The Me You Do Not See: The Experiences of African American Administrators and Double Consciousness

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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The Me You Do Not See:
The Experiences of African American Administrators and Double Consciousness

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Education in
Educational Administration

Julie M. McCann, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee
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2018
Abstract

This qualitative study focused on the experiences of 10 African American professionals, five males and five females, in educational administrative positions. The purpose of the study was to show how African American educational administrators perceived double consciousness and describe how they navigated or negotiated their race when working with European American stakeholders in educational organizations. The administrators participated in two interviews, answering questions on race, socioeconomic status, differences between Black and White leadership and lifestyles, culture, and double consciousness. The theoretical framework of this study included elements of critical race theory and culturally sensitive research approaches to support a narrative inquiry. Each administrator participated in two in-depth interviews at locations chosen by the participants. Each interview session was recorded and transcribed. Four major findings of the study indicated that dualism was innate and internalized, as Black administrators, the participants faced five major challenges, and the participants created a sense of self personally, professionally, and as educational leaders. A synthesis of the findings revealed that the African American administrators functioned within one or more level of duality, which the researcher coined as layers of duality.

Keywords: double consciousness, African American, education, administrators, duality, intersectionality
Dedication

First, this work is dedicated to my jewels, Ebony, William, and Savannah. Life would not have been the same without you. This is what gladiators do. This is for you!
Acknowledgements

I am thankful to my God for planting this seed in me and giving me the strength to complete an accomplishment of this nature.

I thank my parents—my father for making me feel like a princess and my mother for taking the time to instill the importance of having an education. My brothers and I knew that if we did not do anything else in life, we needed to graduate from high school or that would be the end of life as we knew it!

I thank my brothers for being pillars in my life. I thank my oldest brother for being the first in everything, the first born; the first to graduate from college, and the list goes on. He set the course, paved the way, and established and positioned the bar of expectations for us to reach. I thank my second oldest brother for terrorizing me throughout our childhood! Our fights made me stronger and equipped me with the skills I needed to not be hurt or crushed by the harsh realities of the world. He was and still is the silent physical strength of our family. The choices he made in life helped me to stay on the road that was paved for us. They are the two greatest men I know.

I am thankful to my first-born for grounding me, which caused me to remain focused in life. Without her, I would have surely and truly been lost. I also thank my two little lights. They were placed in my life so that I could learn to open my heart and love beyond what I am able to see.

I would like to thank my friends, some of whom were my anchors and others who were my buoys. I thank you for being in and a part of my life at the right time and the right place. Without you, I would have drowned. Thank you to my anchors: Big sis Kellicia Mae Gene,
Chanda, Cheyl, Gwendolyn, and my buoys, Marshawn, Michelle, Mary, Stephanie, Brandy, Brandie, and Brandi!

I would like to extend many thanks to my committee members. It was an absolute pleasure and honor to have your knowledge and expertise guide me through this endeavor. There were times in the beginning of this process when I was completely lost, and all of you were patient and allowed me to find my way. Dr. McCann, you were a constant beacon of light. Your e-mails kept me afloat at times when I felt like I was sinking. Your sense of humor, your perspective, and your candidness suit you well; you were the perfect committee chair! Dr. Wellner, there’s a delicate nature to your words; you always said the right things at the right times. I thank you for that. Finally, Dr. Thomas-Dixon, I appreciated the strength of your words and your critiques. I found them challenging, which caused me to grow. I thank all of you for helping to guide my ship ashore!

My final thanks, I extend to my participants: Malcolm, Ruby, Langston, Maya, Xzavier, Sadie, Fredrick, MyaM’chele, Barak, and Zora. Because of you and your willingness to share your experiences with me, I was able to reach a dream. You were and are my dream catchers. Thank you!
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Chapter 1: Introduction

It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others. . . . One ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 7)

Blackness, the conscious awareness and understanding of being Black, is a socially constructed identity (Chiariello, 2016). Blackness is an artificially created association of what it means to be Black in America; mainstream (White) Americans construct connotations, seeded, planted, and cultivated from negative images and stereotypes (hooks, 2003). In fact, Blackness encompasses a conscious awareness so acute that its internalization symbolically assassinates the Black soul (Du Bois, 1903; Eze, 2011; hooks, 2003; Moore, 2005; West, 1993). Recognizing that Black Americans have not enjoyed the same human rights and civil liberties as have White Americans has created a problem for people of African descent who were born in America (Du Bois, 1903; Eze, 2011; hooks, 2003; Moore, 2005; West, 1993).

This lack of privilege has manifested when protesters gathered in urban areas underneath the hashtag of #BlackLivesMatter. Similarly, the problem of Blackness was evident when African American football players knelt on a field during the anthem in protest of the Black lives they felt were taken unjustly (Branch, 2017). This problem becomes visible when researchers study poverty in America. Over the past six years, 13.5% to 15% of Americans lived in poverty (The Working State of America, 2016). Compared to the national average, a much higher percentage of African Americans have lived in poverty—during this same period, 24% to 27% of African Americans between the ages of 18 and 64 lived in poverty, and 42% to 45% of African American children lived in poverty (The Working State of America, 2016).
The consequences of poverty on children’s lives and education has adversely affected them in many ways, ranging from issues with nutrition and healthcare to the physical and psychological dangers of living in poverty-stricken neighborhoods; children of poverty endure “acute and chronic stressors” and “emotional and social challenges” (Jensen, 2009, p. 7). When poverty is coupled with negative notions about what it means to be Black in America, awareness is awakened. Knowledge of historical oppression and the current exploitation of the African identity in contrast to the American identity can traumatize a Black person’s soul (Moore, 2005). Evidence shows African Americans have experienced trauma from oppression and the exploitation of their African identities; this trauma may affect the Black soul—specifically, the souls of Black students, teachers, and administrators.

**Introduction to the Problem**

And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,—peculiar even for one who has never been anything else. (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 6)

The problem of being Black in America materializes in education when “forces of the world . . . cause children of color to question their worth . . . stunting their growth” (Delpit, 2002, Preface, para. 2). Black children who question their value today have the propensity to become adults who question their value in the future. Little substantial culturally sensitive and critically conceptualized research has been conducted about African Americans in the 20th century. Bell (1992), Delpit (2002), Lomotey (1989), Tillman (2001), West (1993), and hooks (2003) have provided pertinent cultural data; however, educators should explore the perceptions of modern African American educational leaders. This study was intended to show how 21st-century African American educational leaders have expressed and contended with the duality of being Black and American. The study represents an attempt to peruse the African American
consciousness, exploring the essence of the problem of being Black among African American educational administrators.

Researchers have theorized that people construct their self-identities from their social interactions with and internalizations of their environments (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). This theory relates to the historical views and actions of mainstream (White) society toward African Americans. When members of society fail to acknowledge and negatively portray a raced people, the “lack of recognition has a devastating impact in the formation of the self” (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 233). Therefore, when studying the success of African American students, it is imperative to consider the educational administrators who lead them.

In the literature on educational administrators, more than 148,000 entries were found; approximately 63,000 of those entries were scholarly studies. However, in a specific search for literature pertaining to African American educational administrators, fewer than 750 entries emerged. The number of studies found on the double consciousness of African American administrators in education was minimal. Understanding how African American educational administrators navigate among the construction of their identities, their Blackness, and their working environments may help future Black educators and administrators working in White-led educational systems, as well as White America understand the duality affecting African Americans (Du Bois, 1903).

**Background and Conceptual Framework for the Problem**

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing . . . to merge his double self into a better and truer self. (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 7)

The history of Blacks in America is an American story unlike any other (Coombs, 2013); Black history in America is a story of concealed voices silenced to minimalize “the reality of
trauma in black life” (hooks, 2003, p. 23). Concentrating on the experiences of African American educational administrators and their perceptions of the roles they play within the educational arena facilitates the opportunity to hear the voices of administrators who influence the lives of students, parents, and teachers while standing in the midst of their realities. Leaders establish the cultures and learning climates of their organizations (Gorton & Alston, 2009; Lambert, 1998). With the community and family, educational organizations symbiotically affect students’ consciousness with organizational messages; educational leaders are the orators of these organizational messages, and children will thrive or shatter according to the messages these leaders deliver (Muhammad, 2009).

This study was conceptualized to explore race critically in terms of navigating the duality and complexities of being modern Black educational administrators in America. The study focused on the concept of duality originally described by W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) as African Americans having two souls. African Americans have two souls intertwined; one soul represents the race of people who were once referred to as colored and the other stems from the nation in which they were born.

**Purpose of the Study**

In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of White Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 7)

The purpose of this study was to amplify voices of 10 African American educational administrators, to hear their perceptions of duality, and to understand how duality may or may not have affected their daily personal and professional lives. This study contributes to academic
knowledge in the areas of cultural diversity and cultural justice by providing additional perspectives of the varied experiences of African American educators in America. The findings may help show whether “the greater opportunities to embrace and participate in mainstream America may have paradoxically intensified the challenges posed for Black Americans navigating between the identities of ‘Black’ and ‘American’” (Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2005, p. 5).

Research Questions

This narrative study stemmed from a desire to hear the experiences of 21st-century African American educational leaders to determine how they navigated the duality of being Black and American. The primary questions of the study were:

1. What professional challenges do 21st-century African American educational administrators face?
2. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in White America?
3. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators navigate their two perceptions when conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?
4. How does duality affect 21st-century African American educational administrators’ daily working environment when interacting with White administrators, colleagues, and subordinates?

These research questions were designed to increase awareness of duality and to reveal 21st-century African American administrators’ experiences and encounters when working in educational organizations predominantly controlled by White administrators.
Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

Some studies have focused on African Americans in education, including the intersection of race and gender. The findings of this study are unique and significant for three reasons. First, it is important to hear the voices of African Americans who remain underrepresented. Second, it is important to focus on educational administrators who work in urban areas with students of poverty to reveal the internal intersections of race, self, and society for educators. Third, one of the primary tenets of critical race theory is to bring race to the forefront to uncover what is normal when searching for justice (Ladson-Billings, 1999). This study has the potential to strengthen the working relationships between Black and White Americans.

Definitions of Terms

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

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

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

Critical race theory (CRT): This theoretical approach evolved out of an opposition to “positivist and liberal legal discourse” in the 1970s that was originally called critical legal studies (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 7). CRT is built on four major tenets: (a) Racism is normal a part of society and needs to be revealed; (b) storytelling is used to analyze and establish an additional perspective to the normal narrative; (c) liberalism is consciously critiqued to promote social changes; and (d) Whites are the primary beneficiaries of the civil rights movement (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 7).
Culturally sensitive research approach (CSRA): This term refers to an alternative to traditional research styles in which researchers place race at the forefront (Tillman, 2002). CSRA primarily consists of interviews and observations, which allow researchers to gather culturally relevant information from participants (Tillman, 2002).

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

Duality: This term is used interchangeably with double consciousness to describe the two states of being for Blacks in America, being Black and American (Du Bois, 1903).

Homophily: This term refers to a phenomenon that occurs when two people with similarities are able to communicate and interact effectively (Lomotey, 1987).

Intersectionality: This term refers to the points at which aspects of social entities meet creating, “multiple forms of exclusion” (Monts, 2012, p.41).

Narrative inquiry: This term refers to a research approach involving a collaborative venture between the participants and the researcher in which experiences are explored, shared, and analyzed (Clandinin, Huber, Steeves, & Li, 2011).

Mainstream America: This term refers to White America. (Brannon, Markus, & Taylor, 2015)

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

This study was based on the assumptions that the selected participants contributed willingly during the interviews and shared authentic experiences of their lives. Participants were assumed to be honest and truthful. Participants were assumed to believe the narratives they provided would contribute to knowledge about African Americans and education.
This study was limited in three ways. Purposefully, the researcher focused only on the perceptions of African American educational administrators because their voices were missing from the literature. Thus, the study excluded the voices of White educational administrators. The study was bound by its primary focus, which was to gather the perceptions of 10 African American educational administrators located in urban Midwestern cities. Other limitations included the researcher, the data collection method (semi-structured interviews), and the interview questions. The researcher was bound by her experiences and biases. Further, administrators from a limited selection of educational institutions participated in this research; thus, the sample included educators at public and private K-12 schools, and higher learning institutions.

Summary

The theory of double consciousness is a phenomenological description of self-formation under conditions of racialization (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015, p. 232). This chapter provided an overview of what it means to be Black in America. Because of the way race inherently has been woven into the fabric of American society, researchers must consider race when studying social issues. African Americans, as a race, have endured many traumatic experiences. African Americans have responded to oppression by evolving a double consciousness, which has allowed those who embrace it the opportunity to traverse two worlds.

The purpose of this study was to provide a conceptual meaning and comprehension of how African American educational administrators have navigated between two racially created worlds and show how this endeavor may have affected their professions. Chapter 2 is a review of the factors that have contributed to the formation of double consciousness, including overviews of the history of Blacks in America and the factors of race, culture, and education.
Race, culture, and education are analyzed through a critical lens. Chapter 3 provides descriptions of the methodology of the study and indicates how the data were collected. In-depth interviewing was used to gather data from the participants during two 60 to 90 minute interview sessions. Each session was designed to elicit participants’ narratives regarding their experiences with double consciousness and its influence on their personal and professional lives.

Double consciousness occurs when people live in a highly racialized world (Itzigsohn & Brown, 2015). This study was intended to seek the essence of people’s “oughtness” and show “how it coincides with their willingness” to make changes (CampbellJones, CampbellJones, & Lindsey, 2010, p.64). Among the many tragedies African Americans have faced, certain tragic moments have created an “oughtness,” an awareness of a personal and social self. As African American educational administrators work in inner-city schools, it is important to understand their oughtness, the essence of their souls. This study was designed to reveal the essence among African American educational administrators.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the general history, race, and culture of African Americans. A portion of the literature addresses the overarching question of how 21st-century African American educational administrators have led inner-city organizations while working with European American supervisors, colleagues, and staff. The first section provides an overview of race, culture, and history of the Black experience in America. The second section of the chapter contains literature on African Americans in educational administration positions, showing how their race and culture have affected their roles as leaders. In the third section, elements of critical race theory (CRT) found in Tate (1997) and Tillman’s (2002) culturally sensitive research approach (CSRA) are discussed to build the conceptual framework and describe the methodology used (semi-structured interviews) in which through the CRT lens, race could not be bypassed, overlooked, or ignored. The fourth section of the chapter provides a review of methodological issues and a critique of the research found pertaining to education and double consciousness.

The literature on African American educational administrators has covered feminism and the intersection of race and gender (Davis, 2012; Peters, 2012; Schmidt & Mestry, 2014), biculturalism (Hooijberg & DiTomaso, 1996; Martinez & Welton, 2015), race leadership (Gooden, 2012; Lomotey, 1989; Moore, 2013), and the effects of race on leadership (Vinzant, 2009). This review was constructed on previous researchers’ statements about the culture and experiences of African American educational administrative leaders, guided by two preliminary concepts: The culture of Black people in America is unique (Lomotey, 1987), and Black Americans relate to the world differently than do White Americans (Lomotey, 1989; Vinzant, 2009).
Findings in the literature have indicated that Black educational leaders lead differently, compared to White educational leaders, because of the unique cultural perspectives cultivated through the experiences they encountered from being Black in America. “Black principals . . . lead differently than [do] their White peers” (Lomotey, 1989, p. 173). If this internal difference stems from the duality found in the juxtaposition of Black life versus American life, then understanding the duality may help Black and White leaders in educational communities.

In studying how race affected leadership identities among African American administrators in New England, Vinzant (2009) found that African American administrators’ identities were linked continuously to their race, and the color of their skin was always a factor. Vinzant’s participants revealed that because race was an integral component of American society, a negative connotation was associated with “Blackness,” and constructing identities within this “negative stigma . . . [meant] race affected every part of their lives” (pp. 71–72).

Some participants in Vinzant’s (2009) study believed that race might motivate African American administrators to work harder. Because of the negative perceptions many people in mainstream America possess about African Americans, the administrators stated they had to work harder to dispel the negative myth and to prove they were competent and capable of carrying out their duties (Vinzant, 2009). In addition, Vinzant found (a) the African American administrators believed that because of their race, they were more aware of the inequities minority students experienced; (b) their uniqueness stemming from their blackness allowed them to communicate with a variety of people in a more culturally sensitive way, compared to their White counterparts; and (c) their race influenced their hiring practices, which focused on creating a culture of diversity.
However, there was one question to note in Vinzant’s (2009) study. Although the participants found it important to hire people of color, thus allowing students the opportunity to see Black people “working as principals and educators” (p. 109), Vinzant discovered the “participants did not believe that minority teachers were best for minority students” (p. 116). When hiring educators to teach minority students, some of the participants looked beyond race and searched for teachers who believed any student was capable of learning, especially the underprivileged minority students they served (Vinzant, 2009).

In a study about the perceptions of race and resiliency among African American elementary principals working in predominantly White schools, Davenport (2010) found that although all the participants navigated around and through racial issues, some embraced the roles race placed upon them while others negated race and viewed themselves only as educational leaders within the school. Among the African American administrators, two themes were identified supporting the concept that African American administrators related to the world differently, compared to European American administrators, and those differences governed how they led (Davenport, 2010). The first notable theme was that the participants felt varied emotions when being identified as the Black person in charge (Davenport, 2010). The second notable theme involved the participants’ perceived burden of being representatives for their race (Davenport, 2010).

Finally, in describing the uncertainty of the impact of race on their profession, Davenport (2010) cited a tenet of critical race theory—Whiteness as property (Harris, 1993)—to validate the uniqueness of Black people in America. Davenport stated, “Whites do not have to question their race as a possible negative influence in their job performance” (p. 131). When people must
constantly question whether their race played a part in another’s actions, a sense of double consciousness emerges (Davenport, 2010).

In an investigation of Black and White leadership and the influences of race and race relations on leadership styles, Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) found that Black and White leaders led differently because of their beliefs. In comparing the two subcultures, Brooks and Jean-Marie found differences in cultural values between the two groups in the areas of leadership roles, student achievement, and intergroup interactions. The White leaders followed a patriarchal leadership style within their subculture; the Black leaders did not—the Black subculture respected all their leaders despite their gender (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007).

In addition, the Black leaders believed they were in the position to serve the students of their communities, to be leaders, role models, and advocates for success (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). In contrast, the White participants believed in “rewards and student achievement” based upon “merit” and achieving success through those they knew (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007, p. 762). The White administrators did not think Black students could attain success in any aspect of life because of Black families’ and students’ poor attitudes (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). Finally, Black leaders did not believe in the White leaders of their districts or schools (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). These differences caused the two groups to interact on a superficial level (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). They worked together on business items in a professional manner, but they did not intermingle on a person level (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007). Black leaders held themselves to different expectations than did the White colleagues (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007).

Although shown in a variety of ways, analysis of the literature revealed that the perceived difference in African American leadership was because of what W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) defined
as Black people in America having “two souls,” representing a double awareness of being both Black and American. Clarifying how historical events have created and shaped what Lomotey (1987) described as the Black cultural experience may help readers understand the construct of a double consciousness. The research reviewed in this chapter indicates how African Americans’ duality influenced their educational leadership roles in the 21st century and shows how they navigated this “two-ness of self” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 7).

Conceptual Framework

History of Blacks in America

Race. Throughout American history, Black people in America have been categorized, dehumanized, scrutinized, and oppressed (West, 1993). The systematic oppression of Black people began in Virginia before the American Civil War (Nsombi, 2013). Nsombi (2013) used Galtung’s (1996) concepts of violence to describe three levels of oppression: physical, organizational, and cultural. Colonial Virginians used these levels of oppression to ensure Africans’ enslavement in the present and the future. Nsombi provided historical accounts of the ways Virginian lawmakers systematically constructed laws to help promote and sustain the dominant ideology of that era.

Black people have been considered inferior to their White counterparts from an anthropological viewpoint (Fallace, 2016) and from a psychological viewpoint (Rowe, 2002; Rowe & Cleveland, 1996; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Black people were the progeny of uncivilized beings imported from Africa to Colonial America (Allen & Perry, 2012). Fallace (2012) asserted that the belief in the inferiority of Black people forged the conceptual thought of pragmatic scholars during the early 20th century, creating a reform in educational pedagogy grounded in Western thinking.
In addition, Fallace (2012) proposed that this mindset delineated people of color by covertly conveying a message that Western ideology represented a progressive, forward-looking school of thought, compared to other schools of thought, thus making education “inherently ethnocentric and racist” (p. 511). Moreover, 20th-century scholars such as Du Bois and Dewey inadvertently validated this elitist dogma by using it as a premise of contention (Anderson, 2004; Fallace, 2016).

However, out of this opposition to the predominant canon emerged a focus on the Black intellectual. Du Bois (1903) began concentrating on elevating the social status of Black people in America by highlighting their scholarly capabilities. Du Bois introduced a new concept for Blacks in America, one in which the terms Black, Negro, and colored would become stepping stones for what Alan Locke (1925) defined as the “New Negro,” thus leading Jesse Jackson during a 1988 press conference to encourage Blacks to embrace themselves as African Americans (African American Registry, 2016).

In the 21st century, the issues of race and education have changed to conversations about poverty and education (Jensen, 2009; Payne, 2013). Research has shown that race remains relevant in youth education and educational leadership (Brown, 2005; Castagno, 2014; Harris-Cornileus, 2013; Hooijberg & DiTomaso, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Reed & Evans, 2008; Schmidt & Mestry, 2014; West, 1993). Social scientists created the term race in the 19th century as a tool to label and suppress people of color; the demarcation of race gave birth to racism, which fueled the desire to defile and dehumanize African Americans (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). When humans are debased, human rights are lost (Freire, 1999).

The connotative value placed on the term race was oppressive when applied to humans of a darker hue. However, transforming from slaves to free people, from property to citizens
(Ladson-Billings, 1999), has shown that as a raced people, African Americans are resilient. Through their shared experiences as a group of people bonded by their skin color classification, a symbolic culture emerged, representing

    a distinct African-American culture . . . rooted in soulfulness, a culture of resistance where regardless of status, of whether one was bound or free, rich or poor, it was possible to triumph over dehumanization. This soulful Black culture of resistance was rooted in hope. It had at its heart a love ethic (hooks, 2003, p. 12).

Thus, the resiliency of African Americans as a race has become symbiotic to and a catalyst of culture (Lomotey, 1987; Smedley, 2007). Figure 1 shows a visual representation of the conceptual framework. The perceptions of culture and race held by society, help define and shape the experiences of African Americans in education, as a culture and as leaders.

![Figure 1. Conceptual framework.](image)

**Culture.** The race and ethnicity of a people create a common bond, or culture. West (1993) described culture as a structure rooted in institutions forged by the beliefs, morals, and
ethics of a group of people. Dewey (1916) referred to culture as an intimate human creation that becomes more refined in juxtaposition to nature, similar to the way an aged wine is more refined compared to juice siphoned from freshly crushed grapes. Karenga (as cited in Lomotey, 1987) proposed seven characteristics of culture: mythology, ethos, creative motif, political organization, economic organization, social organization, and history; using these elements, ethnic groups develop unique perspectives of the world. Culture shapes the way people view and interact with their environments. Synthesizing the thoughts of Dewey (1916), Lomotey (1987), and Karenga (as cited in Lomotey, 1987), culture, as a byproduct of the interaction between humans and their environments, is the physical culmination and representation of a group’s shared experiences.

People are shaped by experiences encountered in their environments. People’s thoughts, actions, and words show how they interpret the world (Wilhoit, 1998). In a study of the significance of African American students having African American principals, Lomotey (1987) stated, “Blacks have a distinct culture in America” (p. 173). African Americans perceive, relate, and react to the world “differently” than do other cultures (Lomotey, 1989, p. 3). However, McWhorter (2000) posited that the culture of African Americans created a group of people who inherited the trait of devaluing education. Devaluing education helps promote racial disparities that influence the achievement gap between Black and White American children. The distinctions in African American culture have created a cultural Black phenomenon. This phenomenon has transformed into a shared cultural experience with varied outcomes.

**The Black Experience as a Cultural Experience**

From the Antebellum South to emancipation and from Jim Crow to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), African Americans have had experiences clearly unique from those of other
cultures found in the United States (Lomotey, 1987). The lives of many African Americans have been shaped by oppression, fear, and exclusion from educational opportunities granted freely to European Americans. These characteristics played a crucial part in creating the culture of the darker-skinned people of the American nation.

One example of how fear and oppression shaped African American lives is the story of Ota Benga (Bradford & Blume, 1992). Benga was an African Pygmy man captured in the Congo, shipped to America, and displayed with primates in a cage alongside an orangutan in New York at the Bronx Zoo (Bradford & Blume, 1992). This 1906 event was presented to show the similarities between Black people, monkeys, orangutans, and apes, as opposed to showing the similarities between Black people on display and the White spectators who paid to see Benga (Fallace, 2012). This demonstration exemplified the thought and messages delivered by some psychologists and anthropologists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Guthrie (1976) described the union of the two disciplines as “bedfellows during this golden age of racism” (p. 30). During this time scientific investigations were conducted on “Negritos” [Blacks] (Guthrie, 1976, p. 41) and other people of color in great magnitudes. One event noted by Guthrie (1976) was the St. Louis World’s Fair experiments where psychologists and anthropologists worked together to validate their beliefs by traveling from abroad to study the intellects of Black people and other races, whom they referred to as “uncivilized” (p. 30).

Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry, and Mitchell (2015) showed how 21st-century African Americans in the United States affected others’ perceptions. Regarding the social justice identities of assistant principals, one participant spoke about growing up in the inner city and recognizing the differences in the neighborhoods, which were divided (Carpenter et al., 2015). As a child, this assistant principal understood that he could not be in a particular area at night,
implicitly knowing that “Blackness was a marker of danger to others” (Carpenter et al., 2015, p. 13). Along with carrying the symbol of Blackness, African Americans have historically experienced a culture of spirituality, which induced faith to ward off oppression by immersing the self in critical reflective thought or aesthetic creativity to actively interpret their hope (Dantley, as cited in Dantley, 2005).

Theorists have proposed that culture is determined and created by the shared experiences of a group. In 1871, E. B. Taylor (as cited in Smedley & Smedley, 2005) wrote the earliest definition of culture: Culture is a complexity of facets built by “knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capability and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (p. 1). In 1949, White (as cited in Smedley & Smedley, 2005) expanded Taylor’s definition, noting the ability of humans to create symbols out of such complexities.

Goodenough (1976) asserted that culture was imposed on people as they learned characteristics through interactions. Culture encompasses the beliefs, customs, and arts of a particular society, group, place, or time (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). Culture is the creation of humans, a manifestation of structures found within an environment intertwined with human behaviors (West, 1993), and it shapes and influences people’s lives. Therefore, the plight of African Americans throughout history stemming from the color of their skin and their race can be categorized as a cultural experience.

**Blacks in America: Duality, Education, and Leadership**

Near the late 19th century, Black intellectuals worked to diminish the propaganda about the inferiority of African Americans. Their sole purpose was to promote, cultivate, and highlight intellectual capabilities of African Americans, negating the superiority of Western thought and displaying the ability of African Americans to become socially equal (Young, 2002).
Acknowledging the disparity between the two cultures, Young (2002) stated, “It was also clear to Black scholars that Black Americans differed radically from White Americans in their cultural and social organization at the turn of the century. Hence, a duality existed for Black intellectual thought of that period” (p. 79).

W. E. B. Du Bois, a pioneer of the Black intellectual movement who emerged during the Progressive Era of the early 20th century, sought ways to lift African Americans out of the social and economic hole into which they had been thrown (Young, 2002). Imploring readers to search for the truth in his words, Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903. Du Bois wrote the book to address the problem of that era, namely, the line separating Black and White people. Du Bois described this separation as “the color line” (p. 3), a boundary, a line of racial separation. For African Americans, however, the line created a “veil” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 3) between two worlds and thus symbolized Black people as an American problem.

Du Bois (1903) revealed his analytical perceptions of what it meant to be Black behind the lines of oppression and separation. Having access to both worlds, White and Black, Du Bois dissected and described the ambiguity he encountered when interacting with mainstream America:

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. . . . *How does it feel to be a problem* [emphasis added]. . . To the real question . . . I answer seldom a word. And yet, being a problem is a strange experience. (p. 6)

As he expanded upon the identified problem, Du Bois (1903) delved deeper into the analysis of what it meant to be a Black person in America in comparison to other nationalities in the world. He referred to Black people as being the “seventh son” of America, “born with a veil”
Although Black people born in America inherited a veil of oppression, and were seventh in line, Du Bois (1903) wrote, they had the ability to be bicultural, “gifted with second-sight in this American world, a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world” (p. 7).

Referring to this realization of duality as an unusual awareness, Du Bois (1903) defined this sensation as a \textit{double consciousness}. African Americans had the capacity to see themselves through the eyes of both worlds, White and Black America. This astuteness allowed transparent reflexivity to occur by continuously “looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity” (p. 7). For Du Bois, this ability possessed by African Americans was constant. Therefore, it gave birth to “two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (p. 5). In the early 20th century, Du Bois used his words and insights to express his truths about the differences between White and Black America.

By the mid-20th century, in the context of the state of education and African American students before \textit{Brown v. Board of Education} (1954), African American students attended schools led by African American principals (Brown, 2005). However, after the landmark decision of \textit{Brown v. Board of Education}, the driving force of desegregation caused many of these leaders to be displaced (Brown, 2005). From the late 1960s to the mid- to late-1970s, the number of African American principals diminished throughout the United States, especially in the South (McCray, Wright, & Beachum, 2007; Valverde & Brown, 1988).

Data from the National Center of Educational Statistics showed that from 1993 to 2012, the percentage of African American public school principals remained relatively the same, at
10% of the total population (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 1993 to 1994, 10.1% of public school principals were African American (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). In 2011 to 2012, 18 years later, the percentage remained unchanged (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Currently, African American educational leaders are likely to be placed in urban educational settings that struggle to service students because of a series of “underisms”: underfunding, underachieving student scores, and underqualified teachers ill-equipped to work in urban areas (Brown, 2005; McCray et al., 2007). However, some researchers have found benefits of such placements (Lomotey, 1989).

