Pastoral Care: Notions of Caring and the Black Female Principal

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The purpose of this qualitative life narrative study was to describe the themes and patterns in which religio-spirituality influences the leadership process for four Black American principals. The study explored how these women leaders navigated intersecting oppressions as they engaged in social justice in their schools and the role of religio-spirituality in that process. One such emerging theme in their narratives was their re/conceptualization of traditional notions of care in their schools in which large numbers of African American students are served. Although care is not always theological in nature, the type of care highlighted in their life narratives was termed pastoral as it resembled the care often exhibited by theological caretakers and in Black American churches, of which each participant was a member.

Keywords: *Black female principals, pastoral care, womanism*

TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF CARE IN SCHOOLS

In 1982, Carol Gilligan wrote the influential book, *In a Different Voice*, to provide a counter perspective to the male dominated field of social psychology. Gilligan proposed that women often ground their decision making on internal sensibilities related to context and relationships (Gilligan, 1982). Subsequently, feminists such as Nel Noddings extended Gilligan's premise by theorizing about an ethic of care (Noddings, 2003). As a primary figure in the research on care, Noddings posited care as a basis for ethical decision making and moral development, yet she also described how people are when they are engaging in caring. These behaviors become the basis of recognizing and engaging in caring and "sympathetic" acts. In addition, Noddings argued for the care as important in schooling, a source of social capital, yet views the home as the primary and chief source of care. In spite of work by Noddings, there remains an either-or-stance concerning moral and ethical development and justice and care (Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1981; Noddings, 1984). Furthermore, research in feminism, leadership, care, and justice has been located in European, White-accepted wisdom (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). This White, accepted form of wisdom fails to recognize the interrelatedness of these standpoints and the gendered, raced and cultured aspect of care which this article will further examine.

Current researchers in educational leadership are realizing the conduit of education as a means for transforming society and promoting democratic principles, while still recognizing the marginalization of those who differ from the majority (Marshall & Oliva, 2009). Inequities surrounding culture, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other differences still exist in the United States that impact educators and the students and communities they serve. At all levels, education gaps among achievement, graduation rates, and grades exist between students of color and their White and Asian counterparts (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). Poverty is at an all-time high and there is a sharp line in economic attainment in certain areas of the country and among races (Morris & Monroe, 2009; Rodriquez & Fabionar, 2009). As further examples of inequity, children and adults who are gay or lesbian, second-languaged, or with disabilities are frequently discriminated against and not served well throughout schooling (Apple, 2001; Mitchell, 2006).

Due to these societal circumstances, the educational leadership literature has moved toward social justice standards and philosophies to attempt to ameliorate inequities for those who have not

been well served in schools. Although social justice remains a somewhat inchoate term in educational leadership, a consensus is beginning to build around the construct. In spite of this consensus, more research is required to examine daily administrative practice as it relates to processes of social justice. While some research has begun the process of defining social justice, this same research fails to consistently articulate what it looks like in everyday practice (Romo & Roseman, 2005). Ordinary, everyday administrative practices must become more of a focal point in understanding how administrators actually engage in the process of social justice.

WOMANIST THEORY, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

This research drew heavily from what writer Alice Walker termed, "womanist theory" in her book, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (Walker, 1983). Walker described the standpoint and experiences of women of color who wanted "to know more and in greater depth (p. xi)." Walker's four-part definition of womanism formed a critical and methodological framework for various disciplines exploring the lives of Black women, including theology.

Womanism entered the theological arena as a gender-based movement in the 1980s (Williams, 1993). Womanist theologians appropriated Walker's definition to examine Biblical scholarship, Christology, ecumenics, and Christian practice (Mitchem, 2002). In addition, womanist theologians have applied womanist hermeneutics to challenge oppressive societal traditions, patriarchy, notions of sexuality, and other marginalizing constructions in society (Gilkes, 1993; Mitchem, 2002). In concert with womanist theory, womanist theology offers a way (a) to examine women's religious meanings and epistemologies, (b) to learn how women strived to contest and eradicate oppression, and (c) to inform social justice in US society and education past, present, and future. Both womanist theory and womanist theology build on feminist "insights into the relationship between power, and the construction of social roles, as well as the unseen, largely invisible collection of patterns and habits that make up patriarchy and other types of domination" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 5). Womanist thought critically engages traditional hierarchies associated with race and class (Walker, 1983). In this way, womanist theory makes salient the values of Black people, particularly Black women, and provides a lucid illustration of education and leadership born out of protest and social justice. Womanist theology offers a way to "consider how the Divine became and becomes manifested in the everyday experience of women . . . women who are and have been left out of society's discourses" (Floyd-Thomas, 2006, p. 8).

