm going to keep my identity." Tatums also recounted, "My first year, I lost pretty much all my Caucasian teachers. They left, complained against me, and said I did not seem approachable with my leadership style." These negative notions came primarily from teachers and parents. Several participants felt that while handling frustrating situations, they had to keep their emotions in check. For example, Grayson stated, "Because you want to come off as calm, highly educated, kind of in control."

Code Switching was described as changing one's speech, behavior, appearance, and entire persona to fit within the dominant group. Boley mentioned, "Well, my profession has a lot of white people, and I feel like I have to shelve who I really am and be a different person." Rentiesville added, "I feel like when I interact with teachers certainly, most teachers, I would say in my building and pretty much all district-level administrators, I have to put on my white persona." Tatums stated, "you must learn how to navigate both worlds. You must know when to turn it on or off and when to be all black. You must toe that fine line and some people can do it better than others." Tatums also provided a unique perspective regarding the adverse effects of code switching. They mentioned that some African Americans call it "selling out."

When talking to the African Administrators in the study, it appeared that code-switching began as a survival tactic that just became second nature. Grayson added that the skill can transcend race when they mentioned "I realized we do that, but I don't think it's all about color. You code switch when you get home. You can't go home with the

acronyms that we use here unless your spouse or partner is in education.” Most participants understood and realized the importance of code switching.

Job Acquisition was described by many of the participants as an obstacle. The mere fact that some possess the qualification only sometimes equates to a job opportunity, even though there are numerous openings, particularly in suburban areas adjacent to Oklahoma City. Langston mentioned, "I was super naive in that, hey, I got my degree, I passed my principal's test, so I got my certification. So now I'm going to get a job." Time and perceived preparedness were also roadblocks. Tatums stated, "It took me about three years to get an assistant principal job because they kept saying I wasn't ready."

Another aspect of job acquisitions centered on location and placement. A few comments arose regarding the possibility of being pigeonholed in a predominantly minority and high-needs school. Langston stated, "The opportunity came only at those schools where it was largely African American." These types of placements produce a quandary because the participant seems to have the desire to impact the underserved population in the same way they were affected; however, this can cause doubt about the possibility of a limited skill set. For example, Brookville shared, "I feel like people probably can get pigeonholed, but I want to be at a place where I can figure out how I make things better for the kids and people in the community." Conversely, Grayson shared, "So, I bring it up to say that when you see people get constantly placed in black or brown schools, you have to ask that question, is it because I'm Black?"

Impact Beyond Race

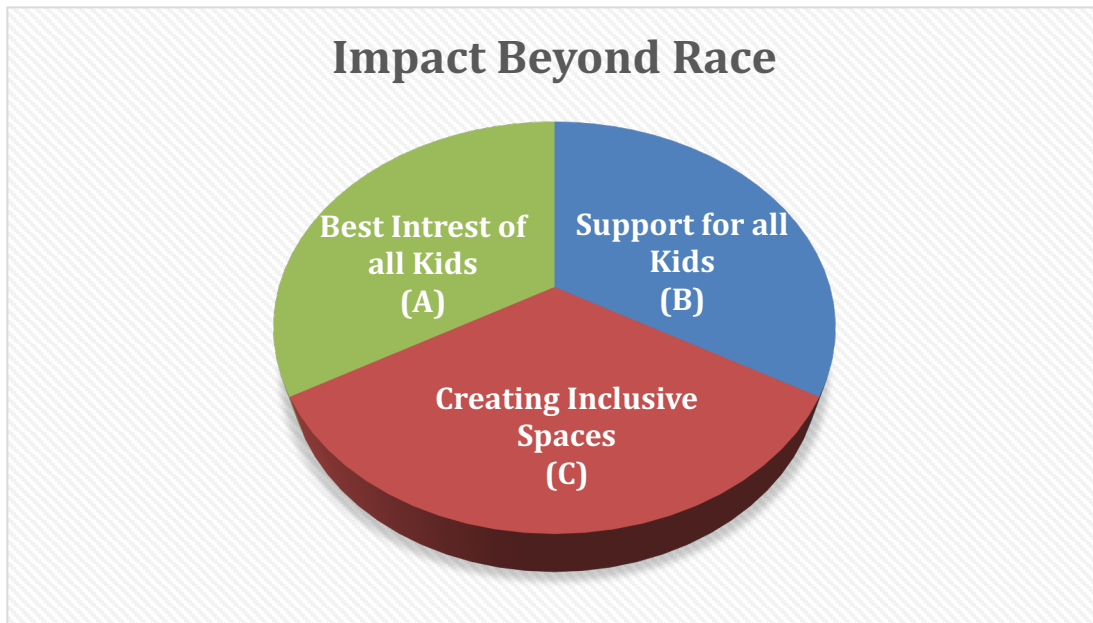


Figure 2. The second theme is *Impact Beyond Race*. The subthemes include Best Interest of all Kids, Support for all Kids, and Creating Inclusive Spaces.

The participants commented on their desire and ability to make a profound impact in educational settings that transcend the boundaries of race. Multiple statements show a conscious effect, show love, focus on the best interests, and meet the needs of all kids. These educational leaders serve as role models and support systems for students of all backgrounds and ethnicities. By fostering a culture of inclusivity within their schools, they created environments where students learn to appreciate diversity and develop a sense of belonging. Several comments display and assist with answering the question of how African American principals understand and utilize their identity.

A consistent pattern developed around believing in love and the **Best Interest of all Kids** and all students. Boley emphasized, "I love all kids." Vernon mentioned, "Our priority is what's best for all of our kids, and we are to do going to be best for all of our

kids." The participants repeatedly made a conscious effort to identify that they spoke about all students regardless of ethnicity. Rentiesville mentioned, "When I interact with students, I treat all students the same. And so, with students, I never think about my racial identity." Clearview stated, "Because I've worked with a variety of populations and kids, they just want to know that you have their best interests at heart." Tatums disclosed that "no matter your race, if you are Hispanic, if you are white, whatever, I see them just as well. We have the same zip code, and I'm able to build relationships." Grayson mentioned "I consciously want the parents to know I'm a partner. I want them to know I'm trying to protect this child." Brookville stated, "And trust me when I say at the end of the day, I am always going to have the interest, the best interest of your child at heart, all kids."

Support of all kids was manifested through positive influence, advocating, and the notion that experiences can be shared across racial lines. Administrators in this study believed in role modeling and leaving a lasting impact. Boley mentioned, "It's a beautiful thing to know that you're showing people that you can be anything you want to be. They believe they can be anything and I constantly preach that to all students." Vernon revealed,

I want kids of all colors to be able to look back at a time to say, I had a positive black male figure in my life, and they treated me like I wanted to be treated. They showed me love and cared about me. They wanted me to do my best and wanted me to be successful.

There was a deep desire by participants to serve as role models and individuals that students could look up to, along with their support. Brooksville stated, "I feel like it's

important that kids have strong examples of leadership and that also just being African American, I understand the challenges and the leadership that they need. This statement provided an example of the realization that current students will be our future leaders.

All the participants work in Title 1 schools, which means they are high-poverty schools, as determined by the number of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. Many students are underserved and need assistance. Brooksville noted that one of the biggest challenges concerning support involved "advocating and making sure our kids have what they need and deserve." Rentiesville remarked, "I can take my experiences and share them with any ethnicity. These are the things that I have dealt with as an African American, and this is what you're going through. Now, how can I help you?" There seemed to be a unanimous consensus and strong sentiments regarding support for all students.

The subtheme **Creating Inclusive Spaces** materialized out of multiple participants speaking of making school a place where students all students can go through the process of self-discovery. Brooksville stated, "We want things to be more student-centered because they're going to be the kids that are going to be our leaders. And so, a lot of great things happen because kids have agency." Vernon mentioned, So, I think my general theme on my racial consciousness is that in a public school, everybody has a right to get their education, to feel safe, to be seen, and to make that experience what they want it to be. Langston commented, "I use my identity to build relationships and always make sure that all students are being heard." In the previous comments, it was quite telling that respondents utilized the terms "my identity" and "racial consciousness" as tools to ensure students feel safe, seen, and heard. Vernon also said So, it's good to have somebody there

who can see past what can be seen as a difference and see just another kid in need. These concepts bridge the gap between understanding racial identity and utilizing it for the benefit of students.