Lomotey (1989) used the concept of homophily (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001; Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971) as evidence to describe and support how African American administrators could communicate and relate more effectively with African American students through the commonalities they shared. Nass and Yen (2012) determined that similarities attract—that is, people are more easily drawn to those who are more like them than not. However, Reed and Evans (2008) examined a multicase study that analyzed self perceived challenges of Black principals in predominantly low performing school with predominantly students of color. The researchers (Reed & Evans, 2008) presented two assumptions found about Black principals working in schools with predominantly Black students; the assumptions were: “African-American leaders have values and attitudes that differ from those of the White leaders (p. 490) and African-American female leaders are caregivers or ‘othermothers.’” This role contributes to their nurturing leadership style (p. 494).

After observing as African American female principal in a predominantly Black school and presenting the claims, Reed and Evans (2008) dispelled the assumptions by providing evidence of the principal’s values, attitude, and sentiments which did not reflect the findings of
the research reviewed. Unlike the focus of this study the problems that may surface with African
American principals when working White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates in inner city
schools filled with predominantly students of color were not important factors.

Reed and Evans (2008) contended that principals should not accept principalships based
on race and ethnicity due to the tremendous differences in their social identities. Differences in
experiences regarding the two characteristics “may limit” a principal’s “capacity to lead urban
schools” (p. 489). The researchers (Reed & Evans, 2008) stated, the actions of the principal they
observed revealed that “identity is not fixed, it is fluid and context rich” (p. 496). Cunnigen
(2006) elaborated on this notion by asserting that education was a communal issue, and as such,
African American educational administrators must be flexible, imaginative, and creative when
teaching African American youth (p. 28).

In the 21st century, researchers have examined double consciousness and education in a
variety of ways to describe and define its positive and negative attributes among African
hypothesized double consciousness deterred Black males from pursuing higher education.
Hickman’s findings indicated duality had “a profound effect on African American males” (p. 77)
in education, resulting in a low representation of African American males in higher education.

In a psychological study of adolescent males, Rice (2004) interpreted three forms of
double consciousness represented in the formation of self identity: the conflict and negotiation
of duality, self-preservation, and self-proof. In dialogue, the forms appear when (a) people
realize the existence of duality and experience conflict as they learn to navigate between the two,
(b) people feel the need to preserve their Blackness in mainstream America, and (c) people
attempt to prove or disprove Black stereotypes created within mainstream America (Rice, 2004).
Regarding the experiences of slavery, segregation, and others injustices, Brannon et al. (2015) claimed that double consciousness in the 21st century “was fueled by contemporary racial disparities and the ongoing experience of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality” (p. 586). In a series of studies, Brannon et al. found that double consciousness could be used as a tool to help increase academic achievement among African Americans.

Brannon et al. (2015) indicated African Americans’ duality reflected an “independent” and an “interdependent” creation of self (p. 594). The independent self mirrored the knowledge and characteristics of mainstream society, which encompassed the notion of being an American (Brannon et al., 2015). The interdependent self reflected the knowledge that stemmed from being both Black and American (Brannon et al., 2015). Further, Brannon et al. (2015) theorized that African Americans’ interdependent self nourished their psyches with “positive consequences” by promoting “engagement,” “relatedness,” and “collective responsibility” (p. 588). These attributes increased African Americans’ self-value, and when fostered in educational settings, led to positive outcomes (Brannon et al., 2015). Although their focus was on students at the college level, Brannon et al. suggested the success found in valuing and operating within college students’ interdependent selves might be applicable to African American administrators in educational settings.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) materialized in the 1970s to counteract the dominant legal discourse during the civil rights era (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997). Since then, political activists and scholars have used CRT as a catalyst to focus on and analyze race, racial issues, racial tensions, and the oppressive presence of power in the social and cultural arenas of the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).
In CRT, race is placed at the center of analysis. The theoretical framework of this study was based on two basic premises. The first premise of CRT is that racism is both common and deeply woven into the fabric of American society. CRT researchers’ primary task is to unearth the value placed on an individual being White in an attempt to “transform and move social institutions toward racial empowerment and emancipation” (Roithmayr, 1999, p. 5). In reference to the “meaning and value” assigned to the privilege of being White, Ladson-Billings (1999) wrote, “CRT becomes an important intellectual and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction-deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourse, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (p. 10). Tate (1997) noted the origins of CRT were based on the idea that people of color have experiences “framed” by racism and that their perspectives—their “voices”—were crucial components of the analysis (p. 210).

The second premise of CRT involves hearing the voices of the oppressed; these voices represent the counter-narrative. Roithmayr (1999) and Ladson-Billings (1999) asserted the counter-narrative of CRT intentionally includes the experiences of minorities as the opposition to the story of mainstream America. Evans (2007) contended that hearing the voices of African American educational leaders must be considered. Their voices define their realities, providing theoretical “form and substance in scholarship” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 15).

Culturally Sensitive Research Approach

The second component used to construct this review was culturally sensitive research approach (CSRA; Tillman, 2002). CSRA is an integral component of this study because if culturally sensitive research did not exist the research community would not have access to become knowledgeable about African Americans and education or learn how African Americans
experience the world (Tillman, 2002). A conceptual framework in itself, CSRA comprises several components, including culturally congruent methods, culturally specific knowledge, cultural resistance to theoretical dominance, culturally sensitive data interpretation, and culturally informed theory and practice (Tillman, 2002). CSRA practitioners use qualitative methods such as interviews, observations, and participant observations “to investigate and capture holistic contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic, and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African Americans” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). When using these methods, researchers must consider their personal cultural knowledge, perspectives on race, and inner and outer issues related to the research process; hence, “the researcher is committed to and accepts the responsibility for maintaining the cultural integrity” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6).

**Narrative Inquiry**

The traditions of using oral stories as historical markers intertwined with personal and communal experiences are deeply woven in African and African American culture (Hamlet, 2011). In fact, passing on knowledge through oral expression is a crucial aspect of human culture. Heath (2012) asserted, “Human beings hold primary interest in two things: reality and telling about it. . . . And tell stories, we must” (p. 6). For African Americans, these oral traditions have been a source of shared learnings of “cultural expressions and survival” (Hamlet, 2011, p. 74). The participants in this study shared their experiences of what it meant to be African American administrators leading inner-city educational organizations predominantly managed by European American administrators.

The culture of Black people in America whose ancestors were slaves in America encompasses varied and unique experiences that identify the African American experience as a
phenomenal event. The constraints placed upon African Americans throughout history have established the social significance of studying how African American administrators have navigated being a person of color while working with European Americans, who currently represent the majority in America. In this study, White colleagues, supervisors, and subordinates are referred to as mainstream America. The findings regarding African American professionals’ experiences may help members of the research and educational community understand one of the many obstacles African Americans still face in the 21st century. The key to understanding experience is to engage in dialogue in which narratives of personal experiences are lived stories shared and with readers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

**Review of Research and Methodological Issues**

A majority of the research (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Davenport, 2010; Hickman, 2008; Rice, 2004; Vinzant, 2009) presented in this chapter were qualitative studies that used interviews as the primary methodological tool to collect data. Some of the researchers used observations (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007; Reed & Evans, 2008; Vinzant, 2009), surveys/questionnaires (Hickman, 2008; Rice, 2004), and focus groups (Davenport, 2010; Rice, 2004; Vinzant, 2009) in addition to interviews as a part of their methodology.

Hickman (2008) conducted an ethnographic study consisting of 50 African American males attending predominantly White higher education institutions. Using interviews and surveys the participants of the study were placed in focus groups ranging from 8-10 people. To protect the identities of the participants, the researcher gave each a name derived from Greek mythology.
Hickman (2008) successfully identified six common themes (collaboration in higher education, personal experience in the pipeline, personal ideology about the success/failure of African American males not pursuing higher education degrees, pros and cons to the educational pipeline, for education and improving the numbers) during the data analysis process. The researcher (Hickman, 2008) used surveys and interviews to collect the data, which aided in establishing a critical analysis of culturally sensitive information (Tillman, 2002). This technique strengthens the methodology. Other elements of the study can be enhanced to add further merit to the methodological approach.

The brevity of the methodology section can be eliminated by adding more evidence to support the choice of methodology, which increases the depth of knowledge and feasibility of the methodological choice. Providing details such as when, where, and how the participants were asked “to describe their paths through education” (Hickman, 2008, p. 74) and whether or not the focus groups were purposefully constructed aids the reader in understanding how the methodology was conducted. During the interview process, the participants were provided with an explanation of the meaning of double consciousness before they were given a survey to complete, an explanation constructed by the researcher.

An alternative method could have been to provide the participants with direct quotes explaining double consciousness to eliminate the possibility of researcher subjectivity. The participants could have also received the quoted explanation of double consciousness after the survey and given the opportunity to reflect on their answers noting noticeable differences after reading the explanation on double consciousness. This process would allow the researcher to see if the explanation altered the subjects’ answers.
Rice (2004) methodically presented the answers to his thesis by purposefully selecting a focus group of six African American adolescent males. In a case study analyzing “the interactions” (Rice, 2004, p. 15) of the participants with an analytical emphasis on scrutinizing the discourse of each participant, the focus of the study was to understand and identify the presence of double consciousness in adolescent African American males.

Identifying the complexities of the concept of self in the review of literature, the methods performed to conduct the study connected to every component of the literature reviewed. Rice (2004) identified patterns of negotiation in the participants’ dialogue revealing evidence of double consciousness in three ways: voicing the understanding of the duality of one’s Blackness and being an American, the need to defend one’s Blackness within American society that was built upon the historical belief of racism, and owing a sense of collective responsibility because of one’s Blackness. Rice’s (2004) findings increased the understanding of double consciousness in the field of psychology by identifying patterns of double consciousness.

In a multiple participant case study, Vinzant (2009) used interviews, memos, and a focus group as tools to collect and validate data. Similar to the purpose of this study, Vinzant sought to understand the perceptions of Black administrators, specifically principals, and how their identity influenced their leadership style. Vinzant’s (2009) methodological approach reflected the structure of the topics, identity, race, and leadership, covered in the literature presented in his study. As a result, Vinzant (2009) was able to collect detailed data through the interviews conducted, the memos taken, and the focus group he held as the final meeting.

The researcher’s (Vinzant, 2009) analysis of the data presented a clear and concise picture of the methodology used in the collection and analysis process. Vinzant (2009) used the Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a lens to analyze the participants of the study. This approach
provided a narrative of the participants, which represented a counterstory, “a new reality through analysis of the experiences and beliefs of black principals” (p. 63), to the narrative found within mainstream America. Similarly, a primary purpose of this study is to use CRT as an analytical lens to add narratives of new perspectives about Black principals and their experiences with race and double consciousness to the educational research community.

In a two year qualitative ethnographic study Jeffrey S. Brooks and Gaetane Jean-Marie (2007) interviewed the 42 members of a high school leadership team located in the Southeastern United States. The researchers (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2007) conducted 85 semi structured interviews, collected documents, and completed over 250 hours of observations on the Black and White leaders of the school. Although Creswell (2013) notes there are certain challenges encountered when conducting observations, the findings Brooks and Jean-Marie (2007) developed from the data collection created an important component of this chapter as well as the construction of the interview questions used in the next chapter.

In a qualitative study using a phenomenological approach and narrative inquiry, Davenport (2010) captured the voices of five African American elementary principals via interviews, a focus group interview, and responses to writing. Initially, the reader may question why only elementary principals were selected for the study, but soon after the researcher provides valid reasons as the methodology section continues. In contrast to this study, Davenport (2010) purposefully selected Black elementary administrators for two reasons. The first was due to there being a larger representation of Black administrators found in the elementary field. The second reason was based on the researcher’s assumption that the issue of race is not as prevalent among elementary settings as it may be in secondary settings. However, similar to the current study, Davenport (2010) used snowball sampling to obtain participants.
Two to three, one hour, interviews were conducted with four out of five of the participants and a two member focus group interview was held. Each subsequent interview was a scaffold of the other. Davenport’s (2010) choice to collect data by using individual and focus group interviews and responses to writings allowed an opportunity to triangulate data. This triangulation occurred as she provided the participants with transcripts to review at the beginning of the subsequent interviews and compared the responses to the writing and the dialogue through the focus groups. Due to monetary issues, the researcher transcribed the digital recordings of the interviews. This process exposed Davenport (2010) to the data numerous times; this exposure allowed the researcher to become familiar with the data, comparing and contrasting data on a multitude of levels.

Davenport’s (2010) study influenced the methodological approach of this study in multiple ways. The two studies parallel in the use of interviews, how the participants were selected, and the approach used to present the data, which is discusses in depth in the following chapter.

Brannon et al. (2015) conducted a pilot experiment and then conducted a multi analysis of five quantitative studies to determine the benefits of utilizing the double consciousness of African Americans in educational settings. Participants were offered $10 cash or a course credit for the experiment and each study. Although the methodology of this study greatly differs from the methodology found in Brannon et al. (2015), as well as the other literature found in this chapter, the implications the researchers found about impact double consciousness has on African American students support the questions proposed and sought to be answered in this current study.
The number of participants used in the pilot experiment and the studies ranged from 40 African American college students to 80 African American and European college students to 326 African American college students. The approaches used to analyze data collected varied from coding responses to analyzing regression. The research design in every study was clearly defined and each study was linked to the other in various ways, some by the materials presented: images, icons, questionnaires, applications, point scales, information on specific content, and some questions found in the surveys were revisited and expanded to further analyze responses.

The instruments used to collect and analyze data was developed to strategically scaffold the data collected. This purposeful planning connected the findings of the former study to the latter study. This connection provided a detailed analysis answering the questions and hypotheses posed in each of the studies. Despite the type of research conducted, Brannon et al. (2015), provided insight to how African Americans benefit from possessing a double consciousness.

Another study which guided many of the research questions posed in this current study is the work of Lomotey (1989). Lomotey sought to observe the leadership characteristics of African American principals in successful schools filled with predominantly African American students. Lomotey (1989) used questionnaires and conducted interviews with teachers and administrators, as well as observations to collect data on four Black principals. Lomotey (1989) was guided by his search to describe how the selected participants exhibited four leadership components: how leaders developed goals, were they transparent and an embodiment of themselves, were the leaders able to communicate, and gather and maintain a consensus in obtaining the developed goals, and finally, did the leaders have the ability to lead their educators instructionally in order to obtain the goals desired. Each of the four leadership styles mentioned
derived from an analysis of the literature Lomotey (1989) found on leaders leading successful schools.

In selecting the schools and leaders to be study, Lomotey (1989) began with a sample of 142 elementary schools with predominantly Black children. Lomotey (1989) then compared composite of the schools’ state scores in reading and math for two years and selected the four schools with the highest scores. The sampling procedure Lomotey (1989) was based upon two points of statistical information, which helps to eliminate researcher bias and participant validity. To maintain the validity of the studies instrumentation, the researcher then conducted a pilot study to strengthen his observation skills and to determine the effectiveness of the questions used in the questionnaire and during the interview process. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to refine the instrumentation process (Creswell, 2013).

Lomotey (1989) strengthened the merits of his research by obtaining multiple points of data, which increased the validity and authenticity of the data and the results. Lomotey obtained multiple perspective data from teachers and administrators by using questionnaires and interview and from conducting four days of observations of principals and over 20 hours of observations in each school, as well as a limited number of school documents. The multiple points of data allowed Lomotey to triangulate the validity of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Summary

This chapter contained a review of literature related to the historical aspects of race in America and the application of race as a decategorization tool on the descendants of Africans born in America. Previous researchers have shown how the African American experience has been an acute singularity (Lomotey, 1987; Guthrie, 1976). African Americans represent the only race that has transcended the designation of property to become citizens (Ladson-Billings, 1999).
Oppression through subjugation caused the sieving into double consciousness in African Americans (Du Bois, 1903). Unable to participate as equals in American society, African Americans were forcibly dehumanized under European Americans’ power. This power contorted basic human rights (Freire, 1999) into a freedom granted only to White Americans. As this ideology became the dominant dogma of the era, 20th-century scholars exacerbated the perceived inferiority of African Americans (Fallace, 2012).

From the epistemology of 20th-century scholars arose a second ideology, an unbridling of Black intellectualism, leading to a new thought that humanized and intellectualized African Americans (Du Bois, 1903; Young, 2002). African American consciousness gave breath to equality (Smith-Brown, 2014) and created dialogue about race and the lives of Black people in America. By midcentury, the intellectualization of Black people created a new movement, and a fight for their civil liberties began. Out of this struggle emerged the image of African Americans, thus abolishing the stereotypes of the Negro, the Colored, and Blacks (African American Registry, 2016).

In various ways, African American culture has become a topic of discussion. The differences between African American culture and mainstream culture have created ripples in the quest for equality (Tate, 1997). Critical approaches to diminish inequalities have emerged. Concepts such as critical race theory grew out of African American legal minds in an attempt to unearth systematic racism, which is deeply woven into the fabric of American society (Tate, 1997).

As a natural consequence of circumstances, African Americans have been “gifted” with a second sight, a double consciousness, allowing them to see themselves through a double lens (Du Bois, 1903). Chapter 3 provides the methodology used to explore the lives of African American
educational administrators, gather their perceptions regarding their interactions with European administrators, colleagues, and subordinates, and examine how their perceptions have influenced their actions as leaders in educational organizations that predominantly serve African American students.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this qualitative research study, the researcher gathered the experiences of 10 African American educational administrators whose positions included assistant principals, central office administrators, and administrators in higher learning institutions. The methods used to conduct the study included narrative inquiry and in-depth interviews. Narrative research focuses on the human experience (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012). Through narrative inquiry, the participants revealed their perceptions of how this group of 10 African American educational administrators led inner-city organizations while working with European American senior administrators, colleagues, and staff. Conducting critical inquiry through narratives allowed the incipient silenced stories of the participants to emerge because, “Throughout history, the dominant culture has obliterated and devalued the stories of the experiences of African Americans” (Taylor, 2004, p.81).

In this study, participants’ perceptions were gathered and characterized in a way that authenticated the participants’ experiences, providing future researchers and educators insight into a topic undisclosed to mainstream America. Participants’ experiences become reconstructed stories of their realities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989). When participants share information about their experiences, the experiences become participants’ lived stories. Therefore, the terms story and experiences are used interchangeably throughout this study. Once a participant shared an experience, it became a personal narrative. “Stories are the foundation of qualitative research” (Banks-Wallace, 2002, p. 410); thus, the storied experiences of the participants became the foundation of this study.
Research Questions

Exploring the lives of the participants by hearing and analyzing their narratives was intended to accomplish two objectives. The first objective was to describe how African American educational administrators led in inner-city organizations while working with European American administrators, colleagues, and subordinates. The second objective was to identify the “second narrative” (Steinmetz, 2003, p. 55) hidden in the experiences of African American educational administrators. In an exegesis of biblical text, Steinmetz (2003) compared this process of analysis to the process of uncovering the second narrative found in a mystery. Working backward, from the end to the beginning, the primary story begins to unravel as the secondary narrative emerges.

In this study, the concept of second narrative (Steinmetz, 2003) was interpreted as the experience W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) described as double consciousness. The primary story may be considered the mainstream (White) American story of the everyday life African American administrators live. However, the emerging story, which became the primary narrative in this study, appeared as African American administrators described their lives at the point of intersection of Black life and American life. In this sense, the process of discovering the experiences of the participants relied on the following questions:

1. What professional challenges do 21st-century African American educational administrators face?

2. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in mainstream society?

3. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators navigate their two perceptions when conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?
4. How does duality affect 21st-century African American educational administrators’ daily working environment when interacting with White administrators, colleagues, and subordinates?

**Purpose and Design**

In private, many African American educators have shared stories that began with phrases such as “If that were a White person . . .” or “If a Black person did that, they’d be gone in the blink of an eye.” Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gather the voices of African American educational administrators as they described their professional experiences and shared their perceptions of how race has affected their experiences as 21st-century educational leaders. This study was conducted during a time when the number of African American administrators has declined since the *Brown v. The Board of Education* decision (Brown, 2005) and when the country’s first African American president was ending his tenure while African Americans filled inner-city streets to protest the killing of Black men (Marino, 2015). One example of such protest was the political movement known as #BlackLivesMatter, created in response to the 2013 killing of Trayvon Martin (Marino, 2015). In comparison, this study was designed to capture dwindling voices with the intention of contributing additional perspectives about the experiences of African American educational leaders to the body of knowledge.

Narrative inquiry was the research method used in this study. This form of inquiry is typically used to examine experiences as stories. The experiences of the participants represented a storied phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Murray Orr, 2010). A major principle of narrative inquiry is the researcher’s interaction with the content of the study (Boske, 2010). In the narrative inquiry process, the researcher is both storyteller and a character in the study, and the experiences of the participants are revealed through a temporal,
societal, and situational (setting) lens (Clandinin, et. al., 2010). This form of inquiry requires the researcher-as-storyteller to dive deeply into participants’ experiences to reveal the researcher’s understanding of the participants’ narratives in relationship to the researcher’s role as an active observer. Clandinin et al. described this process as attending to the tensions, “the cracks” that “create spaces for inquiry” (p. 84).

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

**Research Population**

Narrative research focuses on the story of humans and their worlds (Gay et al., 2012); therefore, the researcher chose to interview 10 participants who held different educational administrative roles for the richness and depth their diversity would add to the study. The participants’ organizations ranged from elementary schools to higher learning institutions. Gay et al. postulated that sampling approaches for qualitative studies should be purposeful when identifying participants. Therefore, the researcher chose the initial participants based on three homogeneous criteria. Participants were required to

1. work in an inner-city educational organization;
2. have at least one European American supervisor; and
3. self-identify as African American.

**Sampling Method**

In the early stages of the data collection, the researcher randomly recruited four potential participants: three men and one woman. However, at the onset of the scheduling interviews, the female participant declined to participate because of her status in her organization. The participant who declined referred four potential candidates to interview. Of the four prospects, one did not return the phone call, and one was unreceptive. Thus, the protocol for future
referrals changed. If a participant referred a prospective candidate, the researcher asked the participant to make the initial contact to lessen the chances of rejection from not knowing the researcher.

After the initial interviews, the researcher used a form of snowball sampling to acquire the other participants. This form of sampling is purposeful when studying “special populations” (Spreen, 1992, p.35). When talking about race and the participants’ experiences and perceptions inside their organization, snowball sampling allowed the researcher to be referred to potential participants who possibly shared similar experiences as the sampled participant (Spreen, 1992). With snowball sampling, after the second interview, the initial participants indicated if they knew people who would be willing candidates to interview. If participants had recommendations, the researcher asked them to contact the potential candidates and give a brief statement. If the participants did not know what to say, the researcher gave them the following statement: “I am participating in a study, and I think you would be a great person to interview. Would you mind if I give the researcher your number so that she can call you?” Having the initial participants recommend a potential candidate increased their stake in the study. It was also beneficial to the researcher because of the existing relationship the referring participant had with the prospective participant; this allowed prospective participants to invite the researcher into their worlds with a reasonable level of trust because of the relationship between the referrer and the referred.

**Validation**

The validity of this research was contingent upon the researcher’s ability to capture the stories of the participants accurately in a descriptive, authentic, transparent, and understandable manner, and to “establish the trustworthiness” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012, p. 392) of the
research. During the interview process, the researcher used four of Maxwell’s (1992) measurements for validity—descriptive, interpretive, theoretical, and evaluative validity—to maintain high levels of trustworthiness. The participants were asked to clarify information and expand upon their thoughts if their answers were close ended or abrupt. Using a natural constant collaborative process in the interviews with the participants (Creswell, 2013) helped the researcher ensure the accuracy of the data by expanding on critical aspects of the participants’ experiences thereby enhancing the credibility and quality of the study. Creating authentic narratives that reflected participants’ true voices allowed the researcher to establish the study’s credibility and dependability.

The researcher consistently reviewed the narrative of the storied experiences (Denzin, 2002) to ensure the “factual accuracy” of the descriptions of events and interpretations (Gay et al., 2012, p. 392). The researcher used guiding questions that reflected the topic of study and aligned to the theoretical framework of the research. Further, using narrative inquiry and in-depth interviewing required the researcher to be aware of her own biases as she actively listened to the participants. The interaction during the interviews was communal, a partnership between researcher and participant involving the telling and “restorying” of true tales (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4).

The validity of the research was also constructed upon the consistent analytical comparing of the participants’ narratives. Comparing multiple participant narratives allowed the researcher to validate the participants’ experiences by finding and noting similarities found within the participants professional and personal lives. The researcher constantly moved within an “analytical circle” (p. 182), as Creswell (2013) stated, beginning with the data collected,
reading, interpreting, describing, and classifying information, emerging with each participants unique narrative.

**Instrumentation**

In interviews, the researcher is the research instrument (Brinkmann, 2013; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Gay et al., 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). As a collector of personal experiences, the researcher was cognizant of multiple elements—the stories of the participants, the story emerging from the research itself, and the story of the researcher’s experiences—all while seeking to answer the research questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). An interview protocol was created to document the participants’ responses (see Appendix A).

Using narrative inquiry with in-depth interviewing meant the research and the researcher were guided by the experiences of the participants (Trahar, 2009), which transcended into their lived story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Lives are creations of experiences. Experiences are social exchanges coupled with reactions, positive or negative, and when shared with others become tales of people’s lives (Horsdal, 2012). These tales are personal phenomena of life, reflection, and growth, described by Clandinin and Connelly (1989) as a primary benchmark of learning.

**Data Collection and Analysis Procedures**

During the data collection and analysis process the participants’ stories became the researcher’s narrative (Brophy, 2012), which was woven together in the analysis of the interviews and stories collected by the researcher. In this section, data collection and analysis are discussed.


**Data Collection**

This study was conducted in the Midwest. The researcher conducted two interviews at a location designated by the participant. If the participant did not select a destination, the interview was held at a third party location. The interviews were semi structured containing some open-ended questions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to explore the perspectives of the participants and hear their stories of how race has influenced their daily actions. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) described semi structured interviews as sessions in which the researcher asks open-ended questions, and the direction of the interview is determined by the participants’ responses with limited guidance or intrusion from the researcher. In this study, the researcher used a loose interpretation of Schuman’s (1982) three-part interview structure when conducting interviews with the participants.

Monts (2012) used Schuman’s (1982) three-part interview process in a study of African American women to explore the barriers they faced as secondary school principals. Monts (2012) guided the participants through three phases of focusing on the rebuilding of their experiences. When recalling memories of the past, humans often struggle with recalling events exactly as they occurred (Monts, 2012). The initial interview allows the researcher and the participants to traverse through the participants’ experiences; during this phase, the initial picture of the participant emerges (Seidman, 2013).

Each interview was scheduled for 60 minutes. The researcher used the interviewing sessions as a tool to prompt the participants to excavate, renovate, and convey past experiences, bringing them as close to the present as possible. This was the act of bringing what was to what is (Seidman, 2013). In the first interview, participants provided general professional demographic data such as years of experience in education, number of years as an administrator,
their reasons for entering the educational field, and descriptions of their experiences as African American administrators. The participants’ descriptions encompassed recalling challenging incidents, defining moments, and significant lived events. At the end of the interview the participants were given excerpts from *The Souls of Black Folk* (Du Bois, 1903) to read and respond to, and the questions for the second interview.

The second interview allowed participants to contextualize the experiences they revealed during the first interview (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and explore their thoughts and interpretations of the meaning of double consciousness. According to Seidman (2013), during the second interview, the researcher’s primary goal is to revisit the paths previously explored in the initial interview to capture the details of the participants’ experiences. Capturing the details of the emerging stories allowed the researcher to clarify any misconceptions, ask questions, and gain a greater understanding of the participants and their experiences. During the second interview, the researcher revisited experiences as needed. In addition, the researcher asked participants questions about their responses and interpretations of Du Bois’s (1903) concept of double consciousness and their perceptions when interacting with mainstream America.

The final interview occurred if the researcher and the participants had further questions or information to share about the discussion topic. Over the course of one to two weeks, the researcher sought to collect participants’ personal experiences relevant to the topics discussed in the previous interviews. The participants shared events as they transpired in their lives (Seidman, 2013). This third meeting indicated the closing of the interviewing process with the participants. Five participants participated in a third meeting. Three of the five members met as a group to discuss their experience, an idea initiated by a participant during the end of the second
The researcher submitted a modification request form to the University’s Internal Review Board, and permission was granted to deviate from the originally approved protocol. The interviews were audio-recorded by two devices, and notes were taken during and after each session as a precautionary measure in case of technical difficulties. All audio recordings were transcribed, and data were collected through the transcriptions of the interviews and responses to excerpts taken from The Souls of Black Folk. An interview protocol (see Appendix A) was created to document participant comments and researcher observations and reflections (Creswell, 2013; Gay et al., 2012). After the end of each session, the researcher reviewed the participants’ stories to prepare for subsequent interviews.

Data Analysis

A full data analysis occurred after all interviews and observations were completed. When conducting interviews, Seidman (2013) refrained from performing a detailed analysis of data during the data accumulating process. Waiting until after the interviews were completed lessened the chance of self-imposing predetermined meanings between interviewing sessions. In the first level of analysis, the researcher created a matrix of the questions to analyze, compare, and contrast the answers of the participants. The participants’ answers were inserted into columns under the interview questions. The researcher then compared the answers to look for similarities, differences, and emerging themes. The words or concepts the participants shared were highlighted, and emerging themes were circled.

Next, the researcher uploaded the participants’ answers to each question into the analytic software NVivo 11, first separately, then as a group, to identify the most commonly used words used by individuals and by the group collectively. The software allowed the researcher to check the validity of the identified themes with the words recognized by NVivo 11. The researcher
conducted multiple queries to identify the most commonly used words. Words used 50 or more times were omitted from the analysis because they were found to be words used in both the questions and the responses by the interviewer and the interviewee. Queries were conducted to identify which participants used the words, the contexts of the words, and the number of times the words were used. The researcher cross-referenced the remaining terms with the terms initially highlighted and identified as important words in the question matrices.

