

## 11

## AFRICAN AMERICAN PRINCIPALS AND THE LEGACY OF *BROWN*

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The year 2004 was filled with celebrations and commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. There were a significant number of conferences that featured experts from education, law, sociology, and civil rights organizations who spoke of promises fulfilled and unfulfilled 50 years after the historic decision. Much of what was written, presented, and discussed during the jubilee year focused on historical accounts of events leading up to *Brown*, court-ordered desegregation efforts, the displacement of Black educators after the *Brown* decision, and the current state of African American education 50 years after this landmark case.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, our thinking has been stimulated about the impact of the *Brown* decision on education today, particularly for African Americans.<sup>2</sup>

One aspect of the *Brown* legacy that is underdeveloped in the literature is the significance of the leadership of African American principals in pre-K-12 education both before and after *Brown*. Pre-*Brown* African American principals were committed to the education of Black children, worked with other Black leaders to establish schools for these children, and worked in all-Black schools, usually in sub-standard conditions. Post-*Brown* African American principals helped to implement desegregation and educate African American children in the face of resistance. Today these men and women are primarily employed in large, urban school districts and continue to work for the social, emotional, and academic achievement of African American students. Yet many of the historical and contemporary contributions of African American school leaders have not been documented in the traditional literature on educational leadership and administration.<sup>3</sup>

Our knowledge of the contributions of African American school leaders has been enhanced by the work of scholars such as Anderson (1988), Franklin (1984, 1990), Savage (2001), Siddle Walker (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2003), and Ward Randolph (1997). However, research by and about African Americans in school leadership positions has not become a dominant strand in the scholarship on educational leadership, leaving gaps in terms of an African American perspective (Banks, 1995; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Coursen, Mazzarella, Jeffress, & Hadderman, 1989; Dillard, 1995; Tillman, 2007). It is worth noting that, during the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of *Brown*, no special issues were published in the four major educational administration journals identified by Leithwood and Duke (1999)—*Educational Administration Quarterly*, *Journal of School Leadership*, *Journal of Educational Administration*, and *Educational Management and Administration*<sup>4</sup>—that focused on the

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importance of the *Brown* decision to school leadership.

A special issue of *Educational Administration Quarterly*, "Pushing Back Resistance: African American Discourses on School Leadership" (Tillman, 2005b), includes perspectives on *Brown* and its significance to educational leadership. In addition, race and culture as factors in school leadership, topics that have not been extensively discussed in the educational leadership literature, are consistent themes in this special issue. The issues of race and culture in educational leadership are particularly relevant given the increasing number of African American principals and students in pre-K-12 education and the need to investigate issues that may be specific to African Americans in school leadership positions, including same race and cultural affiliation; leadership styles; recruitment, hiring, and retention of African American leaders; instructional supervision; leadership in urban schools;<sup>5</sup> and the relationship between African American school leadership and African American student success. This special issue was the first full issue in *Educational Administration Quarterly* to focus specifically on African Americans in school leadership, and represented an attempt to broaden the discussions on school leadership generally, and to establish a body of work on African Americans in school leadership specifically, in the mainstream school administration literature.<sup>6</sup>

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision is significant with respect to African Americans in the principalship for several reasons. First, teachers, principals, and parents were the most important influences in the education of Black children in the pre-*Brown* era of schooling. Thus, discussions about the *Brown* decision and the education of Blacks cannot be held without discussions about the roles played by the central figure in the school: the Black principal. As the research reviewed here will reveal, it was the Black principal who led the closed system of segregated schooling for Blacks, primarily in the South. The Black principal represented the Black community; was regarded as the authority on educational, social, and economic issues; and was responsible for establishing the all-Black school as the cultural symbol of the Black community. Second, the work of Black principals in the post-*Brown* era has contributed to the theory and practice of

educational leadership. As this review will also reveal, the leadership of post-*Brown* African American principals is similar to that of their pre-*Brown* predecessors. Finally, the *Brown* decision is significant with respect to Black principals because one of the goals of the decision was to remedy educational inequities and thus allow Black principals to continue their work under improved social and educational conditions. It is ironic that the *Brown* decision resulted in the firing and demotion of thousands of Black principals, mostly in the southern and border states. As a result, Black principals were often denied the opportunity and authority to act on behalf of Black children in the implementation of desegregation.

Culture appeared to strongly influence the leadership of pre- as well as post-*Brown* African American principals. Tillman (2002) defined *culture* as "a group's individual and collective ways of thinking, believing, and knowing, which includes their shared experiences, consciousness, skills, values, forms of expression, social institutions and behaviors" (p. 4). The research reviewed here reveals that in the closed system of segregated schooling, as well as in post-*Brown* re-segregated schools (Orfield & Lee, 2004), Black principals considered the cultural norms of the Black community in their leadership practices. The work of scholars such as Lomotey (1989a, 1993), Dillard (1995), Siddle Walker (1993a, 1996), and Bloom and Erlandson (2003) points to the importance of culture in the leadership of African American principals. For example, Dillard wrote that principals have three cultural management roles: interpreting, representing, and authenticating school culture and relationships. Dillard (1995), citing the conclusions of Mitchell, Ortiz, and Mitchell (1987) in their work on the notion of cultural management, noted that "particularly helpful were their conclusions that background, culture, religion, gender and other identities serve to develop particularized experiential views of schooling and leadership for the school principal" (p. 545). Finally, Dillard noted that "both nurturing and protecting African American children has historically included authoritative and direct ways of interacting, guided specifically by explicit, ethical, social, and *cultural rules and expectations* [*italics added*]" (p. 551). While the importance of culture, particularly with respect to racial and ethnic group membership, is not fully developed

in the traditional educational leadership literature, this review will show that an emphasis on culture as a factor in the leadership of Black principals dates back to the pre-*Brown* era of schooling.

### OUTLINE OF THE PRESENT DISCUSSION

The specific focus of this chapter is African American principals in pre-K-12 education in the pre- and post-*Brown* eras. It is not my intent to present a comprehensive review of the broad range of topics in the field of educational leadership. Rather, I have reviewed published research on Blacks in the principalship and identified major themes in the literature. The research is interdisciplinary, including work from the fields of history, sociology, education, and, more specifically, educational leadership/administration. While a great deal of the empirical work on Blacks in educational leadership/administration can be found in unpublished dissertations (see, e.g., Hobson-Horton, 2000; Loder, 2002; Shotwell, 1999; Wells, 1991; White, 1995), this review is based on published research and does not include dissertation research on Blacks in the principalship.

The chapter is organized into three sections. In the first section, I discuss historical research on Blacks in the principalship in the pre-*Brown* era and the impact of the *Brown* decision on the displacement of Black principals. In the subsequent section, I discuss research on Blacks in the principalship in the post-*Brown* era. This work includes case studies, ethnographic research, and an emerging body of research on African American female principals. I conclude the review by summarizing major themes across the studies, discussing the impact of the absence of a discourse about race in educational leadership and recommending directions for future research.

The presentation and analysis of the research in this review may be considered “different” from what is traditionally offered in “standard” literature reviews in educational research. However, this difference is consistent with the methodological approaches used by some of the researchers whose work is discussed in this review. Several of these authors note that their findings offer a counternarrative to what is written in traditional educational research (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dillard, 1995; Lomotey,

1989a, 1993; Siddle Walker, 1993a, 1996). These authors rely heavily on the narrative approach and recount participants’ stories—stories that, as the authors point out, may not be valued outside these specific racial and cultural experiences. They are stories of vision, hope, persistence, pride, opportunity, disappointment, racism, sexism, segregation, desegregation, resegregation, and survival. The approaches taken by the researchers are intended to place the experiences of African American principals at the center of the inquiry rather than at the margins (Tillman, 2002).

Collectively, the research in this review yielded four consistent themes: (a) resistance to ideologies and individuals opposed to the education of Black students, (b) the academic and social development of Black students as a priority, (c) the importance of the cultural perspectives of the Black principal, and (d) leadership based on interpersonal caring. These themes are not linear. Rather, they overlap, and several themes may be found in a particular study. In addition, the themes cut across the pre- and post-*Brown* eras. Finally, there may be tensions in some of the themes; that is, they are not without contradictions and at times may appear to be in conflict within and across the research. A possible limitation of this review is that much of the research focuses on the positive aspects of Blacks in the principalship and “good schools.” However, as did Sowell (1976) and Siddle Walker (2003), I chose to highlight scholarship on Black principals in the pre- and post-*Brown* eras that will “expand the narrow lens through which Black leadership has historically been viewed” (Siddle Walker, 2003, p. 59).

### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE BLACK PRINCIPALSHIP

The work of Black educators is historically and culturally significant. A tradition of excellence in Black school leadership and an agenda for the education of Blacks date back to the 1860s (Anderson, 1988; Foster, 1997; Franklin, 1990; Pollard, 1997; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001; Watkins, 2001). Black educators helped to build and operate public and private schools, secured funding and other needed resources, worked with the Black community, and served dual but complementary roles as educators and

activists for the education of Black children. From a cultural standpoint, the educational philosophies of Black principals generally reflected the collective ethos of Black communities that believed education was the key to enhancing the life chances of their children. Particularly in many small southern towns, the all-Black school was the institution that reinforced community values and served as the community's ultimate cultural symbol (Dempsey & Noblit, 1996).

Thus, even while schools were segregated, they were "valued" by the Black community (Siddle Walker, 2000). Indeed, while separate school systems were the order of the day in the pre-*Brown* era, Black educators taught and nurtured an important segment of the Black community: its children. Henig, Hula, Orr, and Pedescleaux (1999) noted that "by the second half of the twentieth century, black teachers and principals were important role models and respected leaders in their communities. They also comprised a significant proportion of the African-American community's middle-class" (p. 44). Education was one of the few vocations open to middle-class Blacks in the pre-*Brown* era (Foster, 1997; Orfield, 1969; Pollard, 1997; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001), and, because of their profession, Black principals served as models of "servant leadership."<sup>7</sup> Black principals demonstrated an ethos of service "which obligated those who acquired literacy to transfer this knowledge to others in the Black community" (Savage, 2001, p. 173).

The historical literature on Black principals focuses primarily on two areas: the lives and work of Black principals in the pre-*Brown* era and the employment status of Black principals immediately after the *Brown* decision. The sections to follow discuss research in these two areas.