The concept of intersectionality suggests that there are interlinking, overlapping connections among various forms of oppression and gender, race, class, sexual preference, religion, and disability (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality can be used to "think through all social institutions, organizational structures, patterns of social interaction and other social practices on all levels" (Collins, 1998, p. 205). Single category frameworks, such as race-only or gender-only frameworks, can be rather sterile; however, these discrete categories can be de-sterilized and unified through the lens of intersectionality. Doing so permitted the authors to derive a deeper understanding of the interplay between the experiences of religio-spiritual Black female principals and the larger historical, socio-cultural, religious, and institutional contexts in which they lived. Studied in this way, the collective experiences of these women were not essentialized as the gendered and raced standpoint of the mythical universal Black female. Rather, intersectionality allowed us to study the individual and the group without losing the uniqueness of either.

The use of intersectionality links strongly to William Tate's assertion that scholars of education should look to moral and spiritual texts to interrogate the workings of gender, race, and other forms of marginalization in schools (Tate, 2005). While Tate did not describe ways in which this moral and spiritual grounding is made manifest, the women in this study located themselves within a religio-spiritual worldview through which they sought social justice in schools. Rather than attempting to find broad agreements, the authors made careful interpretations of what a religious or spiritual tradition meant to and what its importance was for these women. This interpretation includes critiquing religion from the inside by those who hold these views,

exploring tensions of faith, and examining resources that an individual's religio-spirituality can offer to care, education, and leadership.

In this study, the concept of social justice became important and was a central strand in our findings. A desire to eradicate school realities of injustice were interwoven into the narrative of each woman we interviewed. As the educational leadership literature moves toward a social justice framework, administrative practices focus on an analysis of how administrators actually engage in the process of social justice. For our participants, spirituality was not neutral in matters of social justice and leadership in schools. Our analysis revealed that social justice and the spiritual were closely related and often intertwined. For the participants, to be spiritual *was* to be socially just.

THE BLACK CHURCH, WOMEN, AND EDUCATION

Any attempt to discern the meaning of African American women's faith and action would be incomplete without reflection on "The Black Church" (Williams, 1993). While there is no single body of doctrine that defines the religious identity of Black people in the U. S., there is a common religious experience that stems from the formation of the Black Church. Williams explained this experience, noting that "the Black Church is the heart of hope in the Black community's experience of oppression, survival struggle and historic efforts toward complete liberation (Williams, p. 205)." Although symbolic, the Black Church refers to the social and religious collective realities that African Americans experience. From this hermeneutical and epistemological reference, one can study Black religion and spirituality without apology. The Church remains a pillar in the Black community and represents more than a place of worship. Lincoln explained that "to understand the power of the Black Church, it must first be understood that there is no distinction between the Black Church and the Black community. The Church is the spiritual face of the Black subculture" (Lincoln, 1999, p. 96). Historically, the Black Church was a place of political, religious, social, educational, and cultural activity (Cannon, 1988). It remains so today.

In her book, *If It Wasn't for the Women*, Gilkes discussed the historic role Black women have played in their church and community (Gilkes, 2001) Work within the Church often centered on poor women and children and included "mothering" activities such as providing food, clothing, child care, and housing (Warran, 1989). Included as well were Biblical instruction, meeting community needs, and support and promotion of education. The role organized religion plays in cultural, racial, ethical, moral, and philosophical understandings, politics, and activism cannot be trivialized. Churches in the Black community have been central to the "project of seeking change" (Sawyer, 2000, p. 297). For the historic Black Church, "social justice [and] religion seemed inseparable" (Sawyer, p. 297). From its beginnings, the Black Church symbolized to Black people that they could manage the structures of civil society despite their exclusion from the dominant White culture in the U.S. (Murphy, 1996). Opportunities for leadership, not available elsewhere in society because of deeply entrenched racism were available in and by way of the Black Church. There, emerging leaders found not only opportunity but also affirmation for service and the demonstration of ability.