This analysis divided the data into two categories: words used commonly by all the participants and words each participant used the most, compared to other participants. This method of analysis validated the narratives of the participants analytically by ensuring the words they commonly used were reflected and presented in the writing. Then, the words were grouped by the interview questions, coded, and categorized based upon their similarities and differences.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design

As with any research, limitations and delimitations affected this study. The participants, the location of the fieldwork, the researcher and the framework formed the limitations of the study. The delimitations of the study extend beyond the scope of the study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study included (a) the participants: demographics; (b) timing and financial resources (c) the methodology, the researcher, and instrumentation of the study; (d) a preexisting friendship between the researcher and two of the participants, which cannot be disclosed in detail to preserve their anonymity; and (e) topic of study. The participants selected primarily worked and lived in the Midwest, all except one, who previously lived in the Midwest. All of the participants worked with inner city students and with predominantly White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates. Due to the geographical location of the study, the
time constraints and limited financial resources, the study was confined to the immediate location of the researcher.

Semistructured in depth interviews were used in the methodology of the study. As a result, the information provided by the participants was self-reported and could not be verified. The researcher relied upon each participant and his or her ability to recall events from the past to maintain the authenticity of data. The instrumentation process consisted of questions created by the researcher. In qualitative studies, the researcher being a tool of instrumentation is a limitation as well. As an African American woman who recently entered into the educational administration arena, the researcher was connected to the study personally, emotionally, and professionally. A look, a head nod, or a smile could have persuaded a participant during the interview process. To eliminate researcher bias during the interview process, the researcher remained focused on the participants’ experiences to exclude any researcher subjectivity.

However, the researcher’s relationship with two of the participants established a preexisting level of trust during the interview process. The remaining participants had only a nascent professional relationship with the researcher.

The fundamental nature of narrative inquiry depends on personal and social interactions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Phillion, 2002). The main focus of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of the subjects. Because no one human or story is the same, the only limitation was one of participant authenticity, which was mitigated by the parameters of narrative inquiry and in-depth interviews. The same questions were asked to all of the participants and the stories of the participants are modeled representations of how they experienced and navigated their duality in their lives and their professions (Connelly &
The participants’ experiences were extracted word for word from the transcripts of their interviews to maintain the authenticity of the participants’ narratives.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of the study consisted of: a) the exclusion of students, White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates; b) surrounding geographical areas; c) the number of participants; and the data collection methods. Since the researcher was entering the field of education administration, students, teachers and supervisors were excluded from the study. The purpose of the study was to share the experiences of African American educational administrators, therefore administrators of other races were excluded from the study as well. Ten participants were chosen as the sample size to provide depth to the study. The financial resources of the researcher and the time constraints of the courses caused the researcher to limit the number of participants to ten and to only interview participants that were easily accessible.

**Expected Findings**

The dominant voice of the majority has silenced the voices of African American educators (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Tate, 1997; Tillman, 2002). As an African American educational professional, the researcher has often heard other African Americans working in mainstream American education make statements that question the actions of European Americans—for example, statements such as “That would not have happened if he were Black” and questions such as “Would that have happened if she were White?” These questions caused the researcher to seek others working in the education profession to learn how they dealt with issues that arose because of problems that may have occurred because of the darker hue of their skin.
In this study, the researcher expected to find many instances of Black professionals appeasing White people because of perceived differences in social status, regardless of professional positions. Whether the White people were in supervisory or subordinate positions, the researcher expected Black administrators to respond differently, compared to Whites, because White people represented the majority. The findings of this study might help members of the majority understand the many internalizations African Americans encounter because of working with European Americans. It may also help African American educators when learning how to interact effectively with European Americans. This study showed common themes among the participants’ narratives, indicating areas in which these 10 African American educational administrators struggled most with their duality and professionalism.

**Ethical Issues**

**Conflict of Interest Assessment**

The researcher’s duties were to extract the lived and storied experiences from the participants, to explore every participants’ experiences, and to re-story these experiences with rich and thick details to make them transparent, transferable, and meaningful to the research community (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

The sole aim of the researcher was to uncover the lived stories of the participants. Because the researcher’s professional status ranked below that of the participants, the power remained with the participants and their stories. However, the researcher’s perception of race constituted an ethical issue. To ensure ethical purity, in this dissertation, the researcher reported the verbatim voices of the participants to disclose their personal narratives and perceptions of double consciousness fully during the data collection process. The researcher fully disclosed
personal perceptions and biases throughout the process of the study by stopping to note personal thoughts and feelings as needed on the interview protocol form.

To avoid any ethical issues that arose during the study, the researcher accommodated each participant based upon the participant’s needs. The participants were able to determine the site of the interviews. Recordings were destroyed once transcription occurred. All data collected were kept confidential. Data will be kept up to three years after the study’s completion, and then it will be shredded and discarded.

**Researcher’s Position and Ethical Issues in the Study**

Although this study was not openly controversial, personal issues could have surfaced during the participants’ interviews because of the topic, content, and focus on race. The researcher reassured participants that fictional names would replace the identities of the participants to help conceal their identities. Although the researcher added or omitted information to mask the participants’ identities, the researcher recognized the possibility that participants would not be willing to complete the interview process because of their positions and because of repercussions from telling their stories. For example, participants may have believed the disclosed information could be negatively used if read by a central office administrator. Therefore, the researcher omitted or distorted any specific and identifiable information to preserve participants’ identities. All participants could opt out of the research at any time.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the researcher described the methods used in revealing how 21st-century Black educational administrators led inner-city organizations while working with White administrators, colleagues, and subordinates. The primary purpose of the study was to amplify
the voices of African American educational leaders by revealing their perceptions of double
consciousness and showing how a dual consciousness has affected their lives. The purpose was
fulfilled by conducting in-depth interviews with the participants and gathering their responses to
a piece of literature. The next chapter provides the narratives of the participants and the findings
from individual interview sessions. In Chapter 5, the researcher summarizes the findings to
provide greater depth in understanding the challenge of African American administrators and
double consciousness.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question. . . . How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word. (W. E. B. Du Bois, 1903, p. 6)

Chapter 4 provides the data representing the words spoken by 10 African American educators. At the time of this study, nine of the participants currently held administrative positions in education and one participant had previously held an administrative position. The researcher asked the participants to respond to Du Bois’s (1903) question asked more than 100 years ago. The participants shared their experiences of duality as they explained how they negotiated and navigated the intersections of life as they worked with mainstream America and led inner-city educational institutions. The participants shared their experiences about their interactions with mainstream America as they daily navigated the unasked yet implied question posed by Du Bois.

Two major sections comprise this chapter, reflecting the interview process and elements of the conceptual framework described in Chapter 2. The first section consists of a series of minivignettes providing the histories of the participants. The researcher describes the participants by providing details of their backgrounds to gain a greater understanding of the participants’ constructs of double consciousness. The second section discloses the participants’ answers collectively, revealing their thoughts and perceptions of double consciousness and showing how they utilized, navigated, and negotiated their duality when working with mainstream America.

After gathering each participant’s contextual information, the researcher discussed race with each participant. The participants answered personal and professional questions regarding race and its influence. The following section shows that process.
Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 10 administrators: five females and five males. The participants were African Americans. One participant formerly lived in the Midwest; the other participants lived and worked in the Midwest. Their ages ranged from 33 to 50 years old. Their combined years of educational experience totaled over 150 years. The participants held varying positions, including assistant principals, central office administrators, and administrators in higher learning institutions. Four of the participants had held principalships during their careers. At the time the study began, one of the 10 participants held a bachelor’s degree plus 30 graduate hours, and nine held at least one master’s degree. One of the 10 participants was in graduate school working on a doctorate, and two of the 10 held doctoral degrees. The researcher assigned pseudonyms to the participants: Langston Martin, Xzavier Hughes, Malcolm S. Turner, Maya Toussiant, Fredrick X., Zora Neal, Sadie St. Pierre, Ruby Tinubu, Barak Kingston, and MyaM’chele O’Bamgelou.

In the following report, the narratives of the participants are grouped into three segments consisting of participants’ introductions, discussions of the shaping of the racial self, and discussions about the matter of race. These sections comprise participants’ verbatim responses to the questions asked about the participants’ past and present experiences. The first segment of the section introduces the participants. The second segment reveals significant experiences the participants encountered with race. The third segment provides the beliefs and perceptions of the participants in the context of race as it related to their professions.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The researcher filled a matrix of the questions with the simplified answers of the participants. Each question represents a column header, and the participants’ fictitious names appear in the rows. The researcher copied and pasted simplified versions of the participants’
responses in the columns under their respective questions, thus facilitating comparisons between
answers and giving the researcher the ability to check the validity of the narratives by cross-
referencing the most commonly used words. These words were identified using NVivo 11.

The researcher built the initial descriptions of the participants on the information obtained
in the first interviews. During the initial interviews, the researcher asked questions to gain a
sense of the participants, specifically, who they were and how they formed their constructs of
race. Participants answered questions about various demographic factors, including their ages,
childhoods, family lives, and socioeconomic status to determine the underpinnings of the
construction of their racial identities and perceptions.

After constructing the participants’ introductions, the researcher uploaded the transcript
data into the analytical software program, NVivo 11. The software was used to identify
recurring words within the participants’ answers as well as to cross-reference the words among
the interviews of the other participants. The researcher conducted multiple queries to identify
the most commonly used words. Because the interviews were semi structured, many words were
used hundreds of times; therefore, to avoid misrepresenting the data, words used 50 or more
times were omitted from the analysis—these were specific words used in both the question and
the response. The researcher cross-referenced the remaining terms with the terms initially
highlighted and identified as important words in the question matrices. Word queries were
conducted to determine which participants had used the words, to identify the context in which
the words were used, and to count how many times participants used the words.

Next, the researcher examined the terms to determine if they had been stated by the
researcher or by a participant. Any words stated by the researcher were deducted from the total
if the word was used in the question and repeated in the answer of the participant. Once
identified, these words became the themes of the participants’ narratives, because they were key words used by the participants.

Cross-referencing the commonly used terms as a method of analysis aided in the creation of the narratives presented in the study. The words represented the participants’ thoughts and experiences, which were the basis of the construction of their narratives. For example, the word knowledge occurred 37 times. Out of the 37, one participant used the word 21 times, which indicated a primary theme for that participant related to the quest to seek and obtain knowledge. Another example was the use of the word assimilate. The term appeared 21 times; of the 21 times, one participant used it 19 times; thus, assimilate was a major theme of her personal narrative.

The method used to determine the major ideas of the lived experiences of the participants paired well with narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is the study of people’s lived stories and connects to Dewey’s (1938) notions of education and experience. Dewey (1938) believed experiences were lived events that transcended into lived narratives. Crucial aspects of critical race theory (CRT) are explored through interviews to provide a medium to share the voices of people who have experienced subjugation through suppression of their race (Tate, 1997). The method of analysis used in this chapter substantiated and supported CRT by identifying commonly used words of the participants to depict themes of their experiences.

All the participants actively participated in two interviews. Only half the participants participated in the third meeting, which was deviation from the original methodology. Because of the semi structured nature of the interviews, few answers needed to be clarified. Consequently, the researcher eliminated the third meeting unless participants had acquired new experiences they deemed worthy of sharing.
Summary of the Findings

As mentioned, commonly used words of the participants were identified and cross-referenced, thereby showing the number of times the participants used the word and the number of participants who used the word. If five or more participants used the same word, the researcher categorized the word as a major concept or experience.

Several conceptualizations emerged from the participants’ first interviews. Eighteen common words out of 37 were identified during the first interview; five participants used the following words: prove, voice, value, difficult, balance, observations, and advocate. Six participants used the words carry and human. Seven participants used the words hard and expectations. Nine participants used the words relationship and awareness. All 10 participants used the words relate, challenge, community, and opportunity. The most stated words occurring during the interview were voice (22), hard (27), relationship (29), relate (37), opportunity (47), awareness (48), challenge (55), and community (77).

Various elements emerged from the data that may have shaped the racial identities of the participants. For some of the participants, their double selves took shape during their formative years as they were introduced to schools outside their communities. For others, their duality developed when they were teenagers or when they became young adults. Nevertheless, race and duality significantly emerged in the lives of all 10 participants regardless of their ages, especially in their professional lives, and for a few, in their personal lives. As a result, every participant perceived being an African American administrator working with mainstream America as a struggle. The participants indicated that race would always be a factor in America and expressed the significance of cultural identity and awareness for African American educational leaders.
Many of the participants said their ages definitely affected their perceptions of race. However, the youngest two participants did not believe their ages played any role in shaping their perceptions of race. Subsequently, all the administrators said their experiences were crucial elements that forged their perceptions of race. When they spoke specifically about significant experiences, the impact of desegregation was memorable for most of the participants. However, the presence and impact of their families played a critical role in the shaping of participants’ racial selves.

The impact of socioeconomic status (SES) on their perceptions of race varied by participant; a few said their SES helped shape their racial identities, and others did not. Many of the participants experienced noticeably different hardships in comparison to their perceptions of their counterparts in White America, and the younger participants experienced poverty that was not separated by race. The younger participants lived in poverty stricken environment filled with a variety of races.

The second interview produced fewer common words because the scope of the questions was focused on the element of double consciousness and the quotes by Du Bois (1903), compared to the first. Of 18 emerging conceptual experiences, only eight words were used by five or more participants. Five participants used the word fight; six participants used the word present; eight participants used the words frustration and some variation of accept/accepted/acceptance; seven participants used the word wrong; nine participants used the words power and comfortable; all 10 participants used the word situation. Among the 18 words, the most stated were wrong and situation (45), accept/accepted/acceptance (35), comfort/comfortable (34), and power (32).
During the second interview, the researcher asked the participants to discuss their responses to excerpts extracted from Du Bois’s (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. All the participants expressed feeling a connection with the passages. Although their experiences differed, all the participants spoke about how the situational aspects of being African American affected their daily lives. Many of the participants expressed that idea that being Black in America was problematic only for those in mainstream America who perceived African Americans as a problem. There were times when the administrators had to navigate and or negotiate around the perceptions of others, which fueled a desire to dispel the negative perceptions and establish clear professional personas. Layers of duality emerged as participants learned to navigate the impacts on their personal and professional lives of the intersection of their race and identities with mainstream America.

The following sections provide the thoughts and perceptions of the participants. A picture emerges of the elements in their lives that shaped their racial identities. To close, the researcher reveals how participants functioned in their working environments.

**First Interview: History of the Participants**

The first interview with the participants reflected similar components found in the conceptual framework of the literature review. To understand how double consciousness affected the participants’ lives when working with mainstream America, participants’ histories in the areas of race, cultural identity, education, and social status were discussed. Participants described the shaping of their concepts and constructs of race as they reflected on different aspects of their lives and their perceptions of race. At the end of the interview process, each participant selected a pseudonym. The participants’ pseudonyms function as subheadings introducing the participants’ experiences. The upcoming segments
present the participants’ direct responses to the interview questions during the first interview in narrative form. The first segment of this section contains the participants’ background information, reported as a narrative of introduction to each participant. The second segment of the participants’ narratives depicts the answers the participants provided when asked questions about their experiences, positive or negative, with race. These questions focused on the formation of the participants’ racial identities, their perceptions of the differences between the lifestyles of Black and White Americans, and the characterization of race as it appeared in their personal lives as adults.

The third segment of the participants’ narratives pertains to the questions the participants answered about the role race assumed in their lives in the context of their roles as professionals and leaders, encompassing its relevance, its importance in the cultural identity of African American leaders, the struggles they encountered individually, and the challenges they believed Black administrators faced in general. The fourth and final segment of the participants’ narrative reveals the participants’ views on race and socioeconomic status to provide depth to the participants’ perceptions of race and their constructions of double consciousness.

**Langston Martin**

**Introduction.** I grew up in a family that originated from the South. I know my family tree very well. I even know the family that owned my family. I often heard stories about African Americans being lynched and chased out of the South. I had a family member who fled from the South because he was looking through the window at a woman who happened to be White. But all those . . . stories provide a backdrop . . . as it relates to race . . . of sometimes mistrust.
When I got older, is in the ’70s. I mean going through my teenage years. A lot of that was in the ’70s. The Black Power movement, all that conflict coupled with my parents’ philosophy of, we just gotta keep our head down so we don’t get in any trouble. To me, growing up in that movement of, I’ll do whatever I have to do to achieve what I have to achieve. Legally, of course. Those experiences shaped me. I understand poverty probably greater than anybody because I grew up in it. I grew up with not having the new things, or shiny things that we would see. But I think that’s what made me work so hard. I saw my dad struggle.

I did not want to struggle. Hey, when you tie it to race it makes so much sense. We all have different starting points, which Whites, traditionally, have had a head start. And I feel like, when you compare me to my parents, I had a head start. And that head start was education.

**The shaping of the racial self: Desegregation.** They bused me out west when I was in the third grade. I remember getting up really, really early in the morning. I mean, insane, ungodly early, hours too early for a third grader. All I remember is, I used to fall asleep on the bus all the time because it was quite a drive. It was weird there [at the school] because there was only one African American student per class and if we were lucky, there were two. I was unlucky more than I was lucky.

What nobody can ever say at that young age is the impact of people using the N-word. You know, in calling you the N-word and then going home and telling your parents that you’ve been called the N word. My parents were so adamant about education. It was like, you won’t respond to that. You won’t lash out at that. You won’t get yourself in trouble. But I will say that, if that experience taught me anything, it taught
me discipline. Lashing out is easy, but you can lose everything lashing out. So it takes discipline. And I think that’s why I have a lot of that.

**The shaping of the racial self: The pommel horse.** In the sixth grade, I’ll never forget . . . We were in gymnastics. I was helping a younger kid over a pommel horse . . . In P.E. that is what we would do, help the younger kids because they would fall off and hurt themselves, although there were mats around. I remember helping this kid over and then he looks at his arms . . . like my color could rub off on him. And it just taught me one thing, if . . . anything. I remember thinking, man, he must have never seen an African American before. I may be the first one . . . and my second thought was that no one had taught him that our color can’t rub off. Because if it could rub off, we would all rub it off so we could blend in and maybe our lives would be less challenging.

**The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race.** I’m trying to go back through my time. I remember there being some racial tensions. Some of the stuff is when I hit my twenties, but even O. J. Simpson, that trial, Rodney King, those things. Still, periodic shootings around the country of African American people. I remember the Reagan Era and what we used to joke about as kids, government cheese, and other food programs. People don’t realize some of that probably was racial stuff. Some of it was probably more socioeconomic, but I equate it back to race, like I said. Generations of our great-grandparents, great-great-great-grandparents couldn’t go to school. How does America think that one can be equal in a race today when the race has already been won for land? It’s already been won for socioeconomics. It’s generations of people that still haven’t broke that cycle of poverty from slavery. Those are the things that shape me, and those are things that make you wonder who you can trust or how you can trust.
I can walk into a store as a Black person and it’s highly likely I’ll be followed around. I also get different treatment when I’m in my business clothes as opposed to when I’m in my jeans and my baseball cap. I don’t hear too many of my White friends ever say that they felt like people followed them around the store. I’ve been profiled. I’ve been pulled over. Looked at my car, spotlight on my car. Show registration, my driver’s license and no dents in my car. Race kind of dictates where I go, I’m sure.

When vacationing, I was in some very uncomfortable situations because, once again, I was in places where I didn’t see any other Black people. And I’m sure those concerns go all through all of my experiences through life, where I’ve been in places where I was the only Black person. Maybe even back to that classroom. Now I have my kids with me . . . it was one thing if I’m by myself. If I now have to defend myself, or protect myself and protect my kids or my wife, it’s different. You always have those worries. As a White person, you can probably walk through America and you never feel those things.

**Professional and leadership roles.** As a leader, you have to realize you’re a leader of all people. And whether race comes into play where they see eye to eye with you or if they don’t see eye to eye with you. Race plays a role because you have to be very careful. I’ve had issues with parents that, I truly believed, didn’t want their kids at this school because the principal was Black at this school. It’s a double-edged sword. Sometimes I think race plays a role as an administrator. You get placed in schools in areas where there’s high minorities. I’m probably not going to be sent out to a school that’s in a predominantly White neighborhood. It’s probably not fair. Probably not legal. But you would never be able to prove that’s the reason.
We tout those schools that are in high socioeconomic areas. But you could take those same principals, those same teachers, those same nurse, security, whoever. Take that whole staff and put it in a high poverty area, and they would have the same struggles we all have. But I think people perpetuate an untruth that people are struggling because they’re not doing the best they can do. And I’ll go back to what we said earlier. Running a race, but you’re already a mile ahead, and then asking someone that hasn’t even started the race to catch them. And if you can’t catch them, then there’s a problem.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** Society makes race an issue. I think in young children, if they’re really young, I don’t think it matters. But by the time they even pick up the social cues and other things from adults, it probably does matter. I see most of our kids. I don’t think we have too many race problems in our current situation. So maybe school kids that are together all the time and around each other all the time, maybe they can put it to the side. I think where it struggles is when we build these communities where we don’t see each other, get to know each other, and the only way we get to learn about each other is the stereotypes and misconceptions of TV, or social media, or YouTube, or whatever people watch. I think money is the equalizer. If you have enough of it, people can forget your race. I think that’s the . . . what do you call it? The universal language. People can overcome that. They can forget about it.

**Xzavier Hughes**

**Introduction.** As far as growing up, my circumstances allowed me to interact with a lot of different races and I got to see those positive and negatives. That impact of race did curve my understanding of where I wanted to go as far as school. It also impacted who I ended up marrying as well.
On the positives, it gave me an insight as I was growing up. Being around a lot of different races allowed me to get an inside track because you really get to understand Latinos, the Hispanics, the Whites, the Blacks, the Koreans, and the Vietnamese. When you see how they interact with you as a kid at school through play and then through business, it gives you a nice perception on how you might be able to fit in because it gives you an edge. If you have an edge like I do, you can navigate those sticky waters when certain race issues come up, to have a chance to be able to actually stabilize the situation. The negative is too much information. It can actually taint how you’re going to interact with folks.

It was my junior year in high school. Conversations were swirling around college entrance exams, tuition, and whether or not a person could qualify (getting access to that next level of education). Counselors have been calling down kids to have those conversations, and I was tracked as a person that would do well in a technical field versus going on to college. That reinforced . . . that maybe I wasn’t good enough for college.

I was the first member in my family to graduate from college. I got bitten by the education world. I love numbers. I love math. While working with some students on an accounting assignment I realized that some kids just didn’t get it. They weren’t getting it. Some kids weren’t adding and subtracting correctly. These were 10th graders and it was just basic math money. Then I got hit with who taught these kids math? Why are they struggling with math when they were in 10th grade? At that point I said, maybe I need to be teaching.

**The shaping of the racial self: Afros.** I recall even going way back. . . . This is disturbing to me now. Going back probably about first, second grade, I used to have an
afro. I used to grow it out because then my mom would braid it and it would look cool. It was tight but every once in a while, you had to let the hair down so the afro would be very poofy (full of volume). [I attended a school where] there weren’t many African American kids at all. Because I had poor vision and we couldn’t always afford glasses, I’d have to sit upfront. That made me pretty much a target for spit wads and eraser ends and pencils. I never knew about them until I got home and was doing the nightly bath because we’d always take a bath at night. I’d wash my hair and all this stuff would fall out. I knew it wasn’t from any other African American children because they didn’t sit by me. That was always interesting to see why that happened.

**The shaping of the racial self: The shoes.** I think I was in about the fourth or fifth grade. There were different parts of the community that seemed to have more kids of color in one area than the other. More of the folks in my neighborhood were of different races and a lot more of the White kids were on another side. It was always interesting when we came to school together. Competition on the playgrounds, some of those games existed because there’s this idea that, that kid was better than you. You can tell by the clothes, tell by the shoes. It was always the shoes.

Kids that are affluent always had new shoes every year. Some kids had new shoes every couple of months. My family, you try to make them last as long as possible. I still remember my Converse. They would rip out on the cloth side. I’d try to find a way to be able to patch them together so they look like they were still good to go on the inside. I still remember my old Nike shoes trying to slap the white polish on them so they’d look newer. My shoes would be always a little bit too small sometimes. I remember always polishing my shoes so they look good. That was one thing my father
always said, it was imperative that the look of a man’s shoes represented how they
carried themselves, him or herself. It was always shoes. I remember that very vividly.

The shaping of the racial self: Manicured lawns. In my neighborhood, we had
various sizes of houses. In one area, the lawns were always pristine and green, always
well-manicured. I always use to tell myself, I’m going to have that someday. I wasn’t
sure how, but I just knew that I was going to have that someday, that I deserve that too. I
remember when we would cut the grass at our own house. My dad would say, “Your
older brother can cut grass using the lawnmower. Because you’re younger, you’ll trim the
fence.”

I would take such great pride in making sure our fence line looked good, because
the other families had a weed whacker. I had the manual kind. It took a while but when I
was done, it looked good, from the edging, to the fence line. It didn’t make sense why
we couldn’t have that same . . . pride . . . exhibit that same kind of pride. Just because
your house is a little bit smaller than that guy’s, that wouldn’t make that person any
different. That’s always driven me as to at least catch up or surpass. I always use to tell
myself, I’m going to have that someday. I wasn’t sure how but I just knew that I was
going to have that someday that I deserve that too.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. Race matters, I’d be a fool if
I told you it didn’t. I am driven by race. I’m driven to break down a lot of walls. That’s
always driven me. Earlier, I used to think the walls were a glass ceiling. Now, I call it a
brick ceiling because even though you used to be able to see through it and do a lot of
different things to get as high as you think you can get, some people actually will put a
brick [in place]. They’ll build a wall on the ceiling if they’re threatened by the fact that
you could be as successful or more. That’s what I’m going through right now in my life, is that piece.

I’m driven by race to dispel a lot of myths and to really break down some barriers for that success . . . at least catch up or surpass [them]. Now, when I say success, I’m not equating it just to money. I’m trying to state that success is just simply saying I’ve got to that next level. If the money is there, so be it, but that’s not what drives me. What drives me is trying to dispel the fact that there are people out there with the perception that African Americans have been given things because of either a history of the slavery issues, whether it be your grandparents, great grandparents, all of those different things that happened in this country.

Some folks are saying, “Well, I’m due. I’m entitled.” I don’t believe in that. I run up against that a lot. Unfortunately, it’s still hidden. What’s the word? It’s covert. Racism right now in my mind is so covert that folks are able to disguise it in such different ways: number one, how they’re making decisions and they’ll still smile and be very nice to you, cordial to you but then you can’t seem to get in. So, I’m driven by the fact that race is so prominent.

I love the fact that I have all of these different tools that people then think I could acquire and I’m utilizing those very tools in which to keep chipping away at that brick. I’m driven by those. I really am. I hate to say that, but if I can’t break down some of these barriers and then show folks how to do it, then I really don’t have purpose. I guess that ties back to why I became a teacher because nobody showed me how.

It ties back to the earlier stages of being around so many different cultures because if you create a foundation within those cultures, I mean dissecting them and
understanding them and then being able to see how you can fit in. Again, using that same premise of how. How can I show you how this works? By using that same premise, I gain an advantage of admittance. That’s an advantage that unnerves some people. This again is just my opinion, but it shows that you have harnessed a certain power and nobody wants to look like they are lacking power.

I don’t care what it is. I don’t care how rich somebody is or how well-educated they may be, my strength is to be able to integrate into that room and make assessments based on what I see, what I feel because I have that intuition. That gives me a great advantage. Now, again, I think what that has done is it’s actually harmed me because I have too much insight. Having that crucial nugget of knowledge on how to be able to integrate in any racial culture, it scares some people. I think it’s hindered my growth for where I would like to go in this industry.

**Professional and leadership roles.** As a leader, getting people to believe that what I have to offer is relevant. I feel like I’ve been chained. The involvement for change isn’t there and that’s deflating for me. I bring a multitude of attributes to the table. My knowledge of culture and how to access those skillsets when dealing with differences is my strongest attribute. Everybody’s culture is different. We all bring different backgrounds to the table. I think having an awareness is important. I think the practices that you bring to a community need to be relevant, otherwise you’re not going to be effective. If you’re not aware of the people to which you’re working with and entrenched with, you’re not going to be successful. It won’t have an impact.

I think our leaders are shying away from some of these pushes of change. They are not as outspoken as they used to be because I think they’re realizing this ridiculous
phrase called career suicide. A lot of Black leaders, male or female, they’re not speaking out like they used to. There’s almost a nerving allegiance that’s no longer there. It’s very unnerving. It’s not there. . . . Certain Black leaders within this organization have gotten to a level and they’re doing very well for themselves as building leaders and affluent in their community but they’re not reaching back like they used to.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** Being a kid of color, you learn how to get what you really need and deserve through different strategic moves. In my mind, I felt the best way to get what I needed and wanted was to treat people like I wanted to be treated. To treat them as exactly how I would like to be treated and then exceed that expectation. As a kid when I first got a paper route, I knew that I wanted to exceed people’s expectations. In our business as educators, you could be the same individual and some folks would still treat you as if you’re still not quite equal. You can have the same degrees and you could have the same position and yet if something else opened up for an opportunity to learn some more, to be able to move up, it is unfortunate that, that African American ain’t going to be looked at necessarily first. I know this because it has happened.

It happened years ago with a position that I had been seeking. It happened with a person who did not have any experience. That person got that position and I didn’t even get an interview. It’s just been interesting that even as a Black male, I still can’t necessarily get to that post and there could be a White female that would get that nod first which was profound. It took the wind out of my sails.

I’m driven by figuring out that mystery of how can you get to that next level? How can you get past race? Is there something that I’m missing? Is there another nugget of knowledge that I don’t have? Is there something of a qualification that I’m missing?
And that’s unfortunate that a Black man has to continually question his worth in order to gain access. The playing field could be even and as I mentioned earlier, I’m still trying to figure out how. I don’t know. There lies my conundrum. I’m in a quagmire. I can either keep chipping away at that brick ceiling or I can change directions altogether, maybe seek the avenue in a different district or maybe just change the whole game and get out. That will get me all upset.