### BLACK PRINCIPALS IN THE PRE-BROWN ERA

Much of the scholarship on the lives and work of Black principals who led schools just after slavery into the early 1950s has been written by historians and is typically based on archival research and interviews. The majority of this scholarship has focused on the principal's role in the education of Blacks in the South in the pre-*Brown* era. The tasks of building and maintaining schools for Black children were taken on by

Blacks who assumed leadership roles and functioned as heads or principals of common schools as well as all-Black institutions such as Hampton and Tuskegee institutes (Anderson, 1988; Butchart, 1988; Franklin, 1990; Jones, 2003). For example, Zion School, one of the first all-Black schools in the South, was established in December 1865 and operated with an all-Black teaching and administrative staff (Anderson, 1988). Anderson wrote that Black Southerners were freed during the same time that education for Whites "was transformed into a highly formal and critical social institution" (p. 2). Blacks gained access to education under a different set of circumstances than Whites, for whom education was an entitlement. Anderson described systems of public and private education designed and implemented for and by Black Southerners between 1860 and 1935. Two types of schools established and maintained by ex-slaves were common schools and Sabbath schools. Sabbath schools, for example, were church sponsored, were open in the evening and on weekends, and provided literacy instruction to ex-slaves. According to Anderson, schooling for Blacks in the South was for the most part effective given the segregated context and hostility toward educated Blacks. Indeed, one of the most prominent themes in the history of Black Americans during this era was their persistent struggle to participate in an educational system that would ensure their continued freedom and grant them entrée into a democratic society. Anderson noted,

The short range purpose of Black education in the post-slavery era was to provide the masses of ex-slaves with basic literacy skills plus the rudiments of citizenship training for participation in a democratic society. The long-range purpose was the intellectual and moral development of a responsible leadership class that would organize the masses and lead them to freedom and equality. (p. 31)

One of the earliest known Black principals was Booker T. Washington, who headed Hampton Institute in Virginia and later Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. Students who attended Hampton and Tuskegee were typically older and had been denied the opportunity to participate in structured education in the years immediately after slavery. Washington was principal during a

period of history when the education of ex-slaves was primarily controlled by White philanthropists and industrialists who believed that Blacks should be trained (rather than educated) in skills that would benefit the economic development of the South. As principal, Washington established a manual labor program at Hampton Institute in 1879 (Washington, 1901/1993). The program operated at night after students had worked for 10 hours a day, 6 days a week, 11 months a year for 2 years. The Hampton manual labor program was “designed as an ideological force that would provide instruction suitable for adjusting blacks to a subordinate social role in the emergent New South” (Anderson, 1988, p. 36). Basic skills in reading, writing, and computation were discouraged; rather, Black students received instruction in cooking, sewing, and farming and were taught Christian morals. As the principal, Washington was given a great deal of authority to implement his own vision for educating Blacks, a vision that was consistent with the wishes of the White power structure. He often disagreed with Black leaders and Black educators who fought to provide Blacks with the same type of liberal arts and classical education received by Whites. Washington is credited with designing, implementing, and supervising the education of many Blacks, as well as raising money to modernize two schools that would later become premier all-Black institutions. However, his alliances with wealthy and influential Whites and his willingness to compromise the rights and the future of Blacks make him one of the most controversial figures in the struggle to educate Blacks.

From the 18th century through the 1950s, educated professional elites such as ministers, journalists, and politicians provided leadership in the struggle to educate Blacks (Franklin, 1984, 1990). Throughout the antebellum era, African American minister educators were particularly instrumental in opening schools in the North and the South. As principals or headmasters, these individuals held a strong belief that while Blacks could be stripped of their money, civil rights, and property, the knowledge they acquired through education could not be taken away. Jeremiah Burke Sanderson served as a principal-teacher in all-Black public schools in Stockton and San Francisco, California, from 1859 through 1874. While studying for the ministry, Sanderson became an outstanding

educator and advocate for the schooling of Black children. In 1826, Daniel Payne, an African Methodist Episcopal bishop, started a school in Charleston, South Carolina, for free Black children and adult slaves. The school was closed in 1834, when Whites became fearful that free Blacks might have access to and be influenced by abolitionist literature. The South Carolina legislature passed a law that prohibited free Blacks from having “any school or other place of instruction for teaching any slave or free person of color to read or write” (Franklin, 1990, p. 43). Payne left Charleston and moved north, where he became an influential minister educator. He later founded Wilberforce College (now Wilberforce University) in Xenia, Ohio, the oldest college affiliated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The agency of African American teachers and principals in Franklin, Tennessee, between 1890 and 1967 was the subject of research conducted by Savage (2001). In this pre- and post-*Brown* account of the education of Blacks, Savage defined *agency* as “self-reliance, proactive actions, and self-determining philosophies that result from a ‘centeredness’ within one’s community” (p. 172). Savage’s research documented the work of African American principals at “four continuously operating African American schools located on the same property in Williamson County just 15 miles south of Nashville, Tennessee” (p. 171). Findings indicated that African American principals “did more with less” (p. 171) with respect to providing an education for Black students. That is, even without money or resources, Black principals operated and maintained schools for Black children. Savage noted that Black principals operationalized agency in three ways: (a) developing resources (acquiring money, materials, and other resources to ensure the success of the school), (b) performing extraordinary services (maneuvering district policies, introducing new curricula and activities, and instilling in Black children resiliency, self-reliance, self-respect, and racial pride), and (c) focusing on the school as the center of the community (transforming schools into the cultural symbol of the Black community). Thus, the concept of *agency* comprised a range of purposeful strategies designed to foster Black self-reliance and empowerment and to resist opposition to the education of Black children.

The eight African American principals in Savage's study were agents of change who served collectively for more than 80 years. While the leadership styles of the principals were somewhat different, Savage found a common theme in their stories: They worked to provide schooling for African American children in the face of hostile conditions. Their passive and direct resistance to overt hostility included working around discriminatory policies (such as lack of resources and efforts to stop the spread of Black schools) and leading significant curricular change (such as adding academic courses to existing manual labor programs). In addition, they had worked to improve the quality of teachers in all-Black schools by recruiting qualified teachers trained in prestigious Black institutions such as Fisk and Tennessee State universities located in nearby Nashville. Educating Black children was the impetus for their actions, and the notion of "doing more with less" was the core of their agency in preparing students for immediate and future success.

African American women also played exemplary roles in the education of Blacks in the pre-*Brown* era (Alston & Jones, 2002; Franklin, 1990; Hine & Thompson, 1998; Jones, 2003; Perkins, 1987). Educated African American women opened schools in the North and the South and served dual roles as teachers and principals. Jeanes Supervisors were females who served as teachers and principals from 1907 through 1967, and their duties included introducing new teaching methods and curricula, organizing in-service teacher training workshops, and serving as assistants to county superintendents of schools. Among the most famous African American female principals who worked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were Sarah Smith, Mary Shadd Cary, Fannie Jackson Coppin, Anna Julia Cooper, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Mary MacLeod Bethune. Sarah Smith was named principal of the African School in Brooklyn, New York, in 1863 and was the first African American female principal in the New York public school system. Mary Shadd Cary became a principal in the Washington, D.C., school system in 1869. Fannie Jackson Coppin was the principal of Philadelphia's Institute for Colored Youth from 1869 through 1904 and was one of the most influential Black educators of the late 19th century. Under Coppin's leadership, the institute served as the premier example

of African American intellectual achievement (Perkins, 1987). The institute was considered one of the best secondary schools in the country, and students were exposed to a curriculum that included the classics. It was also considered a training ground for individuals who would teach in the segregated schools of the South. Coppin's vision for excellence in Black education was evidenced in the educational and professional achievements of the more than 5,000 students with whom she worked during her long tenure at the institute. Her efforts represent one of the earliest examples of the link between African American school leadership and African American student achievement.

Anna Julia Cooper, one of the few Blacks to earn a graduate degree in the 19th century, was recruited to teach at the M Street School in Washington, D.C., the city's only Black high school, and became the principal in 1902 (Cooper, 1892/1988). Cooper's tenure at the M Street School was marked by many accomplishments. When she became principal of the school, she was faced with promoting an agenda for Black education that was counter to Booker T. Washington's vocational and industrial program. As noted earlier, Washington's program was viewed by many Whites as the model for educating Blacks, and his philosophy had won the approval of influential Whites who believed in the intellectual inferiority of Blacks. But Cooper fought to build and maintain a curriculum and school culture that prepared students for college and beyond. She defied her White supervisor and prepared M Street students to attend prestigious universities such as Harvard, Brown, Oberlin, and Dartmouth, and under her leadership the school became accredited by Harvard. Her commitment to preparing Black children to attend postsecondary institutions and her refusal to yield to the White power structure and sexist atmosphere in the school and larger community were factors that led to her dismissal as principal. A former student at M Street School noted that Cooper should have expected hostility from males:

You must also remember that as far as the Negro population of Washington was concerned, we were still a small southern community where a woman's place was in the home. The idea of a woman principal of a high school must account in some part for any reaction Dr. Cooper felt against her. (Washington, 1988, p. xxiii)

According to Franklin (1990), African American female educators participated in similar types of professional and social activities as African American men in the 19th century. However, Cooper's tenure as principal at the M Street School suggests that African American female educators were subjected to various forms of gender discrimination with respect to their supervisory roles. While Cooper was well trained for the principalship, exhibited strong leadership skills, and shared the philosophies of many of her African American male counterparts, the opposition she faced was similar to that experienced by other African American women (e.g., female minister educators) in the pre-*Brown* era.

The historical literature reveals that African American principals were central figures in segregated schooling and the African American community (Anderson, 1988; Franklin, 1990; Pollard, 1997; Savage, 2001; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001). They served as connections to and liaisons between the school and the community. As principals, they encouraged parents to donate resources to schools, helped raise funds for schools, and served as professional role models for teachers and other staff members. For example, Black principals in the pre-*Brown* era modeled professionalism by attending professional conferences and meetings and earning graduate degrees. They also served as instructional leaders and not only provided a vision and direction for the school staff but also transmitted the goals and ideals of the school to a philanthropic White power structure.

As liaisons to the White community, African American principals often requested funding, resources, and other forms of support for all-Black schools. Black principals enjoyed a significant degree of authority and autonomy that was largely the result of the indifference and neglect of all-White school boards and White superintendents. Whites' lack of interest in the education of Black children (as opposed to training them for manual labor) usually led to the Black principal becoming the ultimate decision maker at the school site. Because segregated schools were primarily closed systems that were important only to Blacks, Black principals could hire and fire teachers, implement programs, and raise money for needed resources. However, these principals had no real power outside the Black community. According to Siddle Walker

(2000), they "could consult with the White community, but [they] held little power to make policy decisions" (p. 275). Black principals understood and worked within the existing power dynamics and acted as "middle men."

Understanding the importance of developing an educated Black community, these individuals held themselves accountable for the academic achievement of Black children and adults who attended all-Black public and private schools. Principals in segregated schools "provided counter education to Whites' expectations" (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003, p. 22) and understood that their own progress was directly linked to the academic, social, economic, and political progress of African Americans as a race.

#### THE *BROWN* DECISION AND DISPLACEMENT OF BLACK PRINCIPALS

Was the loss of employment for Black principals one of the (un)intended and (un)anticipated consequences (Tillman, 2004b) of desegregation after *Brown*? The *Brown* decision was intended to remedy the inequities of segregated schooling, and, ideally, the decision would provide a more equitable context for Black principals to continue the important work of educating Black children. But the tradition of excellence in African American school leadership was dramatically changed by desegregation, particularly in the South. While some Black principals retained their positions after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, desegregation had a devastating impact on the closed structure of Black education and thus the professional lives of thousands of Black principals (Ethridge, 1979; Pollard, 1997; Tillman, 2004a, 2004b; Valverde & Brown, 1988; Yeakey, Johnston, & Adkison, 1986).

In his essay "Another Vanishing American: The Black Principal," James (1970) observed that Black principals were "prime victims" of the move from a dual to a unitary system of schooling. Black principals were often the only formally educated Blacks in the community. More important, Black principals had a direct impact on the lives of the students they served; as role models, they provided images that would inspire and motivate Black students. In the post-*Brown* era, displacement of Black principals meant that they were demoted or fired. James noted that, in many instances, Black principals were transferred

to central office positions such as coordinators of federal programs or were “given some other title completely foreign to all known educational terminology, a desk, a secretary, no specified responsibilities or authority, and all this with a quiet prayer that [they would] somehow just go away” (p. 20). Because one of the roles of Black principals was to provide a training ground for Black leaders, James lamented that their threatened extinction had dramatic implications for Black leadership in the future. According to James, the loss of Black principals was “catastrophic.”