After the U.S. Civil War in the mid-1800s, women played an important role in building Black denominations. Like men, women were recognized as "elocutionists, lecturers, field secretaries for the Women's Conventions, missionary workers, teachers, writers . . . school directors, and orators" (Carpenter, 2000, p. 101). Church women were active in "practicing their religious lives, yet at the same time . . . expanded their concern for their moral development to their families, and ultimately [took] their concerns to the larger society through . . . reform activities" (Townes, 1993, pp. 81-82). Black women's overtly religio-spiritual enactments reflected a historical posture of the Black Church: education as mission and ministry. "If any one ministry could be identified as central . . . it would be education . . . Black people defined education as a central task of the Christian mission" (Dodson & Gilkes, 1987, p. 84). African Americans have long been proponents of formal education. Education was of chief importance in the moral and social advancement of the Black community. The tradition of the Black Church, womanism, womanist theology, and

historiographic texts are tools used in this study to explain the intersection of Black women and educational leadership.

Educational researchers have not studied historical texts to understand how religion and spirituality shape the leadership of Black women in actively resisting the status quo in schools. Such an omission is puzzling given that, historically, Black spirituality has been located in resistance (West & Glaude, 2003). Many historians, archivists, and womanist and feminist scholars cite the inherent political importance of religion and spirituality to the life and work of females. Sociological studies of the history of the African American woman in religion highlight their leadership and personal, institutional, and structural creation and transformation. In theorizing history, researchers have explored over-feminizations in the Church, home, and community, challenged the essential Black churchwoman, examined the role of religio-spirituality in naming oppression and seeking its abolition, and critiqued the erotic/exoticism of the female religious experience (Carby, 1998; Lorde, 1984; Mitchem, 2002; Moody, 2003; Sanchez-Eppler, 1992).

METHODS

In this article, the authors drew upon existing data from a larger narrative research study concerning the importance of the spirituality of Black female principals and how that spirituality impacts their leadership (Witherspoon, 2008). These data were placed alongside an analysis of early historical and contemporary spiritual narratives of African American women. These data resulted from in-depth interviews of four Black female principals who were selected using purposive sampling (Patton, 1980. The in-depth interviews (including follow-up interviews) occurred over one year. The data were analyzed through a womanist theological lens as a means to highlight the ways in which religio-spirituality was articulated in the lives and work of the participants. Furthermore, this lens illuminated the ways in which spirituality was subsequently used as a means to interrogate marginality, promote social justice, and initiate social activism in schools as forms of care for students.

Principals in different parts of a southern state and at different career junctures, school levels (elementary, secondary, etc), and levels of education were selected. To maintain anonymity participants were given pseudonyms: Bobbie, Pattie, Toni, and Avery Collectively, they have 75 years experience as educators and 14 years experience as school administrators. *Bobbie* is in her 32nd year in education. Her career is unique in that she was an assistant principal for three years, a principal for two, and had transitioned back in to an assistant principal position. *Pattie* is in her 16th year in education and in her sixth year as a school principal. *Toni* is in her 13th year in education and in her first year as a school principal of an elementary magnet school. *Avery* is in her 14th year in education and is a second- year principal. Two of the participants, Bobbie and Pattie, are in the same district. Toni and Avery work in other districts.

What resulted from the interviews was the creation of *spiritual narratives*. These narratives explore how religious and spiritual values and beliefs influenced their experiences as principals. Although these narratives and the each of the words of the participants are important, for the goals of this article, t a summary of the findings is presented while highlighting implications for educational leadership. The participant's words that capture the "thematizations" of various sections in the article are printed rather than a listing of quotes from each (Wolff, 2002).