Benefits of Racial Identity

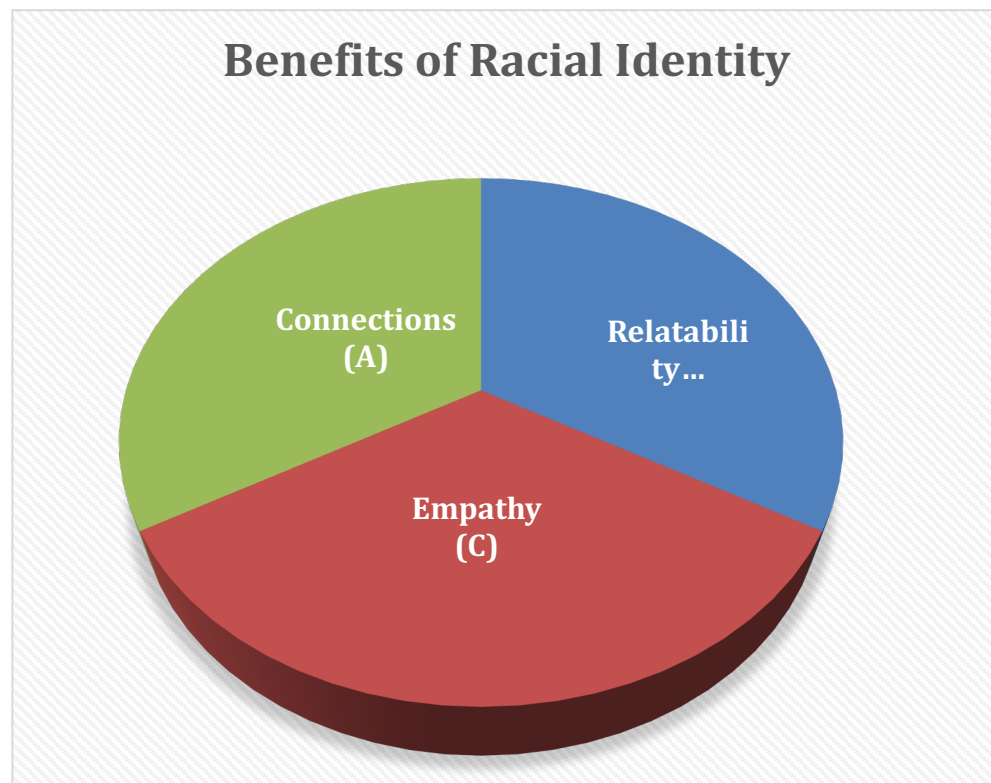


Figure 3. The third theme is the *Benefits of Racial Identity*. The subthemes include Connection, Empathy, and Relatability.

The participants spoke about how they utilized and drew upon the strengths of their racial identity, which can be a powerful asset in their leadership roles. Their unique experiences and perspectives as members of the African American community enable them to connect with students and staff on a deeper level, fostering a sense of understanding relating to the school environment.

Making **connections** with students surfaced as a subtheme and a powerful asset in the participant's leadership roles. The notion of stereotypes is complex. They can be negative based on oversimplified generalizations, but there were also group beliefs and practices that appeared to be accurate. There were some cultural commonalities and shared experiences that were beneficial in a school where most students are people of color. Boley stated, "It puts me in a position where there's trust because I look like them, and they can share their music with me, or they can share a TV show." Langston mentioned they assume that because I am Black, I have heard or seen something. Whether it be from music to sports, they relate to me on that level because they know we have similar experiences." Tatums stated, "I'm connected to them, so I think that helps me out a lot. I was born and raised on the east side, so I know some of many struggles, man." Brooksville felt that their race does matter when making connections, and they commented, "I joke with the kids, I give them nicknames, and we have fun. I feel like they connect with me, and I try to connect with kids in all different types of ways based on who they are and what they value."

Addressing trust, connection, and racial identity in a broader sense with parents and community became evident. Boley stated, "It serves me well to look like the students I serve because the parents trust me. If there's an issue, they say, hey, I know you've got my back. Don't worry about it. So, I don't have to jump that hurdle," Grayson stated, "Well, you have to be a conduit from the district to the community."

Empathy emerged as a subtheme because the participants had personally navigated the complexities of American society as minorities, which allowed them to connect and understand students' everyday challenges on a deeper level. Langston

commented, "And so I am able to tap into those things that I've experienced and help. And it helps me kind of empathize with them and relate to them and help them solve their problems." Rentiesville mentioned, "I think that my experiences as an African American benefit me and all of those groups listed because I have experienced prejudice. So, because I have experienced that, it helps me to extend grace no matter whom I'm dealing with." Grayson effectively reiterated that sometimes, students need to be understood at a level where their consideration of their experiences exists. They state that even if a kid is loud, a little boisterous, or angry, they come to me and say, man, my bad." A lot of issues are situational, such as a student having to work late the night before and a teacher yelling about a pencil. Grayson states the students are like "bleep a pencil. I didn't get any sleep. You know what I'm saying? That part is understandable, and Grayson believed it was cultural.

The **Relatability** benefit from racial identity opens communication and a stronger sense of community within a school. It allows for a better understanding of the specific needs and concerns of students. Langston commented, "I see my identity as being one that can really relate and build relationships with those underserved demographics that we have within the building and those who don't always feel like they're being represented in the best way. "Langston also mentioned, "And so I flock to all students, but I just always want to use who I am, and the experiences that I've endured to reach out to those I see may not be getting represented equally as other groups," Simple being African American proved to be beneficial, Vernon revealed,

There are inroads I think I can make, and there's a certain gravitas I get from kids and parents that I can't put a price on. I can say the same thing that one of my

colleagues says, but it might be the tone I use. It might be the way I address them that'll go over better or differently than if they do it because I have an inherent sense of what the message is and what the bigger picture is sometimes when you don't come from the same places.

The notion of gravitas and credibility allows for authenticity and pliability in multiple instances. Clearview disclosed, "I do feel like it benefits me because it gives me flexibility in being able to relate to a variety of stakeholders in different situations."

Tatums stated, "Absolutely. They can't come to tell me anything because I've been there, and they can't come with all that loud talking. That's protection talk."

These themes and subthemes involving African American principals understanding and utilizing their racial identity provided examples of how these participants work within a system of hurdles and roadblocks. Amid loneliness, negative judgment, and limited job placement, they maintained the best interest of all kids and supported and created school environments conducive to acceptance and success. These participants found ways to be inspirational figures, showing success is attainable regardless of the obstacles faced in life. These administrators often acted as role models to students, demonstrating that their aspirations are valid and achievable.

Themes for Research Question 2

2. Do principals have an awareness of double consciousness, if so, do they perceive this as being an asset for their work

Managing Dual Perspectives

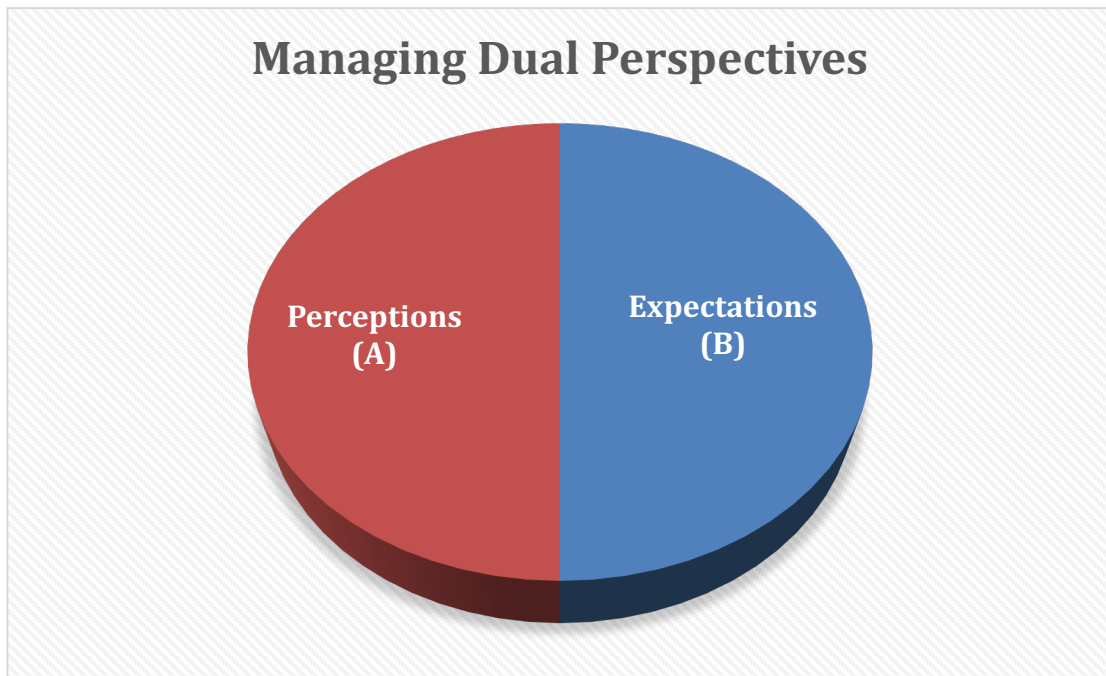


Figure 3. The fourth theme is *Managing Dual Perspectives*. The subthemes include Expectations and Perceptions.

The awareness of double consciousness became evident as participants described their sensitivities to have, they are being perceived and treated and a recognition of added expectations. Layers of duality materialized as these administrators steered through the challenges of African American educators.

Perceptions surfaced as a common subtheme. Similar to what was expressed in a previous subtheme regarding overcoming stereotypes, many White stakeholders have an innate idea or perception of what a typical principal looks like in Oklahoma City, and it is not an African American. Langston mentioned how parents would regularly assume they were a part of the janitorial team, “I was walking around with a lot of keys on my neck and the parent would be like, I want to speak to the principal, and I would be like, well, that's me.” The mislabeling was not only from parents, but teachers would also initially

refer to them as “Hey Coach”. It is insightful that these stakeholders' first thoughts when seeing a black person at a school, was that they were either cleaning or coaching.