The system of separate, segregated schooling usually favored Black principals (Yeakey et al., 1986). That is, because professional employment opportunities outside this system were almost nonexistent, the maintenance of a segregated system of schooling ensured Black principals a professional role in the lives of Black children and in the Black community. The dismantling of this system interrupted their favored status. According to Yeakey et al.,

Since racial patterns in most communities, especially those in the South[,] did not countenance blacks supervising whites in any capacity, much less teaching, principals of formerly black schools usually were reassigned as assistants to white principals or as central office supervisors. (p. 122)

The literature on the impact of *Brown* on Black principals is not as prominent as that on Black teachers.<sup>8</sup> Research on the employment status of Black principals is often incorporated into larger studies of Black educators. For example, Ethridge’s (1979) study of the employment status of Black educators after the implementation of desegregation focused on teachers, principals, supervisors, and central office personnel. Records on the displacement of Black principals were poorly kept, and Ethridge noted that “the lack of effective data collection throughout the first fourteen years of desegregation will prevent the true impact of the *Brown* decision on Black educators from ever being really known” (p. 222).

Some of the earliest research on the displacement of Black principals was conducted by Hooker (1971), Coffin (1972), Ethridge (1979), Abney (1980), and Valverde and Brown (1988). Hooker’s survey of 11 southern states revealed that between 1967 and 1971, the number of

Black principals in states such as North Carolina, Virginia, and Arkansas dropped dramatically. For example, the number of Black principals in North Carolina dropped from 620 to 40.

The years 1954 through 1965 were the most devastating for Black principals (Ethridge, 1979). During the period immediately after the *Brown* decision, Whites believed that Black principals had been ineffective in educating Black children. Expert witnesses who testified during a series of post-desegregation legal proceedings called for the dismantling of all-Black schools and replacing Black principals with Whites. For example, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware closed the majority of their all-Black schools between 1954 and 1965, and more than 50% of the Black principals in these states were dismissed. More than 6,000 Black principals were needed to reach equity and parity nationally, and Ethridge concluded that “thousands of educational positions which would have gone to Black people in the South under a segregated system have been lost for them since desegregation” (p. 231).

Abney (1980) speculated that the all-White makeup of Florida school boards as well as control by White superintendents in many of the state’s districts figured prominently in the demotion and firing of Black principals. He studied the status of Black principals in Florida during the school years 1964–1965 and 1975–1976 and found that, in 1964–1965, Black principals were employed in each of the 67 school districts in Florida. Ten years later, 27 of these districts had no Black principals, even while the Black school-aged population had increased. Florida added 165 public schools in the 1975–1976 school year but fired or demoted 166 Black principals.

School districts in Florida were also grouped according to the percentage of minorities in the state’s general population. Thus, in most instances, when the percentage of minorities in the school population was compared with the percentage of Black school principals, the relative number of Black principals was low. This deficiency was “alarming when one considers the fact that 27 of 67 school districts in Florida do not have a single black public school principal, in spite of a significant number of minority group members in the general and pupil populations” (Abney, 1980, p. 401).<sup>9</sup>



Black principals were being threatened with extinction as a result of desegregation (Fultz, 2004a). Fultz cited a 1971 U.S. Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity report revealing that Black principals were being eliminated with “avalanche-like force and tempo” (p. 28). Demotions and firings of Black principals proceeded by four primary means: (a) demoting Black principals to teaching or nonteaching positions, (b) downgrading their schools to lower grade levels, (c) allowing them to retain their title but with no real power, and (d) giving them “paper promotions” to central office positions with no influence. These practices forced Black principals to work almost exclusively in elementary and junior high schools and to work in schools where decision-making authority was allocated to a White assistant. Consequently, Black principals were removed as authority figures at the school-site level. Such practices occurred primarily in southern and rural areas, and Black principals who retained their positions usually worked in urban districts with large populations of Black students.

Patterns of displacement of Black principals also negatively affected the pool of Black teachers who could be mentored for the principalship, effectively eliminating advocates for the recruitment, hiring, and promotion of Black teachers to principal positions (Karpinski, 2004). Demotions and firings of Black principals reflected the deep-seated segregationist ideology of the South, and White Southerners with turn-of-the-century attitudes about Black inferiority would not tolerate Black principals supervising students and teachers in integrated schools. In racially charged communities, displacement of Black principals removed them from having any authority over policy-making and instructional leadership and made it difficult for students, parents, and community members to negotiate with the White power structure. The Georgia Teacher and Education Association (1970; cited in Siddle Walker, 2003) referred to the massive displacement of Black principals as “outer-gration.” One of the (un)intended consequences of the *Brown* decision was that Black principals were forced out of the profession (Tillman, 2004b), leading to what Cecelski (1994) has called the “decimation” of Black principals. While there have been modest increases in the number of Black principals since

the early 1970s, they continue to be underrepresented relative to the number of Black students in the population. In the 2003-2004 school year, Black principals represented only 16.4% of all principals nationally (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005).

Dempsey and Noblit (1996), in their discussion of school desegregation, noted that

we acted as if we were ignorant of the fact that desegregation was disproportionately burdening . . . African Americans with the bulk of busing, with the closure of African American schools, and with the demotions and firing of African American educators. (p. 115)

Yet history and research illustrate that displacement of Black principals was one of the negative effects of the *Brown* decision. That is, one of the consequences of the desegregation of America’s schools was the loss of Black principals and thus the exclusion of voices and perspectives that were critical to the education of Black children. Not only were positions lost in the numerical sense but, more important, there was a loss of a tradition of excellence, a loss of Black leadership as a cultural symbol in the Black community, and a loss of the expertise of educators who were committed to the education of Black children.

As the research reviewed in this section indicates, the displacement of Black principals had the immediate effect of disrupting the education of Black children and the stability of the Black community. Desegregation placed Black principals, teachers, students, and parents in an unfamiliar space. The racist context of schooling for Blacks became more obvious and more pronounced. Black principals now had no control over the education of their students and no longer served as the liaison between the Black community and the White power structure. While Black principals typically had had no real voice in policy making outside the school itself, the *Brown* decision left them almost completely powerless. Schools were now controlled by Whites, many of whom were resistant to integration. Whites mounted three forms of resistance to integration: (a) States undermined the *Brown* decision by ignoring the mandate and implementing inequitable funding structures; (b) agents of resistance such as White Citizens Councils demonstrated in protest of integration

in many southern cities and proposed plans to close all public schools rather than accept integrated schools; and (c) strategies were used to keep Black educators in subordinate positions so that Blacks would have no control or voice in schools (Siddle Walker, 2003).

Several themes are evident in the research on pre-*Brown* principals: the education of Black children as a priority, resistance to ideologies and individuals opposed to the education of Blacks, and the importance of the cultural perspectives of Black principals. Black principals such as Booker T. Washington, Fannie Jackson Coppin, and Daniel Payne were instrumental in establishing schools, garnering resources, and educating Blacks in the period just after slavery. While their individual philosophies may have differed, they shared a collective will to educate Blacks and uplift the race. These Black principals were also agents of change as they fought against theories of inferiority and blatant resistance to the education of Blacks both in their speech and in their actions. In both passive and overt ways, they challenged a White power structure that would deprive Blacks of their right to participate in the free society designed by and for Whites. Racial pride, self-esteem, and self-respect were instilled as a form of passive resistance to theories of inferiority, while the introduction of academic and classical curricula and the recruitment of qualified teachers represented more overt forms of resistance to ideologies and individuals who would keep Blacks in subservient positions.

The cultural perspectives of Black principals were also a consistent theme in the research. Principals were the central figure in the school and the community, and their leadership represented the racial and cultural norms of the Black community and an ethos of service. Their work reflected a cultural heritage of self-determination (Franklin, 1990), a vision for the future of Blacks, and a framework for the work of Black principals who would succeed them. Siddle Walker (2003) emphasized the importance of the cultural perspectives of the Black principal: "The perspective of the Black principal is central to explaining how the segregated Black schools were able to fight the demon of racism by helping Black children believe in what they were capable of achieving" (p. 59).

Some tensions exist in the research on pre-*Brown* Black principals. First, while these principals were dedicated to the uplift of the race, they

worked in schools that were never adequately funded and lacked essential resources. Consequently, their leadership was, to a great degree, defined by a constant struggle to access buildings, money, and the other resources necessary to produce an educated class of Blacks. Second, pre-*Brown* educators had differing philosophies regarding the most appropriate education, that is, manual training versus an academic education. This was particularly the case in the debates between leaders such as Booker T. Washington and Anna Julia Cooper. In some ways, these ideological struggles resulted in class distinctions among Blacks. Educators such as Fannie Jackson Coppin and Anna Julia Cooper led elite all-Black schools in the North that produced an educated class of Blacks who would go on to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers. Their leadership represents early evidence of the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. Conversely, Booker T. Washington led schools in the South that largely produced Blacks who were trained in manual labor skills and who would always work in the Southern economy. Washington's philosophy that Blacks would receive no training that would place them on equal parity with Whites contributed to tensions among Black educators.

Finally, consistent with the time period, most of the pre-*Brown* principals were men. While the contributions of Black female principals are acknowledged in the research, it was expected that the principal would be male and that he would be accorded recognition and respect based on his gender. These expectations suggest that Black women who aspired to the principalship faced a sexist environment. However, the post-*Brown* period would see a gradual shift in the demographics of the principalship, and more Black women would lead schools (particularly at the elementary level) two decades after the *Brown* decision. Despite these tensions, collectively the research indicates that the leadership of African American principals in the pre-*Brown* period offers a framework for discussing the work of post-*Brown* principals.

### BLACK PRINCIPALS IN THE POST-*BROWN* ERA

Black principals in the post-*Brown* era faced different types of challenges than their predecessors. In the desegregated schools of the South

and North, the roles of Black principals were more complex. Rodgers (1967), in his study of Black high schools, described African American principals as superintendents, supervisors, family counselors, financial advisors, community leaders, employers, and politicians. Scholars conducting research on the education of Blacks in the post-*Brown* era have often focused on the importance of the leadership of Black principals. The research outlined in this section includes ethnographic and case study research on good schools (Lightfoot, 1983; Sowell, 1976), leadership role identity (Lomotey, 1989a, 1993), relationships between segregated schools and the community (Siddle Walker, 1993a, 1996), caring forms of leadership (Lyman, 2000), and African American women in the principalship (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dillard, 1995; Doughty, 1980; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998).<sup>10</sup> As with the themes identified in the literature, these topics overlap. For example, Dillard's research on the leadership of an African American female principal also represents research on a caring leader. The focus of Lightfoot's research is good high schools, but the leadership styles of the principals of these schools are also a consistent theme in her work. Thus, readers will note the overlapping topics in much of the research described in this section.

Sowell (1976) sought to determine the factors that contributed to "black excellence, its sources, and its wider implications for contemporary education and for social policy in general" (p. 7). Sowell studied six all-Black high schools and two all-Black elementary schools. The high schools were selected from Horace Mann's (1970) list of Black high schools with the highest number of alumni with earned doctorates from 1957 through 1962. The two elementary schools in the sample had records of academic achievement.<sup>11</sup> Principals in each of the schools examined were instrumental in students' academic and professional achievement. Two factors were prominent in Sowell's research: a history of educational excellence at each of the schools and strong leaders who were committed to the education of Black children.

Sowell's study is instructive because it offers a historical look at each school: The research not only focused on the prominence of the schools in the pre- and early post-*Brown* periods but also documented their decline after *Brown*. The public schools examined in the study, like the cities in which they were located, were victims of the transformation of urban cities. These cities,

which were once centers of educational, economic, and social excellence, were now characterized by crime, poverty, and decay. Their public schools, which once boasted high test scores, numerous academic awards, service to the Black community, and the development of Black professionals, were now being defined by low test scores, locations in decaying neighborhoods, lack of parental support, and discipline problems.