NOTIONS OF CARING AND THE BLACK FEMALE PRINCIPAL

The pastor, who exists at the center of the African American Black church community, works in a multi-faceted, intersectional position in which he or she seeks to maximize congregants' spiritual, social, and communal fulfillment. If these roles are provided by a pastor in a directed, active, and personal manner, they become functions of pastoral care. Reverend Dr. Delores Carpenter stated that "pastoral care creates the bonding with the congregation. The sharing of experiences, both the

valley and the mountain peaks creates the trust that is to vitally needed for the people and their pastor (Johnson-Smith, 1995, p. 33)." Jonnie Coleman, pastor at Chicago's Christ Universal Temple, believed that "the pastor is there to lift [the congregation] up and let them know that they are all that God is . . . they are perfect (Johnson-Smith, 1995, p. 28)." Pastors function as "social innovators and change agents" for both the church, the surrounding community, and, perhaps beyond even those bounds. Pastors also educate their congregation on proper "political, educational, and moral/ethical conduct in society" so that they may participate in their communities while avoiding the many societal traps that might ensnare them (Lattimore, 1984, p. 11).

In the larger scheme, pastors essentially become caregivers or givers of care who actively attempt to change the world in which their parishioners live, which makes them both personal mediators but caregivers to the larger masses either directly or indirectly (Lattimore, 1984). It is out of the intersection of African American tradition, community, and spirituality that the role of pastor as care-giver is defined, understood, and propagated. It is within this confluence of tradition, spirituality, community, and spirituality that the Black preacher acts as care-giver. However, most scholars have worked under the assumption that models for White or "traditional" pastoral care roles can be changed slightly to reflect the state of pastoral care in the African American church. Perhaps the most used definition of pastoral care comes from research entitled, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1964). The areas of pastoral care identified by Clebsch and Jaekle were healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Black theologians such as Vergel Lattimore have modified those four tenets in order to make them a better fit for the African American pastoral caregiver. However, the descriptions of care as originally described and modified are inadequate and do not reflect the tradition and historical development of the African American church, which was founded far from the circumstances surrounding the origin of White, Protestant churches and continued through modernity under different circumstances. By studying the modern state of African American pastoral care and synthesizing its historical development, six areas of pastoral care-giving emerge that are more closely related than then previously used models.

1. The pastor is the paterfamilias of his church, who is responsible for shepherding and holding the community together, passing on its history and traditions, and acting as spiritual leader, wise counselor, and prophetic guide.
2. The pastor is a spiritual guide, who stresses God's eschatology and helps his congregants see the nature and desire of God in the everyday and mundane.
3. The pastor is a healer, who stresses God's presence and omnipotence and tends to those in immediate crisis.
4. The pastor is a counselor and comforter, who stresses transforming, sustaining, and nurturing abilities of God to help the flock through times of discord, doubt, and counsels them to protect themselves against emotional deterioration.
5. The pastor is a social mentor and activist, who stresses God's desire for humans in to afford others interpersonal love and helps congregants understand the social milieu into which one must navigate in the larger world.
6. The pastor is a community organizer and intermediary who stresses God's desire to see humans live together as a community and helps the church and its individuals connect with the surrounding community.(Lattimore, 1984, p. 37)

These roles more closely reflect the activities of the African American pastor who is responding to the unique needs of Black congregations. These roles also reflect the unique history of the Black church in the United States, which continues to struggle against traditional forms of discrimination and marginalization and also fights against forms of modernity that sever the communal ties of the church and its members.

Much like a pastor, these women not only believed in ensuring the academic well-being of their students, but also in providing holistic care of mind, body, and spirit. The care these

principals engaged in sought to address interlocking systems of material, community, and spiritual realities. The depth of their caring comes through in their words. While all their words cannot be captured in this treatise, some phrases, followed by sections of discussion provide insight into their notions of pastoral care. Each section of quotes has been labeled with the participants' own words that point to their conceptualization of pastoral care.

Wisdom

Religion and spirituality was the source of wisdom for the participants, and as in the African American religious tradition, was a critical tool in making decisions in or related to their schools (Gilkes, 2001). By their own declaration, their school districts were set up as masculinist, policy-driven, and often oppressive to certain students and principals. Implementing stringent, inflexible policies that adversely affected students were not considered appropriate witness for these principals; their personal beliefs determined how they handled policy. While policy is usually interpreted as corporatist, rational, and modernist, the behaviors of these principals reflected a post-masculinist response to leadership and leadership diversity. Obediently implementing policy was not what these women believed to be most important to effective leadership. Pattie said,

> Real leadership wisdom lies in the Word. It is the basis of my decisions. We keep being told to "follow policy. Follow policy." Since when did policy create what is best for students? If policy had its way, I probably wouldn't be the principal!