The awareness of these adverse perceptions remained a constant for the black principals in this study. Vernon stated, “I always have to consider how I am as a person of color, how I am perceived, how I address things with, in most cases a staff, a community that doesn't look like me, how is that going to be perceived.” Langston disclosed, “I always happened to be aware of who I am, but then also having to be aware of how people are perceiving me at the same time.”

Perceptions dictated actions and even the style of hair for a couple of the participants. Brooksville emphasized I feel like your race always impacts everything. How you perceive people or how they perceive you. It's so funny. Even my hairstyle now, so if I show up with a weave or show up with a natural hairstyle. Boley mentioned, “I haven't really changed my hair because it makes me fit in better and I leave meetings thinking I shouldn't have said that. I'm constantly evaluating what I do and what I say around perceptions based on my race.” The unfortunate need for maintaining a certain hairstyle and word usage just adds to a higher sense of awareness, which creates duality. Grayson added “It means that you're constantly yourself and you are consciously working to portray what you think people want to see.

Expectations appeared as constant reminders of racial identity and in the form of teachings from elders with the realization of their truths. The credence of these expectations created additional pressure to positively represent not only oneself but the entire race. Boley stated,

I think about my racial identity. I always think about it, I have to, because if you're seated in a room and you're the only one who is in your position, then I feel like the burden of, I've got to keep this door open for the next person because I believe they see my race first.

Grayson added, "There is this stress to be a benefit to your race, but also to your family, to the community, to your kids, to basically uphold something that you may not even know." Langston mentioned, "So, it makes me think that I have to be on my game. It makes me think that I always have to represent in the best way."

Rentiesville relayed some advice they received from a veteran African American teacher regarding expectations, "You are going to experience challenges all the so, you always have to have your ducks in a row. You always have to be the best. The best teacher and administrator. You have to give extra hours." Along with the advice, they disclosed,

And so, I worked all the activities, all the extra games I did. I stayed after every night till six or seven o'clock, and I changed everything about myself to be the best version of myself. So, it changed me as a person. It changed me as an educator. It changed me as a principal. And so, when I was given an opportunity to come back to the school that I'm at now, I came back not only as a better, stronger administrator but also, I came back as a better, stronger person.

The term "have to" occurred constantly through the transcription involving the subtheme expectations. The participant wholeheartedly believed that these expectations were true and steadfast. Rentiesville's growth and success serve as a testament.

Part of managing a dual perspective was understanding that African American in a professional environment are measured differently from their White counterparts and yet have additional expectations from the Black community. Clearview also mentioned, “one of these things that we've always heard, you'll have to be twice as good as your counterpart and so always try to stay ahead of the curve.” Tatums said “Man, I'm measuring on a different stick that's always have the toughest school. I always have the toughest kids.” Clearview stated, “If you are in a school that is predominantly African American, you are looked at as the person who has the answers. And sometimes your experience may not be the current experience and you might not have the answers.” Grayson commented, “People love that they have a black principal, but then you're you when you suspend their kid, now you're a sellout now, you know?” Grayson also stated, “And so that's the other part. That's kind of, for me personally, I think I have to, there are feelings of me contributing to the prisoner pipeline when it's a serious situation.”

Advantages of Double Consciousness

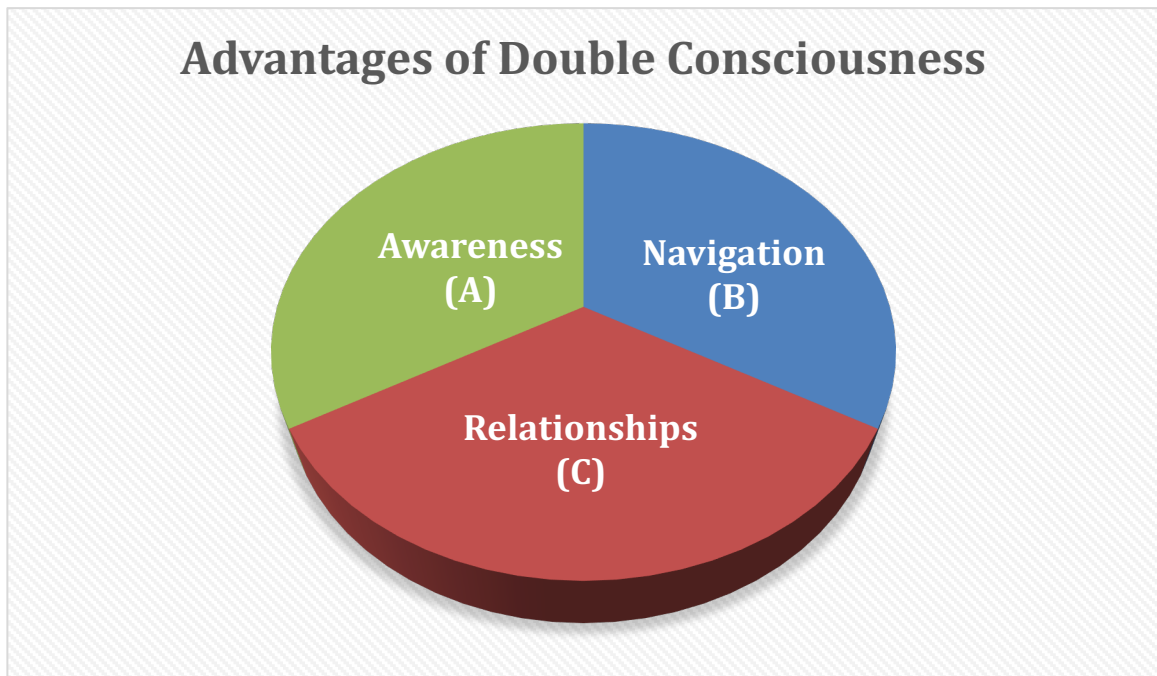


Figure 4. The fourth theme is the Advantages of Double Consciousness. The subthemes include Awareness, Navigation, and Relationships.

As illustrated in the introductory segment of the participants at the beginning of this chapter, racial identity was something seven of the eight respondents were aware of at a young age. This **Awareness** allowed for what W.E.B. Dubois (1902) described it as second sight. Participants commented on how this heightened sense of awareness assists with being an educational leader. Vernon said, “It’s an advantage. You’re forced to live in two worlds, being an African American, you can have those offline conversations with a kid to say, I hope this doesn’t happen to you, but this is where you live.”

Rentiesville shared an observance and story:

I think that it is an advantage always. A lot of people don’t realize what an advantage you have even though you’re raised to be aware of things. I had a boyfriend in high school and his mother called at 11 o’clock at night and told my mom, you’re not going to get a white husband for your nigger daughter. And that

taught me something that has stayed with me forever. It could have been something that negatively soured me, but I think that having that awareness of how people see you teaches you to be aware of everything, every little thing. So, when I am walking through my building, I always am aware if there is something that's about to pop off. I pay attention. I can even tell you what color shirt someone has on.

This heightened sense of awareness allowed for the administrators to gain a unique sense of the world and environment around them along with the people. For example, Clearview mentioned, "I think when you are leading a diverse school, you definitely have to be well aware of the clientele you serve, the students you serve, the communities you serve."

An advantage of double consciousness emerged in the form of **Navigation**. Participants commented on how their experience of navigating through the complexities of racial challenges equipped them to pass their knowledge along to students and become better leaders. Brooksville emphasized students need to know how to talk to people and how to interact with people because those skills are needed for successful Navigation in life." Tatums described the process and ability to navigate as an OKC principal successfully.

Yeah, it is. So, I'm able to dance between two worlds. So, I can sit up here and have a conversation with you about double consciousness and race or leave from a school board meeting playing the game wearing a shirt and tie, and take off the tie, play the game, and then go to Edwards Park and play dominoes with somebody who is 11 years old. You'll never know that I have been dancing

between two worlds. So, that's me. I was educated through all these black schools and then turned around and got educated at All-White College. That helped me out a lot. So, I'm able to code switch, and some people can't, some African Americans can't do that. They are either pro-African or Pan-African, almost radical. I'm conscious, I see the problem, and I know how my experiences have allowed me to walk the fine line and be able to dance in both worlds.

Grayson added, "Double consciousness is an advantage because you learn the code. You learn that there are times when you can be your true self and times when you have to be that person the school community wants you to be."

Vernon provided this insight particularly for African American students, "When I talk about double consciousness, I use the phrase time and place. A lot of us were taught either intentionally or by observation about time and place." Vernon went on to convey that this skill of navigation can be taught unintentionally through exposure. An example was listening to a parent on a phone call. "A lot of us can remember times when our parents would get on the phone, and we could tell who they were talking to by how they talked on the phone." There are a lot of kids who don't get that exposure anywhere else, and they need to know that it is the world we live in. Vernon went on to reiterate from personal experiences and bearing witness to multiple situations that even if black students have a 4.0 GPA and come to school every day, if they don't know how to move in certain spaces, somebody's going to put up a roadblock in front of them. Rentiesville mentioned, "So I was able to take the things that had happened to me as an African American, both prejudice from Caucasian people, but then also prejudice from my own community, and just become a better leader." Clearview stated, "I do believe it is an advantage, and the

reason why is because you're constantly thinking about the next roadblock, the next hurdle to jump, the next step that needs to be taken, and how that would be perceived.”