One of the schools, Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia, was illustrative of such changes. The principal at the time of the study noted that the neighborhood surrounding the school was no longer a stable middle-class area but was now considered a neighborhood of lower socioeconomic status, and the school was plagued by poor academic performance, with student test scores below the national average and below those of other high schools in Atlanta. The principal believed that the school needed more than money to address these problems. She talked about the absence of human resources and, particularly, a lack of parental involvement as major problems. Sowell concluded that academic achievement was more than mastery of subject matter; it also included order and respect in the school. More important, the character and the ability of the principal were critical factors in the success of the school and its students.

Sowell's research suggests that the leadership issues facing principals in the pre- and early post-*Brown* periods were similar in some ways and different in others. Leadership in the pre-*Brown* period was defined to a significant degree by de jure segregation, and principals responded primarily to the wishes of the close-knit community of the day. Leadership in the post-*Brown* period evolved amid the changing demographics and dynamics of large urban cities.

Lightfoot (1983) sought to define "good high schools" in case studies of six urban, suburban, and elite schools.<sup>12</sup> Good schools were "described as good by faculty, students, parents, and communities; [they] had distinct reputations as fine institutions with clearly articulated goals and identities" (p. 23). Strong, effective leadership is one of the foundations of the effective schools movement, and the principal, as the instructional leader, sets the tone for the school, decides on instructional strategies, and organizes and distributes school resources (Dantley, 1990; Edmonds, 1979). Lightfoot's (1983) view of

good high schools included a broader perspective of “effectiveness” than what is described in the effective schools literature. According to Lightfoot, “goodness” (or effectiveness) cannot be measured on the basis of a single indicator of success such as test scores; rather, it includes “people, structures, relationships, ideology, goals, intellectual substance, motivation, and will” (p. 23). A consistent theme in each of Lightfoot’s case studies is the significant role of the principal in the culture of a “good” school. Lightfoot argued that the principal holds the ultimate responsibility for creating the vision, mission, goals, and objectives of the good high school. Furthermore, she emphasized the impact of each principal’s leadership philosophy and leadership style on the teachers, students, and community.

One of the schools described in Lightfoot’s (1983) study was George Washington Carver Comprehensive High School in Atlanta. Carver was a public school located in a lower socioeconomic neighborhood, and at the time of Lightfoot’s study it had “long been known as a dumping ground for Atlanta schools” (p. 11). However, it had begun to make noticeable progress under the leadership of its new African American principal, Norris Hogans, an energetic, passionate individual who was fighting against the negative history of the school and was determined to build a new image of its students, teachers, parents, and staff. Hogans wanted to “undo old perceptions, reverse entrenched habits, and inculcate new behavioral and attitudinal forms” (p. 15). A former elementary school principal, he was selected to “save Carver from total demise” (p. 31). His passion and commitment were considered catalysts for change in a school where change was badly needed.

Hogans’s leadership style was considered to be authoritarian. For example, some teachers and students described Hogans as unwilling to negotiate or share power in decisions that affected the entire school community. Yet teachers and students agreed that his philosophy and decisions were critical to achieving positive results. Hogans believed that schools were transformational institutions responsible for providing students with discipline and safety—resources that were often unavailable to them in their homes and communities—and opportunities for meaningful and productive lives at school and in the larger society. Hogans also believed

that schools should demand excellence from students: “I think we don’t expect enough from our students. We seem to be content if they score two years below grade level” (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 35). Hogans’s belief that students could be successful both academically and professionally led him to address the issue of student achievement in direct ways. He encouraged teachers to set high standards for student achievement and discipline and preached a philosophy that exposure to professions such as business, industry, medicine, and law could be instrumental in developing the aspirations of African American students. Such purposeful exposure to the world of work would link their aspirations to their achievement in the classroom.

In an effort to achieve these goals, Hogans formed the Explorers Program at Carver High. The program was designed for 10th-grade students and included monthly field trips to major businesses and agencies in the Atlanta area. The purpose of the field trips was to teach students how these businesses operated, orient them to careers offered in such businesses, and provide guidance that would help them make informed career choices. Similar to the Boy Scout tradition, which served as an example for the program, the Explorers Program stressed honor, honesty, and rigor—characteristics that Hogans promoted as part of the Carver High School image.

Hogans’s vision for the school was an ambitious one given the urban school context of his leadership: He wanted students to experience and benefit from a comprehensive education that would provide them with both technical and academic instruction. He believed that students should be exposed to a threefold curriculum (general, vocational, and academic) that would prepare them for positions as laborers as well as positions in professions such as education and medicine. His philosophy was similar to that of Booker T. Washington, one of his heroes. He believed in the value of vocational and technical training for economic stability, as did Washington; however, he did not share Washington’s belief that education and employment opportunities for Blacks should be limited to vocational/manual labor fields.

Teachers, students, and parents at Carver were hopeful that Hogans’s leadership would be a significant factor in helping students become “industrious, hard-working citizens” (Lightfoot,

1983, p. 312). Good attendance, a relative lack of discipline problems, a safe and orderly environment, and high employment rates after graduation were viewed as indicators of school success. Under Hogans's leadership, the school had made great strides in each of these areas, and he had led the school through "impressive changes, the progress from terrible to much better" (p. 313). According to Lightfoot, the standards of goodness were being met as a result of Hogans's leadership. While indicators of goodness were evident, Lightfoot also found that there was much more work to be done to achieve other, less measurable standards of goodness such as civility, poise, and ambition, characteristics that students would need in the world outside school.

Lightfoot (1983) noted that "an essential ingredient of good schools is strong, consistent and inspired leadership" (p. 323) and a school culture defined by the vision and purposeful actions of the principal. Hogans was described as a strict authoritarian leader who was both loved and feared by students, teachers, and staff. This description might lead one to assume that Hogans was uncaring and insensitive toward students and the community. However, according to Lightfoot, Hogans was an example of an authoritarian father figure who, above all, had a strong commitment to the social and academic success of Black children. She noted that he embodied three dominant images associated with the literature on school leadership: Principals are disproportionately male, they are usually former coaches or jocks, and they are father figures. Hogans, a Black male was also a former athlete coach, and acted as a father figure.

The post-*Brown* era brought about an emphasis on effective principal leadership as a catalyst for student achievement (see, e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1988; Witziers, Boskier, & Krüger, 2003). Researchers attempted to define the specific kinds of direct and indirect leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996) that established a school culture of success and enhanced student achievement. Some of this research was particularly focused on African American students who had lagged behind their White peers since the advent of school reform efforts, including the standardized testing movement (Anderson, 2003).

Lomotey (1989a) conducted research focusing on the significance of African American

principals in the educational success of African American students. Lomotey sought to determine the ways in which the leadership styles of African American principals directly influenced the academic achievement of African American students. The study was conducted in "more successful African-American schools": those that "possess the qualities suggested by the research on principal leadership and academic achievement" (p. 6). Three African American elementary school principals who worked in predominantly African American schools were the subjects of the study. The schools were deemed "more successful" than other African American schools because third and sixth graders scored higher in math and reading on the California Assessment Program over a 2-year period. A central question guided the research: "What kind of leadership do African-American principals exhibit in more successful African American elementary schools?" (p. 6). Data were derived from interviews with teachers and principals and from observations of principals in their daily work. In addition, questionnaires were used to investigate teachers' perceptions of how principals implemented four components of principal leadership that were consistent with the school administration literature: (a) developing goals, (b) harnessing the energy of the staff, (c) facilitating communication, and (d) being involved in instructional management.

Principals in Lomotey's study exhibited more than one leadership style. For example, all the principals placed the education of children as their first priority. However, only two engaged in assertive forms of leadership while establishing a school climate and culture that motivated teachers to focus on the academic achievement of all students. The third principal practiced a more indirect form of leadership and delegated much of the responsibility in each leadership component to support staff. The two principals who engaged in all four components of principal leadership were central figures in the school who performed traditional leadership functions leading to the maintenance of organizational goals. These principals accepted the goals of the organization, facilitated cooperation among staff members, developed and implemented effective communication with their staffs, and actively engaged in curriculum planning, teacher supervision, and student assessment. Lomotey argued that principals who adopt and

use all four components of principal leadership help promote the goals of schools: determining how information is disseminated, deciding whose ideas and values are privileged, and controlling the behaviors of others.

The most prominent finding in Lomotey's (1989a) study was that each principal demonstrated a "commitment to the education of African-American children, a compassion for, and understanding of, their students and the communities in which they work, and a confidence in the ability of all African-American children to learn" (p. 131). These principals were committed to the education of African American students and were concerned not only with helping students move successfully from grade to grade but also with enhancing their life chances. They understood that being African American was not enough; they had to exhibit compassion for African American children and their communities. Lomotey posited that because these qualities were shared by each of the principals, this finding

raises the question of the significance, for African-American principals, of these three characteristics in relation to the four qualities that I sought to explore. It is possible that, given the unique characteristics of these African-American schools (e.g., economic, academic, cultural, and social), these three qualities supersede all others in importance in bringing about success. (p. 131)

Lomotey concluded that principal leadership is critical to the successful schooling of African American students.

In a later study, Lomotey (1993) applied the frameworks from his 1989 study of principals in successful schools to case studies of two African American female elementary principals.<sup>13</sup> Both principals worked in schools that were pilot sites for an African and African American curriculum infusion project. The study focused on the principals' role in facilitating the implementation of the infusion project. In this study, Lomotey referred to the four components of principal leadership as the *bureaucrat/administrator* role identity and the qualities of commitment, confidence, and compassion as the *ethno-humanist* role identity. Specifically, the primary goal of a principal who assumes a bureaucrat/administrator role identity is "schooling": facilitating the

movement of students from grade to grade. The primary goal of a principal who assumes an ethno-humanist role identity is "education": meeting a set of cultural goals.

Findings revealed that both principals exhibited the qualities of commitment, compassion, and confidence and were concerned about education issues related to

the development of the whole child. As members of the same cultural group, the principals were committed to providing an equitable education to African American children, were confident that these children would excel academically, and showed compassion and understanding for the children and their families. Their goals and actions were purposeful: As leaders, they were committed to ensuring the perpetuation of African-American culture. (Lomotey, 1993, p. 410)

For example, both principals were committed to providing African American students with opportunities to learn about African and African American history and culture. More important, the principals were committed to helping students "develop positive self-concepts and generally to feel good about themselves and their people" (p. 410).

Lomotey (1993) pointed out that while principals are administrators (i.e., they perform various administrative functions), they are also members of distinctive cultural groups, and principals who believe their cultural affiliation is important to their work will make a distinction between their bureaucrat/administrator and ethno-humanist role identities. Lomotey acknowledged that such a distinction could be viewed as conflicting but noted, "Consequently, but not at all unexpectedly, the personal (ethno-humanist) and professional (bureaucrat/administrator) role identities were often intertwined" (p. 410). The principals in this study merged the two identities in their work and balanced "schooling" and "education" to help African American children achieve academic excellence.