Maintenance

Holding onto what they believed was religio-spiritual, and just behaviors were of particular importance. Some of these behaviors included being consistent with what they viewed as the *mission* of the principalship. While it is rare to find individuals who, when interviewed separately, use the same term to describe a particular phenomenon, each participant used the word *mission* or the phrase *mission field* in describing her principalship. What exactly was their mission? When asked, the participants found it hard to give specifics, but each one was passionate about the overall need to make things better for the students that they served. Their mission was closely tied to their idea of social justice. In their words:

> Social justice is making sure my kids have everything that everyone else has. Sometimes it may mean giving my kids more than you give other people who already "have." It may not be fair, but life hasn't been fair to my kids. (Avery)
> Every child deserves the best that we can give them. (Toni)
> I understand that we can't do everything for children, but I am tired of seeing White folks be the only ones with a chance. (Pattie)

Therefore, while these principals did not call social justice by name until specifically asked, their understandings about schooling and the principalship encompassed what they believed were fairness, equality, and equity.

Care and Morality

For the participants, morality and ethics were not seen as separate. Similarly, religion and spirituality were not separate from ethics and morality. Their views have some consistency with the profound effect of ethics and spirituality on the field of educational leadership (Shields, 2005). Consequently, another contribution this study makes is to accentuate an "ethic of spirituality." As Pattie noted,

> So much of who I am as a Black woman means living with integrity. God values integrity.
> I try to live my personal life with integrity. I definitely try to run my school with integrity.

As researchers, the authors wondered what it meant to "run a school with integrity." Toni elaborated, saying, "It means not standing by and watching the wrong things get done."

> It was a good thing that I was there, you know, for the children, because they needed someone who was compassionate and who cared about them. (Bobbie)
> At the end of the day, there is not a person in this building or outside this building who can say I don't care about these kids. You can say whatever you want, but at the end of the day, there is not a person here who could question my passion and my desire to help these kids. (Toni)
> Some of these parents don't take care of these babies. When they are here, they are my babies, and I gotta make sure they have what they need. They need some Jesus, too, and I do the best I can without getting fired. (Pattie)
> I've got kids whose parents are on drugs. Ninety-eight percent of them live in poverty. Some are under that care of DHR [Department of Human Resources] because they are neglected. I honestly don't believe we can do it without God. (Avery)

The participants saw themselves as a part of "God's active care for the disposed" (Murphy, 2000, p. 137). In each of their narratives, there was an expressed belief that they were an extension of God's care for their students. God was seen as actively involved in the affairs of the school and the lives of its students. It is in this relationship, or lack of it, that spiritual historians believe would have the greatest impact on the lives of students. It was this relationship that these women sought to introduce or nurture in the lives of their students.

Racism

Underlying each woman's philosophy was the experience of racism. Eradicating racial injustice was interwoven into each narrative. Each principal stated a belief that the biggest problems she had to overcome were inequities rooted in race or racism. In discussing issues affecting schooling, such as test scores, poverty or wealth, community tensions, or students' households, race or racism was integral. It was clear from the participants' responses that race and class issues were entwined with one another and called for social justice. Although the participants saw some inequities in schools as rooted in other socio-cultural issues, they also saw them as spiritual issues that needed to be overcome.

> My belief is that all of this stuff is rooted in the devil. Besides, God still runs this...this world, I mean. At the end of day, I don't take this stuff home with me because He is still the one in control. I have to do my part with that. (Pattie)
> Prayer is the thing. You can't fight something as big as this with flesh and blood. You are in a spiritual battle for these kids. (Bobbie)
> I take some of my students home with me. I take care of them. That is the Christian thing to do. I know that this is a part of educating them. This thing is spiritual. (Avery)
> Sometimes I am just plain tired. I deal with issues all week. But I keep coming back to my faith. (Toni)

For these women it was clear that their religio-spirituality was what informed their educational and leadership philosophies and that these formed a mission of social justice. In each narrative, social justice and spirituality overlapped in a significant way.

Spiritual Fruit

The participants constantly reiterated being compelled toward right behavior in the principalship. The difficulty this involved needed to produce results to sustain the effort required. Avery wanted to see the fruits of her labor.