Relationships materialize as a subtheme. The participants spoke of bringing a unique set of experiences to the educational environment that assists in building meaningful and authentic relationships with students. Their background, marked by resilience, allowed them to connect on a distinctive level. Langston stated, "I definitely believe it's an advantage because I'm able to tap into being sensitive to others, other plight and other people, other races, circumstances in their situations, and what they've had to endure." Rentiesville commented, "I was assigned the rough cafeteria. And so, my double consciousness allowed me to build relationships with, oh my gosh, so many of my kids from so many different walks of life." Tatums recalled, "I've had the ability to build relationships because of my experiences, because of where I come from and where I'm at right now." Grayson mentioned, "There's an advantage when it comes to the interaction when it comes to the understanding when it comes to the emotional support of our kids. Well, social-emotional support."

Summary

The data were collected and analyzed using semi-structured interviews to attempt to explore how African American principals understand and utilize their identity and to examine the awareness and possible advantage of double consciousness in their work as educational leaders. This generic qualitative inquiry followed the steps and procedures outlined by Merriam & Tisdale, (2016), Hood, (2007), and Creswell & Creswell, (2018). Data was coded inductively to identify patterns and themes. The data analysis process was a complex procedure moving back and forth between data and concepts focusing on

codes and themes. Multiple themes and subthemes emerged from the participants' thoughts and perceptions as African American principals in the Oklahoma City Metro.

The five major themes that emerged reflected the challenges and triumphs of navigating racial identity and double consciousness as head principals in a diverse environment. The first three themes, Navigating Challenges, Impact Beyond Race, and Benefits of Racial illustrate how these African American principals understand and utilize their identity. The last two themes Managing a Dual Perspective and the Advantages of Double Consciousness directly correlate with their awareness and perceptions of the dichotomy of the formidable yet beneficial realities of double consciousness. Overall, the participants shed light on the complex intersection of race and education leadership.

The finding of this study solidified many aspects of what has been revealed in previous studies and literature regarding the research questions, particularly involving challenges, perceptions, and expectations of black principals. However, the findings also address the significance and benefits of racial identity in educational leadership and delve into the concept of double consciousness and its advantages for leading diverse schools. The five themes identified support the research questions along with rich detailed descriptions of experiences provided by each participant. Chapter 5 will outline a summary, discussion, and conclusions of the results of the data.

Chapter Five: Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

The purpose of conducting this study was to gain a better understanding of how African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders. Through the lens of double consciousness, this generic qualitative study explored the thoughts and perceptions of Black principals in Oklahoma City as they lead diverse schools. Specifically, the researcher interviewed eight participants and collected data to answer the research questions: 1) How do African American principals understand and utilize their identity in their work as educational leaders? 2) Do principals have an awareness of double consciousness, if so, do they perceive this as being an asset for their work?

Summary of Findings

The researcher attempted to provide further insight into the experience of African American principals in the Oklahoma City Metro Area. The eight participants were selected for this study according to specific criteria related to the research protocol as approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Oklahoma. All participants willingly agreed to participate in this study by reading and signing an informed consent form.

The research was conducted using a generic qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were implemented and recorded. The GIQM allowed for flexibility in exploring and gathering data from each participant in this study. The method offered the opportunity to gain in-depth information about the participants' thoughts and perceptions through statements, stories, and accounts of their personal and professional lives. Data were collected through interviews. When the data were analyzed, multiple patterns

seemed to emerge from the description of the participants' experiences. Five key themes emerged from the patterns found within the data.

The five themes that emerged from this study revealed the participants were highly aware of their racial identity and accustomed to experiences relating to the concept of double consciousness as educators and leaders. Successfully navigating challenges and managing perceptions and expectations honed a skill set that became impactful, beneficial, and advantageous in leading a diverse school. Overall, the data and themes shed light on the complex intersection of racial identity and education leadership in the Oklahoma City Metro Area.

The themes that emerged from the data were:

- Theme 1. *Navigating Challenges*
- Theme 2. *Impact Beyond Race*
- Theme 3. *Benefits of Racial Identity*
- Theme 4. *Managing a Dual Perspective*
- Theme 5. *Advantages of Double Consciousness*

The themes came out in relation to the primary research questions, however, the initial background question set the tone of the early awareness of racial identity.

Early Awareness of Racial Identity

The first research protocol interview background question *Can you describe the first time you realized that you were African American/Black?* set the stage for the concept of racial identity. The researcher did not want to assume that simply because an individual was categorized as Black, they possessed a particularly strong sense of racial identity or consciousness. Seven of the eight participants described an early childhood recognition, which manifested into a lifelong awareness of their African American identity. All participants possessed an idea of racial identity before they became

educators or educational leaders. The responses were purposely left in block quotations in Chapter 4: Findings to assist with understanding and impact. The data from the research correlates with one of the tenets of Critical Race Theory that racism is a normal part of society (Delgado, 1995, Ladson-Billings,1998)

Early awareness was also captured in encounter moments. The Nigrescence theory developed by Cross (1991) describes an encounter moment for Black people as a definitive experience and a time when it becomes impossible to deny they may not be accepted as part of the “White world.” These moments are critical racial awakenings that open the eyes of Black individuals to the ubiquitous nature of racism and its impact on their lives. Clearview being spit on at a public amusement park serves as a clear example.

The encounter moment for Grayson appeared eerily similar to that of W.E.B Du Bois (1902), more than 100 years earlier. In both situations, there was a young child interacting naïvely with another child of a different racial category, ending with the feeling that you are different, not only different but somehow inferior or less worthy of certain interactions. These are the types of experiences that lead to a solidified sense of racial identity and double consciousness. Du Bois gave a profound account of his feelings in *Souls of Black Folk*,

Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil. I had thereafter no desire to tear down that veil, to creep through; I held all beyond it in common contempt and lived above it in a region of blue sky and great wandering shadows (p. 8).

For Du Bois this is when he realized that he was different from others and being Black could be problematic. In *Souls*, he states the real question is, "How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word"(p. 7). This experience caused him to go through his form of the Nigrescence. After the encounter moment, he eloquently describes the experiences of being shut out from the world by a veil. He does not have the desire to tear it down but to break through it with contempt. This anger manifests the second stage of the Nigrescence, Immersion (Cross, 1991). As a coping method and a sense of retribution, he felt good when he could beat his peers on academic tests, athletic contests, and even physical altercations. Ultimately, Du Bois came to believe for a large portion of his life that education of himself and others in his race would be the key to liberation.

Early African American Influence and Mentor

When answering the question, what led you to become an educator? Interestingly, four of the eight participants directly mentioned positive African American individuals as their influence. The influencers were a mixture of parental figures and educators. Three of these four commented that their parents were educators. Another respondent recalled later in their interview how their parents played a vital role in their upbringing and served as an example of how they had to navigate through the complex landscape of a racialized world. Yet another mentioned how important a fellow Black educational colleague played in their success by providing teaching and mentorship. It is vital to note that seven of the eight participants confirmed that there were African American figures who helped them succeed.

Role modeling serves as a consistent theme regarding Black principal leadership. According to Madsen and Mabokela (2002), Black principals possess the need to be role

models for minority students and to prove themselves worthy of respect through positive actions. Scholars have argued in the principles of leadership reproduction, that it takes one to make one. In other words, if we seek to produce great leaders, those in leadership positions should serve as role models and mentors to reproduce their greatness. Role models are needed to pass on the torch to future generations. For these participants, this desire to be a positive role model stemmed back to an earlier African American influence.

The observation of early awareness of racial identity and mentors serve as additional insights into the overall experience of Black principals. The following portion of this section will highlight the connection between the themes, subthemes, and the previous literature related to the topic of this study. The study revealed a great amount of information regarding how African American principals understood and utilized their racial identity and became aware of the advantages of double consciousness.

Comparisons with Previous Literature

Theme 1: Navigating Challenges

The first theme in this study centered on participants learning how to navigate challenges revolving around their racial identity to be successful. They experienced solitude, negative bias, and limitations on employment. Research corroborates these respondents' beliefs of social and systematic challenges associated with being a Black educator. As stated in Chapter 1 of this study, numerous researchers have conducted studies regarding African American principals. These studies view the experience of African American educators through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the external systematic barriers and challenges that must be overcome (Alston, 2018;

Beasley, 2020; Brooks, 2017; Cramer, 2016; Gregory, 2017; Haynes, 2016; Hill, 2013; Jackson, 2018; Miller, 2019; Monts, 2012; Rice, 2020; Richardson, 2014; Smith, 2019; Thomas, 2018; Tyson, 2016; Vinzant, 2009; Ward, 2020).