I don’t want to get out of this educational field, because there’s a burden at the same time. I fought too hard to get here and I guess if I give up, then there’s going to be a lot of kids that won’t know how to get past the same stuff. If I get out from the game who else is impacted? I’m smart enough. I can start over. I’m not going to be broke. I can be homeless, but how can I help kids when I see White educators, I’m just going to say, educationally kicking these kids’ ass. When I say educationally kicking their ass [I mean] because they’re not showing them how. They’re not giving the best instructions to meet the kid where he or she is at, so that way they won’t be sitting in front of a counselor saying, I think it would be best suited going this track. A kid deserves as many options just like the other kids sitting across the aisle. I’m driven by that, but I’m also getting pissed off because I can’t get to that level to impact and have that voice.

**Malcolm S. Turner**

**Introduction.** I grew up at the time where there was still public busing. They had where there’s a certain age where you’d actually leave your neighborhood to go to a different school. I think as a result of that, the solution was instead of upgrading and improving instruction at all locations, that instead we just bused the students to a different school that already had higher standards or maybe quality or test results. Things like that. You
went from basically being in a school with all your peers and friends, kids from the neighborhood to actually riding a bus to another neighborhood which actually, I don’t know. Probably early on probably created some anxiety but at the same time created some awareness to different cultures.

Growing up, it was always about love your neighbor. It was more about because God said x, y, and z and because the Bible said. So, we were taught to pretty much love everyone. Even though you’d read about slavery, segregation, and sharecroppers in history books, it was only the one generation removed. It wasn’t like it was a story-tale or fable but it was actually, my grandfather. My mom had to miss school throughout certain periods of the time during the harvest season, you know, to pick cotton and things like that. So it brought a little bit of awareness that even growing up, I was already in a better place than even my parents because I didn’t have to pick cotton.

**The shaping of the racial self: Competitions.** It was second grade when my mom was actually married briefly to a White guy, and we actually lived out west of the inner city (in the suburbs). I think that was the first exposure to schools [that] are a little bit different. It seemed like in the neighborhood school, teachers had a hard time controlling the students. They could act out or they could get away with things. I did well, but really didn’t take school seriously. However, at the new school, there was a little more structure, kids just kind of naturally behaved and it seemed like you tried to fit in and go with the flow.

I think fourth grade is when I was actually bused from the neighborhood school to a school that was primarily White and Hispanic. I think prior to that I was pretty much kind of a class clown, kind of a social bug. It seemed as if there was probably some kids
who didn’t want us at the school, and it seemed like they thought they were better than us and I think at that point it probably became more of a competition. Well, I could do this if they could do it. I always enjoyed school, but the competitive aspect made it worthwhile.

**The shaping of the racial self: Can’t be friends.** I remember growing up in the hood. You get in trouble. You talk to dozens (the dozens is a verbal game of bantering, where the opponents talk about each other, their mothers, or their families) and sometimes you settle your differences with a little bit of a fist fight. I remember Jake, one of my good friends in my new neighborhood had a twin brother, Jon. I didn’t like Jon that well and we ended up getting into a fight. So, because I got into a fight with Jon, my friend, Jake couldn’t be friends with me anymore. That was kind of an eye opening experience. Not so much about White and Black, but just about the consequences your actions may have if you decide to use aggression to solve your problems. Boys will be boys, but when you like a girl, and you find out that, ‘Oh, you’re very nice but I can’t really like you back because of your color,’ things like that was kind of an eye opening experience also.

I think even with all of that, it was almost trying to take some of the things you learn from living in the projects, living in the hood, and you try to take that out to a different culture. You find out that those behaviors are not really acceptable, you didn’t really fit in, so then you had to alter and change yourself a little bit to fit. I think that’s when I really first started to excel academically.

**The shaping of the racial self: Counselors.** The biggest transformation might have been transitioning from sixth grade to middle school. The counselor actually came
out to interview the students and build their schedule for placement. . . . The counselor said, “Do you like math?” I said, “Well, it’s okay, it’s not my favorite.” He looked at my report card and said, “You have pretty good grades, I’m gonna put you in honors math,” and then he went to the next subject. “What do you think of social sciences?” “They’re okay.” He looked at my grades, he goes, “Okay we’re gonna put you in honors social science.” Based on him looking at my academic record for those three years being bused, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade and based on the conversation we had, he put me in all honors classes.

It was one of those things that had that counselor judged me (he’s a Black kid, we’ll just put him in regular courses), I probably would have been on a different track. But because I think he saw the ability and said, “Hey he can handle this track here,” I got put in those classes. It seemed like whenever I was in the honors classes, it was never half Black, half White like it was in the general population. It might be one fourth Black and then the rest might be White, something like that. Once again, you’re already separated a little bit, but now you’re competing against other kids who also have the ability to do well.

I think that right there started the thought, or continued the belief, if you work hard, you can compete with anyone. In a way, you kind of had a certain way that you would act when you’re in your honors classes and you kind of had a certain way you’d act when you’re back in art or music classes where you had your friends.

**The shaping of the racial self:** “Cress.” There was a difference between Blacks and Whites, but some of it was just cultural. I just think when I look at the high school perspective, a lot of times we were just all economically disadvantaged and then
sometimes there were little things. You just learn things at home like toothpaste. We used to buy Crest, but my mom would always say “Cress.” So I’d go to school and say, “Hey, I got some Cress toothpaste.” People would respond, “Cress? What’s that? Where’s the T?” “Oh. Crest!”

Little things you just naturally do because that’s what your parents said and so you just picked up on that. Then you realize. Okay, here’s what you hear at home but here is what you’re learning at school. Then you get to a point where you’re like, no mom, that’s not right. Or hey, what about . . . As you start learning, some of that stuff back home you just realize, that’s just the way it is at home. Then you start having an, okay, when I’m here I talk like this. When I’m here, over here, I can talk this way. You kind of develop this double talk which is in some ways is no different when boys around their fellas. They talk different way than when they’re around adults.

**The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race.** So, it seemed growing up, one of the things that I felt was important to me was making sure that you understand what it means to be African American but you’re also just an American. There’s certain things that you find that’s important growing up as you learn about important figures in Black history. Things that you wouldn’t always learn in school. I think because of those things, you go through a transformation. I remember going through the African pride phase where we’d wear African necklaces and things like that. It was more about just having pride in your heritage, understanding where you are from. I think as you got older, you understand that it’s not the center topic of every conversation, it’s not always about you. But you can still be authentic and still be an American citizen.
Professional and leadership roles. Well okay, starting with the professional life, I think when you’re helping students, when students are of color you kind of have instant credibility with them because I think that first of all they come in and they’re going, “Wow, he’s in this position?” you know? There’s already this feeling of self-worth or feeling of hey, if this person who’s an administrator at this level can obtain this kind of status, than whatever I want to be, it’s possible. I think that’s part of it.

I think the other part of it is, sometimes it’s this fine line to where you have to represent all Black people. Just because I’m African American, doesn’t mean that I represent all views of all Black people. But sometimes it’s easy for you to be in a room of 20 professionals and 20 administrators and if you’re the only person of color, all the sudden there’s a question that comes up related to race. Well, I can answer that question from my perspective. It may not be the voice of all Black people. You sometimes find yourself having to also defend things that people may not understand. You find yourself talking in ways where you try to help other folks understand. You can’t always make it a Black or a White thing, so you start learning to use the words that are key triggers. Like how can we eliminate these barriers for students? When you keep it generic like that, you can kind of talk in a way where I think you get folks to see another perspective because we’re here to help put this student on a path for success.

I can think about early on, being a professional, a lot of times you get put on committees because they want diversity. You have this fine line between once again, staying authentic but at the same time, seeing a bigger picture. Everything can’t just be because I’m African American, I gotta go this way. You have to expand your own thinking but at the same time advocate when you need to advocate. I think as I’ve
learned to navigate through systems, I think that there are some folks who will look at you and say, “How did he get in that position?” Or there’s some folks who may not value your opinion early on because . . . for whatever reasons. I think you have to go and develop relationships with them, you have to develop trust. Over time, I think what happens is you can pick and choose what voice you’re gonna speak from.

I think if you navigate through those things well, you pick and choose when you allow your race to benefit you in a way that maybe it normally wouldn’t have. Sometimes you have to be an advocate, sometimes you have to be a leader, sometimes you have to go along for the ride, sometimes you have to be the driver.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** As you develop a personal and professional reputation in the community, there’s times where folks are gonna invite you to the table. Not because of your color, but they’re gonna invite you to the table because of your status or your title for the things that you can actually do to move a problem forward or to help a situation. Different people have different experiences. When you’re in the inner city, there’s different challenges that students, moms, and dads face.

But the fact that you’re actually able to navigate when you’re in different socioeconomic situations. I can talk a different way or have a different agenda when I’m in the inner city where there’s an Urban League luncheon or whatever the case may be. But I can also shift to a different gear if I’m a fundraiser and we have all the philanthropists from the city there. But you also have to do it where there’s this balance so whatever I say to one group, it doesn’t sound like I’m fake or phony to the other group, that’s still authentic to who I am and what the mission of the institution is.
Depending on knowing who your audience is. You have to be aware of what those challenges are. Sometimes you have to really not only identify culturally, but be able to relate. There’s a lot of times where you’re not so much thinking about is this a Black or White thing. You’re just coming in to represent this area as my position allows and it’s my responsibility to be knowledgeable or communicate x, y, and z.

**Maya Toussiant**

**Introduction.** My family has actually influenced my perceptions of race positively because my aunt on my mother’s side and my uncle on my father’s side of the family are White. They have children who are biracial. So that [diversity] is just kind of through my family. We get together. I don’t think about it. They’re my relatives. So I appreciate the fact that we kind of have a family that’s mixed, blended, for lack of a better term.

I grew up in a time with there was some separation, like busing and stuff like that. I guess more of a strife for equality, not separation. My experiences at a school that wasn’t a neighborhood school, I had some encounters, race-wise, I would say. Then some encounters, also by going to a predominantly White college.

School was always a place where I tried to shine. I tried to do my best academically or athletically or whatever it was I was doing. At the elementary level, when I was in the fourth grade, I had a teacher who was White, and I just got the sense that she didn’t like Black people. I was probably not her typical student, and I just felt like there was nothing that I could do that was right or that would please her; I always thought in the back on my mind, “She doesn’t think I can do it. She doesn’t hold the bar high enough for me to reach it.”
The shaping of the racial self: The battles of safety heat and cafeteria food. In college I had actually had my roommate ask me if she could take me home because her parents had never seen a real-life Black person before. I told her no. I didn’t think about racism at that point, and I guess I shouldn’t say it was racism; it was just she was very naïve. You just don’t say that to people. So I didn’t go, and we were only roommates that one year. She was just . . . It was just different.

For example, my roommate would not lock the door. I’m like, “Sweetheart, you got to lock the door. Where I’m from, we lock the door.” She was from a farm . . . They don’t lock the door . . . That was one kind of a battle. The heat was a battle. I wanted it warm. I wanted it on. She wanted it off. I’m like, “Okay” . . . but I couldn’t figure it out. I’m like, “Why are we walking around here in layers of clothes when we can just turn on the heat? It don’t make sense to me.” Maybe it could’ve been financial. Maybe they couldn’t afford heat. I don’t know, but that was one difference to me that I thought, “No, we don’t do that.”

Then the cafeteria food at school, I didn’t eat cafeteria food. I was rebelling . . . I didn’t know what broccoli was, cauliflower. I didn’t have those experiences growing up. My mom did green beans and corn and carrots. In the cafeteria, you can get all these things, and yogurt. I had never had those things, and so I was like, “Mom, I got to figure something out.” So I was cooking in the kitchen in the basement of my dorm. I was frying fish. It was just crazy. That was a different experience. . . . Then finally I guess I just was tired. . . . Then I just started . . . I opened myself up to new experiences.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. From my Black woman’s perspective, race is always present for me. I just don’t let it affect me. Because I think
the world is set up that way. I think it’s inherently set up for . . . White is right, and that’s all. To me, it’s a White man’s world, and I’m just living in it. I’m just trying to maneuver and find my place in it. For me, it’s always present, and how I interact with people and how I carry myself, I feel like if something happens somewhere, I’m like, “Please don’t let them be Black. Please don’t let them . . .” you know what I mean? It’s like I feel like we have to carry . . . One Black person can mess up, and it’s the whole Black race, so, to me, it’s all . . . I don’t know that White people feel that way or Asian people feel that way, or if Hispanic people feel that way. Maybe they do . . . but I just feel like it’s always present for us.

**Professional and leadership roles.** I feel like I have to constantly be proved that I deserve to be here. Even when I became an assistant principal, a White person that also interviewed said, “I knew you were going to get it because you were Black and you were a female.” I always feel like I have to prove that I have the ability or the skills to be where I am.

So, I think you need to know who you are . . . have a pretty sound and a full sense of self because . . . sometimes you have to fight through some things, through some stereotypes, or you might have to be in situations. Like, I feel all the time I’m in situations where I have to either somehow tell people that they have to hold kids, like my African American kids accountable because . . . some[times] . . . the bar is too low. Then sometimes I have to advocate for them (African American kids) because I think that they’re being not very fair or nice to them . . .

Then, I also feel like in my job, I see a lot of people doing a lot of stuff, and it’s like in the back of my mind I’m thinking, “I could never get away with that. I could
never do that.” Like I said, I feel like I can’t ever drop the ball, and that particular . . . I always felt that way, but that particular situation kind of proved it for me.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** I feel like a lot of times, not all in any of these things, but a lot of times certain folks don’t carry their own weight. They don’t make us look good as a race, and so I feel that I’m kind of harder on them because, to me, anything’s possible for anybody if you try hard enough or if you work at it hard enough. Through an education, you can get just about anything you want. It may not always be equal, but I think the opportunities always there to be successful, to improve one’s condition, so on and so forth.

Where I work, I feel that I can relate to the students that I work with, the parents, and the community members. Sometimes, unfortunately, it gets undermined a little bit because I feel like some folks think that I feel like I’m better than them, or they feel like I’m talking down to them.

I don’t know if it’s . . . It’s probably all stemming from those experiences, but I kind of think even though I’ve achieved a certain level, I feel like I have to constantly prove that I deserve to be here. I always feel like I have to prove that I have the ability or the skills to be where I am. I just don’t think it’s equal . . . I mean, I think folks . . . I feel like folks are waiting for me to not do it right so they can say, “See, she didn’t need to be there.” I don’t know if that answers your question, but . . . I always know my place. I feel like I always have to know not to . . . whether it’s professionally, whether it’s personally, that no matter what, I’m still an African American female in this world. I don’t have the same privileges and liberties as everybody else that doesn’t look like me.
Fredrick X

**Introduction.** My mother was a church-going person so I had church growing up. My family was real receptive to different people, different colors, and different races. I have never seen them have a negative interaction with another person of a different race that would cause me to think differently about that race or people of that color. I mean, I grew up in the projects where everybody looked like me, and for the most part, we thought that everything was the way it should be. Other than school, you didn’t have a lot of interaction with people of other cultures or races in the projects. As you grow up, as you begin to be exposed to different things. I know my family was one of the first Black families in a neighborhood, and of course, that wasn’t really . . . We weren’t appreciated, so we had things thrown at the house and things just done out of sheer hate and ignorance.

I didn’t have my first male teacher until high school and so I wanted to . . . give back . . . just be a positive role model for kids coming up behind me. I wanted to have a positive impact on generations of kids, especially kids of color who need to see African Americans in the educational field, who are there to assist them to achieve and strive to do better.

**The shaping of the racial self: Two white guys.** During my early elementary years, there was one summer when some White guys came through the neighborhood. Of course, they stuck out like a sore thumb in the projects, White guys. So, they started talking to us about different things and eventually got around to talking about the Bible and things like that. They played basketball with us. They played football with us and it became a weekly thing. They would come down and talk to us and hang out with us.
Eventually we just developed a bond or relationship or friendship with them. I knew church and then to see someone come into your community and have the same faith and not be afraid but kind of be accepted into the community was kind of shaping. It confirmed that it was okay; it was acceptable. Until you know better, you think it’s the norm. We still communicate with one another so I think it was more for reinforcing experience that truly God is for all people, not just one race or another. To see that kindness and care that they showed was positive.

**The shaping of the racial self: The bus and desegregation.** Like I said earlier, we were all the same back then. There really wasn’t a lot of diversity in our neighborhood. I didn’t start seeing that there was a difference until busing. When I was bused out of my neighborhood to another school was when I started to see and feel the difference in how people looked at you, how you saw other kids.

That seemed like a long ride on a bus to go from that part of town to West side of the city. Seeing your community change as you’re going from your neighborhood to another neighborhood, it was eye-opening, it was an experience, but I still felt comfortable in who I was and really didn’t question it. You just started seeing, “Okay, the world is bigger than my neighborhood.”

As we were bused, you were just thrust into a new environment that you had to adjust to. New teachers, a new way of doing things. You really didn’t have a choice, you just had to go with the flow for the most part and adjust to the changes. I think at that point you began to develop . . . a kind of a dual personality. . . . Parents always reinforced, “Be on your best behavior. Don’t get calls from the school.” Those things are already planted in us, but to . . . see school in a different light was an eye-opening
opportunity for me to say, Okay, this school looks different from mine. The material looks different from mine. The desks and everything look kind of different from mine. There is something different other than my neighborhood.

You just kind of start to absorb those things and say, okay, this is how they do things. This is how they talk. This is how they interact . . . if you act a certain way then . . . they’ll respond a certain way. If you behaved negatively then they would respond differently . . . my friends, some of them would misbehave and you can see how they were disciplined versus how other kids were disciplined for doing the same thing. As minorities, you have to learn how to fit in. Some of us learn quicker than others and easier than others. For the most part, I think I learned quickly how to adapt in a different environment. Through reinforcements, positive and negative. Just by observation, you know, “Okay, I don’t want to experience what they did so I’ll adapt.”

**The shaping of the racial self: The n-word.** As a teenager, I remember riding the city bus to school and hearing the kids in the back of the bus saying the n-word. Not necessarily directing it at you but nonetheless having that conversation in front of you is just . . . That was reinforcing that, “Okay, yeah I’m definitely different.” . . . but I didn’t react in a negative way, that would have caused problems, but I just knew, okay, there were certain people that I can be around and certain people I can’t. Of course, it was upsetting but you learn that the world is what it is. There’s always been racism and either you get it first-hand or you get it second-hand and I had an opportunity to get it like that, not necessarily directed at me but overhearing it and knowing how they felt about people of my color and my race. It definitely woke me up to some things.
Naturally I’m not an aggressive person and so it would take a lot to get me to act out in a negative manner or to respond in a negative manner because, again, growing up parents taught us that there’s going to be people that don’t like you because of who you are, not because of what you’ve done. I’ve always had that in the back of my mind and I just knew that as a family unit we took care of each other no matter what. As long as they didn’t physically do anything to me or my siblings, they can say what they want, do what they want. I was pretty comfortable in who I was and my direction that I was going in and so I just didn’t allow them to negatively impact my environment.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. I try not to let it [race] impact who I am or what I do, but you have to just be mindful of it. You can’t be ignorant that it doesn’t impact your life on a daily basis. I’m always mindful in the area, in the building that I work in. I’m always mindful of proximity to other people. I don’t know what their experiences are dealing with a minority person, male or . . . Especially because just of the perception of Black males. I try to always present it in a positive light.

When you are working with people of other cultures, then I think race is an issue because everybody’s bringing their own perception and experiences through a common conversation or discussion, but I don’t think within a race, because we’re all seeing the same thing, experiencing the same thing to some extent it probably isn’t so much of an issue. It may be an underlying thing but not apparent, not one of the bigger issues. There’s just opportunities that you see that you don’t get, that other folks do get, and that’s just simply based on who they are versus who you are. There’s definitely a double-
edged sword for administrators of color out there in a predominantly White school system.

To work within a system that is really not created to be fair and then you’re asked to do jobs that should be fair, which are not, because you’re limited with your resources, you’re limited with your support; you’re limited in materials. You’re really set up to not be as successful as you want to be just because of the system you were put in. Overall I think that we are not treated the same. We’re not given the same amount of respect for the same work that we do that other cultures do. I think we fight a battle that can be stressful because someone is constantly trying to undermine who you are and your authority. That can be somebody of your own ethnicity or the opposite. It’s a battle. It’s a daily battle to try to keep everybody on the same page and going in the same direction.

**Professional and leadership roles.** Individually, I think I try to just take the lead when I’m given a task to make sure that I’m putting my stamp on it and not allowing others to put their stamp on it as far as how things are going to go. They’ve given a task or duty and then I’m going to do it to the best of my ability according to how I think it should be done and accept feedback and input from others. Based on my experience and situations, I’ll make those decisions.

On a larger scale, if you’re not part of that decision-making team or within that friendship of those on that decision-making team, then you are pretty much limited to what you will be exposed to and what decisions that you’ll have a participating part in. I see it every day. I’m always wondering how decisions are made and who’s making these decisions and who’s at the table to make these decisions. It’s, I guess, in my opinion who they feel comfortable with that’s going to not rock the boat or be adversarial so to speak.
Again, it’s an observation, it’s an adjustment . . . how do I get myself in a position where I can make positive impacts and contributions to what I do on a daily basis? Sometimes you have to make those opportunities.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** My socioeconomic status . . . It has given me opportunities to do more things, to have more opportunities, to allow me to see things in maybe a different light because of my socioeconomic status. It’s simply the fact that people, when they see you, if you dress a certain way or they have certain expectations of you, right or wrong. I just think when people know that you have attained a certain level of economics that they are more likely to be open to sharing things with you because you have similar opportunities versus somebody who doesn’t have the same economic level because, you know, it could be selfish reasons, it can be just ignorance.

Not that I’ve made it by any means financially or anything like that but I think, again, the opportunities that you have based on your socioeconomic status and then when you see how, in comparison to other races that there are some unfair opportunities or positions or things of that nature. However, in education or when looking at leadership positions, you are who you are, regardless of your economic status. People will see you for who you are. Eventually it will come directly to you that no matter what your economic status is, you still are who you are. . . . It may water down some of the negative interactions but if it gets to the point that it’s serious enough, yeah, they will call you out for who you are and what you are. At the end of the day, you are who you are and class will never outrank race.
Zora Neal

**Introduction.** My age is my experience. What I’ve experienced really shapes my perception of what is and what isn’t. I haven’t had a whole lot of vast experiences, but I look at the way things are done. I find myself often . . . I bounce everything off my own experiences . . . is that how it would’ve been done in my home? Is that how my mother would’ve done it? For example, coming up as a child, I compare my childhood in a predominantly labor class neighborhood to the childhood of the kids that we are working with. Like, I wouldn’t have done that as a kid. Sometimes I think I’m vilifying them, and portraying myself as an angel, and we all know that’s probably not true.

In my formative years . . . I would come home and I’m playing, and they are saying stuff like, “You talk like a White girl.” Well, you do end up talking like a White girl when that’s where you are. That’s what you’re immersed in. It wasn’t necessarily talking like a White girl, or talking proper, it was speaking the way I learned. Those things kind of pop up in my own personal experience, as just things that have always kind of hung with me and helped me to find the difference between Black and White.

When I went to college, which is mostly White, I think I was the only Black girl on my floor in the female dorm, I found a lot of curiosity about Blackness. My prissy, or pristine talk, or uppity or White talk, you talk like White people kind of stuff, when I moved amongst White people, it was like they couldn’t understand what I was saying. But when I was with Black people it as always like, “You talk funny. You talk like White people.” So when I got there it wasn’t so much me being White.

**The shaping of the racial self: My father, black and white.** I would hear stuff that my father would say. He worked at a factory where they used racial slurs a lot. My
dad was asked to be a supervisor. He struggled with it because it was a pay increase, you
need that little extra money in your household, but then the other big part of it also meant
treating your brethren negatively. As a supervisor, the supervisor was the person who did
the dirty work for the boss, and who used the name-calling and all that kind of stuff. That
was an experience.

I think I’m a very Black-and-White. You do this because I’m Black, you do this
because he’s White, kind of thing. As opposed to maybe seeing things, because you
know him and because you don’t know me. You know what I mean? I think it has
shaped my life a lot. Yeah, it’s impacted me.

**The shaping of the racial self: White-washed.** In my family, there was a
definite stigma, or there were defined lines, between what was Black and what was
White. I remember about 26 years ago, my mother and I were looking at a cooking show
on TV. Well, Black people like greens and my mother made the best greens ever. So,
my mother was comparing her recipe to the recipe she saw on the show.

My mother was like, “She knows that that’s not how Black people do that. Black
people don’t do that to their greens. They put this, this, and this in their greens.” What
she was saying is, these were the things that we use, the neck bones, the smoked meat,
this, that, and the other, and we don’t put collards with mustard . . . Mustard and collard
is, I forget which, and we definitely didn’t use no kale back then. That’s kind of how she
talked. She saw the way the lady was making the greens. She saw those greens as almost
being whitewashed, like the perception of, this is how White people do it.

In reality the segment was about the things that plague Black people, like obesity,
heart issues, diabetes, high blood pressure, and a lot of these things are brought on by the
food that we eat, so we need to change that diet. She was saying, this is a new way that you could do it. My mother was like, “I don’t care what you say, White people do it that way.” Not that I’m pushing off what my mother did, but that’s an example of one of my perceptions. I do it all the time. It’s a lot of things, it’s just the way we do things, the way they do things.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. Personally, I don’t consider race a big issue. I have White girlfriends, Black girlfriends, all of that. I’ve always had the ability to make friends with people, whoever they were. Professionally, I think a lot of times they try to diversify our leadership teams by race. . . . Sometimes those situations didn’t work out . . . Sometimes I was hired because I was Black, sometimes I was hired because I was a female. You know what I mean?

Professional and leadership roles. There was one position I had where I felt like I was kind of being pushed out. In those situations you just have to recognize patterns of behavior. It was just the little things like, not giving me enough time to complete a task, or giving me a task and being surprised that it was completed, or not receiving credit for the work you do.

I’m a little earthy, a little grainy, for some people. I’m not a button up type. I totally believe the major part of that [problem] was race, and me not fitting the standard because of the way I looked, because of the way I worked. I’m a very casual type, so that way you know . . . But what I am is real. To me, I think I bring it to the table all the time. When I speak, I speak as a Black woman, through my Black female experiences, through my knowledge that I’ve gained as a Black female, and an administrator…my pros and my cons, my yays and my nays, are based on what I know.
I feel like people need people to relate to . . . understand my struggle, understand where I’ve been. . . . I had an issue with the way I was being treated and the perception that supervisor had of me. I think those were the times where I’ve been in that situation where I felt like it was my race, and [a supervisor’s] perception of my ability to do things because of my race, that led to a decision that affected me. My current position is a different situation because I think my current boss has a lot more to do with comfort level than race, performance than race.

I feel like right now race is a pretty big issue. I feel like we can impact race, or de-emphasize race, in the schools, even in between us. I feel like we don’t have any advocacy system here. But, this [holds up a Crate and Barrel credit card] is not about race. This is about economic power, I guess, for lack of a better word. There’s no way you can make this about race. There’s certain things you’re talking about, certain things you’re doing in your life, that are just not . . . I think race is being minimized. Meaning in the sense that it doesn’t matter to us, but in the world around us things are very Black and White. Black and white and brown.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** I was one of the first kids that was bused. ’76, ’77, ’78. The whole integration plan here was, to take all the kids from the north side of town, put them in school on the south side of town. Then, take kids from over south and put them in schools in the north, and that’s how we fix this integration problem. That’s where I started to understand the difference between people and lifestyles. Then I just started to understand what integration was supposed to mean, and the difference between Black and White, because from a socioeconomic perspective they were switching two neighborhoods that were exactly the same.
This [holds up a Crate and Barrel credit card again] affords me the opportunity to make extravagant purchases. It affords me those things. It helps me to prioritize things. Having children has also kind of changed those things too, but that’s the way money does. I got a nice house. . . . I live in a nice neighborhood. If I wanted to I could go out West [to the suburbs], it’s just not me. I don’t. That’s not the choice that I think is best for me, but I think it’s important that, in terms of socioeconomic benefits, I do get to live a Whiter lifestyle. That’s very true. It’s very much a Whiter lifestyle than what I normally would have, or would normally have if I had just a labor job.

**Sadie St. Pierre**

**Introduction.** My family is from the South. I grew up in a time where the schools had not too long ago integrated. My older siblings had gone to all-Black schools and I was going to integrated schools. There were constant conversations at the house about me and my White friend, my White best friend. I didn’t really understand it because I didn’t know their [her siblings’] experience at that point. I was just trying to understand why I was being pinpointed because my best friend was White.

Through those experiences, I grew to understand that I was not to trust White people and I was to always work harder, so that I could be noticed as much as they were noticed. I think having those rules in place set a precedence for how I would operate in this society, understanding that I had to work hard to have the same things or that I was not going to be accepted to a same level as my White friends. To me, understanding that in my family and having to really navigate between the two worlds of being in my Black home and my Black neighborhood, but living and working in White mainstream, I just learned very quickly that I was supposed to work harder because I wasn’t going to do
what my siblings were describing, “Well, you’re never going to get to do that. You’re never gonna get to do that.”

The shaping of the racial self: My best friend, Catie. I think probably the most daunting memory was my best friend, Catie, when I went to the predominantly White school. We were just inseparable. She had invited me to her birthday party. I remember nagging my mother about, “So, am I going to get to go? Can I go to Catie’s birthday party?” And she kept delaying, like, “I don’t know. We’ll see.” And there were some questions like, “Really?” And my sisters and brothers were like, “You really going to a White girl’s birthday party?” At that point, I didn’t know any different. We were just friends and we just wanted to be around one another. And so, there was that thought/feeling of like, “You’re doing something very different here.” But it was never really directly said. This was just me picking up on it, something is very different what you’re trying to do.