Siddle Walker (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 2003) investigated the relationships between segregated African American schools and their communities in the South. Her ethnographic and case study research examined how communities supported schools, how schools supported their communities, and the implications such relationships

might have for contemporary school reform efforts. In her award-winning book, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (1996), she documented the pre- and post-*Brown* periods of segregated schooling at Caswell County Training School (CCTS) in rural North Carolina. The school educated children from 1934 to 1969, and a central focus of Siddle Walker's investigation was the work of dedicated educators who believed that their jobs extended from the classrooms into the community. A mutually dependent relationship existed between CCTS and the community. The school held itself accountable to the wishes of the Black community, and community members provided financial and other forms of support for the school. Siddle Walker's work represents a counternarrative to earlier work depicting all-Black schools as deficient (see, e.g., Brown, 1960; Clark, 1963; Kluger, 1977). She noted that while such depictions were not completely inaccurate, they often excluded the perspectives of Black principals and in-depth and thoughtful analyses of how they established and maintained schools for Black children. Furthermore, these depictions overlooked "any suggestion that not all education for African-American children during segregation was inferior" (1993a, p. 162).<sup>14</sup>

Siddle Walker (1993a) used terminology similar to that of Lightfoot (1983), describing CCTS as a "good school" on the basis of the school's and the community's belief that it provided a positive social and cultural environment for learning. Siddle Walker acknowledged the inequities as well as the "goodness" of CCTS:

My description of why CCTS was perceived as a good school is not meant to validate the inequities or minimize the discrimination that existed in this and other segregated schools, where parents were overly burdened to create for themselves the educational facilities and opportunities schools boards often denied them (Anderson, 1988; Bullock, 1967). Rather, I offer this case as representative of the many other southern African-American schools whose communities were also pleased with their schools, but whose histories have been lost and whose value is understood now only by former teachers, principals, parents, and students. (p. 162)

Open-ended interviews were conducted with former teachers, students, parents, and

administrators, and themes of goodness in the school-community relationship were explored. In the segregated South, the Black school principal was a key figure in establishing and maintaining standards of goodness. Black principals were committed to the social and academic achievement of students and developed relationships with parents, the broader Black community, and the White establishment to achieve their goals. The segregated school environment often served as a second home for Black students; it was an environment where they were taught, nurtured, supported, and corrected. As the central figure in the school, the African American principal provided vision, leadership, and guidance to students, teachers, and other staff members.

The principal of CCTS was Nicholas Longworth Dillard, highly regarded by the community as well as Black and White educational leaders. As an African American principal in a segregated school environment, Dillard worked to ensure that the school kept its commitment to educating African American children by providing support and encouragement and insisting on high academic standards. Dillard prided himself on being very knowledgeable about educational issues and sought to expose students to a well-educated teaching staff. By 1954, the majority of the teachers at CCTS had earned postgraduate certification. Dillard served as principal of CCTS from 1933 to 1969, and during his tenure he instituted more than 53 "extracurricular clubs and activities to enhance student leadership and development" (Siddle Walker, 1993a, p. 162).

As the principal, Dillard played a critical role in developing the instructional and physical aspects of the school. By 1938, the student population of CCTS had grown to more than 600, and the school was moved to a 10-room building. Later, Dillard would be instrumental in planning, designing, and supervising the construction of a modern 27-room school that opened in 1951. Parents and the community supported the construction of the school by donating almost \$8,000 in equipment. This monetary support was evidence of Dillard's positive relationships with parents and the community.

Dillard promoted student achievement primarily in indirect ways. For example, he established an environment that was conducive to student achievement. One strategy for promoting

student achievement was to promote parental involvement. Dillard regularly communicated with parents and used activities such as Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings to report to them about the education their children were receiving at CCTS and ways they could help their children. He reinforced the school's expectations for the students and encouraged parents to attend school-related events. In interviews, parents recalled that the success of every student was Dillard's first priority. He conveyed this message to teachers and required them to attend professional development meetings and conferences. Teachers were also required to attend PTA meetings, which provided parents with the opportunity to establish positive relationships with them. As with other accounts of Black principals in segregated schools, Dillard rarely appeared before the White board of education. He was aware that, as an employee, his sphere of authority was primarily confined to the school site. Thus, he prepared parents to make requests for the school before the school board, supporting them in their roles as advocates for Black children. Such actions, while illustrative of indirect forms of principal leadership, were consistent with a time period not yet dominated by an emphasis on school reform.

As the "principal leader of a Black high school" (Siddle Walker, 2003, p. 62), Dillard helped develop a positive relationship with the Black community, and his leadership style is illustrative of the ethic of care in educational leadership (Lomotey, 1989a; Starratt, 1991), where his goals and actions showed in concrete ways that he cared for every student and was committed to their success. Dillard's goals and actions were also consistent with "interpersonal caring" with respect to the successful schooling of African American students (Siddle Walker, 1993b). This interpersonal caring included providing students with psychological, sociological, and academic support.

Students were transferred to integrated schools when court-ordered desegregation closed CCTS in 1969. A parent who attended PTA meetings after desegregation lamented that, in the new school, teachers were rarely present at these meetings, and the meetings were more focused on problems in the school than on the needs of students and what could be done to address them. She noted,

You just didn't see any teachers hardly. What few teachers came said, "you don't just walk up to teachers and ask how your child is doing; you have a conference." They said we were not supposed to ask about any [concerns] about our children [in the presence of] of anyone else. We were used to when we were there at the PTA meeting, we could just talk. (Siddle Walker, 1993a, p. 178)

The racial and cultural mismatch between the Black parents and students and the White principal and majority White teaching staff led to barriers between the school and the community. As noted by Lomotey (1987, 1989a, 1993), same-race affiliation and membership in a distinct cultural group (e.g., African American) are significant factors affecting how principals interact with parents and students. In addition, Lomotey concluded that it is often the case that individuals with similar values, beliefs, and cultural norms (such as teachers, principals, parents, and students) communicate more effectively.

In *How Do They Know You Care? The Principal's Challenge*, Lyman (2000) presented a case study of Kenneth Hinton, the principal of an early childhood education center located in a low-income, racially and ethnically diverse city in the Midwest. Lyman conducted an in-depth qualitative investigation of this caring leader and analyzed his contributions to the school environment. Hinton was chosen for the study because he was well respected and epitomized a caring attitude toward students, teachers, parents, and the community. The framework for the study was based on four perspectives of caring: (a) Caring both *gives* purpose and *is* purpose (Mayeroff, 1971); (b) caring is an ethical orientation (Gilligan, 1982); (c) caring is a relational process involving engrossment, action, and reciprocity (Noddings, 1984); and (d) caring leaders make a difference (Beck, 1994a, 1994b; Dillard, 1995; Lightfoot, 1983, p. 11). According to Lyman, the fourth perspective is informed *by how* leaders make a difference in the lives of students and their families. Thus, it is multifaceted, including the following elements: Caring leaders who protect and nurture are critical to maintaining schools that are good (Lightfoot, 1983); leaders grounded in an ethic of caring transform schools by embracing complexity and making an emotional investment



(Beck, 1994a, 1994b); and caring leaders who advocate for the needs of individual students are critical to students' success, particularly in culturally diverse schools (Dillard, 1995).

As the new principal and director of the recently built early childhood education center, Hinton had supervised much of the construction of the new building, developed the instructional program, hired a new staff, established rapport in the community, and welcomed new students and their families. The school had a racially diverse student population; the majority of the students were African American and White, and a small percentage were Hispanic and Asian. Lyman characterized Hinton as a nonconformist. At times, he challenged the bureaucracy of his school district regarding the most appropriate methods for educating children. He developed his own methods for working with challenging students in his school and worked with his staff to develop innovative programs that would respond to the various social, emotional, and economic needs of students and their families.

Hinton was also compassionate. As an African American male, he had experienced various forms of discrimination in school and in the community. But he was also influenced by an upbringing that stressed a supportive family structure and strong spiritual values, and his experiences led him to engage in acts of compassion that emphasized caring and developing children to their fullest potential. For example, Lyman found that in interviews with school staff and parents they used terms such as *caring*, *warm*, *nurturing*, and *loving* to describe Hinton's style of leadership as well as the school environment. As a builder, Hinton was able to build not only physical structures but relationships among key stakeholders: staff, students, parents, and the community. Staff members and members of the community praised Hinton for his ability to build bridges between the races and noted that "his caring for children is clearly not limited to children of color" (Lyman, 2000, p. 31). He served as a role model for students, and his leadership and service extended beyond the walls of the school. Hinton expressed his beliefs about caring in the following statement: "Caring carries with it a loss of class, ethnicity, gender, and religion. If a teacher cares, then these things that separate us through ignorance and fear become

unimportant. Status ceases to matter, and children are simply children" (Lyman, 2000, pp. 116–117).

Hinton's beliefs about caring were an extension of his experiences as a teacher and a learner. His caring leadership style was critical in enhancing student learning and was consistent with Hart and Bredeson's (1996, as cited in Lyman, 2000) assumption that "principals influence student learning outcomes directly and indirectly by what they do, what they believe, and how they use symbols" (p. 219). Hinton was motivated by his desire to "enhance the growth of others and give back to those who helped me" (p. 120). Hinton's decision to "give back" was similar to what Lightfoot (1994) referred to as "giving forward"—the concept that one cannot repay acts of caring but can engage in such acts in the future. Hinton's leadership style was also similar to aspects of Lomotey's (1993) ethno-humanist role identity; that is, he displayed commitment, compassion, and confidence in his interactions with students and their communities. However, unlike the principals in Lomotey's study, Hinton's ethno-humanist role identity was not solely based on same-race/cultural affiliation. Hinton focused his caring leadership on all students. Thus, while same-group racial and cultural membership has been shown to enhance principal-student relationships, Lyman's research suggests that other factors may influence these relationships. Lyman's findings also suggest that, because African Americans also lead mixed-race schools, there is an imperative to practice leadership that will meet the needs of students, teachers, and parents from all racial and ethnic groups represented.

The education of Black students as a priority, interpersonal caring, and resistance were dominant themes in the research on post-*Brown* principals. In some cases, principals were faced with making decisions about how they would continue to educate Black children after desegregation. Nicholas Dillard, the principal of Caswell County Training School had hoped that desegregation would dismantle the inequitable educational structures that had, in many ways, defined his leadership. Yet many of the inequities remained until the school was closed and desegregation was officially implemented. Principals such as Norris Hogans also placed the education of Black students as a priority but had

a different vision for educating them. Drawing on the work of his predecessors, Hogans merged historical philosophies with his own vision and implemented a general, vocational, and academic curriculum that would prepare students for the world of work. Collectively, these post-*Brown* principals continued to make the education of Black students a priority and resisted Whites who attempted to undermine the *Brown* decision, teachers who held low expectations for students and who were resistant to change, and in some cases Black parents who, feeling disconnected from the newly integrated school, became less involved in their children's education.

The theme of interpersonal caring was also evident in the research on post-*Brown* principals. Several principals adopted Lomotey's (1993) ethno-humanist role identity and based their leadership on commitment, confidence, and compassion. Such principals were caring and loving and provided academic, social, and psychological support. In research on highly successful and loving elementary schools serving minority and low-income students, Scheurich (1998) found that while principals used the term *caring*, the term *loving* best described environments where principals exhibited extremely supportive attitudes toward students and adults. Scheurich's analysis was consistent with the types of interpersonal caring exhibited by Black principals in the research reviewed here. A tension exists in the research with respect to definitions of goodness in the education of Black students. While researchers sought to describe "good" schools, they also acknowledged that "good" did not necessarily represent a search for perfection. Both Sowell and Siddle Walker found imperfections in good schools. Schools that were once sites of educational excellence now struggled against being defined by external factors such as housing projects, crime, and poor student achievement. Fifty years after the *Brown* decision, schools continue to face these as well as other challenges that affect the quality of schooling for Blacks and thus the leadership capacity of Black principals.