Research shows that Black principals experience loneliness and isolation associated with their work (Vinzant, 2009). Boley was taken aback when they found out in their initial teaching position that they were not only the sole African American on staff but also the first. This experience was a repeat occurrence as they moved up into educational leadership. Tatums' story of a group of White colleagues eager to visit Thomas Jefferson's home in Monticello, knowing he was a slave owner yet not considering the uneasiness and discomfort the sole African American person in attendance might feel, reveals the nuanced and complex feeling of isolation even within a group of peers. Brookville expressed that the feelings are exacerbated when there are not any mentors or mentorship programs.

Vinzant (2009) also showed that Black principals believe that race affects every aspect of their identities. They recognize the pressure to prove themselves to their supervisors, staff, and parents who may not accept them as knowledgeable leaders based on commonly accepted views held about members of their race. Research also revealed that African American principals are looked upon with "suspicion and distrust, as having acquired their positions because of color rather than competence" (Hines & Byrne, 1980, p. 67).

Participants in this study corroborated the research with the acknowledgment that faculty, parents, and students are surprised to find that they are leading schools and that these people doubt their abilities. Langston felt that they were perceived as not smart

enough to be a head principal. When some teachers would even refer to them as “Hey Coach,” Vernon commented how their experience helped a lot of people get past perceptions, especially adults, “They need to get past what might just be stereotypes and false expectations they might have upon first meeting me.” These stereotypes and beliefs lead to the need and the learned capability of code-switching.

Black school leaders think about their race and how they might be perceived when interacting with those of other races, such as supervisors, colleagues, teachers, parents, and students (Cinues, 2018). To overcome aversive negative perceptions, African American principals must hold multiple identities without conflicting them in ways that make progress possible (Fordham, 1996). Black principals in this study utilize code switching to traverse through the system and change how they were viewed. Boley mentioned they must “shelve who I really am and be a different person.”

Langston's comments validated the research when they recalled a time a mentor said “You need to get better on your code switching. You are coming across as too Black. You need to make everyone more comfortable.” This advice came from a person who understood the social and cultural climate of the building and the school district. For the participants, code switching is commonly understood and practiced. Rentiesville commented, “when I interact with most teachers in my building and pretty much all district-level administrators, I have to put on a White persona.” Vernon even initially thought the term double consciousness was a possible synonym for code switching. Grayson stated, “we've already learned the code switch, there are times when you can be your true self. And there are times where you're going to have to be that person at the school the community wants you to be.”

The need and ability to code switch is complex, multifaceted, and possesses drawbacks, including internal struggles, and an adverse social stigma. Tatum remarked that “the ones that are really able to do it maneuver better than others. We call them Bo Jangles, selling out. We call them a House Negro.” These terms are highly offensive in the African American community. Thomas (2018) mentioned how administrators in his study.

struggled with the fact that ‘holding back’ who they truly were to maintain employment was a far greater cost than not having a job. Unfortunately, many of the participants had this breakthrough far too late in their careers and admit to having lost some of who they were never to be regained as they move forward (p. 123).

Participants of this study concede that code switching is a necessity for professional advancement, yet research confirms it may have a social and psychological cost.

Research shows that CRT assumes the belief that specific barriers exist and can be used as an explanatory tool to address disparities (Haynes, 2016; Jackson, 2018). Despite the underrepresentation of African American educators and principals in the Oklahoma City Metro Area various participants found it challenging to obtain a job. Langston naively assumed that since they possess all the credentials, such as a degree and principal certifications, they would automatically be a prime candidate for a job and at least be offered interviews. Multiple large, predominately White surrounding suburban districts declined. Once Tatum got adequately credentialed, the school district maintained that Tatum needed more time to be ready. Even with many openings, it took three years for

them to get an assistant principal job. Tatums expressed that the current head position was given because “no one else wanted it.”

According to Lynn and Parker (2018), overt racism has been lessened because of legal practices, but other forms have arisen. This sentiment was confirmed by participants who felt they were pigeonholed to specific job placements due to their identity. Langston and Grayson expressed feelings of being limited opportunities and compartmentalized to predominately Black schools. Brooksville noted that they can see how some can get pigeonholed, but they like to go where there is the greatest need to improve things. Research attests that Black principals sometimes feel like they must be the *Savior* for all Black students (Martin, 2014; Wolfhope-Brigg, 2021). This dilemma is troubling because African American principals in this study possess a solid racial identity and generally want to help students of color. However, they were confident in the skills to increase academic achievement, build relationships, and develop positive cultures for diverse and predominantly Black schools alike.

In conclusion, this theme showed that existing research involving CRT and the ever-presence of race as an issue in American society was confirmed by participants. Participants learned to navigate challenges and overcome barriers to success. Because of negative stereotypes and beliefs about the lowered intelligence and acumen of Black people, the African American principals in this study agreed that others did not expect them to be school leaders and that others did not initially trust their leadership. Learning how to operate despite these barriers and successfully overcoming these challenges enabled the participants to be more effective administrators.

Theme 2: Impact Beyond Race

Principals are expected to provide effective leadership to the school community (Fullan, 2011). The research concludes that there are cultural benefits of having a person of color as a school leader (Adair, 1984; Hess & Leal, 1997; King, 1993; Stewart et al.1989; Egalite, 2015). The benefits include providing positive role models for students of color and fostering a more inclusive and culturally responsive educational environment. The positive outcomes of this situation seem to be proportionally high for students of color. The respondents of this study corroborated with the research and overwhelmingly maintained a belief and interest in serving all kids. Boley shared a story involving a student related to their best friends. She went to another school in the district, and the principal was a White male. And she said I thought all principals were Black. The exposure had an impact on the child. Boley mentioned, "They see me and know they can do it," in this case, they mainly referenced Black children. However, all eight participants made it a point to emphasize a high level of support for all kids.

In analyzing this theme in this section, nuance and complexity must be noticed and mentioned. A reasonable person can conclude that when talking to an effective public-school principal on a surface level, they should make decisions based on the best interest of all kids and provide support. It would be difficult for a principal to get or maintain a job if this was not the case because school leaders see themselves as responsible for student success (Kafele, 2015). The principals in the study made it clear that having an African American principal is beneficial for African American students through exposure and role modeling. Boley and Brookeville both mentioned that it is essential for them to "see it for them to be at." However, the identity and consciousness level of the principals in this study enabled them to make it clear that they were not just

talking about African American kids or students of color, but every kid. Brooksville also expressed,

I think it's important for all kids, right? Because we don't live in a society where it's just you going to just be around White people or you're just going to be around Black people. You may be White, but your boss may be Black.

Numerous participants repeatedly made the distinction of “all kids”. The act itself deliberately makes a clear delineation that "all kids" and not just African Americans manifests a deep understanding of racial identity and dynamics.

Theme 3: Benefits of Racial Identity

Participants believed that their experiences as African Americans allowed them to connect better and relate to students and parents. It gave them a sense of understanding and empathy for all students going through adversity and struggles. These African American administrators used their racial identities as an effective tool in school leadership. Cineus (2018) attests that for African American administrators, racial identity is significant in educational leadership. More research indicates that educators of color can effectively utilize their insider knowledge of the language, culture, and life experiences of minority students to improve academic outcomes and school experiences (Villegas & Irvine, 2010).

Many participants in the study spoke about having a positive connection with students while utilizing their racial identity. Brooksville mentioned they can joke, be loud, and give the kids nicknames. Langston and Boley shared sentiments that because of their identity, students would assume they like or have heard a particular song or seen a TV show or a movie, and in most cases, they had. Correlating with research from Vinzant

(2009), there was a cultural element that appeared to be visible and beneficial in connecting to students. Langston went on to mention,

I can relate to students on a level that sometimes my colleagues are able to. I'm able to because I've had to kind of juggle between different worlds and being around different environments, you're able to relate but also come across in a more authentic way.

African American scholar Kofi Lomotey (1987) argued that Black principals view the world differently and have a thought process crafted by unique cultural characteristics. Lomotey insisted that homophily, the tendency to seek out people to themselves, remained present for Black educators and their students. Participants in this study corroborated this idea which helped with their relatability.

Vinzant's (2009) investigation revealed that Black principals are acutely aware of the stigmas attached to being minorities in the predominant culture. Overcoming statistical odds to assume leadership roles in education, these individuals possess invaluable experiences, empowerment, and insights crucial to addressing the challenges faced by students predisposed to slipping through the gaps in the American education system, irrespective of their racial background. The participants held the conviction that their life experiences as African Americans endowed them with a unique understanding and empathy for students undergoing adversity. Having endured a lifetime of being "othered" and successfully navigating through a system where they were viewed unfavorably equipped them with skills that they eagerly imparted to their students. The study uncovered a surprising finding: a correlation between the African American experience and the development of an extremely heightened capacity for empathy,

fostering supportive relationships for all students. While this depth of compassion aligns with existing literature, it represents an intriguing extension.