I went to the party and we were having a blast. Then, Catie’s mom came in the room and she said, “Sadie, your ride is here.” And Catie started screaming and crying. She’s like, “No! She can’t leave! She can’t leave!” And Catie’s sister, Carrie, came in and they were trying to calm Catie down and I had never really seen this side of Catie. She was just kind of a nerd. I was really trying to figure out the dynamics of what was happening. So then Catie’s dad came out and he was like, “Now, Catie, you know why she has to go.” Well, later on, I found out that it was a slumber party for everybody else, but because I was the only Black kid, I couldn’t be allowed to spend the night, so everybody else knew what was going on except me. And I was trying to figure out what all of that meant to me.
I think those unsaid things growing up in my family challenged me and I became pretty competitive about what I couldn’t do and what I was not allowed to do. I really wasn’t going to suffer for it. I was like, “A lot of White kids get to walk the school and ride their bikes to school, and I got to ride the bus from the other side of town. Well, I’m going to live in a house like that.” I started to develop this competitive mindset of “I’m having what they’re having. I’m no different than them.” Even though in my inner self, I was struggling with the physical differences between myself and all of the White kids, there was something in me that grew up to be this driving force of “Mmm mmm, I’m not about to not have what they have.”

The shaping of the racial self: Education and family. During desegregation, everybody’s sitting in the classroom together, and they always strategically place the Black and Hispanic kids. They would spread us out. One Black girl, one Black boy, one Latina girl, one Latino boy. . . . So, you’re sitting in a classroom where you’re exposed to everybody else’s experiences and you can feel pretty isolated pretty quickly because your story is not the same as theirs. And because there are more of them, you can feel like their story is the story; it is the way it’s supposed to be.

I think that’s what propelled me to push so hard is I kept hearing this other stuff and either I would not know what it was, and I was curious about that. You know what I’m saying? So, they would be talking about stuff like . . . I mean, we traveled, but it wasn’t like going out of the country. There were things that I didn’t know about and I really didn’t feel like I had a way to ask anybody about it. I think it pushed me to try to do something different because I wanted their life. That’s what I wanted.
My family very much impacted me, but I think I took that challenge to be almost . . . It almost became the thing that set me apart from everybody in my family. I fell into education, I think, because of that. They were like, “You’re really, really smart and you’re really, and really this and you’re really, really that.” So, it almost set me apart in my own family. It’s like, when we had conversations about college, my oldest sibling had gotten into college and dropped out in their senior year. None of my other siblings went. So, when conversations arose about me going to college, it was like, “Oh yeah, she goin’.” It’s not a choice. That’s the expectation. That became what my identity was about, me being set apart from education, which also pushed me to the arena with more White folks and Black folks. You develop the two lifestyles, so to speak.

**The shaping of the racial self: Jordache jeans.** As a female, clothing was always an issue for me because my butt’s so big . . . there were things as a Black girl that all of my little White girlfriends were wearing, Jordache jeans, Gloria Vanderbilt, and Calvin Klein, but they just would not fit the same. I remember dying to have some. I would go in Dillard’s over and over and over again, and I would try them on . . . But when I would look in the mirror . . . I remember internalizing, it just wasn’t the same for me. Though I never spoke about it until I had my own daughter who started to verbalize it . . . because I didn’t think it was such a big issue for me . . . but I hated it. I hated my lips. I hated my butt. I hated my curves. I wanted to be exactly what they were because I wanted to fit in. . . . Those experiences also shaped—I didn’t know it at that point—but it very much shaped . . . my identity.

**The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race.** When I received my first building administrative role, I started therapy because I was finally in a spot where I
could say some things, but I was the only Black person there. We had some Black teachers. We had a ton of Black kids, but on the administrative team, I was the only Black person. So, I sought out a therapist and I was like, “I don’t know which Sadie I’m supposed to be. They want me to be the White Sadie in the hallway. I gotta talk Black to the Black kids while I hide from the White teachers. I don’t know who the heck I am.”

She said to me, “Why not be Sadie, but you change how you operate depending on the situation that you’re in?” So, I started going down the hallway, I started telling the Black kids, “If you don’t stop, I promise I will show up at your house and talk to your mom about what you’re doing because you know if she knew, she would beat your behind.” What I got from White people in the building was . . . I started being validated for just being me whereas before, I didn’t feel like I had the education or the position to be able to do that. Once I started doing that, I was promoted. I was promoted for being my Black self . . . but I had hid my Black self all of my career.

**Professional and leadership roles.** So, with adults, race literally comes up every single day in our conversations. . . . We have more than 10 languages spoken in our building. We have one Black teacher and all White teachers and every single day I see underlying things that happen to kids . . . Every single day . . . I see an inequity. I see a low expectation of a Black kid. It’s not so much with our Asian population, not even our African population. It’s Black kids. It’s African American Black kids. . . . This is my struggle.

I can try to educate the teacher and help the teacher to grow because if a teacher doesn’t even understand their behavior and how it’s impacting especially a Black kid, if I scare them, they are going to shut the door on every Black situation because they are
going to be afraid of it. Every day I have to make a decision, do I speak up or do I just handle this myself until I feel like this teacher is ready for a deeper conversation? Every single day. Every single day, not a day goes by . . . but you can’t do that without a relationship.

Understanding cultural settings is essential just because of the simple fact that the majority of teachers are White and the majority of kids in inner city schools are kids of color. . . . It’s about understanding one another first at a very basic level . . . and then getting to know people and having experiences with them where you got a mutual level of trust. Then you can go in further or closer. . . . So, it’s essential because in every urban school across the country, when you look at data, our kids are the highest in poverty and the lowest on everything else. All of our academic subjects. How can you combat that if you don’t have an awareness of what’s really going on, if you don’t build relationships?

So, that is the biggest cross that I have to bear, when can I speak up? Is this an appropriate time? And will I scare them? It’s a cross to bear because I balance, how do I grow this teacher to where she sees what’s happening? And how do I save this kid, who doesn’t have a voice, so that they don’t become a statistic? What are they going to do to the vulnerable kids who don’t have a voice? How do I help a group of White teachers who have never even been around Black people? How do I help them to understand how to teach that Black boy? It’s not even teaching them. The teaching is not even the issue. It’s the encounters. It’s the messages that they send without saying anything.

Then, I think about some of our Black Principals, they don’t get a fair shot. They put Black principals at the hardest schools in the hardest parts of town and then they don’t support them. So, they look bad. Every time, they send a document out, the first
thing I do is I find where the Black schools and the Black Principals are. They’re always at the lowest, for every document they send out. So, I work hard to make sure I’m not categorized with anybody. Whether they’re Black or White, I’m not going to be low and be Black. I got to be Black, but I don’t have to low.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** Because of that competitiveness nature I developed, I worked and I pushed my kids harder. I educated them differently. Everything that I saw happening to other Black kids because I was in the school system, I was over the top with my own kids to the point where they were like, “Mom! You got to pipe down a little bit.” But it was really my own experience that I had which I was preparing them for.

I was raised in such a diverse place that you don’t really see the isolation in neighborhoods quite as much. So, if you live in a suburb, everybody’s from somewhere. It’s not just you’re the only Black family. It’s one family from Turkey, one Black family, one family from Africa, so everybody’s different. In the Midwest it was crazy. We came and we lived out in the suburbs, but we assimilated very, very quickly. In doing so, we also noticed the Black folks here, which in our minds we thought, “Well, the Black people here are kind of different,” but we thought maybe it’s a regional difference. Then, as we started to ask more questions and started to find out a little bit more about the history of the city, we thought, “Okay, this is more of a poverty mindset, we think.” In trying to understand, we ended up being in a situation where we had more in common with White people than we did with Black people. So, then when we tried to become involved in the Black community, we got a lot of pushback because of where we lived. I remember sitting in a seminar and these women lashing out at me because they were like,
“Yeah, those big companies, they love to recruit Black people from out of state, but they won’t hire us Black people here.” And I’m just like, “Okay. We didn’t create this problem, so you don’t really need to target me.” I watched myself start to be a little more judgmental of other Black people. I went through this phase where I thought it was more about race. Then I went through a phase where I thought it was more about poverty. Now, I feel like the two are almost one and the same because the statistics really are synonymous.

After a few years of therapy, at least a solid year, probably a year and a half of therapy, I really started to look at my stuff in the mirror to see how I started to judge other Black people who didn’t pull themselves up by their bootstraps. I started to look at more systemic things. Why are the Black men selling drugs? Why do you ride through certain areas and see the Black men sitting out at seven in the morning not going to a job? I started seeing that stuff as less of those people’s problems, to more of, “This is systemic. This is a whole big problem in our system.” And then, really seeing more big picture things and not, “I’m this school administrator that’s better than anybody else.” We chose to fight and really play by the rules of the White culture a little more than other people who were like, “I’m not gonna change who I am.”

I know women who have interviewed for administrative positions in OP or positions in corporate America who wore natural hair seven days of the week, but they knew to flat iron, to straighten, their hair for the interview. I have done it. I flat ironed my hair for one day. I put on my most conservative suit because I wanted them to not view me as a threat as they do some educated Black women. I finished my interview and I went back, wet my hair, and I twisted it back up or wore it natural. I had learned to play
the games, but today I view it as, “I get to decide when I want to play the game and I get to decide when I don’t.” You know what I’m saying?

Ruby Tinubu

Introduction. Living where I am located, in the Midwest, it’s like kind of a melting pot, so I’ve had interactions with all races. So, I don’t think my perceptions of race have been affected. I had friends in my neighborhood of different races, Blacks, Whites, and Native Americans. We all went to school together. My family was predominantly all of one race, and we didn’t veer far from that race in any of our areas of life. So you know, with work professionally, mentally, spiritually, we stayed with our particular race.

The shaping of the racial self: Miss Awe and my education. I think back to my teacher, her style, her demeanor, and the way she carried herself. It didn’t make me want to be a White woman, but it made me . . . her level of classiness and professionalism was something that I wanted to attain. She had it and I think that it also just helped me to realize that along the way somewhere I want to have that same type of characteristic but I want to see it in my own people. So, where do I go to find that?

So, in junior high, my best friend and I made a pact that we didn’t care where we went to school or what we doing, we were going to a historical Black college/university [HBCU] to be around people that looked like us but they were professionals. We had been introduced to the Black college tour and it helped us to identify that, even though we lived in the Midwest and there were people of different affluent levels and economic status, we didn’t get to see a lot of African Americans that were affluent. But when you read about it and see that there were African American people that were in affluent positions that were not just your cooks, chefs, or nannies. So we chose to go to Alabama
State and I think that was my second level of getting introduced to individuals that were just in leadership roles and of color.

Coming from the Midwest, we had been isolated for so long, we didn’t even know what true racism was, blatantly in your face until I got to Alabama State. Like living in the Midwest it was more undercover as I should say. You know, like you probably never paid attention to it. It wasn’t until I went away and realized that those jokes they were saying were no longer funny because it was African American people telling me that is not a joke, “They are talking about your hair. They talking about your clothes.” There weren’t a lot of African Americans in the Midwest that were around on a regular basis to say that behavior was not okay. I didn’t learn that until I went away to a predominantly African American community.

Like for example, when I went to Alabama State and we went to the mall, and we were going into a store and one of my dorm mates were like “We ain’t going in there to buy nothing, they’re racist.” And I was like no, you know it’s a store, we have this same store at home. She was like “Okay, well go in there.” So when I went in there. I bought my stuff and I paid no attention to what was going on. When I came back out, she said, “You didn’t even pay attention to that White lady at the counter. She did not want to touch your hand. She slid your money across to you on the counter, by setting it on the counter and pushing it out to you. But you had your hand out for her to put it in.” You know what, if I was at home that probably would have been a norm, nobody would have brought it to my attention. But since I was there, where there had been some racial divide, they were giving me those lessons to learn these behaviors are not okay.
The shaping of the racial self: HBCUs. Another experience that was really an eye-shocker to me was sororities and fraternities. Because I came from the Midwest, Black sororities and fraternities were not as widely known. Here, when getting ready to go to college, we did not have our Black sororities trying to recruit us, saying, “Hey, go here and be a part of my sorority. You should be a Delta or an AKA.” I didn’t even know that they existed, but when I went down there they met us at the gate saying, “You need to be involved in a sorority!” And I’m like, uh uh, that’s like a gang. In my eyes, that’s what it looked like back then. I am not in any [gang], coming from the Midwest. I do not do any organized groups. Really, I was raised where I did not participate in organized groups that pertained to being one specific race or one specific color or any of that. I did not have that experience because I left from the Midwest and went south and it was like, you need to be in the NAACP and you need to be involved in AAUW.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. I’m a proud African American. I think my race plays a role that I believe, I have a point to prove. That I want individuals to know that I have the ability to be a leader. That I can make decisions, healthy decisions, healthy boundaries, and that I’m not just another negative statistic. So . . . when I think of somebody asking me about my race . . . I’m a proud African American woman.

When I was growing up and individuals come and speak to us at schools, it was never just a ray of diversity. If they had people coming in and talking to our classes about careers or jobs during junior high or high school, they did not look like me. They did not look like me. They were White, predominantly White individuals, or Caucasian individuals that would come in say okay you could be a lawyer. Or you can be a police
officer. And it wasn’t that we probably didn’t have them, they just were not readily available or invited to come into the school system and share their experiences.

Poor is poor. Economic status is economic status. As far as race mattering, I can’t say that there’s just one isolated area when race does not matter. Heck, how many billionaires do you have that’s Black and White? Not very many. So no, I don’t think there is an area or ever a time when race doesn’t matter.

**Professional and leadership roles.** I’ve been working education for the last nine years. I can promise, if I’ve gone to a meeting of 10 or more, I’ve never been in a room probably, I ain’t going to say never but, a majority of the time I have not been in a room with more than two or three African Americans that are in leadership. That I think that’s where I see more racial divide than I ever see anywhere. . . . I can promise you, I’m the only African American woman in leadership that’s in that room, unless it is a meeting specifically for African Americans.

In being in leadership they often try to even out boards and organizations with individuals that are of color and in leadership. I know by sitting on these boards and just hearing they assume that I would know about a service that’s being offered in the community that’s helping African Americans that are poor. They also think I know how good or bad it should be and I don’t even know. I’ve never heard of that service in my life. So what makes you think I would know that?

Right now, I’m the only African American in a leadership role at my institution. A lot of our students who are of color, and it doesn’t just have to be African American, color period, they gravitate to someone they see that looks like them or maybe they feel can relate to their situation. The staff-I literally have staff come and get me to de-escalate
a situation because they have a student that’s become aggressive or upset. They want me to come to talk this student down. When I get in there, it’s an African American student. So I got to be that student advocate and petition for them to be educated on those things without them [White people] getting offended.’

So, it’s important that African Americans are aware and share in regards to our culture and our identity in leadership roles. Some of the things that we have that come from our history have made us the decision-makers. Have made us loyal and dedicated. That means that we’re resilient in any situation. Many people that would go into a situation and they’re the minority, they would be ready to leave. If you look at the history of African Americans who are in leadership roles. . . . They’re not job hoppers. They’re not like, “Oh I’m just going to do this for two years or three years.” They are dedicated, they’re loyal, they stay there, and they’re vested.

As an African American leader in education, my greatest struggle has been not ever having a positioned offered to me. Every position I’ve had has been something I had to go after and acquire. And as an African American leader working in education, it took someone that did not look like me . . . to look me into my face and say, “You know you’re a success story. Do you know that you are an asset? You’re one of the greatest assets to this institution.” None of my mentors look like me.

I should not have had to leave the Midwest to go see an African American be acknowledged for the great work that they did in leadership. We’ve had people here. They had been vested for 20 years before, 20—25 years before their great work was acknowledged. I think it’s important that accolades are given to them earlier on. It’s important for our students to see, our individuals in our city and state that wanted to stay
here and invest in our kids and our urban communities. Finally, as African Americans we have to be willing to learn that business side of education and don’t let them side-mow us to say, “Well you’re African American you have to work at a HBCU.” As in if that’s the only way you’re going to be able to get on the administration side of it. That’s our greatest challenge.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** In my younger years, it never fazed me like there was a divide of Black and White. Even if, I grew up in north Omaha in the urban community, I had White friends, Black friends, we had Native American friends that we all trucked from our neighborhood all the way up to our junior high school. Then we went to our centralized school or any of that, I’d never really seen that divide. Because the people that were in our neighborhood, they were just as poor as we were. My light bulb probably did not click into racial divide until I actually left home.

However, in this day and age, I will say that I’ve learned that economic status does not discriminate. When I was younger and growing up, to me all Black people were poor and all White people were all right and living well. Now that I’m an adult, I know that economics does not discriminate at all. When I got ready to purchase my first home was when I really started seeing the divide. I was like, oh you trying to sell me homes in this community, this way, but I’m telling you I have enough money to live over here.

My husband and I are in the market to buy a house, now. This is not our first house, but when they see us walk into a bank, they automatically treat us like we some first time home buyers. They assume we don’t have credit, we don’t have money. They don’t talk to us about a conventional 15 year loan to pay off our home fast. They talk to us about a program for first time home buyers, or if you live in this community you can
buy a house here . . . they just assumed that. They don’t even take the time to ask, what role do you play?

Even being in education and being a leader in my role when I am in a meeting . . . sitting in a room with other leaders and I’m the only African American at that table. I could be the last one they ask for my opinion. They can go around this whole table and ask everybody’s opinion and get everybody. And then they’ll ask, “what do you think?” And I’ll say to myself, “Well, why didn’t you ask me first?” So, no, the socioeconomic status of a Black person does not matter.

Barak Kingston

Introduction. I kind of grew up in a time after the Civil Rights Movement, where a lot of the stories that took place with my parents’ generation and my grandparents’ generation were certainly passed down to me, so my age definitely influenced the way I perceive race and the way I experience race. Stories about their struggles during the Civil Rights Movement and the struggles they faced in the South coming north. Both my parents were from the South and they faced some pretty treacherous situations dealing with race, not being able to go to certain schools, being chased home by the Klan and what have you.

They certainly played a role in my perception of race, hearing those stories, because those narratives were very real, even not experienced, but they were very real from the secondhand perspective as well. When you see those things play out to some degree, in my personal life, kind of ties into reflections and experiences of my parents and grandparents.

One of the things I was always told was that being an African American you always had to work three or four times as hard as the average White person because there
are certain privileges that come along with the skin color that we on the surface see. So I’ve always been a person that’s willing to work harder. Whatever the minimum setting has been for an expectation, I’ve always gone above and beyond that because as an African American, that’s what we have to do.

**The shaping of the racial self: Hand-me-downs.** I remember my grandmother working as a maid and having to work really hard. She would go take care of their family, then she would come home with hand-me-downs. I would say, “Wow, we’re not worthy of new clothes?” I watched how she worked for people of a different race and wasn’t treated well and how we always kind of became second-class citizens. I had this vow that I would never be a person who would see myself as second-class to anyone.

My grandmother was doing that because she was a great woman, but it rubbed me the wrong way that I had to wear someone else’s clothes to survive. I just said, in particular, “Why is this group of individuals in a better position than me based upon their race?” Because again, there were a lot of White families and they were very affluent. Then, I said, “I think I can do the same thing someday.” So, my goal and my mission was to elevate my family to a place where we could be affluent.

**The shaping of the racial self: Performance animals.** As a teenager, I went to a predominantly White high school and I was recruited because of my athletic ability. It was interesting because many of the White kids were afraid of us because we were coming from this high poverty, high crime area. They were just terrified of us when we got to the school. Then we were also called sellouts by the Blacks in our neighborhood.

It was interesting because once we began to perform athletically, we began to become accepted by the group of Whites out there, but it was all based upon
performance, not who we were as individuals. Today, I still see that with a lot of Black athletes; we’re oftentimes accepted based upon performance, and not necessarily who we are. We have to perform. It goes back to that piece again, whatever the minimum is, we need to be outdoing that minimum in order for us to be successful and do what we need to do.

My thought was always, “Why can’t my friends, who aren’t athletes come out to the same school and get a good quality education?” Because they didn’t play sports, they weren’t invited to come out to the school to get that opportunity. It was tough because you got to live between two worlds. You got to live between a world where you’re going with individuals who are afraid of you and then you’re coming back in the evening time to a community where they’re calling you names like sellouts and everything else because you’re choosing to go out there to this predominantly White school for a better education.

What I’ve learned is, we have to learn to survive in our immediate culture and we also have to be able to survive in the mainstream culture. Oftentimes, that’s looked at as a negative. I think what that does for many of us is it makes us more resilient and gives us a skillset far above and beyond the individual who just simply knows how to succeed and function in a place where they’re a one-trick pony.

The dual environments we have to survive in . . . one of the things that made the Tuskegee airmen so great was the fact that they were forced to do double the amount of hours of the average White pilot. They had no planes shot down because the hours they already put in, that made them better. They didn’t like it, but in the end it made them
better. I think some of the things we endure in society, we don’t necessarily like it, but in the end it certainly made us stronger and better and certainly more resilient as well.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. Unfortunately, race always matters in America because it’s the way we’re set up. I mean, the whole racial aspect following slavery and the way for them to keep a system of disparities in place was to make it be about color, even though genetically we’re all the same people.

I’m very proud of my race as an African American male. It’s something I appreciate, the journey of those that come before me. I also appreciate others who are willing to get to know me based upon my journey as an African American and their willingness to bring things back to who they are because oftentimes, Whites, they want to impose who they are on you and then maybe a little bit of your story may come out on the backend, but I’m very appreciative of who I am as an African American.

I always appreciate those who are willing to learn some things about me, but one of the things that challenged me living in the Midwest was I was tired of feeling like I was invisible or a second-class citizen. So, I moved my family to the South, where relationships were stronger amongst African Americans and to some degree, even better with some Whites.

Professional and leadership roles. Race has taught me to be one of the hardest working individuals in the room because I mean, goes back to my childhood. As a leader, because we are forced to not be a one-trick pony, it gives us a chance to see things from multiple different lenses when we’re going in situations. It was easy for me as a principal to not rush the judgment and really sit down and analyze situations and give insights to my staff that they hadn’t thought about, which can be really challenging when
you’re dealing with White staff. My leadership and my racial experiences certainly played a role in allowing them to open up and see something different.

For example, they often looked at the practices of African Americans when it came to things such as spankings and stuff at home like that as something that’s really negative. I had to really share with them that part of that, again, was a tradition. However, not every African American family resorts to spankings. Another example is the tones that the Black women who came to my schools talked in were tones that were quite different from Whites because . . . For example, one of the things I told my assistant principal was that in the Black community, we don’t necessarily give suggestions to our kids. We give commands. When I say, “Go sit down,” I’m not asking you, “Do you want to go sit down?” I’m saying, “You go sit down.”

It was a huge eye-opener for her and my other staff members to see and get that, even when they were doing things with our kids. They started giving more direction versus, “Would you like to go sit down,” or, “Would you like to go do your homework? Would you like to do your classwork?” No, I’m expecting you to do your homework, with love as well though. Just because the tone may be a little harsh or sound a little harsh, doesn’t necessarily mean that there’s no love behind it. There’s a lot of love behind that and those parents come to that school and they’re ticked off. They love their kids just like you love your kids. They may just say it and go about it a little differently, but I was able to shed light on those educators by sharing those stories.

I think those of us who are serving in those roles of leadership become the voices of those who can’t speak. We have to completely be in tune with the plight of many other African Americans who are struggling, but also be able to have the charisma and
skillsets to be able to articulate the needs with the majority community as well. It’s critical to have that cultural identity because we’re voices for those who can’t speak for themselves.

I also think that leaders have to be skilled in their motivation, instruction, curriculum, but certainly cultural identity is going to be a critical aspect of it, more so in the Midwest though. Places where you don’t see a lot of African Americans in leadership roles, again in the South you’ll see a plethora of African Americans who are dispersed in various leadership roles. They’re willing to have tough conversations about race if they come up.

In the Midwest, when it’s only you, you have to be a little bit more. . . . You have to be aware of it, but you have to go about it in a very delicate way though because one of the struggles I faced when I was leading a school with a predominantly White staff with a majority of Black students who were struggling was oftentimes I made decisions. I had White staff saying, “You’re just doing this because you’re Black and they’re Black.” I had to begin to point people to the data. I had to move away from the emotional conversations about it being the right thing to do for kids because they couldn’t see that. I had to point to the data and effective teaching to be the premise to push forward through to a lot of those Midwesterners.

It became a very data-driven conversation because they couldn’t seem to grasp hold of the emotional need of all kids needing a quality education. Many of my staff members drove into the inner cities and then they went back out to the White suburbs when they left. They were not around people of color at all. They didn’t see the value and there was probably a piece of them that didn’t really think that their kids would ever
be able to achieve that level anyhow. Their belief systems always needed to be challenged and I had to do it with data, versus on the emotional appeal.

Race and socioeconomic status. I wish I could say that the higher you climb up the socioeconomic status ladder, the more and more race doesn’t play a role. However, people still see race in everything we do. I think the challenge that you face as you climb up the ladder of socioeconomic status is that you don’t only face the battles from external communities. You also have to constantly be reinforcing to the community that you’re in that you’re still a part of it and committed to the struggle there as well. Some people see you as striving, as becoming more distant from them and the culture because . . . it’s typical with most cultures, not necessarily in that same socioeconomic status. You have to continue to reaffirm them, let them know you’re still committed to the same causes, but also you got to be willing to deal with the challenges that come along with still being in isolation and in predominantly White communities as well, as you climb up that ladder. You face a battle on both sides.

You got to be willing to be open to sharing your story, got to be open to learning about other individuals. I think one of the challenges many African Americans face in the White communities is we’re not willing to share of ourselves. It’s not comfortable initially, but sharing of ourselves gives us a chance to enlighten them to a new experience to some degree and then opens them up to do the same thing with us. I think one of the pieces they’re missing oftentimes is we all have a narrative that’s been told to us about each other that sometimes isn’t generally true. In some ways, there may be some things that are true, but sharing those experiences of who you are, your story opens up the conversation for more dialogue.
MyaM’chele O’Bamgelou

Introduction. As a kid in my childhood years, I did not experience any forms of racism. I had White and Black friends in my school and my neighborhood. I had teachers who were Black, my principal was Black. Yeah. Like I said, my neighbors, I had White and Black neighbors. I probably had the same number of Black teachers as I did White teachers.

So, I feel like when I was in college things shifted. I was a minority. Most of the time when I came to a classroom they were usually filled with White people, especially as I got to my teaching core classes, they were usually White females and then me.

The shaping of the racial self: Be your word. We were supposed to do a talent show and for whatever reason my friends and I decided to pull out of it. We didn’t want to do it anymore. I remember my fourth grade teacher telling us that she’s going to put this on our permanent record and you should always be a person of your word. I did not understand it at that time. I remember us being so mad, and saying, “She can’t put that on our permanent record!” For whatever reason, I was reflecting on that and I was like, “Wow, that was really a great lesson to know that your word is all you have and you want people to see you as somebody who they can depend on.” That’s what she wanted to teach us. She wasn’t just trying to be mean, even though I don’t think she really put it on our permanent record. She just wanted us to get that, when you say something you need to mean it and you do it, which correlated to my mother as well.

The shaping of the racial self: Mama. Like when I used to try things and I always wanted to quit. Like, I did softball. I wanted to quit cheerleading and she would make me stick through it to the end. I couldn’t quit. And so, just those different things
and then seeing how my mom just . . . she didn’t graduate from high school but education was always so important in our house, and so we went to the library in the summers. I just remember going and getting all these books and stuff. . . . But she just really, without saying it, she didn’t ever say like, you need an education to have this in life or to be this, she just created those opportunities. So that really has shaped me, who I am as a person and as a parent.

The shaping of the racial self: Just a note. There was one incident that really impacted the way I viewed what people thought of me. During my practicum, we got to work with a partner. My partner was a White female and everything that we did, we were able to collaborate on it except for the final essay. On our reflection, my partner emailed me saying, “I don’t really get this, you know, can you send me what you did so I can just see how I should do this?” Not thinking about it, I said sure and I sent it to her. Well, when I got my paper back I think I had a C and the comment on there was that, “It’s obvious that you copied off of . . . ” and it had my partner’s name on it.

So, I went to my partner and asked, if her paper was similar to mine. She apologized and said she would confess. So, we went up to our professor and she told her, “I didn’t really understand the assignment. M’chele sent me hers so that I could understand. So it’s not her, it was me.” (M’chele was the name I went by in college because it was much easier than MyaM’chele). And the professor just noted it. She took out a pen, marked out the C, gave me an A, and said she’ll change it in the grade book. She never apologized. She never docked the other student. So, that right there made me feel as if . . . I don’t know, just by who I am, what I look like, the expectations for me was that you can’t possibly do. . . . You have to be the one in the wrong, you’re the one
that’s wrong. So, that right there is what activated me being conscious to how people perceive me.

The shaping of the racial self: The matter of race. When I was a child and we were all on the same playing field, it didn’t matter. It wasn’t until my adulthood that I started to notice, “Okay, White culture they get married and then they have kids and, you know, they live in a nice house, and their husband has a good job,” and you know, I started to notice a difference between Black and White culture as I began to grow into my adulthood. That’s what I noticed. I would say my early 20s. Yeah . . . [she paused and the researcher asked her why did she pause] . . . I was just thinking about how that noticing that made me behave differently.

I have an unconventional family. So, I think there are sometimes we’re looked at, when people know that, I think that we’re looked at differently just because of those circumstances. I’m conscious of, okay, this is what my family entails and I know what people’s perceptions are. So it’s like, I’ll be viewed as less than until they learn more about me.