### RESEARCH ON AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE PRINCIPALS

The research reviewed in this section focuses on African American female principals in the post-*Brown* period of schooling. There is limited

evidence in the post-*Brown* educational leadership literature pointing to the leadership styles, accomplishments, and lives of Black female principals (Allen, Jacobson, & Lomotey, 1995; Benham, 1997; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Coursen et al., 1989; Pollard, 1997).<sup>15</sup> Benham (1997) identified several factors that have contributed to the paucity of research on Black women in school leadership. First, the number of Black women in pre-K-12 educational leadership positions, while increasing gradually, is still small relative to the numbers of White men and women and Black men. Thus, it is difficult to identify samples for large-scale studies. Second, a limited number of Black female and male researchers are investigating issues affecting Black school leaders. Further, the absence of a body of research on Black female principals is exacerbated by the fact that theories about women in leadership often refer to women as teacher leaders. Finally, Benham noted that the absence of studies of Black women represents, to a great degree, "an educational leadership discourse and practice that has been structured to impede such treatment" (p. 282). Bloom and Erlandson (2003) concurred with Benham's argument and elaborated on this point in the following statement: "Findings from a minority insider's perspective are regarded as dubious and unlikely to be published in professional journals. Suspect conclusions are summarily ignored or dismissed, seldom becoming a part of administrative leadership theory" (p. 344).

Inclusion of the contributions of African American female principals within predominantly White feminist literature is also problematic. According to Bloom and Erlandson (2003), asking questions about the experiences of African American women from the perspective of a White woman results in two negative outcomes: (a) perpetuating the practice of intellectual and cultural exclusion by creating the appearance of acceptance in women's studies using an ethnic additive model and (b) failing to acknowledge that White women retain White privilege and that women of color do not hold a color of privilege, thereby making African American women's experiences similar in some ways to those of women in general but deviant from the White female norm (p. 344). The result is a privileging of knowledge that often devalues the leadership theory and practice of African American female principals in the educational leadership discourse.

A search of the educational leadership literature reveals an additional challenge in identifying research on Black female principals: Work about these women is often grouped under the topic “women and minorities.” Researchers have used this categorization in conducting studies that have included Black female principals (see, e.g., Adkison, 1981; Banks, 1995; Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Crow & Glascock, 1995; Edson, 1987; Enomoto, Gardiner, & Grogan, 2000; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Jones & Montenegro, 1985; Mertz & McNeely, 1998; Ortiz, 1982; Shakeshaft, 1999; Tonnsen & Truesdale, 1993; Young & McLeod, 2001). However, this research rarely presents detailed portraits of the lives, work, vision, and impact of these principals on the school community and student achievement or discriminatory practices that affect their work. As pointed out by Coursen et al. (1989), “what is true for blacks is not necessarily true for members of other racial minorities and may have nothing to do with women” (p. 87).

In a national survey of Black school administrators, Doughty (1980) found that Black women were most likely to be employed as consultants, supervisors, elementary school principals, and administrative assistants. At the time Doughty conducted her study, Black women in the elementary principalship were more likely to lead in challenging urban districts with predominantly Black student populations. Black women in Doughty’s study typically assumed their first leadership position in their middle 40s to early 50s, and were older than Black or White men in such positions. In addition, Doughty’s results showed that, after 1966, the percentage of Black women in the principalship decreased relative to the percentage of Black men. Black women were not the specific focus of Doughty’s study. However, the findings about these women identified specific challenges and barriers faced by Black female principals and how they adapted to their roles—roles prescribed by their race *and* their gender. Doughty argued that roles associated with race and gender had negative consequences for Black women who aspired to principalship positions and also contributed to the myth of Black women as superhuman, capable of solving every problem and dealing with every crisis:

The black female school administrator is in a double bind, perhaps even a triple bind. She

embodies two negative statuses simultaneously. One is her color, black, and the other is her sex, female, neither of which society values very highly. (p. 165)

Doughty’s findings are significant because they focus on the ways in which both race and gender, rather than gender as a single factor, affect the leadership of Black female administrators. For example, at the time of Doughty’s study (1972–1973), Black women were usually in supervisory or consultant roles. As principals, they were primarily found in elementary ranks in challenging, predominantly Black schools; they were rarely in the high school principalship, a position reserved for men. Thus, almost two decades after the *Brown* decision, Black women continued to be selected for positions on the basis of their gender. As pointed out by Shakeshaft (1989), women were viewed as *well suited* for teaching, but it was usually the case that men were viewed as *more qualified* to be administrators.

Dillard (1995) conducted a case study of an African American female principal and sought to explore and reinterpret traditional definitions of effective school leadership, particularly in the context of the increasing diversity of schools. A central question guided her research: How do African American women interpret their acts of leadership? As an African American woman, Dillard noted that she approached the research from a critical feminist perspective and was “particularly interested in the inclusion of African American women’s realities in the shaping of policy and literature surrounding effective schools and schooling” (p. 543).

Gloria Natham, a caring African American secondary school principal, was the subject of Dillard’s research. Natham’s school was situated in a metropolitan city that had undergone mandatory districtwide desegregation, and Natham noted that, like many other Black principals, she had been “brought here to clean up this mess and relate to these kids” (Dillard, 1995, p. 545). Natham modeled caring leadership in culturally meaningful ways. Her (re)interpretation of school leadership was a form of “talking back”: practicing a style of educational leadership counter to traditional norms. Natham talked back by setting high expectations for students and by holding teachers accountable for helping students reach those expectations. She also talked back by “standing right in their

faces” (p. 557), referring to White teachers who held low expectations in regard to the behavior and academic achievement of Black students. She maintained her role as teacher and taught one class each semester. While her decision to teach initially stemmed from her dissatisfaction with the teachers who were being sent to her school, she also taught as a way to reinterpret her role as principal and to be “part of the lives of our kids” (p. 550).

Natham practiced “othermothering” (Case, 1997; Irvine, 1999; Loder, 2005)<sup>16</sup>—consistently nurturing, protecting, and encouraging students and holding herself responsible for their success. Dillard labeled Natham’s personal commitment to students as “authentic leadership”: leadership grounded in nurturing and protecting children who were not her own. Her authentic leadership also involved establishing credibility with parents and gaining their support in efforts to enhance student achievement. Natham encountered several challenges to her caring style of leadership: racism, uncommitted faculty, lack of support for integration, resistance from veteran teachers, and lack of commitment to the academic success of all children. Despite these challenges, Natham remained committed to educating and caring for her students.

Natham was described as a role model for African American students: “She nurtures . . . and leads by her presence, by her example, by the way she conducts her life and work in putting herself on the line for them” (Dillard, 1995, p. 557). In contrast to Hinton (Lyman, 2000), who did not interpret his caring leadership style as being connected to race, Natham’s caring leadership was directly tied to her same-race affiliation with her students and their families, her cultural heritage, and her status as an African American woman. Natham’s caring leadership, her talking back, and her commitment to African American students represented overt acts of resistance often viewed as risky, “particularly for African American women working within powerful White male dominated sites such as the high school principalship” (Dillard, 1995, p. 548). Paraphrasing Derrick Bell (1992), Dillard wrote that Natham was an example of a caring African American female principal who served “to constantly remind the powers that be that there are persons like us who are not only on the side of [African Americans and other subjugated people] but are determined

[through resistance and reinterpretation] to stand in their way” (p. 550).

Returning to a central question of her research—Are traditional “scientific” conceptualizations of principal leadership relevant in a time of increased diversity in schools?—Dillard (1995) concluded that Natham’s story suggests “it is impossible to create such conceptualizations of teaching or leading—or their ‘effectiveness’—without taking issues of culture and community context into account” (p. 558). Natham’s caring leadership established a school culture focused on the needs of students. It also provided African American students with a nurturing and caring environment that was similar to what Blacks experienced in all-Black schools before desegregation but that is often missing in urban schools today. Natham’s story is illustrative of the effects of race, gender, and culture on principal leadership. She chose to lead in purposeful ways that reflected her own values as an African American and a woman and in ways that she believed would help African American students. This research also provides evidence of the ethno-humanist role identity assumed by African American principals. Natham took ownership of and held herself accountable for the academic and social achievement of her students. Her decision to teach a class, her direct work with parents, and her ritual of making notes on every report card reflected her personal form of cultural management: interpreting, representing, and authenticating the school culture and her relationships with students.

Debbie Pressley, a Black female middle-school principal, was the subject of research conducted by Reitzug and Patterson (1998). The researchers described the caring and empowering practice of Pressley primarily as she interacted with students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, and “shadowing” Pressley as she went about her daily work. Pressley’s school was located in an economically depressed area of a large urban city and had a predominantly African American student population. Pressley was selected for the study because of her reputation as an outstanding leader. Her community nomination (Foster, 1997) came from several principals, and her reputation was verified by teachers as well as other educators. Reitzug and Patterson (1998) identified several key themes related to Pressley’s leadership practice: her focus on interactions with students, the caring nature

of her interactions with students, and the ways in which she empowered students through her interactions with them. Pressley described her role as principal as facilitating learning, empowering others, and developing the healthy child. Using a narrative approach, the researchers told Pressley's story over the course of 2 days, documenting the typical plans, activities, interruptions, and challenges of her workday as well as her interactions with students. Pressley practiced empowerment through caring interactions with students by: (a) establishing and developing a personal connection, (b) honoring their voice, (c) showing concern for the individual well-being of students by setting standards, (d) connecting students to their communities, and (e) helping students consider alternatives to actions and decisions that could jeopardize their social and academic future.

Reitzug and Patterson (1998) observed that Pressley's roles and responsibilities did not differ significantly from those described in the principalship literature. However, Pressley's style of leadership was distinctly different with respect to "how she chose to engage in this responsibility and the amount of time she chose to devote to it" (p. 178). The "how" of Pressley's caring leadership included *receiving* the perspectives of others through an open-door policy, *responding* to students by caring for them and comforting them, and *remaining* by keeping students with the same teacher for 3 years to build positive relationships. Her focus on the healthy child, academic excellence, and merging individual needs of students and community concerns shaped her caring and empowering style of leadership.

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) conducted in-depth interviews with three middle-aged African American female principals working in urban schools. Each principal "recounted the realities (successes, failures, and limitations) of her actual work, the reconstruction of deeply held leadership belief systems, and the personal resolutions evolving from her leadership experiences within schools" (p. 340). Like Dillard (1995), the researchers sought to listen to the voices of Black female principals as a way to begin to "change minds and social constructs about the 'Others' in America's public school districts" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 352).

Educated in the segregated schooling of the Midwest and Deep South, the principals drew

on their "cultural consciousness" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 359) to guide their leadership decisions. Each woman revealed her experiences with racism, sexism, stereotypes, and assigned identities and her decision to succeed in spite of the barriers she encountered. Each worked in a school where she was challenged with implementing and maintaining policies and programs that were inequitable and impeded student achievement. Despite such challenges, these principals exhibited a personal commitment, based on their cultural affiliation, to educating African American children from low-income backgrounds, many of whom had been subjected to low teacher expectations. Seeking to build schools with a culture of caring, they implemented alternative forms of decision making that not only would benefit students but would also offer alternative definitions of organizational effectiveness in schools.

Claire, one of the principals in the study, was charged with turning around a failing school. In interviews, she discussed the "hopelessness and helplessness" at the school, the poor graduation rates (only 2% to 5%), and other internal and external factors that placed the school in the "failing" category. At the end of Claire's second year as principal, student attendance and test scores had improved, and Claire had increased parental involvement by instituting family partnership nights and had improved relationships with teachers by forming teaching teams. The second principal in the study believed in the power of staff development and devoted a considerable amount of time to planning activities that would "raise the level of consciousness about racist teaching practices" (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 353). The third principal modeled servant leadership as a way to show teachers how to serve every student. Collectively, the stories of these principals speak of a desire to make a difference in the lives of African American children. Bloom and Erlandson noted that the women's stories reject theories of inferior capabilities based on race or gender. They also acknowledged, however, that the stories do not suggest that "only African American principals know how to effectively operate urban schools" (p. 351). Rather, these stories are illustrative of leadership that is counter to what is generally described in the literature.