Many participants expressed a willingness to assist students grappling with challenges or those who felt marginalized. Rentiesville emphasized the want and ability to put themselves in the students' shoes. Langston expressed how experience enables them to visualize, understand, and empathize with student struggles. Similarly, Vernon added, "the primary focus is on what is optimal for all our students, recognizing that this will vary based on their diverse backgrounds and circumstances." Parallel to the participants in Thomas's (2018) study, the Black principals in this research perceive themselves as highly effective leaders of color. They serve as role models, offering vital support to students of color and addressing the unique needs of individuals from different ethnicities. This approach holds the potential to dismantle adverse racial stereotypes.

In the Cross (1991) theory of Nigrescence, the final and highest level of Black identification is Internalization. A strong racial identity with a rejection of racism and similar forms of oppression characterizes this stage. Individuals at this level establish positive relationships with Whites and other ethnicities and can analyze White culture for its strengths and weaknesses. Internalization allows individuals to be free and express themselves in a variety of ways while still having a positive Black identity. One of the most crucial aspects is that people in Internalization no longer need to judge people on their cultural group membership (e.g., race, gender, nationality). Instead, they are concerned with commonalities and find value in people who do not look like them (Helms 1990). The Internalization stage of Nigrescence serves as a powerful lens through which to view an impactful way to explain the empathy, understanding, care, and love

that African American principals in this study possess for school community members who do not share their hue or ethnicity.

These findings from this study directly correlate with the research question of how Black principals understand their racial identity. Even though they possess a solid racial identity, each participant specifically clarified that all students, regardless of race, were valued and that their experiences as African Americans in the US helped them better understand and empathize with struggling students from other ethnicities.

Theme 4: Managing Dual Perspectives

Black principals must manage a complex landscape of perceptions and expectations (Martin IV, 2014; Cineus, 2018; Jordan, 2018). On the one hand, they may encounter negative stereotypes and preconceived notions about their leadership capabilities based on race, which can influence how both staff and the broader school community perceive them. Simultaneously, they grapple with the all too real expectations of being measured on a different scale and being a beacon for the entire race. Jordan (2018) found that African American administrators experienced events that created a dual awareness, including having their competency questioned, having their voices silenced, and being devalued. Striking a balance between challenging assumptions about their leadership abilities and living up to demanding expectations requires a nuanced approach that draws on awareness, cultural competence, and practical leadership skills.

The emergence of perceptions as a recurring subtheme is noteworthy. Analogous to the subtheme addressing the challenge of overcoming stereotypes, many White stakeholders harbor preconceived notions or images of the typical principal in Oklahoma City, and it usually does not align with the vision of an African American. Langston

shared instances where parents routinely assumed they were part of the janitorial staff, and even teachers initially labeled them as someone working in athletics. It reveals how these stakeholders instinctively associate a Black person in a school with roles related to non-leadership functions.

The weight of constantly self-evaluating actions and words based on racial perceptions loomed heavy with the participants. As Brooksville emphasized, race impacts everything. The unfortunate necessity of conforming to a specific hairstyle and careful word choices heightens self-awareness, creating a dual existence. The fact that participants changed their hairstyle, going with a weave instead of a natural hairstyle, monitoring their speech, and adjusting many aspects of their lives correlated with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital.

When examining the three categories of Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital (Institutionalized, Embedded, and Objectified) in conjunction with the participants' experience in this study, specific correlations of cultural competence emerge. He posited that cultural capital exists in an embodied state, signifying that the knowledge individuals accumulate over time through interactions and education becomes an integral part of their being. Additionally, norms, mores, and skills like manners, language proficiency, and effective communication are often manifested and displayed as individuals navigate the world and engage with others (Bourdieu, 1986). The participants all spoke of instances and ways they adjusted to fit in. With all the modifications made to speech, personality, and communication skills, combined with physical aesthetics, African American principals in this study were highly aware of the values necessary within the dominant culture and education system to succeed.

Research corroborates participants' belief that Black principals must work harder to prove themselves trustworthy and worthy of respect in their schools (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Numerous participants described the need to be twice as good as a White principal would be to be considered equal. These pressures caused participants like Langston to feel they had to prove they were always in control of everything: "Not the same opportunity or grace." Tatum commented "I'm measured on a different stick, and I always have the toughest schools with the toughest kids." All eight participants mentioned the realization of perceptions, which are heavily impacted by race. This pressure manifests in the belief that you must always try and not have room for errors.

Similar to the Black educators in the research by Wolfhope-Briggs, 2021, some participants in this study experienced challenges of becoming a *Savior* for their African American students (Wolfhope-Briggs, 2021). Participants felt they had to carefully how they perceived, how they reacted, and how they represented the entire race. This sentiment is captured in Boley's statement "if you're seated in a room and you're the only one who is in your position, then I feel like the burden of, I've got to keep this door open for the next Black person I believe they see my race first."

The role of Black principals in managing a complex landscape of perceptions and expectations is undeniably challenging, as highlighted by existing research and the narratives of the participants in this study. The dual awareness experienced by African American administrators, characterized by negative stereotypes, preconceived notions, and the weight of heightened expectations, underscores the need for a nuanced approach to leadership. The recurring subtheme of perceptions, illustrated by instances of mistaken roles and the constant self-evaluation based on racial stereotypes, emphasizes the

persistent challenges faced by Black principals in navigating and challenging pre-existing biases. The participants' conscious efforts to conform to cultural norms, as seen through adjustments in speech, personality, and appearance, align with Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, highlighting the awareness of the values necessary for success within the dominant culture.

The corroborated belief that Black principals must work harder to prove themselves adds to the pressure of constantly being on guard and reflects a persistent need to dispel stereotypes and exceed expectations. Additionally, the burden of being perceived as a savior for African American students adds another layer of difficulty as participants express the responsibility of representing their race in their professional roles. The impact of these factors calls for ongoing dialogue, awareness, and strategic efforts to create an educational environment that values and supports Black principals in their leadership roles.

Theme 5: Advantages of Double Consciousness

Cineus (2018) found that most Black school leaders (Principals and Assistant Principals) experienced double consciousness. This phenomenon included interaction with teachers, students, and constituents. Black educational leaders must navigate their racial identities when interacting with others and functioning in their daily roles. The study concluded that racial identity in leadership is significant in educational leadership (Cineus, 2018). Martin IV (2014) concludes that double consciousness, at its core, is about the experience of otherness. Each African American educator described feelings of otherness—psychologically, emotionally, culturally, and professionally at various times.

Along with being considered othered, a pivotal internal aspect of double consciousness is the awareness of twoness, which signifies that a Black person occupies the position of two distinct worlds: one constructed behind the veil in the African American community and the other in the White world that devalues them through lack of recognition. This division between Black and White individuals creates a profound influence on the awareness and perceptions of perception of the social world of African Americans (Smith-Brown, 2014). Consequently, while grappling with two vastly different perceptions of themselves, many African Americans develop what Du Bois refers to as the gift of Second Sight. Second Sight is the ability of racialized individuals to see beyond the veil, gaining awareness of their invisibility and glimpsing life beyond it (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). It is a skill that proves invaluable and advantageous for African American principals.

The heightened awareness described by W.E.B. Du Bois as Second Sight emerged as a valuable asset for participants in their roles as educational leaders. They acknowledged that this heightened awareness, stemming from living in two worlds as African Americans, allowed for meaningful conversations with students. Vernon highlighted the advantage: "You're forced to live in two worlds." This increased cognizance provided a unique perspective on the world and environment and enabled administrators like Clearview to emphasize the importance of understanding the diverse students and communities they serve.

The concept of double consciousness revealed an advantage in the form of navigation. Participants shared how navigating through the complexities of racial challenges equipped them with valuable knowledge to guide students and enhance their

leadership skills. Brooksville stressed the importance of teaching interpersonal skills to students for successful Navigation in life. Vernon highlighted the unintentional teaching of navigation skills through exposure and being able to explain to students the importance of time and place. They underscored the significance of these skills, especially for African American students, emphasizing that more than academic success is required to navigate different spaces effectively. They need someone who can say do this, or that while effectively navigating a White world (Avery, 2020).

Researchers have also noted Black principals using their shared cultural experiences to inform their practice and build relationships. These principals employ models of leadership that speak to the racial and cultural composition of the school (Brown, 2005; Tillman, 2004, 2005). Relationships emerged as a critical component, with participants expressing how their understanding of double consciousness and their unique experiences contributed to building authentic connections with students. The resilience embedded in their backgrounds facilitated a distinctive level of performance. Langston noted, "I believe it's an advantage because I'm able to tap into being sensitive to others, other plight and other people, other races, circumstances in their situations, and what they've had to endure." Rentiesville and Tatum emphasized the role of double consciousness in fostering relationships, allowing them to connect with students from diverse backgrounds. Grayson highlighted the advantage of providing emotional support and understanding in the realm of social-emotional well-being for students.

In *David and Goliath* (2013), author Malcolm Gladwell demonstrates how much of what is beautiful and essential in the world can arise from what looks like suffering and adversity. Gladwell argues that under the right circumstances, personal difficulty can

promote the development of valuable skills. Gladwell illustrates this point using several people who grew up with dyslexia. Dyslexia forced trial lawyer David Bois to become an excellent listener. It also forced film producer Brian Grazer to become an exceptional negotiator (Gladwell, 2014). Gladwell concludes that what many people regard as a disadvantage is advantageous if put and utilized in the right situation.