So, as I was going through my Master’s program and we would get together and have little outings just to work it made me feel like I need a husband, like I have children, but I’m not married, but I am a professional, I need a husband, and we need a nice house. I just felt like I needed those things, and I think it made me feel more like I settled. So at any cost I’m just going like, “I want to do this.” Regardless if good or bad, I just was like, “I just want to get married.” I’m like, “That’s what I need so that they don’t view me as less than.”
Professional and leadership roles. I feel like professionally, I have seen positives and negatives, so I see teachers who truly just want to help students, regardless, and that’s just shown by the way they don’t create excuses, or they don’t dismiss their culture, and they are just equitable with their students. Then on the flip, there are teachers where it’s like, you know, you don’t get paid that much so, why are you here? And then when I see teachers who send their kids to other districts but then work for this one, it’s like, “Well, how vested are you or what are you saying about this district if your own kids can’t go here?” Then, I guess some people don’t send their kids here because they live in a different community, but, “Why don’t you get a job in that community then? Why don’t you live here so you can relate?” I mean, I just love being able to run into kids at the grocery store and things like that. You don’t get that if you’re not living in here, in the community. Then some of the ways that they [the teachers] perceive parents. If parents have multiple kids and/or multiple fathers, then they make their judgments and it’s like, “Well, what do you think about me because that’s me?” You know?

Then, I had a colleague come up to me at one point and said, “You know, it’s just hard teaching these students how to read and how to decode just because of their language, and the dialect, and how they talk through, kind of like, the slang that they use. So it’s difficult. How old were you when you realized the way you talk at home is different from how we talk at school?” So, I asked, “What do you mean?” And she said, “You know, like, you know.” And I said, “Well, everybody talks different at home, so I’m pretty sure you say things at home that you probably wouldn’t necessarily . . . .” So, she says, “Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, you know, like I was raised on a farm.” So, she kind of
tried to change it, but for me, I took it as, “You’re Black, they’re Black, they don’t have the best language development and the way they say things aren’t usually the right dialect and proper grammar.” You’re Black, you probably didn’t have proper grammar either.

Then, what I’ve experienced working with other Black female leaders, for whatever reason, I feel like there’s this underlying belief that I’m a threat or they have to go into protect mode and be like, “This is my . . . I work . . . .” It’s just where they feel like I know I’m capable, and I know what I’m doing, and I don’t really need your input . . . whereas they’ll take things from the White people and I almost feel like there’s, not all, but there’s been some incidents where it’s like, “I don’t need your help,” and I just feel like, they feel like they have something they have to prove or they feel like . . . threatened. I’ve experienced that working with Black females, I’ve not experienced that working with White females. . . . When I’ve worked with White females, they’re open. However, I’ve noticed that I don’t get the credit for what I’ve done.

Wow, that’s interesting that I just said that, because it’s making me think about what I’m experiencing with Black leaders. Maybe that’s why they’re so protective. So, the thing is that, when I don’t get the credit I’m like, that happened to me and I was so furious. So what I do is, I make it known that I’m working with . . . So, regardless if they give me credit, at the end of the day, it’s known. So, I guess if I didn’t think that way, I can see myself shutting down or shutting people out to say like, “No, you’re not going to take the credit for what I’ve done.”
The day and time that we live in, or what our kids are going through you have to be culturally aware so that you make sure you’re not creating a stigma or making assumptions.

When you say cultural identity, I automatically think of, we need African American leaders and administrators for our students to identify with, and our families. I just think that it’s powerful when they can see someone who looks like them . . . when I was in a predominantly White school, there were a couple of Black kids here and there. I taught one grade level but every kid in that school knew me, especially every Black kid. But even the White kids. I think for them to see that, I think that did something.

I think . . . we need to make sure that there is a good representation of everyone, so that people see that . . . not every Black person has a story where they came from poverty. One aspect of it is just being able to identify just by looks . . . but then . . . the most powerful is when they do have a similar story. Even, if not for our kids, definitely for our parents . . . a lot of times the generational curse or the generational things that some of our families go through . . . they kind of just give up.

My greatest struggle is trying to save the world, I think. Before you can get to Bloom’s you have to take care of Maslow. I just get so . . . I carry it . . . I carry the weight of what I see of our kids and their parents . . . I wish I had just a button, the easy button, to push and just say, “It’s fixed. Everybody is well and that does it.” Finally, I think Black men have a struggle . . . they have to work 10 times harder than someone who is not African American or who is not Black in some cases. . . . They have to prove themselves and . . . when they do arrive or when they are in those leadership positions they struggle with . . . trying to prove themselves but then also communicating to their
families or their loved ones . . . that, “I’m not a sellout or I can still relate. I’m not . . . feeling like I’m above you,” and those types of things . . . sometimes they can be punished from their own community for being successful and wanting more.

**Race and socioeconomic status.** I think my SES does affect my perception. . . . I’ve experienced that because of where I’m at now, people only see that. They don’t know that my mom was a single mom and she worked three jobs at all different times of the hours just to make ends meet. They think that I grew up middle class, well off, because my SES right now. They don’t see, they just automatically assume. My experience has been mainly with my White counterparts, where I’ve heard that, “Oh, you know, your mother probably was able to afford for you to go to preschool and get awesome preschool care.” When honestly, I was not able to be accepted in a preschool because my intelligence level. I didn’t meet the criteria as far as that, so I was at home but because I am successful they automatically just think that.

And yes, when you’re Black and you’re poor. But if you’re Black and you’re not poor there’s still a great chance that people are going to make assumptions about you and they’re going to put you in that category. . . . But when I think that poverty supersedes race is when we see White. I think that’s what White people start to focus on, even though the culture is . . . sometimes people think of Whiteness as you’ve achieved, you’ve arrived but once they know that you are poverty stricken then you get lumped with Black folks, with the low poverty folks. . . . So, you will lose a lot of your entitlement as a White person because you’re poor, whereas, a Black person, even if you’re rich, you still don’t have those entitlements.
Second Interview: Black Administrators’ Duality, Education, and Leadership

In this segment of the chapter, the researcher presents the findings from the second interview. The researcher discusses the participants’ perceptions of double consciousness and describes how it may or may not have influenced their working environments. The participants were given excerpts (see Appendix A) from Du Bois’s (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. They were instructed to respond to the excerpts by noting their thoughts and feelings and highlighting any resonant words or phrases. The participants were also asked several questions pertaining to their professional lives, including their perceptions about their experiences as Black educational leaders, the cultures they must create, and their beliefs about how they are perceived by others.

Unlike in the first segment of this chapter, this section uses participants’ statements to show how as African American administrators they have experienced duality. Some of the examples are attributed to specific participants, and others are not. The data presented show the participants’ perceptions of double consciousness in the context of the research questions. Statements from several participants are presented to support or negate the participants’ feelings and reactions toward the interview question or Du Bois quotation.

The examples include the participants’ interpretations of excerpts from Du Bois’s (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk* and their definitions of double consciousness. The researcher describes the dualistic experiences of the participants, their perceptions of whether being Black is a problem, the cultures the participants have created to function in the workplace, and the ways participants have navigated or negotiated their race professionally. These elements were subquestions corresponding to the primary research questions. Finally, in this segment of the chapter, the researcher delves into the participants’ perceptions of their interactions with White upper-level administrators, colleagues, and subordinates regarding how mainstream America
perceives them. Perceptions of differences between White and Black administrative leaders’ working environments are described.

The participants were asked to read six excerpts taken from Du Bois’s (1903) *The Souls of Black Folk*. From those quotations, participants identified 16 common excerpts as resonant statements. The most commonly identified passage was “After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5). The second most commonly marked passage consisted of three excerpts:

- —a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5);
- How does it feel to be a problem? (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5); and
- It is not enough for the Negroes to declare that color-prejudice is the sole cause of their social condition, nor for the White South to reply that their social condition is the main cause of prejudice (Du Bois, 1903, p. 5).

**Professional Challenges**

The first research question was “What professional challenges do 21st-century African American educational administrators face?” To ascertain the answer to the first research question, participants were asked three subquestions: “What is your greatest struggle as an African American administrator in education?” “What do you believe are some of the challenges of African American educational administrators?” and “Do you feel that 21st-century African Americans share the same experiences as 20th-century African Americans?”

Overall, the 10 administrators identified five major struggles and challenges they have encountered:
• Interacting with various stakeholders (e.g., the community, parents, students, staff, and upper level administrators)

• Dealing with the small number of Black administrators

• Dealing with the perceptions others possess about Black administrators

• Encountering a lack of respect or support, a lack of advocacy

• Working with students of poverty

The participants’ responses appear in Tables 1 through 3. Table 1 shows the participants’ responses to the personal struggles they encountered as African American administrators. Table 2 shows the participants’ perceptions of the various external factors that have created challenges in their professional lives. Table 3 shows the participants’ responses to the similarities between 20th- and 21st-century African American administrators.
Table 1

*Black Administrators’ Personal Struggles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xzavier</td>
<td>Getting people to believe that what I have to offer is relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Is with students that look like me, because I want so much more for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>Other people’s perceptions of me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>Fairness. Trying to uplift your community. My biggest struggle was trying to awake what’s really going on without being seen as a radical leader but being fair because not everybody of the different race is out to get you and hold you back.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sadie       | The biggest struggle for me is how to help my White teachers:  
  - Seeing the things I see and trying to find a balance of how to address them in relation to race  
  - How do I help a group of White teachers who have never even been around Black people? |
| Barak       | When we are leading predominantly White staff, we have to be very careful not to engage in the emotional arguments about race because it’s easy to get caught up in the emotional pieces and really turn more to letting it be a data driven conversation. |
Table 2

*Black Administrators’ Challenges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>You’re very isolated. We don’t intentionally try to reach out to connect to one another to have one another’s backs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>Being in tough neighborhoods’ areas and trying to increase your test scores. Maybe they are overlooked for promotions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>It doesn’t seem like there’s many and once you get there, how do you get another African American administrator there?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>There are not enough of us and because of that people under us, have a hard time receiving that instruction as valuable or the experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>Being seen; not being treated the same, we’re not given the same amount of respect for the same work; we’re not supported enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>We don’t have any advocacy system; being recognized as positive contributors to the educational system. Being taken seriously about our profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barak</td>
<td>Very few of us in education and a growing number of our kids who are at the bottom and failing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The participants identified a diverse set of responses when questioned about the possible shared experiences among 20th- and 21st-century African American administrators. However, a primary premise emerged from the participants’ responses—a common theme voiced by a majority of the participants was that racism remains prevalent in society yet is subtle and covert. Several examples of the participants’ narrative appear in Table 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>The degree of racism they faced may not be as great as the degree of racism that I face. So I think it still exists, because some of the same challenges I have today, you know, my counterparts that mentor me had those same challenges.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>They might be somewhat similar, having to adapt to the ways of White corporate America to compete for your piece of the pie. Taking a page out of the Jewish community, I believe that today there’s a greatest focus for all African Americans working together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>Unfortunately, yes. I think it’s displayed differently. Back then, they knew prejudice was there and they knew that they had a certain place that they had to be in. I don’t have to be in that certain place anymore but prejudice is still just the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>I’d say they’re similar, nothing has changed that much. Racism is part of the foundation of this country. It has a deep-rooted connection to what goes on day to day in our society. I see that we’re still fighting the same fight that was fought back then, maybe not to the same degree on a daily basis yet the fight still continues because there is still a difference in perception or understanding the different cultural impacts, contributions, value, things like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>To a certain extent I do, but in practice, everyday practice, some things are still very similar. But the way we play the game has changed a little bit because of discriminatory laws.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyaM’chele</td>
<td>To a certain extent. I mean of course, I think we do, it just looks different. There’s still slavery, but it’s more institutionalized now. Then there’s still prejudice, there’s still racism. So it’s still there, it’s just it’s against the law to do it. I might hide behind my social media account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>I feel like it’s more covert. I feel like we were in a place as a society . . . Well as a society I mean, Black and White folks, where attitudes, beliefs really guide our actions. Some of the same experiences definitely. But no, Black America is evolving. America is evolving.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All participants said the presence of racism was a similar challenge for 20th- and 21st-century African American educational administrators, yet how others responded to racism varied. When coupled with the participants’ perceptions of the challenges African American educational administrators faced in general, a complete picture of the challenges African American administrators face emerged. The participants’ personal responses centered around three basic concepts: students, community/society, and self. Generalizing the challenges of Black educational administrators revealed that the range of factors had expanded to consider other elements, including the number of African American administrators, their value to the institution, the support they received, and their ability to advance student achievement.

Langston, Fredrick, Malcolm, Sadie, and Barack identified aspects of their communities, neighborhoods, and professions as struggles they confronted daily. Langston sometimes faced African American parents and African American community members who viewed him as a “sell-out,” someone who abandoned the community to attain success. He said there were times when he was judged by the community because of his position. Fredrick voiced his struggle in trying to uplift his community “with the understanding that there won’t be a lot of fairness out there but trying to bring about awareness . . . of how the game is played” and “how the system works” without creating the appearance of being a “radical leader.”

Malcolm, Sadie, and Barak’s quandaries grew out of their professional communities. Malcolm stated his organization needed to establish continuous “cultural competency” training; the lack of such training created a system without checks and balances. The lack of cultural competency training allowed employees to enter the institution without checking their biases at the door. Sadie and Barak voiced struggles that were grounded in finding “a balance in addressing” White teachers about racial issues and being “careful not to engage in emotional
arguments about race” when creating success for poverty-stricken students, especially African American students.

Langston mentioned challenges from other avenues in his professional life, from being overlooked for promotions to being a African American administrator in an inner-city school. Langston’s greatest challenge was trying to increase his students’ test scores when faced with the myriad factors working against the students. Two major factors were at play: (a) Students entered the building academically behind their peers, and (b) many students lacked the social skills needed to be successful in school, which had the potential to cause them to be suspended. Concerned about the situation these students encountered, Langston commented about the state of African American administrators:

When you’re put in a situation where you’re expected to work miracles with kids that are behind academically . . . we all know lower suspension rates help increase academics . . . because the more kids are in school, the better their academics are going to be as they’re getting more instruction . . . then the challenge is those kids sometimes don’t have the social skills to be successful in school either.

Although Langston began talking about the challenge of raising student test scores, he ended the conversation talking about how many African American educational administrators may ask the question, “How can I help the kids who look like me?”

Maya Toussiant echoed Langston’s question as a challenge of her own. Maya stated her greatest struggle was with African American students because she wanted “so much more for them.” Maya spoke in detail about how she struggled daily to get the kids who looked like her to see the importance of obtaining an education. She held conversations “behind the veil” with her students in which she voiced her concerns authentically “as a Black person,” not as an
administrator. Maya confessed that not every student had access to the same authentic veiled conversations but some recipients needed to hear these conversations. Like Malcolm, Ruby, and Barak, Maya believed the low number of African American administrators was another problem they faced; consequently, Maya believed people, especially teachers, did not value their instructional knowledge or experiences.

Xzavier and Zora articulated the value of self as a concept during their interviews. Xzavier’s challenge was getting people to believe the relevance people have to offer the institution. He noted he felt stifled, “chained,” because of limitations placed on him that prohibited him from sharing his knowledge with the educators in the building.

Zora articulated a similar conflict under the theme of self. She struggled with how others perceived her. Although she discussed how the outside world viewed her, as Zora continued her dialogue, her words became reflections of herself. She spoke of how she found herself “off on a bunny trail in life . . . doing things that I didn’t want to do.” Zora regretted certain career choices she had made because her guiding factor was money, and in pursuit of it, she became lost, finding herself in a position she deplored.

Ruby identified a personal challenge related to a theme of self. One of her professional trials stemmed from her belief that she had had to pursue every position she wanted—nothing was ever offered to her. The other challenge existed because the low numbers of African Americans in education, secondary, and higher education kept her from having African American professional mentors. “There were so few that they were so stretched so thin. They couldn’t mentor everybody. They could only mentor two or three.” Ruby spoke those words without hope, shaking her head in disbelief. Although she was thankful for the “fabulous” mentor she had known, she voiced disappointment at not having had a Black mentor.
A mentor is a guide, a valuable resource. When mentors resemble and reflect characteristics of mentees’ selves, the mentees can dream and imagine themselves in those positions. This idea emerged from the narratives of two participants who were inspired to go into education because older people in their lives were educators. Placing herself as a mentor for those following behind her, Ruby indicated that on a larger level, when she interacted with her future protégés, it was important for them to know that “education is a business” and “as African Americans, we have to be willing to learn that business side of education.”

MyaM’chele wanted to “save the world”; that was her greatest struggle. She wanted to fix what she thought was wrong. On a wider spectrum, when she looked at impediments confronting African American administrators in general, the problems varied; yet, she identified four major categories: the small number of African American administrators, their perceived value, a lack of support, and the perceptions held about them.

Many of the participants referred to the minute representation of African American administrators in the educational profession. The participants interpreted the effects on existing administrators in several ways. First, because of the small number of administrators, (a) African American administrators are not valued for who they are or for their knowledge; (b) no one is present to help pave the way for others to be promoted; (c) students do not succeed because they do not see people who look like them; and (d) African American administrators are isolated. Second, African American administrators are not supported by White administrators or by each other, either by choice or because of the low representation. Third, the portrayal of Black families and Black men in the media makes it difficult for Black administrators because they are constantly faced with navigating through the negative perceptions about African American families and African American men.
Zora and Maya believed mainstream America did not take African American administrators seriously; Zora felt there was a lack of an “advocacy system” for African American administrators, and mainstream America failed to recognize the “positive contributions” African Americans made to the educational system. Fredrick said African American administrators were “not seen . . . not supported” and not treated fairly or given the respect their White counterparts received. Malcolm questioned how to help future African American leaders gain access to administrative positions.

The Experience of Duality

The second research question was “How do 21st-century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in mainstream society?” To answer the second research question, in the first interview, the researcher asked the participants, “What role (if any) does race play in your personal life, professional life and in your leadership position?” During the second interview, to explore, understand, or develop the participants’ perceptions of double consciousness, the researcher asked participants to read excerpts (see Appendix A) from Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). They were instructed to read and respond to the excerpts, noting their thoughts and feelings and highlighting any resonant words or phrases.

After discussing the excerpts, the participants answered additional questions (see Appendix A) to expand upon their dualistic experiences by revealing how they perceived Blackness personally and how duality was experienced when their race intersected with mainstream America. After they read the Du Bois (1903) quote (“To the real question, how does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word”; p. 29), the researcher asked participants three
subquestions: “How do you relate to his question?” “Have you ever felt as if being Black was a problem?” and “What does double consciousness mean to you?”

The major theme that arose from the interpretation of the text and the personal beliefs of the participants was that the perceptions of others created the notion that being Black was a problem. Examples of the participants’ responses appear in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4

*Black Administrators’ Responses to Excerpts*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyaM’chele</td>
<td>I don’t think being Black is a problem to the point where it’s like I feel like I’m a problem or my people are a problem. So those things can be looked at as problems, but there’s something bigger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>I feel I carry my entire race on my shoulders. If I fall, we all fall, or if they fall, I fall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>I absolutely relate to it. So much so that I remind [one of my administrators] all the time of, this is why it’s difficult to be Black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>I have to acknowledge many of the problems that always lie in the premise of an assumption.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>I think some folks, when they see African Americans, whether it’s in leadership or other roles, they think that they’re the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xavier</td>
<td>I said how does it feel to be something which needs to be solved? I refuse to conform to Black in certain predictable situations as well as African Americans and others. I want people to keep guessing that I could be a problem due to lack of conformity to any consciousness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>Well, Black can be a problem, just being in the room can be a problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5

**Black Administrators’ Personal Thoughts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MyaM’chele</td>
<td>I think that we are viewed as the problem. The system has created us to look as though we are the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>I think being Black, people see that as a problem, society sees that as a problem. I don’t see myself as a problem but just the fact that I am Black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>It’s a problem because of the baggage of your experience that you have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>That’s a problem for me when people think that you know . . . there’s problems with being Black.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>I feel that it only becomes a problem when you’re in a mixed group ethnicities and you find yourself speaking out, pointing out, or going against mainstream thinking or practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>I do feel like I’m a problem sometimes. Because I feel like I’m stuck in terms of what I want to do and how to get there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xzavier</td>
<td>The world may see that Black is a problem, okay, but I hold the solution to your problem because you obviously got a problem.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nine of the participants’ responses indicated that being Black was not a problem for them personally, but the perceptions of others created problems in the form of barriers, burdens, and obstacles. However, the placement of barriers prompted the participants to respond in different ways. For example, one participant was determined to create his own narrative of what being Black meant, rejecting the definition society placed on Blacks; he said he “refused to conform” and that if he was the problem, he was also the solution. Another participant described feeling “stuck” in her Blackness, limited in what she could do and where she could go, bound by the power her superiors held and by the choices her superiors could make. Another participant spoke about the opportunities that arose from the difficulties.
After the participants discussed their interpretations of the excerpts, each person was asked, “What does double consciousness mean [to you]?” Samples of participants’ definitions appear in Table 6.

Table 6

*Black Administrators’ Double Consciousness Definitions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>I think it means living in two worlds and have a consciousness of those two worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xzavier</td>
<td>Your mind is believing one thing and it’s seeking another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>It means being aware of who I am as an African American male. But also being aware of my audience and self-monitoring how I want to be perceived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya</td>
<td>I put, it’s the me that they do not see. I don’t feel free in certain settings to be the Black Maya, and not that that’s wrong, it’s just I think it’s not accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>It means that I need to be aware of the situations or environments that I’m in and determine how I need to interact within those situations to get the outcome that I’m looking to get or to . . . to be a contributing factor . . . or contributing person in that situation in whatever decision that’s going to be coming out of that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>It’s the way I act or the way we act when we are outside of our comfort zone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>It’s having to sort of live and thrive in two different beings, almost, in two different worlds, and understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>It means that individuals even today are still having to be conscious of who they are on two different platforms regardless of where they may be.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barak</td>
<td>It’s about living in two worlds and knowing how and when to navigate between the two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyaM’chele</td>
<td>I feel like double consciousness is knowing yourself, and the things of your culture, and then also thinking about how someone else might view it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Merging the participants’ definitions of double consciousness indicates participants perceived double consciousness as an awareness of two different worlds, involving being able to feel, think, know, and contribute to any situation in both. Similarly, W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) described double consciousness as “this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others . . . two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body” (p. 7).

As the participants continued to expand on their initial definitions, the intricacies of the meaning grew in depth. Examples of participants’ elaborations appear in Table 7.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>I can choose the world of being me, but that’s not going to be productive for me as it means climbing that corporate ladder. I have no choice but to yield to the other world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zora</td>
<td>The important thing about double consciousness is that we are aware of our surroundings and in a way we kind of shield who we are to fit in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyaM’chele</td>
<td>It’s not just a Black person thing, or a mainstream America thing. That’s just the way we operate based on our assumptions of other people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xzavier</td>
<td>I labeled that [double consciousness] as a bit of schizophrenia. I said what a schizophrenic development. You’re attempting to make sense of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors of others in a realm of a perceived reality deemed normal . . . I said, how can a person look at himself through the eyes of others? That is the most perplexing thing I’ve ever thought of in a long time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To discover how 21st-century African American educational administrators experienced duality, it was important to ask the participants to state their personal perceptions and beliefs about African Americans being a problem. In addition, it was important to gather data on the role of race in the participants’ personal and professional lives and in their leadership positions.
These topics emerged during the first interviews. Based upon the experiences provided, two categories emerged from the participants’ responses about the role of race in their personal lives. Some of the participants expressed a sense of being controlled or confined by race, and others expressed a sense of freedom and liberation. Several examples appear in Table 8.

Table 8

Black Administrators’ Race and Personal Lives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Controlled/Confined</th>
<th>Free/Liberated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It affects my [child] and [their] identity, my [spouse]. . . . So, race in that sense, it’s hard and it’s even harder for it for my [spouse] because people will accept me quicker.</td>
<td>I think people always want to be authentic so being authentic you have to be true to who you are, your heritage.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m driven by race.</td>
<td>I try not to let it impact who I am or what I do, but you have to just be mindful of it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always know my place. I feel like I always have to.</td>
<td>My race is my identity; I think my race plays a role that I do believe I have a point to prove.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race kind of dictates where I go.</td>
<td>I’m very appreciative of who I am as an African American and really wear it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My [spouse] is biracial, when around [their] maternal side of the family (who are White), then I am subjected to different things.</td>
<td>I don’t consider race a big issue.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the participants voiced their perceptions of how race materialized in their professional lives, themes containing both positive and negative aspects arose from descriptions of how their Blackness intersected with their work environments. The researcher categorized the responses as superficial or multifaceted. For some participants, their race created a sense of
division and limitations; for others, their race created a sense of pride, motivation, access, and credibility. Examples appear in Table 9.

Table 9

*Black Administrators’ Race and Professional Lives*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive/Multifaceted</th>
<th>Negative/Superficial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They think because you’ve done a doctorate and you’re Black, you the stuff.</td>
<td>Professionally, I think that’s where I see more racial divide then I ever see anywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you create a foundation within cultures . . . dissecting them and understanding them and then being able to see how you can fit in . . . I gain an advantage of admittance. I can get in to any situation.</td>
<td>If you’re not part of that decision-making team or within that friendship of those on that decision-making team then you are pretty much limited to what you will be exposed to and what decisions that you’ll have a participating part in.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you’re helping students of color you kind of have instant credibility with them. There’s this feeling of self-worth. . . . I think the other part of it is sometimes it’s this fine line to where you have to represent all Black people.</td>
<td>I just feel like in my professional job I see a lot of people doing a lot of stuff, and it’s like in the back of my mind I’m thinking, I could never get away with that. I could never do that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s taught me to be one of the hardest working individuals in the room because I mean, goes back to my childhood.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think a lot of times they try to diversify our leadership teams by race.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have to make sure you’re treating all kids equally. People may not want their kids at this school because the principal was Black.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working in the inner city, it is just amazing some of the things that you would hear other educators say. I feel like it has shown me positives and negatives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When the participants were asked about race and their leadership roles, participants described characteristics a leader could possess. The primary theme that emerged was the idea that Black educational leaders need to be multifunctional. Several examples appear in Table 10.

Table 10

*Black Administrators’ Race and Leadership Roles*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston</td>
<td>You’re a leader of all people. You get placed in schools in areas where there’s high minorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>Sometimes you have to be an advocate, sometimes you have to be a leader, sometimes you have to go along for the ride, sometimes you have to be the driver, sometimes find yourself having to also defend things that people may not understand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrick</td>
<td>I try to take the lead when given a task to make sure that I’m putting my stamp on it and not allowing others to put their stamp on it as far as how things are going to go.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadie</td>
<td>I work hard to make sure I’m not categorized with anybody. Whether they’re Black or White, I’m not going to be low and be Black. I got to be Black, but I don’t have to be low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby</td>
<td>I work at a university and I’m the only African American in a leadership role on our campus and our other campuses in this state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barak</td>
<td>My leadership and my racial experiences certainly played a role in allowing them [teachers] to open up and see something different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xzavier</td>
<td>When working with others, race will dictate what I will say and what I won’t do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, depending on the participants’ perceptions, the primary theme that emerged from the findings was that because of the perceptions of others and the problems those perceptions created, duality was internalized, thus creating a sense of efficacy or inadequacy.
The third research question was “How do African American administrators navigate their two perceptions when a conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?” To answer the third research question, the researcher asked the participants two subquestions: “What is the functioning culture of a Black leader when working predominantly with White people?” (Functioning culture is the culture people must create daily; Gomez, Ocasio, Johnson Lachuk, & Powell, 2015; Lomotey, 1989; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and “How do you navigate and negotiate your race and cultural identity as it pertains to your role as an administrator?”

Examples of the participants’ responses to the functioning culture of a Black leader included:

- It’s the dominant culture. You have to work within your own world . . . in this dual consciousness of this other world because, like I said, the people you’re serving, the people you’re working for are those people of your culture when you're in an inner city school.

- As a Black administrator, I have to keep in mind that they [mainstream America] have their own bias consciousness that they bring to the table. So, it’s important for me to pick up on those biases and challenge their thinking.

- When working with White people you try not to offend or intimidate. That means I have to back up a little bit.

- I display less of myself, my true self, with folks I don’t know. I assimilate very well. I blend in very well. Like I said, I can go both ways. I use my professional life, behind closed doors with my students, I am me.
• As an African American administrator in a building, you have to be . . . you have to have clearly stated and established expectations. Culture plays a part when others are not in agreement or understanding your point of view. Functioning culture for me was being strong, competent, and fair in my leadership and that’s what I strive for on a daily basis. Because that seems to be what is challenged the most is your knowledge, your competency, how willing are you to play along with the game, in the game, or the system that’s established.

• Muzzled. Because we have a lot to lose. I think we have a tendency to muzzle ourselves so we can keep going on financially, and I think what happens is we lose some of that responsiveness.

• There are things that I’m required to do as a part of the system, then there’s my own agenda. When I build relationships with White folks in this building, and we get to a mutual point of trust with one another, then I feel like the learning actually begins there.

• I had to be consistent across the board. You have to be consistent and this is for just being a leader period. To cultivate that culture, I think for African Americans particularly because we still are overcoming a lot of those stereotypes, we have to be consistent. We have to be consistent in that professional environment. We have to continue to invest in our areas of expertise and be willing to share that knowledge and that wealth, mentor and develop that culture where all things are inclusive. I know that word has been thrown around a lot lately in the realm of education, but inclusion is important and be ethical.
• I think in my experience, what I had to do with my staff, leading a predominantly White staff. I had to be willing to give much more of myself first, before they were willing to give anything back to me.

• A sense of belonging, like I belong here. Making sure that my . . . How do I want to frame it . . . Let’s see, how do I want to say, just making sure what I bring to the table, or what represents me is suitable for mainstream America.

To analyze the data collected about the culture they must create, the researcher coded the participants’ responses. Three common categories of culture emerged: confined/restricted, transparent, and fluid-relational. Half the participants expressed thoughts and feeling of confinement and restriction, saying they did not truly have a choice or felt limited regarding who they were because they were uncomfortable or did not want to be viewed as offensive or intimidating. Other participants communicated their beliefs that their expectations and actions needed to be clear, well defined, and systematic. The remaining participants voiced the need to be flexible, adapting to and understanding their audiences. This endeavor involved creating an environment to promote change by challenging their audience members’ thoughts or by creating communal avenues of trust to build learning environments through shared collaboration.