According to Loder (2005), "Recent work on African American women principals suggests

that motherhood and its associated values of nurturing, caretaking, and helping develop children are salient to how they understand and interpret their roles” (p. 304). This was particularly the case with the principals included in the research conducted by Dillard and by Reitzug and Patterson. Gloria Natham and Debbie Pressley purposely included “othermothering” (interpersonal caring) in their leadership. Both wanted to relate to their students and treated students like their own children or members of their family. They viewed othermothering as consistent with the leadership roles of Black female principals, and their othermothering/interpersonal caring was linked to their identity: Black and female.

The Black female principals in these studies promoted student achievement in both direct and indirect ways. Gloria Natham was the exception among the cases. By choosing to teach a class each semester, she held herself personally accountable for the academic achievement of students in her school. While Dillard did not indicate whether her direct involvement helped raise test scores, Natham chose to model how principal leadership can lead to improved student achievement. Natham is also an exception because in large urban high schools, principals rarely have time to directly participate in teaching, instructional supervision, or curriculum coordination (Mertz & McNeely, 1998). Rather, they typically fulfill bureaucrat/administrator roles focusing on more indirect goals of schooling. Natham’s decisions reflected her conscious effort to merge her ethno-humanist and bureaucratic/administrator roles. The cultural perspectives of Black female principals were also a consistent theme in the studies reviewed here. These principals relied on their cultural heritage and their knowledge of the cultural norms of the Black community to motivate students and parents. In addition, their cultural perspectives also included knowing the most appropriate forms of communication, having the ability to talk to students in ways that drew on same-race affiliation, and being part of students’ lives. These principals also acknowledged that in the post-*Brown* era, it was their responsibility to address some of the cultural norms that negatively affected students’ opportunities for success.

## DISCUSSION

The 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision provides a context for the examination of the leadership of Black principals in the periods both before and after the decision. Ideally, the decision would have remedied inequitable educational structures and provided a racially and socially just context for educating Black children. Black principals would have continued to make significant contributions to Black children, their communities, and leadership theory and practice. However, these ideals were not always a reality. The research reviewed here indicates that Black principals often led under extremely adverse circumstances. These Black principal-leaders worked in both segregated and integrated contexts, and in many instances their leadership was defined by oppressed community and educational settings. Yet they were resilient, resourceful, and dedicated, and they remained diligent in their commitment to the education of Black children. They were more than managers—they were also visionaries who adopted a philosophy of agency and prevailed in spite of strong opposition to their efforts.

Evidence suggests that many of these principals embodied the characteristics of Lomotey’s (1993) ethno-humanist role identity: commitment to Black students, compassion for these students and their families, and confidence in the intellectual ability of these students. This was particularly evident in the stories of Black principal-leaders in the post-*Brown* era, who were typically assigned to the worst schools in the worst neighborhoods with the lowest-performing students. For example, principals such as Gloria Natham were hired to clean up messes and relate to Black students. Post-*Brown* African American principals also led in the changed contexts of schooling, particularly in urban areas. Urban schools had more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse student bodies, and they underwent complex changes in technological needs, increases in the number and kinds of social support services needed, and decreases in funding (Loder, 2005). Crosby (1999), an African American male principal at a large urban high school, lamented the decline of the urban school context:

For those of us who work in schools, it is . . . the best of times and the worst of times. Our urban

schools, once the pride of our nation, are now a source of controversy and inequity. We have watched with dismay their descent into confusion and failure. (p. 298)

Clearly, 50 years after *Brown*, Black principal-leaders face different challenges in their efforts to educate Black students.

Collectively, the research reviewed here yielded four consistent themes: (a) resistance to ideologies and individuals opposed to the education of Black students, (b) the academic and social development of Black students as a priority, (c) the importance of the cultural perspectives of Black principals, and (d) leadership based on interpersonal caring. The academic and social development of Black students was a priority for the Black principal-leaders described in this review. They were committed to the academic achievement of Black students, and they fought vigorously for chairs, desks, books, money, well-equipped buildings, and qualified teachers as a way to give Black students every opportunity to experience success. They also believed that schools should be transformational institutions that provide students with various forms of support and that Black students should be given opportunities for their total development. Black students were not "other people's children" (Delpit, 1995); they belonged to their parents and to the school and the community as well. Principals accepted responsibility and held themselves accountable for the well-being of every Black student. Students were nurtured and encouraged in a manner often absent in many urban schools today. Many urban schools, which today have primarily Black populations, often do not provide an atmosphere that is conducive to an ethno-humanist role identity.

Black principal-leaders engaged in both passive and overt acts of resistance in their struggles to educate Black children. They fought against theories of inferiority, funding structures that disadvantaged Black students, an emphasis on vocational over academic preparation, and the displacement of massive numbers of Black teachers and principals. They risked their professional careers and their economic livelihood and stood in the way of opposition to equitable systems of education. Lacking any real power to implement policy, they worked with Black

parents who went before White school boards to secure needed resources for schools. In the face of these challenges, they continued to educate Black children, doing more with less.

The importance of the cultural perspectives of Black principal leaders is directly related to the absence of *race* in the discourse on school leadership. Mertz and McNeely (1998) argued that "school administration has been male dominated and male defined (largely White male); that is, explained, conceptualized and seen through the eyes of males" (p. 196). The authors' emphasis on the continuing focus on White males indicates that there is a privileging of one voice over another and a single lens and single authority representing the whole of educational leadership (see also Fenwick, 2001). This privileging of voice also suggests that even while Black principals possess an insider's perspective, their voices have not been considered in debates about the most effective ways to educate Black children. Culture was a constant within this theme. The work of Lomotey (1989a, 1993), Siddle Walker (1993a, 1993b), Dillard (1995), and Bloom and Erlandson (2003) strongly suggests the presence of a distinctly Black perspective in school leadership, a perspective based largely on culture. In the segregated schooling of the South and in many predominantly Black urban schools today, Black principals practice leadership based on their insider status and their membership in the distinct Black culture. Same-race/cultural affiliation appears to influence decision making at the school site, as well as the selection of teachers and interactions with parents.

Because the achievement gap between Black students and their White peers continues to be an important topic in education,<sup>17</sup> it is also important that the perspectives of Black principal-leaders be recognized and included in efforts to close this gap. Siddle Walker's research highlighting the successes of Black principal-leaders provides a critical context for such debates, particularly with respect to their impact on Black student achievement. Morris (2004) concurred with Siddle Walker, asking "In what ways might the kind of agency that was evident among Black educators and institutions in the segregation era become manifest in predominantly African American schools in the post-Civil Rights era?" (p. 72).

Several of the Black principal-leaders in the studies reviewed incorporated interpersonal caring into their leadership. Leadership based on interpersonal caring includes the principal's direct and purposeful attention to meeting the psychological, sociological, and academic needs of students. The purposeful adoption of a leadership style that is intended to address the needs of Black students is contrary to myths about Black educators as uncaring and as unable or unwilling to relate to Black students, particularly those from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Foster, 1997). Interpersonal caring may be a necessary component of leadership in schools with predominantly Black student populations, given that many of these students have been subjected to external factors (poverty, racism, violence) and internal factors (underfunded schools, disproportionate placement in special education, low teacher expectations, below-grade-level achievement) that can contribute to low self-esteem and underachievement. As noted by Lomotey, it is important to encourage students not only to excel academically but to take pride in themselves and their culture. Findings from studies discussed in this review suggest that interpersonal caring in educational leadership is effective in creating school cultures that consider the needs of teachers, students, and parents and are conducive to promoting students' success.

The findings from the studies reviewed suggest that Black-principal leaders rewrote history, redefined theory and practice, and rejected deficit theories about school leadership and the education of Black children. In the spirit in which *Brown* was intended, Black principal-leaders were *transformers*, *translators*, and *cultivators*. These individuals transformed education for Black children from a dream hoped for to a dream realized. They saw the possibilities for enhancing the life chances of Black students and transformed their schools into institutions that promoted Black student achievement, recognized Black culture, and promoted racial pride and self-esteem. They accepted their roles as leaders and held themselves accountable for the uplifting of a race through education, leading schools that were cultural symbols of the development of the whole child. As Black principal-leaders, they transformed the impossible into the possible for many Black children and translated the Black agenda for education to students,

parents, teachers, and the White power structure. Through their models of servant leadership, they used the power of education to change lives. Additionally, they offered teachers and other staff members a vision, provided them with goals and objectives, and showed them the importance of continued professional development. Black principal-leaders cultivated the skills and talents of Black students and teachers. They cultivated the highest ideals of academic achievement and sought to lead "good schools."

The themes articulated in this review are not identified as such in the traditional literature on school leadership, specifically the principalship literature. Contemporary school administration/leadership frameworks typically focus on the various administrative/leadership styles (Bolman & Deal, 1997; Leithwood & Duke, 1999), administrative/leadership functions (Farkas, Johnson, & Duffett, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003), alternative perspectives on school leadership such as leadership for social justice (Dantley & Tillman, 2005; Marshall, 2004), and diversity in educational administration/leadership (González, 2002; Tillman, 2003).<sup>18</sup> Principals are viewed as instructional leaders who coordinate the curriculum; monitor student progress by assessing and using test data; facilitate teacher competence by providing staff development, resources, and other forms of support; and establish a climate conducive to student success.

Hallinger and Heck (1996), in their review of studies on the principal's role in school effectiveness, found that personal characteristics such as gender, previous teaching experience, and values and beliefs "influence how principals enact their role" (p. 21). There is no evidence to suggest that the race or the cultural perspectives of the principal were factors in these studies. Leithwood and Duke (1999) articulated six models of leadership: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial/strategic, and contingency. Culture as a factor in principal leadership was discussed in only one of the models: transformational leadership. With respect to culture, the authors cited Reitzug and Reeves (1992), who noted that cultural leadership includes "defining, strengthening, and articulating values" but cautioned that "leaders may manipulate culture to further their own ends" (p. 50). Deal and Peterson (2000) discussed culture in educational leadership in the



context of the school setting: "Culture arises in response to persisting conditions, novel changes, challenging losses, and enduring ambiguous or paradoxical puzzles" (p. 202). These conceptualizations of culture suggest a different emphasis than those articulated by Lomotey (1989a, 1993), Dillard (1995), Siddle Walker (1993a, 1996), and others.

The descriptions in the contemporary literature do not differ significantly from the descriptions of African American principals who assumed both bureaucrat/administrator and ethno-humanist role identities. As Reitzug and Patterson (1998) found in their study of a Black female principal, differences in leadership philosophy, style, and effectiveness were directly related to "how" the principal practiced leadership and the amount of "time" she invested in her work. The research reviewed here also points to the "why" of principal leadership as an important factor. That is, African American principals, to a great degree, led on the basis of their same-race/cultural affiliation and their desire to positively affect the lives of Black students. In most cases, their "why" was closely linked to their identities: Black and male, and Black and female.

Witziers et al. (2003) noted that the literature on school leadership suggests that principals who are effective instructional leaders positively affect the school climate and student achievement (see also, e.g., Bredeson, 1996; Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). However, other scholars have questioned the effects of educational leadership on student achievement (e.g., Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy, 1988). Among the reasons given for these opposing viewpoints were the absence of an extensive body of research on the relationship between school leadership and student achievement, the difficulty in measuring the direct effects of such relationships, and the varying ways in which educational leadership is conceptualized and operationalized (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995; Witziers et al., 2003).