The concept of Second Sight, introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois, emerges as an asset for African American principals, providing them with heightened awareness and the ability to engage in meaningful conversations with students. The advantage of Awareness, Navigation, and Relationships highlighted by participants showcases the practical application of maneuvering through racial complexities in guiding students to success and enhancing leadership skills. Ultimately, the multifaceted nature of double consciousness not only shapes the experiences of Black school leaders but also equips them with valuable skills that can be advantageous in the right circumstances, highlighting the potential for growth and success in the face of adversity.

Unexpected Findings

Research conducted by Vinzant (2009) concluded Black principals are also aware of the stigmas associated with being minorities within the majority culture. They have beaten statistical odds to become educational leaders, and their experiences, empowerment, and insight may be invaluable to the cause of working with children predisposed to falling through the cracks of American education regardless of race. Participants held the belief that their experiences as African Americans enable them to have a sense of understanding and empathy for all students going through adversity and struggles the experience of being othered for much of your life and working in a system

where you are looked at as unfavorable and successfully navigating through the situation equipped them with skills that they eagerly passed on to students. The biggest surprise and most unforeseen aspect of the study was how the African American experience helps build a capacity for empathy, which aids in supporting relationships for all students. This level of compassion and understanding is not counterintuitive to the literature but is an extension.

Numerous participants were drawn and willing to help students working through challenges or those who considered themselves othered. Rentiesville stated, "I'm able to address that person as a human and put myself in their shoes and think, what all is this person dealing with? And so, it's caused me to interact in a totally different way, totally different way." Langston commented, "it allows me to be able to have empathy, and put myself in the same position, same shoes as them." While Vernon added, "the priority is what's best for all our kids and knowing that that's going to be different depending on their backgrounds and situations. Like the participants in Thomas (2018), Black principals in this study see themselves as highly effective leaders of color who cannot only model the necessary support for students of color but also address the needs of other ethnicities which has the potential to ultimately break down racial stereotypes.

The research clearly states that having a Black principal benefits African American students and other students of color (Dee, 2004, 2005; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Lindsay & Hart, 2017). The findings from this research expand on the idea that it is indeed beneficial, but it is also advantageous for any student who has been "othered." A person can be "othered" or made to feel like an outlier based on gender, economic status, sexual orientation, intelligence, etc. The participants of this study

indicate that through their experience, they can make a great connection with individuals who have or are experiencing the challenges of being considered different from the majority. Their empathy, understanding, and relatability could impact hiring practices. An African American applicant may be typically only considered for a job at a majority-minority school but may be considered for a position where there is not necessarily a large number of students of color.

These findings address a possible gap or, more specifically, a blind spot in the literature. Expanding on what is considered "othered" beyond race and examining the propensities of African American principals being able to relate, empathize, and understand these students, one can argue that African American principals could be effective at any school in America, not just one with a large Black or minority population. This new understanding adds to the discourse and opens possibilities and opportunities for African American principals.

Limitations

This study sampled a variety of African American principals representing various types of schools, elementary and secondary, and both male and female administrators. However, the study focused exclusively on two large districts in Oklahoma City. Additionally, this research included a sample of only eight principals within the Metro Area. This number constitutes the majority of potential candidates for these districts but may be considered a minimal representation of the thoughts and beliefs of all the Black principals working in the state, particularly in suburban and rural areas. Accordingly, this study may not be readily generalizable due to the restricted sample size and location.

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument. The intensity and emotion evoked during the interviews were compelling for the participants and the researcher. Being a former African American principal was beneficial in understanding the complexities of these administrators' experiences. There were many feelings and experiences that I could directly relate to. Generic qualitative inquiry is unique among qualitative methods in that it allows and accounts for having prior knowledge of the experience under study (Percy et al., 2015). The constant need to practice awareness and bracketing was foremost in my mind and constituted my daily practice during this study. There were times when their satisfying and harrowing experiences resonated with me deeply.

The focus of this study examined the experience of African American principals. The participants belong to identity groups other than race such as gender, class, and age. This study did not touch on other identity groups, to which they belong, or the impact it had on their experience as an educational leader.

Implications for Practice

This study aimed to address a specific local problem of practice from a scholarly practitioner perspective and pinpoint some tangible real-world actions for resolution. The key findings clearly demonstrate that African American principals understand and utilize their racial identity along with having an awareness of double consciousness and use it to their advantage. These findings provide an excellent foundation for crafting practical next steps.

Gain Awareness

District leaders are similarly encouraged to comprehend how Black administrators perceive their racial identity while fulfilling their leadership responsibilities. Developing an awareness of the intricate relationship between race and leadership can enable district leaders to assist African American school leaders in their roles effectively. Acquiring this knowledge involves staying informed of current research, attuning to the racial climate in American society, and engaging in open and candid conversations with Black administrators. Armed with this awareness, school district leaders can provide valuable support to Black school leaders as they shape their leadership practices.

Recruitment African American Educators

There is an underrepresentation of African American educators and principals in Oklahoma and the United States as a whole. Failure to see racial minorities in professional roles in schools, with the over-representation of minorities in non-professional roles, implicitly tells students that White people are better suited than others to hold positions of authority (Villegas & Irvine, 2010). Research suggests that a strategy for increasing the number of teachers of color in a school is to hire principals of color, who will be more likely to hire and retain those teachers (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). Data shows that increasing teacher diversity in schools with an African American principal comes with no apparent loss for measures of teacher quality. Black principals increase the probability of hiring a Black educator by five to seven percent (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). In addition, African American principals reduce the likelihood that a Black teacher changes schools by two to five percent. As a result, an increase in Black teacher hiring and a decreased turnover mean that an African American principal increases the fraction of Black teachers working in a school by about three percent,

increasing students' exposure to Black teachers (Bartanen & Grissom, 2019). The impact of having diversity in the principalship is enormous.

Principals and assistant principals are also responsible for meeting the social needs of the students they serve, including promoting diversity, social-economic disparities, and learning deficiencies. Students are direct benefactors of the principal's leadership. Principals hire teachers to instruct students, create lesson plans, and oversee programs that support and enhance instructional development, advance school-wide scheduling conducive to dispensing the educational plan, and much more.

There needs to be an increase in the recruitment of African American teachers. Public education leadership (i.e., legislators, higher education, school boards, superintendents, etc.) must develop comprehensive staffing pipelines to increase the number of potential applicants. I have been to many teacher job fairs, and I may be lucky to see upwards of two to three candidates of color in a convention center full of White candidates. This scenario illustrates the problem that even if a district positively intends to recruit educators of color, the pool is minimal. Understanding the role of double consciousness relating to educational leadership work may be valuable for informing the practice, recruitment, and retention of Black educators.

Mentorship

Having a mentor is critical to any individual seeking advancement within any organization. The mentor serves as an instrumental tool and assists with teaching the necessary skills to facilitate progress and help the mentee navigate the organization's systems. Brookville recognized the significance of mentors and possessed the desire to have mentees. School districts could casually or formally sanction these mentorships to

assist aspiring African American teachers in moving up to the principalship. If local school districts are not able or willing to provide internship programs, I suggest that African American principals formulate their home mentorship program, Mastermind, to create a Black education pipeline.

Recommendations for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in the Oklahoma City Metro Area as they lead diverse schools. The understanding and utilization of racial identity, along with the awareness of double consciousness among African American principals, highlights the complexity of their professional experiences. It underscores the need for continued research and support to address the unique challenges they face in the education system.

The findings from the study may invite further research and discussion to occur in other geographical locations. This study utilized two large districts containing nearly 50,000 students, with the majority being classified as minority students in a metropolitan area. Another study could investigate racial identity and the possible advantages of double consciousness using a sample of African American principals in suburban and rural areas. A researcher could also duplicate this study in another metropolitan area.

Using a different methodology may also serve as an alternative means to examine racial identity and double consciousness. A qualitative study could use a larger sample size to quantify instances that participants report in their practice that they consciously thought of their race concerning their work as instructional leaders. This process could gain insight into the day-to-day thoughts of Black educational leaders and the relationship that double consciousness has on their daily thoughts and actions.

Future research could effectively use a mixed method design (Creswell, 2018), maximizing quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data could be analyzed first to differentiate levels of double consciousness. Based on classifications, qualitative data in the form of an interview could then be utilized for participants with a high score for double consciousness. The quantitative data could provide insight into the relationship between double consciousness, the daily role of school leadership in an ethnically diverse school, and how double consciousness may serve as an advantage. Combining both data sets could better understand the day-to-day lived experience of African American principals.

The intersectionality of race, gender, and double consciousness could serve as an interesting study. Research suggests that there has been scientific literature and sufficient evidence to understand the experiences of those who, despite adversity, had successfully secured administrative positions (Beasley, 2020). Racism and sexism combine to form unique challenges that are not mutually exclusive. Black women are subjected to these visible and sometimes invisible forms of marginalization. Therefore, the experiences of being African American and female in the administrative educational realm do not happen in isolation (Monts, 2012; Haynes, 2016). The emphasis of the study could examine not only barriers and obstacles but also explore any advantages of race, gender, and consciousness.