Participants were asked how they navigated or negotiated their race and cultural identity as it pertained to their leadership position. The researcher sought to use the participants’ responses to determine if race and cultural identity were integral aspects of their day. That is, indicating if race and cultural identity were used as tools in any circumstances or if race and cultural identity were nonessential when in their leadership roles. Examples of the participants’ responses included:
• I think it’s important as an administrator just to follow the rules and regulations, for that reason. You’re always going to be seen, especially when you have to do negative things, like . . . expel, re-assign, suspend . . . Minority families look at you like, “Well you’re a minority, you should know. You know our struggle, you know what we go through, and you know my kid needs to be in school.” Then you fight the other side of it from the staff’s point of view, White staff usually, predominantly, “Well, you just don’t want to suspend them because they look like you.” So, you implement it as fairly as humanly possible.

• I think just again it goes back to understanding that audience. If I understand people’s little stories, their own small story, that quiet story as to where they came from, their background, that kind of piece. Their untold story if you will. If I have a little bit of intuition of to where people have come from, then I can lead them accordingly based on my actions.

• I’ve developed this servant leader mindset. Instead of it being do as I say and not as I do, I want you to do what I do. If I do what I do that means I’m true to the cause and you can’t argue that I’m contradicting myself. If I’m leading by example and I’m telling you this is what I’m doing, there is no conflict. There’s no contradiction. You can’t say that he misled us, no, I was transparent because my actions are speaking louder than the words coming out of my mouth.

• First of all, you have to get them to think about the problem without thinking about race. Everyone can see that you’re Black so you don’t need to remind them of that conversation. When you can think about disadvantaged students, nine times out of 10, they’re gonna say “Yes, we want to help disadvantaged students.” But when you have
your own bias about Black students or your own bias about Hispanic students, and so on. Sometimes you may not be as likely to listen and actively participate.

- I think, other times, you have to then connect the dots. For example: Okay, now you just agreed in a couple meetings that it’s important that we help these students that are disadvantaged and they can’t get books. But now I see that this student here who is African American or whatever this case may be, you haven’t put the words in action. So, sometimes you have to get that common consensus about that thing and relate it back to when . . . you have to remind them that this is what we agreed to. It doesn’t matter about the color. It doesn’t matter about the gender.

- I do temper my interactions with people. I get the sense that some folks would rather not take direction from me.

- I don’t think that I navigate or negotiate my cultural identity because it is what it is. I mean, I am who I am, an African American administrator. I’ve gone through all of the requirements set aside through the system to become an administrator and be a leader in a building. When they accept me, they have to accept me for who I am and what I am. I don’t negotiate or try to be who I’m not in order to fit in.

- I don’t. If things are a race based thing I just address it.

- Very carefully because in navigating this role as an administrator, you understand the influence of the teachers that are standing in front of all of the kids, but you also understand through the lens that you live as a Black female, and you understand the lack of, or the miseducation of, people of color. You understand the achievement gap. You understand why there’s an achievement gap. You understand the faultiness of the curriculum. You understand the faults of the system, like when we talked about why all
the Black boys get referred to the office. You understand all that stuff, but you have to navigate it so carefully because if you damage the people that are standing in front of those kids, you screw it all up. Because at the end of the day, I’m one person, and I can’t teach all the students that come through the door.

- I learned early on in my career I learned that you can’t talk in the alleys because there’s five areas of life; you have spiritually, financially, mentally, personally, and professionally are your five areas. But those areas can get blurred and people believe in things that they can touch and feel and so oftentimes when I’m talking and I want people to be on my journey with me I try to talk about things that are physical that don’t have color related to it.

- One of the things I try to do is keep a strong home base of individuals who share the same sense of double consciousness around me. It allows me to get the support I need in school environments and then the home environment so that’s the way I kind of negotiate and kind of make it through those areas.

- I think I do more negotiating . . . my goal is to be more of a navigator. I feel like the only way people are going to learn is if I navigate them through. However, I would have to say, there’s more negotiating that goes on where I have to think about. . . . Okay for example, if we were in a meeting and they open up with an ice breaker, wanting us to tell something good about yourself. I think about what’s the most . . . I might think about what’s the most professional or whatever, but then at the same time, I’m thinking what would they accept? When I say they, I mean my White counterparts. What would they be able to relate more to?
It was interesting to note that although the question posed two terms, *race* and *cultural identity*, the participants only responded using race as the subject. The omission of cultural identity could indicate that race superseded cultural identity or that race and cultural identity were considered synonymous. Most of the participants’ answers revealed that race was not readily used when performing as a leader. For some participants, integrating both navigating and negotiating strategies helped them communicate effectively with mainstream America because the participants were conscious of how race could inhibit the thoughts of others.

After the researcher analyzed the data, two concepts emerged. First, participants responded to the question regarding their interaction with mainstream America in two ways—intrapersonal or interpersonal. Some participants were only conscious of themselves or of how mainstream America perceived them, and other participants were conscious of how they wanted to shape the perceptions of mainstream America. Second, participants’ responses regarding how they navigated or negotiated their interactions with mainstream America centered on two main approaches. If race was an issue, some participants addressed it. In contrast, other participants intentionally omitted race from the conversation.

**Impact of Duality on Black Administrators**

The fourth research question was “How does duality affect 21st-century African American educational administrators’ daily working environment when interacting with White administrators, colleagues, and subordinates?” To discover the answer to the final research question, the researcher asked participants how their working environments as Black educational administrators were affected by their duality. Three subquestions were asked: “Do you perceive a difference in how Black and White leaders lead?” “Do you believe your position or race influences how White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates, interact with you?” and “Based
upon your interactions with your White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates, how do you think you are perceived?”

**Differences between Black and White leaders.** Because of the participants’ perceptions of race, it was crucial to understand if they perceived a difference in how Black and White leaders lead. Nine of the participants believed a difference existed. Three major differences emerged from the responses of the participants. First, White leaders had privileges that granted them daily access to authority and power; in contrast, many Black leaders had to create their own opportunities and work harder than did White people because of the presence of White privilege. Second, White leaders were more collaborative with each other; however, because of the small number of African American administrators, Black leaders worked in isolation, which generated several disadvantages: (a) limited opportunities to collaborate, (b) a lack of support, and (c) a perceived sense of self-preservation. Third, because they constituted the majority, White leaders led without question or hesitation but Black leaders were questioned. Examples of the participants’ responses included:

- Yes. I think as a White leader, there’s things you can do that could be unpopular, but people will let it go because you’re a White leader. I think if you did that same unpopular thing, whatever it may be, and you’re a Black leader, it may come out totally different. But I think people of the majority culture, if it’s someone from their culture, I think they’re willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.

- White leaders don’t think about cultural impacts. They’ll have an idea, they may do some research on the idea, and not worry about the impact. Therefore, they won’t change the implementation until there’s a lot of pushback or fallout. It always amazes me that they’ll lead with ideas recklessly and believe through data that all will
benefit. There’s no true consideration until there’s pushback or lack of wanted results. African Americans must be more conscientious and strategic, definitely can’t take credit, and must therefore empower people if they expect results to be favorable.

- It always, always baffled me on that and it continues to baffle me that the Black leader must figure out how to empower folks so they’ll feel comfortable enough to implement a strategy. Whereas a White leader will say, “This is how we’re going to do it, folks, in order to be able to achieve our numbers, this is how it’s going to have to work,” and people will just say, “Hey, he’s the leader so we aspire to do it.” It always baffles me. I’ve enjoyed that, I hate to say it, and in a weird, very odd strange way I’ve enjoyed watching how that comes about.

- I don’t think there’s a difference in how they lead if they’ve been trained to lead, you know? When I look at Black leaders and White leaders, I’ve seen . . . I have both that I think are a good leader because of these qualities plus the things you’re bringing to the table. So I don’t think race would play into being a good leader. I think it’s the training and the authenticity and understanding how to motivate people. Good African American leaders are aware of the double consciousness and so, there’s times where they have to communicate in certain ways.

- Yes, there is a difference, for me and a White colleague. I think I see a lot of times the bar not being held where it needs to be held for kids of color. I hold the bar high because if you hold it low they’re going to meet it every time. I don’t think that’s always the mindset of a White person. I think they think they’re doing the kid a favor or they’re helping the kid out when they’re not as hard or they don’t have those same expectations. So, I think definitely there is a difference. I know I can talk to my kids
different. There’s some stuff they couldn’t say that I can say to my kids; the kids will
receive it from me, it won’t be received from somebody that’s non-Black.

• I mean there’s a difference simply because of experiences and who you are. I think
as a Black leader in an administrative role, we have to be a little bit more creative, a
little bit more, I guess... I don’t want to say rigid, but a little more on task, focused.
That way you’re getting the outcome that you want or going in a direction that you
want with your staff and not being sidetracked by the day to day operations, the day
to day issues or concerns that come up in the building. Overall leadership style... I
don’t see that I would do anything different than another non-African American
leader would do other than just how I would go about doing it.

• I feel like we are more isolated in terms of our leadership roles. I feel like White
leaders are more collaborative. I don’t feel like we get together and do things.

• Oh, yeah. They don’t have to come in and first try to create a level playing field.
They sometimes can come in to a mutually agreed-upon trust because they’re like one
another. They have some certain... They look alike, they have similar experiences,
they have kids that go to schools or they live in the same neighborhoods, and so they
can come in with more of a level playing field. I don’t get to have that advantage.
All of these things, all of these assumptions and preconceptions that people come into
a relationship with, I’m trying to re-establish all of that. And if you add the fact of
gender, White males, they don’t have all of that against them. Women don’t readily
question what a man has asked them to do.

• Oh yeah. When I was growing up my grandmother and my grandfather, they always
talked about White people protect their own. They’re going make sure they get that
money. They’re going make sure if there’s a promotion or a job they are going get it and I have seen that occur through organizational change, with a lot of organizations.

- We got offices and there’s probably three African Americans and 20 Caucasians and let me tell you, I’ve seen them come back and reach and say, “Hey, I got me new job over here, come on over here with me. Come on, I’m bringing you with me and I’m going to make sure you get $10,000 or $20,000 more for coming.” Versus they worked with me and I could have saved their butt, but they have not come back not only for myself, but no other individuals of color. African American leaders, it’s so few of us that are allowed opportunities sometimes we don’t want to bring the next person along with us.

- Absolutely, I had mentors, two European American administrators, and one that was African American. The White administrators led Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. When they were done with that, their scope of leading a high poverty school, predominantly students of color, was over with. The African American administrators, we tend to be in the community after the doors are closed at the school. We tend to go to the churches. We tend to go to the grocery stores in the neighborhood. We tend to do a lot more when . . . On Saturdays we’re at barbecues, we’re at all these other functions building relationships because we’re comfortable and know the importance of that. Whereas again, many of your White leaders, who can be less qualified and effective, 4 o’clock they’re usually done and they’re on their way out to the suburbs with the White staff.

- So, before I talk about the difference, I think there’s a difference in the way followers accept leadership from Black and White leaders. There’s a lot of questions when
you’re a Black woman. There is a lot of second-guessing by the followers, like “I’m going to challenge what you’re saying.” I don’t really see that as much with, first of all, a White male leader. Now if she was female, I feel like I’ve seen some of that, whether you’re Black or White, but more so when you’re a Black woman, which . . . It’s so much to it because there’s just a difference.

- I’ve seen different leaders, and the way they act in different ways. There’s some who because of that, I’m going to be my way or the highway. This is who I am as a Black woman. I’m gonna show up. You’re gonna hear me roar, and this is who I am. So, I feel like as a Black woman, we have something to prove. We have to prove that I’m good enough to be here or else I wouldn’t be here. So, I’m gonna prove that to you. I think just sometimes we are not even very collaborative with other Black leaders—I think they feel like a silo. I got here by myself. This is my assignment. This is what I’m doing, and I don’t really need you preying in on what I’ve got going.

- White leaders, there’s always been this hand out, they’ve always helped each other climb that ladder. You continue to see them continuing to help each other up, versus as a Black woman, our own strength can be our downfall, sometimes. It’s like we’ve had to be so independent, that it’s like, nobody didn’t help me, I did this on my own. So let me show y’all how big and bad I am.

**Position or race.** When asked to reflect on whether their position or race influenced how White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates in the organization interacted with the participants, seven of the participants said their superiors, colleagues, and subordinates interacted with them based on their positions. Three participants believed their supervisors interacted with them based on their race. One participant indicated that her colleagues frequently used race to
connect with her. In addition, three participants acknowledged that earlier in their careers, individuals may have interacted with them on a racial level, but as people grew to know them, race became irrelevant, and their position evolved as a more contributing factor. For most participants, if their race was not a factor, then their race was not an obstacle within their working environment. Of the participants who stated race was the primary factor in how others in mainstream America interacted with them, a problem or obstacle was given as an explanation. Examples of the participants’ responses included:

- Sometimes I feel that way with my supervisor. I think that if I was not African American, I think it would be different. My colleagues, the ones I hang with outside of work, I don’t think my race is an issue. I know there’s sometimes things that will come down based on race, and it may be trivialized, but if you’ve never walked a mile in someone’s shoes, it’s hard to understand where they come from. Well, certainly my position is a factor with my staff. However, I always feel when I’m undermined that—I think race plays a problem sometimes.

- I think the position is too powerful for some folks. For White administrators.

- I think a lot of times, it’s the position. I’ve heard folks say, “Oh, well gosh, because he’s this, we got to do such and such.” It wasn’t because I was Black. So sometimes it is the position.

- I’d say absolutely. . . . If I wasn’t in a leadership position, I don’t think their [teachers’] interactions with me would be as professional. I think they would be more to their true thinking about me.

- I think it just depends. With some subordinates it’s position all the time, but with my supervisor I think its race. I’m going to tell you why. There is a White woman who
told me this, in terms of duties as assigned, I don’t get much outside of what I
normally do. What she said is, “Every time there is a Black person in this position, he
goes to this office, this office, and skips that person.” I thought, oh, that’s interesting.

- I think the position definitely outweighs the race all day. But I think when I contradict
their assumptions about Black people, or when I show them something different, then
it’s definitely the race piece.

- Well, when I took on my leadership role my race played a key factor on how my
supervisor treated me. I’ve been in my role for a while now. They’ve worked with
me long enough and we’re all seasoned. So, I will say, now, race is not as prevalent.

- I think initially it was race.

- I am fortunate to have had a Black supervisor and we keep it real behind the scenes.
We can have those conversations behind the scene and even within our circle where
there’s White people. We can say things freely because there’s a relationship there.
Sometimes my White counterparts can overdo it. They feel like, “She’s Black. So I
have to use colloquialisms.” Yeah, it’s like yes, tone it down, that’s not who you are.
Just be who you are. There are some people who I say, have a little soul in them, and
I know that about you so, I’m not offended by it, but when I feel like you’re trying to
go out of your way, and it’s not authentic, or it’s not genuine, it’s like, don’t do that.

The perceptions of White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates. The final
subquestion addressed the participants’ perceptions of how their supervisors, colleagues, and
subordinates perceived them. Examples of the participants’ responses included:

- I think that they would say that I am inspirational. I think that they would say that
I’m a listener. I’m someone that they’re able to come to, to seek advice. I do think
that some of my White subordinates, or colleagues, look at me as the good Black person. They may talk about our Black families at the school, like, “I wish she would quit having kids,” just different things about the families in the school. Even though I’m Black, just like them [the students], I think that they [White subordinates or colleagues], see me more as . . . They do not put me in a category as I’m less than because I’ve accomplished something.

- My supervisors viewed me as a hungry young leader wanting to make rapid changes. My colleagues were very pleased with the work I was doing and the creative things we were doing. The teachers really appreciated what I was doing because I held people accountable.

- My supervisors, they may be intimidated that I may be coming for their job. My colleagues think, “You know everything so let’s just lay it on you.” My subordinates, sometimes I can be a little intimidating because I stick to my grounds and I stick to my values.

- I think that my supervisors value what I bring to the table, not just as an administrator, but honestly as a Black administrator. My colleagues, that one’s a little more complicated. Because of my degrees, people act like I’m a little one-up. My subordinates, intimidating. I don’t think that the educators here have had a lot of exposure to Blacks that have doctorates.

- Funny, humble, honest, an advocate.

- All the feedback that I’ve received for the most part has been positive. My supervisors tend to say, “He’s this nice guy, very friendly, very open, very approachable,” but they don’t mention anything that has to do with the job as far as,
“Yeah he’s very knowledgeable in his area, he’s accomplished this.” They’re looking more at . . . your characteristics as a person, your traits rather than your skills as a leader, as an administrator. So they want to credit you for being a good person, but they don’t want to give you credit for being a good leader or administrator. That is what I’ve experienced in my roles. My colleagues and subordinates, they always want to give you the positive personality things but never want to give you credit for anything that you may have accomplished or they may have accomplished under your leadership because of one reason or another.

- I’m not as intelligent as maybe they are, combative, angry, aggressive, yeah.
- I think I’m perceived as someone that is very knowledgeable about technology and have a great understanding of the ‘big’ picture for the institution.
- Some folks feel that I’m combative, some folks feel as though I’m an anomaly, which means different. But different in the sense that I’m a maverick. A maverick is a person not willing to follow all procedures, but would seek to continue growth and change. Therefore, I think I’m considered a threat.
- I think my appraisals by staff over the years, all the years I’ve been doing it, I hope I’m respected. My numbers have always been good. I haven’t had a single year where my numbers have been horrible. Sometimes I disagree with my supervisor. My current one has probably marked me lower than I have been in my career, and that’s fine, not in every area, but a few.
- I think I’m respected by my colleagues. I think you know when you’re respected when people call you and ask you questions about how are you doing things, or even take you out to lunch and say, “How do you do this?” I’ve been around long enough
I think I’ve trained some of them too, some of my colleagues. So I think that helps. But I’m probably my own worst critic. I beat myself up probably more than anybody else ever could, and I just, I don’t know, I just try and work harder and do better every day, a little bit better.

In the analysis of participants’ responses to the question regarding how duality affected the working environments of African American educational administrators, participants’ answers varied. Nine of the participants indicated differences existed between Black and White leaders. The main difference between Black and White leaders that emerged from the participants’ experiences was the presence of White privilege. A majority of the participants believed most of mainstream America interacted with them on a professional level based on their positions; however, if race was present, a conflict existed as well. In the final question, four of the participants believed their White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates possessed positive perceptions of them; four participants believed their White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates possessed both positive and/or negative perceptions of them; and two of the participants believed their White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates possessed negative perceptions of them.

**Summary**

In Chapter 4, the researcher presented the experiences of the participants from their earliest race-related memories to their current race-related interactions. Their comments reflected their present-day experiences and illustrated their feelings and thoughts of what it meant to be Black in America. In addition, participants shared experiences that African Americans may encounter when working within mainstream America. The formative years of the participants were critical in the shaping of their racial identities.
Regardless of the ages of the participants, each person experienced events that created a dual awareness. Typically, this formation began in an educational environment. Some of the participants experienced the development of this duality at younger ages because of the desegregation practices implemented during that era. The younger participants experienced this dual development as they entered their late teenage years and or as they entered college, which may be indicative of the changes that occurred during the generation of the time. Unlike other participants, many of their earlier experiences with race were inclusive of at least two other races, mainly Caucasian, Native American, and Hispanic or Latino.

Indicative of their experiences, many of the participants voiced they had developed an opposition to the status quo. Many challenged what they saw in relationship to the perceived differences between Black and White leaders and developed a competitive nature to denounce such differences to create a different appearance for African Americans. In obtaining administrative positions, many participants indicated they felt they became the voice of African Americans in general, especially when working with predominantly European American supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates.

In working with mainstream America, some participants experienced rifts between their communities and their professional worlds. They were often challenged to find a balance between both. For a few participants, this rift was noticeable within their families, and if they did not maintain a level of authenticity, it was noticed and voiced.

As 21st-century African American leaders, participants voiced facing challenges because of the hue of their skin. Their challenges varied, including having their competency questioned, having their voices silenced, being devalued, being unable to access higher leadership levels, and trying to uplift their communities. The two most common challenges voiced by a majority of the
participants involved battling the perceptions of various stakeholders when working in inner-city schools with children of poverty and dealing with the limited number of African American administrators, which affected the administrators’ abilities to collaborate with and support each other.

In addition, the ways the participants navigated their duality varied. Some of the participants fought racial issues directly; some steered through these difficulties by delicately interacting with opposing views in ways in which the perceiver could be slowly guided through their misconceptions. Other participants eliminated race as a factor in their daily conversations, which allowed them to divert their attention from the issue of students’ race, which often caused the European American educators to become emotional, and onto the educational needs of all students, including students of color.

Some participants expressed negative perceptions when they spoke about their working environments and described how their duality intersected and interacted with White colleagues, subordinates, and superiors. Their approaches were similar to the ways they navigated their professional lives. Some participants chose to educate those around them, regardless of position and status. They shared themselves with their stakeholders with the intention of creating an environment of trust and collaboration. They followed the rules, procedures, policies, and guidelines to ensure consistency. A few chose to face whatever happened unfiltered.

In the following chapter, the researcher synthesizes elements of the participants’ narratives to depict the current state of African American administrators. The researcher discusses the results of the study in relation to the researcher and the literature.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

More than 100 years ago, William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois (1903) revealed to the world the inner turmoil found in the souls of Americans of African descent as they took strides to rise above the lines of oppression. The line of oppression had separated Blacks and Whites and devastated the Black soul (Du Bois, 1903; Eze, 2011; hooks, 2003; Moore, 2005; West, 1993). Du Bois (1903) wrote in a time filled with the pain of shackled brown feet trudging on the shores of a foreign land, leaving footprints that led into an era of strange fruit swinging from trees (Meeropol, 1939). In words and song, Du Bois (1903) conveyed the story of twisted souls striving to uproot themselves so that African Americans would be prepared for life when the “shadow” of the veil arrived (p. 6).

The essence of the Black soul is “like a wild animal . . . tough, resilient, resourceful, savvy, and self-sufficient: it knows how to survive in hard places” (Palmer, 2004, p. 58). For many African Americans, survival was contingent on their ability to live inside and beyond the veil Du Bois (1903) described. For Du Bois, Black America—the Black community—represented the world that existed behind the veil; it was a world void of White Americans, referred to in this study as mainstream America. Life is learning, and to learn, people must grow. First, this study enriches the existing knowledge of double consciousness and may help African American navigate through predominantly White educational organizations. Second, the study may help to increase awareness of double consciousness and the intricacies of living in a society built upon racial separation.

In this chapter, the researcher synthesizes the lived experiences of 10 African American educational administrators who described their perceptions of double consciousness and revealed how they navigated or negotiated their Blackness when working in education with European
Americans. This dissertation represents the culmination of the objective to fill the study’s framework with the lived narratives of the participants. Their lived narratives provided the primary narrative, stories no longer hidden behind the “veil” that Du Bois (1903) raised to the world so that people could see “the struggle of its greater souls” (p. 5).

This chapter contains six sections. In the first section, the researcher summarizes the results of the study, identifying the major themes that emerged from the experiences of the participants. The second section consists of the researcher’s explanation of the results and determination of how the themes emerged in the context of participants’ responses, individually and then collectively. The third section covers the results of the study in relation to the literature. The final sections provide a discussion of the practicality of the results, recommendations for future research, and the conclusion.

**Summary of the Results**

The formation of double consciousness creates a conflict involving people’s belief that they are oppositions to what is presented as the truth. Duality emerges from what Davenport (2010) described as a person’s incessant questioning of the characterization of race in another’s actions against the backdrop of his or her own Blackness. This questioning motivates people to show their ability to be successful, which in turn shows their worth.

Four essential objectives guided the research and the researcher:

1. Identifying the professional challenges 21st-century African American educational administrators face,
2. To hear how African American educational administrators experience duality,
3. To hear how African American educational administrators navigate the duality of their perceptions, and
4. To hear how duality affects African American educational administrators’ working environments.

The 10 participants played an integral role in the completion of the study by sharing their experiences with the researcher, which will allow their experiences to be shared with a wider audience. Amplifying the voices of the silenced was supported by two essential theoretical components, critical race theory (CRT; Tate, 1997) and the culturally sensitive research approach (CSRA; Tillman, 2002). CRT was built on the premise that racism is interwoven into the fabric of American society (Tate, 1997). CRT was developed to help reveal the racial injustices created by the privileges White Americans innately receive. Applying CSRA involved conducting interviews to collect the voices of the administrators in a culturally sensitive way. Their experiences were expected to “challenge the primary discourse” found in education (Tate, 1997, p. 197).

**Discussion of the Results**

The following section is structured to resemble the construction of Chapters 2 and 4. In the first section, the researcher discusses the history of the participants. The subsequent sections are guided by the research questions. The discussions show the culminating themes derived from the findings in Chapter 4 about how double consciousness developed in the early lives of the participants and how that development materialized in their working environments. Overall, four dominant themes emerged from the data, as shown in Table 11.
Table 11

*Dominant Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Theme Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1</td>
<td>Innate duality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 2</td>
<td>Establishment of self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3</td>
<td>An internalization of duality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4</td>
<td>Layers of duality: epidermal, dermal, hypodermal, and hyperdermal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first theme is a postulation that duality develops inherently in Americans born of African descent when the two worlds, Black America and White America, begin to intersect. The second theme indicates that because of the myriad subtle challenges race creates for African American administrators, representing an internal desire for the establishment of self is formed, driving administrators to work harder, compared to members of mainstream America. Because of the challenges African American administrators encounter, as the third theme shows, their feelings may create a sense of efficacy or inadequacy depending upon how they internalize the duality.

Further, the experiences of African American administrators can dictate whether they become personally confined or liberated and whether they professionally create a superficial awareness or a multifaceted awareness when interacting with mainstream America. Based on the findings four levels of double consciousness emerged, which the researcher coined as: dermal, epidermal, hypodermal, and hyperdermal. These terms represent the fourth theme, determined by how participants operated within their functioning cultures.
The History of the Participants

One unexpected theme that emerged from the study was participants’ individual formation of double consciousness. Although all the participants were Americans of African descent, they developed their sense of duality in different ways. It was interesting to note that the youngest participants did not develop their sense of duality until they were teenagers or young adults; in contrast, other participants developed awareness at earlier stages in life. During the younger participants’ formative years, they lived in communities divided by class rather than by race. They lived by and played with children of different races—all were children of poverty. Many of the participants voiced an emergence of understanding an existence of two worlds early in life, primarily because of growing up during the desegregation era.

Professional Challenges

In response to the first research question posed in this study, the participants’ answers indicated that the 10 African American administrators faced myriad daily challenges that arose from numerous external sources. Four challenges emerged from the findings: (a) Similar to their 20th-century predecessors, participants witnessed the covert presence of racism; (b) participants’ greatest struggles occurred with various stakeholders (community members, staff, students of poverty, and parents); (c) participants regularly faced the negative perceptions of various stakeholders, which affected them in myriad ways; and (d) participants experienced a lack of support attributable to the small number of African American educational administrators. Overall, the four premises developed one of the major findings of the study: The challenge of race in participants’ working environments created an internal desire among the participants to work harder than White Americans worked.
The Experience of Duality

Duality, or double consciousness, emerged from two worlds intersecting (Du Bois, 1903), through subjugation and oppression of race in conflict with nationality, and the other through. The experience of duality became relevant throughout the interviews whenever race was the topic of discussion. The findings indicate that their duality emerged when the participants’ souls, the essence of their being, and the survival of their Blackness— their “oughtness”— was in jeopardy (CampbellJones et al., 2010). Moore (2005) described double consciousness as “adaptive as a survival technique, but it can be considered maladaptive because it can generate mental conflict” (p. 752).

To determine how the participants experienced duality, the researcher explored the participants’ interpretations of the excerpts taken from The Souls of Black Folk (Du Bois, 1903). In addition, the researcher collected their definitions of double consciousness and asked whether they had ever felt like being Black was a problem.

Duality is an internal phenomenon. The findings support the idea that double consciousness emerges from the social negation of African Americans. Further, multiple layers exist in its foundation (the layers/levels of duality). In synthesizing the data, the researcher used a basic approach used by teachers when showing students how to analyze characters (Read Write Think, 2004). Students study four essential components to analyze characters: (a) what the character says and does, (b) how the character thinks and feels, (c) what the reader thinks about the character, and (d) what others say about the character. The researcher applied this framework to study double consciousness in the participants’ experiences through a character analysis lens. In order to accomplish that task, the researcher created definitions of the levels of
duality perceived in the data. The experiences of the participants working with mainstream America coincided with those layers, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 2. Layers of duality definitions.

The internalization of duality in levels or layers resembled the layers of protection humans have on their skin. There was a surface layer of consciousness, the outermost layer, which the researcher called the *epidermal layer*. This consciousness appears to be relative to what people who experienced duality say and do in public. However, as Black people regularly interact with mainstream America, their consciousness develops a second layer of depth, beyond the epidermal level, which could be considered the *dermal level*. The researcher reviewed the participants’ thoughts and feelings about duality and sought to discern how those thoughts and feelings guided their statements and actions when they interacted with mainstream America.

A third layer emerged from the data about participants’ thoughts about themselves. Their feelings, actions, and words that occurred when interacting with people in their environments, professionally and personally, represented the *hypodermal level*. Double consciousness on the
hypodermal level involves the creation of self, an understanding of who people are as a human beings, being connected to their minds and hearts, and being able to make connections with others in mainstream America. The final level of double consciousness was termed the hyperdermal level, which represented the ability of people to use their double consciousness as a tool to evoke change in mainstream America.

To be promoted to any level of administration when predominantly working with White Americans, people of color, especially African Americans, must possess the first (epidermal) layer of double consciousness. They must recognize the two worlds and have the mental fortitude to connect to both. The findings showed that all the participants functioned within the epidermal layer of double consciousness—they had all reached an administrative level while working in environments managed primarily by White Americans.

Six participants were categorized in the epidermal and dermal stages of double consciousness. They understood the existence of two worlds. Their language and actions had given them access to administrative positions in mainstream America. The researcher placed two of the participants at the beginning of the continuum, the epidermal level, because they did not readily seek deeper connections between self and mainstream America. A few participants were categorized as being at the hypodermal level. Without validation through the perceptions of others, none of the participants was categorized as achieving the hyperdermal level.