The research reviewed here suggests that there is a strong relationship between African American principal leadership and African American student achievement. In the pre-*Brown* era of segregated schooling, this relationship was often more subtle; that is, because schools

were not driven by state testing mandates and because Black principals worked in a closed system, student achievement was promoted through encouraging students to excel, encouraging them to pursue postsecondary education, and motivating them to become productive citizens. In the immediate post-*Brown* era of schooling, Black principal-leaders (even after they had lost their positions) continued to encourage students to excel in the face of resistance to integration. Later, these principal-leaders established environments, policies, and procedures that would lead to academic success. They hired competent teachers, coordinated curricula, instituted innovative support programs, and began to use test data to assess student achievement.

While the literature provides evidence of a positive relationship between Black principal leadership and Black student achievement, the literature is less clear on the relationship between White principals and African American student achievement (as well as the achievement of other minority and low-income students). Because it is often the case that the race of principals is not revealed in research studies (e.g., Kimball & Sirotnik, 2000; Portin, 2000), there is little conclusive evidence regarding the ways in which this factor affects student achievement. Thus, it may be difficult to determine in what direct and indirect ways cross-race principal-student relationships are a factor in improved student achievement. Several studies have examined the role of White principals in the academic achievement of African American students. Tillman (2005a) found that the White male high school principal in her study attempted to affect student achievement in indirect rather than direct ways. For example, he felt that his personal connection to the Black students in his school allowed him to use informal conversations with students and their parents as one way to encourage students to excel. He did not use more direct approaches such as empowering teachers to implement practices that would lead to student achievement, nor did he use standardized test data to make decisions about improving test scores.

Mertz and McNeely (1998) studied a White female principal of a high school with a student population that was mixed along racial, ethnic, and class lines. The principal wanted her school to be "an academic giant"

(p. 207) and expressed her commitment to “academic excellence, curriculum improvement, and student learning” (p. 212). However, the researchers found that she spent more of her time on managerial tasks than on instructional tasks. While she visited classrooms to evaluate teachers or to check on students, the majority of her time was spent on discipline matters, patrolling the halls, and responding to requests from parents and the central office. As with the principal in Tillman’s study, her work was consistent with the literature describing the high school principalship; that is, instructional leadership and curriculum are not among the top five tasks that dominate the work of high school principals. Thus, while this principal professed her commitment to academics, she was constrained by the culture of the traditional high school setting.

Riester, Pursch, and Skrla (2002) examined the roles of six principals in highly successful elementary schools that primarily served minority and low-income students. Each of the schools had achieved “recognized” or “exemplary” status in the state accountability system. Three of the principals were White, and one, a White woman, was placed at her school to raise low test scores. Collectively, these principals shared a common belief system that included (a) promoting a democratic culture, (b) adopting a prescriptive approach to literacy and academic success, and (c) demonstrating a stubborn persistence in “getting there” (p. 292). They believed that it was teachers who did the real work in schools and that principals must empower them to “enact specific practices that lead to learning for all” (p. 283). As noted by a White male principal, “If the children can’t learn the way we teach, then we need to learn how to teach to how the children learn” (p. 293). White principals believed that students should not be blamed for poor achievement; rather, after assessing student test scores, teachers used specific prescriptive approaches to developing literacy skills. According to the authors, all of the principals used tools such as benchmarks and assessment of prior performance to guide placement of students. In addition, all held themselves accountable to every student, a characteristic the authors suggested is typically absent in schools. The principals’ beliefs that all students could and would be academically successful and a culture of persistence in each

school were instrumental in facilitating academic achievement. A key in the students’ academic achievement appeared to be the principal’s willingness to allow teachers to make decisions about the most effective curriculum and instructional techniques that would lead to student success. Riester et al.’s findings suggest that White, African American, and Hispanic principals shared similar leadership philosophies and practices with respect to enhancing the academic achievement of minority and low-income students.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The majority of the research reviewed here employed the use of qualitative methods. This suggests that qualitative methods represent an effective approach to conducting research about Black principals. These methods allowed researchers to conduct in-depth interviews, observations, and document analyses that yielded thick, rich descriptions of Black principal-leaders. As Tillman (2002) has argued, when research is approached from a cultural perspective, “the individual and collective knowledge of African Americans is placed at the center of the inquiry” (p. 3). However, there is also a need for more research about Blacks in the principalship in which quantitative methods are employed. Survey research based on national samples can yield results that are generalizable to the broader population of Black principals. Such studies are important given that recent large-scale surveys on the principalship have grouped Black principals in the category of women and minorities (e.g., Farkas et al., 2003; Gates, Ringel, Santibañez, Ross, & Chung, 2003) and have failed to illuminate the specific circumstances that affect the leadership of these principals.

Several questions warrant further research. First, what factors affect the leadership of Black principals in urban school contexts in the post-*Brown* era of schooling? Most Black principals are employed in urban school districts; however, the research on urban schools is diffused, and there are a limited number of specific themes evident in the research that has been conducted on Black principals in these schools. The research described here suggests that post-*Brown* Black principals typically lead schools

that are underfunded, have shortages of qualified teachers, and have low standardized test scores. There is a need for research that investigates how these factors, as well as others, affect the leadership capacity of Black principals.

Second, what specific leadership styles are exhibited by Black principals? The research reviewed here suggests that culture is an important factor in the leadership styles of African American principals, and some principals adopted both bureaucrat/administrator and ethno-humanist role identities. While findings from the studies that were reviewed indicate that Black principals may employ more than one leadership style, little is known about the specific styles (as articulated in the traditional educational leadership literature) adopted (i.e., transformational, contingency, managerial, participative).

Third, what is the relationship between African American school leadership and African American student achievement? Findings from the studies reviewed here suggest that this relationship is positive. However, there is only limited evidence suggesting the specific ways in which same-race/cultural affiliation is directly linked to African American student achievement, particularly with respect to achievement gaps. While much has been written about the achievement gap between African American students and their White counterparts, there is a shortage of research on the specific ways in which African American leaders directly contribute to African American student achievement.

What are the links between White school leadership and African American student achievement, particularly in urban schools? Fifty years after *Brown*, urban schools are now resegregated. Yet the majority of principals in urban schools with predominantly African American and other minority student populations are White (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). These principals are responsible for facilitating the academic achievement of large numbers of African American students. More research is needed to determine the direct ways in which White principals promote student achievement through their leadership practices.

Research on these as well as other questions regarding the leadership of African American principals in pre-K-12 education would enhance

our knowledge of important issues in the field of educational leadership. Moreover, such research is needed to continue the hope, promises, and legacy of *Brown*.

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Anderson (2004), Tillman (2004a), Foster (2004), a special issue of the *Journal of Negro Education on Brown* at 50 edited by Frank Brown (2004), Ogletree (2004), Orfield and Lee (2004), and a special issue of the *History of Education Quarterly* edited by Michael Fultz (2004b).

2. The terms *Black* and *African American* are used interchangeably in this chapter.

3. The terms *educational leadership* and *educational administration* are used interchangeably here. While it is not within the scope of this chapter to enter into a complete discussion of the similarities and differences between the two terms, much of the focus in the field is on school leadership versus school administration. For a more extensive discussion of the evolution of and increased use of the term *leadership*, see Leithwood and Duke (1999).

4. Leithwood and Duke (1999) reviewed feature-length articles about various types of educational leadership in “four representative English-language educational administration journals” (p. 46). The review included articles published as early as 1988, the year the first edition of the *Handbook of Research on Educational Administration* (Boyan, 1988) was published. According to Leithwood and Duke, two of the journals, *Educational Administration Quarterly* and the *Journal of School Leadership*, publish empirical and theoretical work primarily from North America. The *Journal of Educational Administration* and *Educational Management and Administration* publish work from countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom as well as from North America. Another journal, not reviewed in Leithwood and Duke’s work, is the *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, which also publishes research on educational leadership/administration from other countries as well as North America.

5. There is an emerging body of research on the urban school principalship (see, e.g., Carter & Fenwick, 2001; Cistone & Stevenson, 2000; Gooden, 2005; Mukuria, 2002). In addition, articles published in educational journals such as the *Journal of Negro Education*, *Urban Review*, *Urban Education*, and *Education and Urban Society* typically focus on urban schooling. However, no specific lines of research on Blacks in the principalship are evident in the general category of urban school leadership.

6. A recent publication, the *Sage Encyclopedia of Educational Leadership and Administration* (English,

2006), includes a greater diversity of perspectives in the field of educational leadership/administration. This work is intended to be a reference for graduate students, practitioners, and scholars in the field.

7. *Servant leadership* is a term that has been used to describe the leadership of Blacks in leadership positions such as ministers, civil rights activists, and educators. Greenleaf (1977) defined a servant leader as one who is “committed to serving others through a cause, a crusade, a movement, a campaign with humanitarian[,] not materialistic, goals” (p. 13). For more extensive discussions of the concept of African Americans and servant leadership, see Alston and Jones (2002) and Williams (1998).

8. Most of the research conducted on the displacement of Black educators after *Brown* has focused on the massive firing of Black teachers (see, e.g., Ethridge, 1979; Foster, 1997; Fultz, 2004a; Hooker, 1971; Hudson & Holmes, 1994; Lewis, Garrison-Wade, Scott, Douglas, & Middleton, 2004; Milner & Howard, 2004; Orfield, 1969; Tillman, 2004b).

9. For a more extensive discussion about the ways in which Black principals lost their jobs, see Franklin and Collier (1999).

10. For other work on the education of Blacks that also examines the role of the principal, see Jones (1981), Morris (1999, 2004), Savage (2001), and Ward Randolph (1997).

11. Sowell conducted his research at five public schools (Booker T. Washington High School in Atlanta, Georgia; Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland; McDonough 35 High School in New Orleans, Louisiana; P.S. 91 in Brooklyn, New York; and Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C.) and three private Catholic schools (St. Paul of the Cross in Atlanta and St. Augustine and Xavier Prep in New Orleans).

12. Lightfoot conducted her study in two urban high schools (George Washington Carver High School in Atlanta and John F. Kennedy High School in New York City), two suburban high schools (Highland Park High School in Highland Park, Illinois, and Brookline High School in Brookline, Massachusetts), and two elite, private high schools (St. Paul’s School in Concord, New Hampshire, and Milton Academy in Boston).

13. Although the participants in this study were female African Americans, their gender was not the focus of the study. Thus, the study is not included in the section that focuses on research about African American female principals.

14. For more extensive discussions on this point, see Dempsey and Noblit (1996) and Edwards (1996).

15. The topic of women in school leadership has also been discussed by Jones (2003), Ortiz and Marshall (1988), and Shakeshaft (1988, 1989, 1999).

16. Loder drew on Collins’s (1991) definition of *othermothers* as women “who work on behalf of the

Black community by expressing ethics of caring and personal accountability, which embrace conceptions of transformative power and mutuality” (p. 132).

17. See, for example, Anderson (2003), Barton (2004), Caldas and Bankston (1998), Hale (2004), Klein (2002), Kozol (1991), Lomotey (1987, 1989b), Ogbu (2003), Perry (2003), Perry, Steele, and Hilliard (2003), Resnick (2004), and Sizemore (2003).

18. Lomotey, Allen, Canada, Mark, and Rivers (2003) conducted a comprehensive review of the theoretical and empirical literature on African American school leaders. The review covered the years 1972 through 2002 and included dissertations, journal articles, conference papers, books, and bulletins. The authors identified six categories that included work on assistant principals, principals, and superintendents: (a) African American female educational leaders, (b) mobility opportunities for African American educational leaders, (c) roles and role expectations of African American leaders, (d) job satisfaction of African American educational leaders, (e) factors affecting the performance of African American leaders, and (f) management styles of African American leaders.

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