The underrepresentation of African American educators starts with teachers and becomes more prevalent in principals. The lack of diversity is exceptionally prominent in the highest level of school leadership, district superintendents. Scott (1900) conducted a study examining the perceptions of Black school superintendents regarding the interplay

between their professional identity and racial consciousness. The research delved into how they positively contributed to the education of the students served. As a final recommendation, I believe it is worthwhile for someone to do a study of racial identity and the possible advantage of double conferences with the African American superintendents.

Personal Reflection

During a conversation from the interview session with Boley, the interviewee recalled a fascinating story about interaction and conversation with a White teacher during a teaching experience in Japan. Boley and the other individual were part of a teaching abroad program, and the White teacher kept commenting that they were always staring, talking about the Japanese people. Boley then profoundly commented, “Now, you are getting used to what it is like being Black.” This story serves as a great way to give a concrete example of the feeling of what it is like being African American, particularly in leadership multi-ethnic organizations, in the United States.

All eight of the participants made it known that there needs to be more African American principals in the Oklahoma City metro area. When we spoke about the need for more Black principals, they used phrases like “absolutely, it is a severe need, an emergency level need, and we are woefully underrepresented.” These are superlatives that effectively describe their feelings towards the issue. The participants also correspond with feelings of isolation, the lack of mentorship, or the opportunity to mentor a new principal coming up. It is vital to read and study the research, but it is equally important to hear the voices of Black administrators who work in ethnically diverse schools.

It is important to emphasize that the presence of diversity among school personnel goes beyond being advantageous solely for minority students. The lived experiences of African American administrators contribute to their ability to recognize and dismantle challenges. Moreover, the limited representation of Black principals also deprives White students of the chance to build essential connections that can challenge and dispel harmful stereotypes. While possessing brown skin doesn't automatically qualify someone as an excellent educator or principal, living with brown skin provides a unique perspective that can potentially enrich the educational environment.

The intersection of racial identity and education leadership is complex. It consists of many moving parts involving diverse groups of people and multiple processes that impact schools, ultimately impacting student learning. I am very appreciative of the participants' willingness to share their experiences and stories. This group of African American principals navigates the educational system with class, dignity, and pride of being Black. While juggling various facets of their identity and confronting external perceptions and stereotypes, these individuals exhibit remarkable strength and resilience as they persist in their mission of serving students. I am incredibly fortunate to be able to do this research, and I believe this study adds to the discourse of overcoming the challenges of underrepresentation and examining the possible advantages for this group of African American educational leaders.

Conclusion

This research was conducted using a generic qualitative approach. Semi-structured interviews were implemented and audiotaped. The method offered the opportunity to gain in-depth information about the participants' experiences through

statements, stories, and accounts of their personal and professional lives. Data were collected through interviews. When the data was analyzed, multiple patterns were seen to emerge from the description of the participants' experience. Inductive analysis was utilized. Five key themes emerged from the patterns found within the data.

Even though participants of this study reported experiencing double consciousness, it must be noted that Du Bois (1903) did not explain double consciousness as being a disadvantageous state but rather a barrier that could be constructive. He urged that Blacks merge their twoness to thrive in American society (Smith-Brown, 2014). Therefore, Black school leaders who experience double consciousness can use this sense as a beneficial tool to succeed in their personal and professional lives.

This study provided the opportunity to break away from the norm. Most research involving African Americans and school leaders focuses on barriers, struggles, and challenges. That is a real and powerful narrative that should be told because the data clearly shows that Black educational leaders are underrepresented. However, there is more to the story, which researchers could and should explore. This research examined an underrepresented group with a different lens.

Participants demonstrated a heightened awareness of their racial identity and were accustomed to experiences related to the concept of double consciousness in their roles as educators and leaders. Their adept navigation of specific challenges and the management of perceptions and expectations cultivated a skill set that proved impactful, beneficial, and advantageous in guiding a diverse school. The participants unanimously agreed that there are advantages to awareness, utilization, of racial identity, and double consciousness. The overall analysis of the data identified themes that illuminate the

intricate intersection of racial identity and educational leadership in the Oklahoma City Metro Area.

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Appendix A

African American Principal Interview Protocol

Interviewee:

Date:

School:

District:

Years in the Position:

Release Form Signed:

Protocol Section Used:

_____ **A. Introductions**

_____ **B. Background**

_____ **C. Identity**

_____ **D. Double Consciousness**

_____ **F. Concluding**

Other Topics Discussed: _____

Post Interview Comments or Observations: _____

A. Introductory Protocol

With your permission, I would like to record our conversations today to facilitate our notetaking. Please sign the release form. For your information, only researcher on the project will be privy to the recordings, which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. In addition, you must sign a form devised to meet our human subject requirements. Essentially, this document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary, and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Thank you for agreeing to participate.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as an African American principal in the Oklahoma City Metropolitan Area. This study aims to explore the thoughts and perceptions of African American principals in OKC as they lead diverse schools. It is essential to hear the voices of Black principals and learn about leadership from their perspectives. This study will illuminate and encourage discussion on the personal thoughts of Black school leaders, which pertain to their racial identities. Findings from this study may inform the practice of educational leaders and invite further research and discussion to take place in other districts or with other ethnicities.

To begin this interview, I'd like to ask you some background questions.

B. Interviewee Background

1. Can you describe the first time you realized that you were African American/Black?
2. Have you ever felt as if being African American/Black was a problem? Why or why not?
3. Describe what led you to become an educator and how you decided to take your current position at this school?

C. Identity

1. Describe any challenges you have had as an African American educator and administrator. How has your career been impacted by these challenges?
2. How do you perceive your racial identity intersecting with your role as a principal?
3. Do you feel your racial identity influences the way in which students perceive you as an educator? If so, how?

D. Double Consciousness

1. Do you consciously think about your racial identity when interacting with teachers and district-level administrators? If so, how do you feel this awareness impacts those interactions?
2. Do you consciously think about your racial identity when interacting with students and parents? If so, how do you feel like this awareness impacts those interactions?
3. Do you feel your identity and experiences as an African American benefit you? How about your students? Their parents? Your colleagues? If so, how?

4. Are you familiar with the term double consciousness?

Please read the following excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois.

“Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half- hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? they say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or, I fought at Mechanicsville; or, Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.”

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro . . . two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

5. Based on the excerpts taken from *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois, what does double consciousness mean to you?

F. Concluding

1. In possessing double consciousness, do you believe it to be an advantage in leading a diverse school? If so, why?

2. Did you want to add anything not covered or asked during our conversation?

Appendix B



Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Approval of Initial Submission – Exempt from IRB Review – AP01

Date: May 01, 2023

IRB#: 15870

Principal Investigator: Shbrone D Brookings

Approval Date: 05/01/2023

Exempt Category: 2

Study Title: DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS AND AFRICAN AMERICAN PRINCIPALS IN THE OKLAHOMA CITY METRO: A GENERIC QUALITATIVE STUDY

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I have reviewed the above-referenced research study and determined that it meets the criteria for exemption from IRB review. Please note, the IRB made a few minor changes to the signed consent form. Please ensure you use the IRB stamped and approved form when data collection begins. To view the documents approved for this submission, open this study from the *My Studies* option, go to *Submission History*, go to *Completed Submissions* tab and then click the *Details* icon.

As principal investigator of this research study, you are responsible to:

- Conduct the research study in a manner consistent with the requirements of the IRB and federal regulations 45 CFR 46.
- Request approval from the IRB prior to implementing any/all modifications as changes could affect the exempt status determination.
- Maintain accurate and complete study records for evaluation by the HRPP Quality Improvement Program and, if applicable, inspection by regulatory agencies and/or the study sponsor.
- Notify the IRB at the completion of the project.

If you have questions about this notification or using iRIS, contact the IRB @ 405-325-8110 or irb@ou.edu.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Lara Mayeux'.

Lara Mayeux, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Appendix C

Date:

Dear Participant:

My name is Shbrone Brookings, and I am a doctoral student at The University of Oklahoma College of Education. For my dissertation, I am exploring the experiences, thoughts, and perceptions of African American principals as they lead diverse schools. Participants of this study will be African American head principals in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area. This study will benefit the field of education by examining the perceptions of Black administrators while affirming and embracing the power of their individual and collective stories. By examining the experiences of this group, this research could reform the strategies that school districts and teacher education programs employ to recruit, train, and retain African American principals.

I invite you to participate in this research study by sitting for a face-to-face interview. The interview will last 60-90 minutes. Participants will receive a \$10 gift card, and there is minimal risk. Participation is strictly voluntary, and you may refuse to participate at any time. Thank you for taking the time to assist me in this endeavor. The data collected will provide valuable information regarding an increased awareness and understanding of the thought processes of administrators of color and their leadership.

Sincerely, Shbrone Brookings, shbrone@ou.edu (405) 823-9020

Appendix D