Maya repeatedly stated that as an African American woman, she knew her place in the world—she had accepted a prescribed definition provided by White America from the past. Zora shared her understanding of how Black people needed to change their behaviors depending on the audience; she described double consciousness as the way she acted when she was outside of
her comfort zone: “We are aware of our surroundings and in a way we shield who we are to fit in.” Zora remained in the epidermal level because of her need to “fit in” rather than to transform.

Langston, Xzavier, and MyaM’chele were placed in the dermal level, surpassing Maya and Zora, because of the levels of their reflectiveness, a key component to gaining access to the hypodermal level of double consciousness. Langston was placed higher on the dermal continuum. Because of his position, he was capable of creating deeper connection with mainstream America, but he “yield[ed] to the other world” rather than using both worlds for his benefit. Xzavier understood the two-ness in nature, but he viewed the warring ideas as “a schizophrenic development” because he was “attempting to make sense of thoughts, emotions and behaviors of others in a realm of a perceived reality deemed normal.” Xzavier was in a mental state that could be labeled “maladaptive” (Moore, 2005, p. 752) because of the internal anguish it created.

Based on MyaM’chele’s perceptions, the researcher positioned MyaM’chele in the dermal layer because of her beliefs that duality forced her to always function “two steps ahead” of mainstream America; more than just color was at stake: Her duality was a method of “operations based on assumptions of others.” Therefore, “it’s not only knowing yourself and your culture, it is thinking about how someone else might view it.” MyaM’chele’s level of understanding encompassed how she thought and felt in relation to double consciousness, and her conception began to touch on how others viewed her race. She stressed her desire to become a change agent. Some aspects of MyaM’chele’s experiences were reflective, but she had not acted upon those internal thoughts to create deeper connections with others to evoke change.

The remaining participants, Fredrick, Ruby, Malcolm, Barak, and Sadie, were placed in the tertiary layer of double consciousness, the hypodermal level. Each participant displayed
evidence of reflecting on self, in addition to evidence of understanding the need to connect with others in mainstream America.

Fredrick believed double consciousness was “self-identifying with a world driven by color.” He conveyed the importance of administrators needing to be “aware of the situations or environments” they were a part of and recommended they “determine how to interact within those situations to get the outcome” they were seeking. Ruby articulated double consciousness as “having to be conscious of who [you] are on two different platforms.” Ruby provided examples of how her transformation of self through growth enabled her to make greater connections with representatives from mainstream America. Malcolm acknowledged the necessity of being able to “filter” himself in certain situations. He believed it was imperative for African American administrators to be aware of their consciousness in order to “effectively communicate . . . but it is also being aware of [their] audience and self-monitoring how [they] want to be perceived.”

Barak shared the importance of taking the potential negative aspects of double consciousness and changing them into positive aspects. He implored African Americans to “stop seeing that as a challenge and seeing it as a good opportunity. It’s about living in two worlds and knowing how and when to navigate between the two.” Developing the tools to navigate between two worlds extended beyond the epidermal and dermal layers of double consciousness—people must be aware of self and others to determine the correct time to act. Sadie conveyed similar thoughts; however, she noted double consciousness was “bi-lifeful,” which she defined as “having to sort of live and thrive in two different beings.” This idea transcends the concept of two worlds and marks the state of being in which African American administrators must exist to survive.
Moore (2005) described double consciousness as a method learned wherein people acclimate to their environments for sustenance. However, negative consequences may arise based on how people adapt to their environments. Moore stated,

To be American is to be a Black person in skin pigmentation who mentally identifies with White people and European culture. . . . An adaptive response might entail an accommodating mentality that vacillates between being a “Negro” or an American. On the other hand, a maladaptive response could be to change your reality and to take on the characteristics of the oppressor. (pp. 752–753)

The findings indicate various levels of successful adaptive double consciousness. The experiences of the participants showed that African Americans experience double consciousness on several levels. The first level (the dermal level) encompasses the surface layer of duality in which people interact with mainstream America verbally and behaviorally but their interactions are limited by their thoughts and feelings about mainstream America. The second (epidermal) level of duality involves people’s ability to interact with mainstream America verbally and behaviorally, and their interactions are enriched by their thoughts and feelings about mainstream America. In the third (hypodermal) level, metacognitively, people have mastered the first and secondary levels of duality—thus, they are not only aware of what they think and why they think it, but they are aware of their ability to make connections with others. The fourth (hyperdermal) level encompasses people’s ability to use their “bi-lifefulness” to evoke change in others.

Navigating Perceptions

The participants navigated their dual perceptions in different ways. They acknowledged that race played a part in their professional lives and affected their role as leaders. Before interpreting how they navigated their perceptions, it was important to consider the cultures they
created to help them function. The participants’ functioning culture was important because it was the environment they needed to create to be successful. The participants’ cultures were classified into three categories: confined/restricted, transparent, and fluid-relational.

MyaM’chele, Langston, Xzavier, Maya, and Zora were classified as confined/restricted—the created environments confined who they were or restricted their actions and their authentic selves, thus helping make themselves suitable to their environments. For example, when talking about the functioning culture, the participants made several comments: “Making sure what I bring to the table or what represents me is suitable for mainstream America,” “You have to work in your own world,” “You try not to offend or intimidate. That means I have to back up a little bit,” “I display less of myself, my true self,” and “Muzzled. Because we have a lot to lose.” Essentially, the participants did not truly alter their environments; instead, they restricted or confined themselves in order to work in their environments. The cultures the participants created to function within were unaltered environments, which supported the dermal level of double consciousness they inhabited.

In contrast, Ruby and Fredrick were classified as fostering a transparent culture. They created a culture of consistent transparency within their environments. They established “clear expectations,” and were “ethical and consistent” in their actions. Further, Sadie, Malcolm, and Barak were categorized as creating fluid-relational environments. They created their cultures by having a keen awareness of the “personal biases” of individuals in mainstream America by building relationships with “the White folks in the building” and by creating “mutual points of trust” so that all parties involved were “willing to give” more of themselves to “the other,” so everyone could grow and learn.
Analyzing how the participants navigated their perceptions showed many of their actions paralleled how they created functioning cultures. Some participants strictly followed the rules or diluted who they were. Some pursued the single goal of understanding the people they interacted with so they could “fit in” but not transform. Some navigated by working with people through the problem of race; others eliminated race as a factor and carefully handled misinformed individuals with an acute awareness of the delicate nature of the situation.

Race played a prominent role in the lives of the administrators. Race was visible in their personal lives and professional lives, especially in their roles as leaders. However, race materialized differently in each area. Ruby and Barak exhibited a sense of pride as they talked about the role of race in their personal lives: “My race is my identity,” and “I’m very appreciative of who I am as an African American and really wear it.” MyaM’chele and Sadie spoke of the significance of race in relationship to their immediate families and described how Blackness affected their lives.

Professionally, Maya saw the differences in the treatment of White administrators compared to the treatment of their Black peers. She was bound by the reality that she would never be able to “get away with” what she has seen White administrators do. Depending on status and level of education, people’s race may be a constant factor in some organizations, and consequently, some African American administrators become the representative for all African American people. Sadie and Malcolm attested to this idea because they lived in that truth daily. All the administrators voiced how hard they felt they had to work to be in their positions and agreed that Black people must work harder to differentiate themselves from the average White person. To summarize her experience, Sadie remarked, “I work hard to make sure I’m not
categorized with anybody. Whether they’re Black or White, I’m not going to be low and be Black. I got to be Black, but I don’t have to be low.”

The Impact of Duality on the Working Environment

The final question guiding the study focused on the impact of duality on the working environment when participants interacted with mainstream America. In seeking the answer to the question, the researcher posed three subquestions. Although only three essential questions comprised the final guiding question, many of the questions throughout the entire interview process intersected, providing crucial informative insights to every aspect of the research. Using multiple intersecting questions increased the amount of data used to understand the participants, which helped validate the researcher’s assignment to categories of double consciousness. For example, through the lens of the hypodermal level, the researcher learned the participants’ thoughts about themselves as they described their perceptions of those who worked with them.

The participants described themselves based on what others said about them and discussed how others reacted to them. Understanding how the participants saw themselves through the eyes of others was the fundamental concept in the researcher’s interpretation of double consciousness. The participants articulated perceptions constructed upon the level of connections made with mainstream America, which facilitated an interpretative description of the level of consciousness within which they operated. In the next section, the researcher discusses the results in relation to the literature.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

Previous studies on race, culture, the Black experience, duality, education, and leadership provided the foundation for this study. The results of this study relate to the literature found on
the experiences of African American educational leaders when race intersected their professional lives.

Lomotey (1987, 1989) concluded that African American educational leaders led differently than did their European American peers because of their unique cultural perspectives. This study did not directly substantiate Lomotey’s findings; however, indirectly, the study addressed the perceived differences between the lifestyles of Black and White Americans and showed how Black and White administrators led. Many of the participants had noticed a difference between Black and White American lifestyles during their formative years.

Participants categorized the differences between Black and White American lifestyles as cultural, societal, or economic. Langston, MyaM’chele, and Maya perceived the differences they experienced growing up as cultural. Langston noted differences in how the two groups celebrated the same event. MyaM’chele spoke of her thoughts about the structure of the White family related to how European Americans married and created families. Maya described the differences between her lifestyle and her college roommate’s lifestyle.

Xzavier, Zora, Malcolm, and Sadie described economic differences between Black and White American lifestyles. Xzavier described differences in his community. On one side of the community were homes that were visibly larger and more expensive than the houses near which he lived. The children occupying those homes had more, and although they attended the same school, the differences were memorable. Zora, Malcolm, and Sadie described the differences they saw as they traveled into new neighborhoods to attend school.

Fredrick, Ruby, and Barak described societal differences. Fredrick defined the differences in the “level of acceptance . . . and the opportunities” he recognized that Whites received, compared to Blacks. Ruby spoke of the challenges she and her spouse faced when
buying their first home. Barak spoke about the importance of being able to survive in both worlds. It is important to note that MyaM’chele and Ruby, the youngest participants, did not perceive differences between Black and White American lifestyles in their formative years. Ruby did not indicate seeing a significant difference until she began looking for a house. She believed this experience taught her how society separated people by race despite their economic worth.

Vinzant (2009) found that African American administrators’ identities continuously linked to their race. In this study, the findings affirmed that participants’ identities linked to their race; every aspect of their lives—personal and professional, including their leadership roles—connected to who they were as African Americans. The only noticeable difference emerged in the responses of Malcolm and Fredrick. In the construction of his identity, Malcolm learned to live in his natural born right as a citizen of the United States of America rather than living according to expectations created out of the perceptions of White America. From Malcolm’s perspective, he was an American first, and then he was Black; he did not feel the need to inform anyone of his Blackness because it was already visible to the world. Fredrick shared how in his personal life, he was mindful of race but he made sure that he did not let it affect who he was or what he did.

Vinzant (2009) found that race caused Black administrators to work harder to dispel the negative myths and prove they were competent and capable of carrying out their duties. This finding was true for every participant in this study. Despite their positions, they all voiced a belief that they had to work harder than White Americans worked. Some of the participants demonstrated this knowledge in their formative years: Sadie and Malcolm spoke about
developing a competitive academic nature in a desire to be better students than were the White students at their schools.

The final connection to Vinzant (2009) was the researcher’s finding that the participants’ Blackness allowed them to communicate with a variety of people in a culturally sensitive way. The findings in this study confirmed Vinzant’s (2009) premise. Whether they were connecting to students, parents, teachers, colleagues, or their superiors, the participants were able to foster communicative relationships with one or more of the groups. Xzavier noted one of his strengths was his ability to make cultural connections because of his experiences, not because of his race—but not with mainstream America. Building upon Vinzant’s (2009) findings, the participants who operated at a hypodermal level (Sadie, Barak, Ruby, and Malcolm) were able to make connections with mainstream America.

Previous researchers have found some African American administrators readily accept the roles they acquire because of the color of their skin; others negate race and only view themselves as educational leaders within the school (Davenport, 2010). None of the participants in this study negated his or her race. Instead, Ruby, Malcolm, Sadie, and Barak camouflaged their race or changed the dialogue they had with mainstream America so that race was not a barrier.

Davenport (2010) discussed the variety of emotions her participants exhibited when being identified as the Black person in charge. African American administrators carried the burden of being a representative for their race but believed they were in the position to serve the students of their community and to be leaders, role models, and advocates for student success. The participants in this study confirmed two of the three findings conveyed by Davenport (2010). Participants did not express specific emotions when talking about their leadership
positions—similar to other administrators, they encountered stress but no duress from being the Black person in charge. However, all the participants voiced being representatives of their race, although not all of them categorized it as a burden, and all participants said their leadership roles placed them in a position to help their communities and the students they served.

Brown (2005) and McCray et al. (2007) found that African Americans were likely to be placed in urban educational settings in which they struggled to serve students because of various factors working against them. The participants who held principalships referred to the difficulties they faced while serving schools in areas with high poverty rates. Reed and Evans (2008) suggested principals should not accept principalships based on race and ethnicity to avoid adverse effects from differences in experiences. Fredrick and Barak voiced similar thoughts, except their limitations were not caused by their inability to perform because of their race and ethnicity. Their limitations were caused by the perceptions of mainstream America and whether their actions conformed to the thoughts of their White supervisors.

Cunnigen (2006) found African American administrators needed to possess malleable and inventive characteristics when considering how African American students were educated; in fact, duality could be beneficial in achieving their goals. Barak, Fredrick, and Malcolm expressed similar sentiments. Fredrick knew the importance of being flexible and creative. Barak repeatedly expressed the necessity of African Americans viewing their duality as an asset, as opposed to labeling it as a negative. Malcolm used his creativity to appeal to the senses of mainstream Americans.

Brannon et al. (2015) theorized about the interdependent self of African Americans. The state of interdependence nourishes individuals in positive ways, increasing the value of self, which affects the educational environments in which leaders lead (Brannon et al., 2015).
Malcolm, Barak, and Sadie voiced this concept well. The participants shared experiences in which they approached their duality in positive ways.

In the 20th century, Du Bois (1903) described double consciousness as a constant state possessed by African Americans. Although his premise remains true, in the 21st century, the state of double consciousness is only constant when African Americans’ lives are intertwined with the lives of European Americans. African Americans who choose to live continuously behind the veil, with limited or no contact with mainstream Americans, may develop a limited sense of duality or no duality at all. In relationship to the literature, the community of practice, and the community of scholars, the results of this study provide information that may help shape many aspects of education, including scholarly studies in leadership, Black studies, and instruction of students of poverty. Understanding the soul of African Americans allows educators to connect with students in deeper and more meaningful ways.

The findings in comparison to the theoretical framework of the study align with the two premises used of the critical race theory (CRT; Tate, 1997). The first premise, racism is deeply woven into American society and the second premise, hearing the voices of oppressed raced people aids in counteracting the dominant story found in America, all emerged in the findings of this study. All of the participants voiced the presence of racism in society, their organization and their daily lives. Many of the participants stated racism in the 21st century was less transparent than it was in the 20th century. The participants gave examples of how they perceived and experienced racism as professionals. For example, Xzavier and Langston described events in their lives when they felt their race prohibited them from obtaining higher positions. In both instances, the participants stated the positions were given to under qualified White professionals.
The narratives of the participants provided in opposition to the dominant narratives of mainstream America. This second narrative (Steinmetz, 2003) provided a voice for “the marginalized groups” (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 27) in America. Using a culturally sensitive research approach (CSRA; Tillman, 2002) by interviewing the participants in person and being able to connect with each participant as they shared their experiences enabled the researcher to “to investigate and capture holistic contextualized pictures of the social, political, economic, and educational factors that affect the everyday existence of African Americans” (Tillman, 2002, p. 6). Both elements of CRT and CSRA allowed the participants’ narratives to reveal a world unfamiliar (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001) to mainstream American by sharing how this select group of African American administrators navigate through educational institutions managed by European Americans.

**Limitations**

Upon completion of the data collection, beginning with the initial presentation of data, limitations of the study were not readily visible. As the process of analysis began under the scope of the research questions and during the exploration of how the participants’ data answered the research questions, one significant limitation became apparent, the researcher. The researcher inherently possessed opinions and biases in a multitude of ways. As an African American woman, the researcher’s lens paralleled the lenses of the participants. Therefore, the researcher had to be cognizant of the way she responded to the participants; she assumed the role of listening actively to the participants. The researcher also constructed the research and interview questions. In the analysis of the fourth research question (“How does duality affect 21st-century African American educational administrators’ daily working environment when interacting with European American administrators, colleagues, and subordinates?”), the
researcher searched beyond the answers from the subquestions used to analyze the data. The answers to the subquestions only provided limited evidence to support the research question. Although data were collected to answer the question, the answers were also collected from secondary questions in which the researcher asked how the participants navigated or negotiated their race.

Another limitation encountered was the depth of the contextual information provided by participants. During the research and data collection process, some participants shared extremely personal and sensitive information that could not be shared in the study because of the possibility their identities could be discerned. The absence of this missing narrative diminished the depth of the findings, thus limiting the true visualization and descriptive richness of their duality.

After synthesizing the findings, another limitation emerged related to not observing the participants. Observing the participants in their environments would have increased the depth of the study in the context of the four layers of double consciousness presented in the findings. Observing how they interacted with mainstream Americans may have provided more insight.

Finally, drawing a sample from a larger geographical pool, preferably nationally, would have added to the diversity of the experiences. Despite the limitations mentioned, the narratives of the participants robustly depicted their experiences with White Americans and double consciousness in educational settings.

**Implication of the Results for Practice**

The findings of the study can be broadly applied to the community of practice for administrators, teachers, and students. In terms of the layers of duality, future African American administrators should access and reflect on their interactions with mainstream Americans. They should determine where on the spectrum their perceptions reside. If future African American
administrators are capable of obtaining the first two levels of double consciousness, then they could strive to achieve the final two levels. The participants in the study who worked with European Americans on a greater scale understood, valued, and were comfortable with who they were in relationship to their Blackness and then used that understanding to relate to others. This interaction occurs on a person-to-person basis.

The African American participants in this study were all able to attain an administrative position in educational organizations that were predominantly managed by European Americans. All of the participants were able to attain positions as administrators because they were able to connect with mainstream Americans. The participants indicated that African American administrators must know who they are as an individuals and how they connect and contribute to the world beyond the veil, in mainstream America, the world beyond their own.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study indicate future researchers could compare the experiences of African American educational administrators in other geographical areas. For example, the experiences of African Americans living in the coastal regions of the United States may vary from the participants in this study because of the level of diversity found in the coastal regions. Researching the experiences of African American educational administrators in the South may be valuable because of the position race has played historically in that region. This research could include the perceptions of mainstream Americans to explore their understanding of double consciousness. In addition, future researchers could study duality and the experiences of African American educators and students and how they navigate through mainstream America.

The researcher recommends studying how racism displays in the Midwest, compared to racism in the South, and how differences in racism shape people’s double consciousness and
educational experiences. One participant, Barak Kingston, perceived a difference between the two geographical areas, the Midwest and the South, and another participant, Xzavier Hughes, expressed considerable discomfort at being blocked from gaining access to the upper ranks of the educational administrative field despite his efforts. Mr. Kingston expressed the opinion that in the Midwest, Black people could have access as long as White people were helping them to gain access; once Black people were viewed as equal, they could no longer have access. Mr. Hughes perceived Midwestern Whites as the cause of blocking access to higher positions, which could possibly support Mr. Kingston’s premise. In the pursuit of social equality, this is a topic worthy of thought and further study.

Conclusion

Throughout the research process, the researcher constantly reassured participants that there were no wrong or right answers to any of the questions. Their experiences were the most important answers they could provide. The participants seemed to think the researcher was looking only for negative experiences but that was never stated or mentioned. After completing Chapter 4, it became apparent to the researcher that the word race automatically carried a negative connotation; thus, to an extent, the word itself denoted a negative value.

The construct of race is used to classify and distinguish humans. Using a word that separates humans by nothing more than the color of their skin means one physical attribute dehumanizes many people. Distinguishing people by race has caused an unnatural divide, which is why race is repeatedly associated with negativity (Guthrie, 1976). Race as a classification system is inherently harmful to humans (Guthrie, 1976). A minister once said that religion is the only place where race does not matter, but in America, race matters (West, 1993).
This study showed that interacting with others builds bridges of relationships. When students are able to go beyond their neighborhoods, attend different schools, and meet new people, their worlds expand. When they remain in their neighborhood schools, their interactions are limited. As many of the participants of this study stated, African American students must become bicultural and awaken to their double consciousness.

Participants in this study held administrative roles, which indicated a level of success. Their professional lives also caused them to interact daily with members from mainstream America, which demonstrated their ability to work and excel in a bicultural manner. As Du Bois (1903) stated, the way to achieve the problem of racial inequities, which can easily be equated to the achievement gap, is through “the union of intelligence and sympathy across the color line” (p. 88). Students of different races and SES must be schooled together. Growing and learning together creates opportunities for students of different backgrounds, socially, economically, and racially, to learn and acquire places of understanding among each other, which has the potential to create success for all.

When a bond between races cannot exist, the level of understanding between Black and White becomes skewed, resulting in inequities. Black people born in America who are aware of their duality form thoughts and convey messages that their voices are being silenced, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The purpose of this research was to amplify the voices of the unheard because the “Negro blood has a message for the world” (Du Bois, 1903, p. 7).
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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

(First Meeting of Three)

Title of Study: The me you do not see: The experience of African-American administrators and double consciousness

Date ___________________________  Interviewer ______________________
Time ___________________________  Interviewee ______________________
Location ________________________  Release form signed? ____

Script to interviewee:

Thank you for your participation. I believe your input will be valuable to this research and in helping promote racial justice in our professional practice.

Confidentiality of responses is guaranteed.

Approximate length of interview: 60–90 minutes, four major questions.

Purpose of research:
To understand how Black administrators grapple with the intersection of Black life and American life while leading in inner-city educational organizations and working with White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates.

1. What professional challenges do 21st-century African American educational administrators face?
2. How do 21st century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in mainstream society?
3. How do African American administrators navigate their two perceptions when a conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?
4. How does duality affect their working environment when interacting with white colleagues, subordinates, and superiors on a daily basis?

To facilitate note-taking, I will audio tape our conversations today. All records of this study will be kept private. I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; I will be the only person able to access the records. I will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed.
On [insert date], you completed a consent form indicating that I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still ok with me recording (or not) our conversation today? ___Yes ___No
If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you would like for me to pause the recorder or keep something you said off the record.
If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.
Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]
If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be more than happy to answer your questions.

To begin this interview, I’d like to ask you some basic demographical questions.

Demographics

- AGE: What is your age? _________
  o Do you think your age affects your perceptions of race? Why or why not?
- FAMILY LIFE: Tell me about your family (married, single, divorced, widow/widower; children; your parents; siblings)
  o Do you think your family life influences or has influenced your perceptions of race? Why or why not?

- SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: Do you think your socioeconomic status affects your perceptions of race? Why or why not?

- EDUCATION:
  o What is your highest degree?
  ______________________________________________________________________
  o What is your field of study?

- PROFESSION:
  o What influenced you to be an educator or to work in the education system?

Notes:

  o How long have you been …
    ▪ In your present position?
    ▪ At this institution?
  o What deciding factor(s) led you to becoming a part of this organization?

Notes:

Reflection by Interviewer:
Background Information

Now, I’d like to ask you some questions about periods throughout your life and your encounters with racial events.

- Take me back through your childhood. Tell me about growing up. Where you lived and what (if any) experiences in relationship to race you encountered, which you deem as significant.
  - How have these experiences shaped your racial identity?
  - How have these experiences shaped and/or defined who you are?

Notes:

- As a teenager and young adult did you encounter any race related events? Please explain.
  - If so, have any of these encounters shaped your racial identity?

Notes:

- Looking back over your life, do you believe that there is a difference between Black and White American lifestyles? Please explain.
  - If so, when do you believe you realized this difference?
  - If not, when did you realize a difference did not exist?

Notes:

- What role (if any) does race play in your personal life?

Notes:

Reflection by Interviewer:
Professional Information

Now, I’d like to ask you some questions about your perspective of the influence race may or may not have in your professional life.

- What role (if any) does race play in your professional life? In your leadership position?

Notes:

- Is there ever a time when…
  - Race does not matter?
  - One’s socioeconomic status supersedes race in education, especially when looking at leadership?

Notes:

- How important is cultural identity when looking at the roles of African Americans in educational leadership?

Notes:

- Is cultural identity a key factor in success when leading in inner-city educational arenas and in the Midwest?

Notes:

- What is your greatest struggle as an African-American administrator in education?

Notes:

- What do you believe are some of the challenges of African-American educational administrators?

Notes:

Reflection by Interviewer:
Closure

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. As I stated at the beginning of this interview, any and all information shared with me will be kept confidential, will be coded to maintain anonymity. I would like to schedule a time for our second interview. This interview will focus on questions 2–4 of the study, which will pertain to your perceptions of 21st century double consciousness:

2. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in mainstream society?

3. How do African American administrators navigate their two perceptions when a conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?

4. How does duality affect their working environment when interacting with white colleagues, subordinates, and superiors?

Also, based upon the information shared today, I may ask a few questions for clarification. Finally, for our next interview, I would like for you to read the following excerpts from W. E. B. Du Bois’s, The Souls of Black Folk. Please use this copy to write on, highlight, and or respond to anything in which evokes a feeling, negative or positive. I would then like for you to write a response which captures your thoughts about the passages.
Interview Protocol for a Study on the Experiences of African-American Educational Administrators and Double Consciousness

(Second Meeting of Three)

Title of Study: The me you do not see: The experience of African-American administrators and double consciousness

Date ___________________________   Interviewer ______________________
Time ___________________________   Interviewee ______________________
Location _______________________

Script to interviewee:

It is nice to see you and thank you for your continued participation. This interview will predominantly be about questions 2–4 of the study, which will pertain to your perceptions of 21st century double consciousness.

I would like to remind you that the confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed.

Approximate length of interview: 60–90 minutes, three major questions.

Purpose of research:
To understand how Black administrators grapple with the intersection of Black life and American life while leading in inner-city educational organizations while working with White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates.
1. How do 21st-century African American educational administrators experience the duality of being Black and American in mainstream society?
2. How do African American administrators navigate their two perceptions when a conflict (with possible racial underpinnings) arises?
3. How does duality affect their working environment when interacting with white colleagues, subordinates, and superiors on a daily basis and when working toward ensuring the success of Black students?

Based upon the information we talked about during our first interview session, I will ask a few clarifying questions first, we will then proceed to talking about the excerpts taken from W. E. B. Du Bois’s, The Souls of Black Folk.

Follow-up Questions: This questions will be related to any of the questions asked during the first interview. Questions that will clarify or delve deeper into the participant’s statements or responses. These questions cannot be predetermined because they are based upon the interviewee’s responses.
Double Consciousness

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

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

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

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self.”

“One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”

“It is not enough for the Negroes to declare that color-prejudice is the sole cause of their social condition, nor for the White South to reply that their social condition is the main cause of prejudice. They both act as reciprocal cause and effect, and a change in neither alone will bring the desired effect. Both must change, or neither can improve to any great extent” (p. 88). “Only by a union of intelligence and sympathy across the color-line in this critical period of the Republic shall justice and right triumph.”

“America is not another word for Opportunity to all her sons.”

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
• After reading the excerpts please share your thoughts about:
  o Your interpretation of the excerpts; your initial thoughts; your initial feelings

Notes:
  o Did you have the opportunity to write your response to the excerpts? If so, could you please share what you wrote? *Based upon the participant’s response, clarifying questions may be asked.

Notes:
  o What does double consciousness mean to you?

Notes:
  o Do you feel that 21st-century African Americans share the same experiences as 20th-century Blacks in America?

Notes:
  o In the passages above, W. E. B. Du Bois stated, *To the real question, how does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.* How do you relate to his question? Have you ever felt as if being Black was a problem? Why or why not?

Notes:
  o How do you navigate and negotiate your race and cultural identity as it pertains to your role as an administrator?
**Professional Information**

- What is the “functioning” culture of a Black leader or a when working with predominantly White people? (Functioning culture the culture one must create on a daily basis)

  Notes:

- Do you perceive a difference in how Black and White leaders lead?

  Notes:

- Based upon your interactions with your White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates, how do you think you are perceived? Do you believe your position or race influences how they interact with you?

  Notes:

**Reflection by Interviewer**

**Closure**

*Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me today. Please remember that any and all information shared with me will be kept confidential and all recordings will be securely locked. All audio recordings will be destroyed within three months after being transcribed.  

I would like to schedule a time for our third interview. This interview will look at the personal relevance of your experiences, if and how double consciousness emerges in your life and based upon the information provided today, I may ask a few clarifying questions as well.*
Interview Protocol for a Study on the Experiences of African-American Educational Administrators and Double Consciousness

(Final Meeting of Three)

Title of Study: The me you do not see: The experience of African-American administrators and double consciousness

Date ___________________________   Interviewer ______________________

Time ___________________________   Interviewee ______________________

Location ________________________

Script to interviewee:

It is nice to see you and thank you for your continued participation. During this interview we will look at the personal relevance of your experiences, if and how double consciousness emerges in your life.

I would like to remind you that the confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed.

Approximate length of interview: 60–90 minutes, three major questions.

Purpose of research:

To understand how Black administrators grapple with the intersection of Black life and American life while leading in inner-city educational organizations while working with White supervisors, colleagues, and subordinates.

Based upon the information we talked about during our second interview session, I will ask a few clarifying questions first, we will then proceed to talking about the personal relevance of your experiences, if and how double consciousness emerges in your life.

Follow-up questions: This questions will be related to any of the questions asked during the second interview. Questions that will clarify or delve deeper into the participant’s statements or responses. These questions cannot be predetermined because they are based upon the interviewee’s responses.
Appendix B: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University-Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Matasha L. Jordan

Digital Signature

Matasha L. Jordan

Name (Typed)

June 6, 2018

Date