> I want to bear fruit. How hard I work should bear fruit. God tells us that we will be known by the fruit we bear. I mean, if I am running around barking at people all the time, that won't bear fruit. I might "fruit" my way on outta here! But the things I work towards should help not hurt.

While their actions varied, their leadership behaviors were ones of partnering with God as their leader, and they, in turn, provided leadership to their schools. Often their discussion centered on their principalship practice as social justice and for that practice to "bear fruit." Spiritual fruit is

one way that spiritual historians represent social justice in schools. For the principals in this study, creating a just environment for students was rooted in their religio-spiritual mission to provide equitable fruit for their students. In some instances, this fruit seemed mundane, but nonetheless important, such as assuring improvements to and maintenance of the physical plant. But the fruit also included substantive things such as securing resources received by schools with wealthier student bodies, closing the achievement gap for their students, and rejecting the deficit model when it was applied to their schools.

At Toni's school, a magnet, more students were achieving at acceptable levels than were students at the other three schools. Bobbie and Pattie were principals of low-performing schools that were placed in "school improvement" by the state, a categorization that signifies a school is doing poorly in educating its students. Avery's school had been in school improvement, but at the time of the interview, had been released from this category. Nonetheless, Avery explained that

> My kids may never be top achievers by somebody else's scale. And I do believe that education is key. But without that exposure to a different life, they are not going to understand it. These kids are trying to survive. It's like, you want so badly for them to somehow see that there is something else out there, outside of these walls and what they see every day out there. (Avery)
> These kids are smart. I am tired of people worrying about what the kids don't have and think about what they bring to the table. They can't help who their parents are. (Pattie)
> When I stopped focusing so much on achievement at my school, our test scores increased by 19%. The purpose of school is not just about scores. I realized that. (Toni)

These poignant words of the participants demonstrate not only their desire for their work to bear fruit for the students, but also the genuine care each felt for the students at their schools.

In addition to the other things the principals did to achieve results for their students, each also shared an intense belief that fulfilling the schools' mission required garnering community support. In their own ways, each set about nurturing that support.

> I tried to become a part of the life that they lived. I even stopped going to my beautician and I got a beautician on the west side, and I still go there now. I don't think I will ever leave her because back there in that beauty parlor, the kids came back through there; the parents come through there. They got to see me; they got to know me. They go to talk to me and they go to see I'm just like y'all. (Bobbie)
> A lot of my students in my school are a part of my community and even attend my church. (Toni)
> You've got to know your community to serve it. (Pattie)
> I understand this community and they trust me. I couldn't do what I do if the community wasn't behind me. Not every parent agrees with me, but for the most part they do. (Avery)

Presence, availability, and trust were essential in the view of these principals to securing community support.

Subversion

Because schools were viewed as harsh environments, maintaining their religio-spirituality by engaging in acts of social justice were cast as subversive by the "wolves out there." Although their discussion of social justice was not exhaustive, these principals believed that schooling should teach students about opportunities for material realities and provide the material realities that students may not have. The majority of students at each principal's school were considered impoverished. As principals, these women wanted to diminish the effects of poverty on their students.

> I want my students to have everything that everyone else has. The school can't do everything but it can do something. School is a ministry within itself. (Avery).
> I am always on the side of the kid. They should have opportunities. (Toni)
> Some of my kids don't have shoes. I need to be worried about that just like everything else. (Pattie)
> I was always fighting to get things in school that the kids did not have at home. Like computers. None of my kids had these at home. I fought for a lab at school. My school needed it more than the rich school they were trying to give it to. (Bobbie)

Bobbie's comments exemplify ways these principals' religio-spirituality undergirded their enactments of social justice and active resistance to district decisions that kept their students at the margins of school district largesse.

Recognizing the often detrimental effects of school policies on the lives and educational opportunities of children, the principals engaged in acts of creative insubordination to obstruct these detrimental effects and to insure the well-being of their students. Pattie stated,

> I don't have to say anything necessarily to get something done. I simply do what I do. I actually get more done by not getting in someone's face every five minutes. That just puts you on the radar. You don't say anything; you can't get accused of anything. I accomplish plenty for my kids by doing what I do.

As Pattie conveyed, acts of social justice sometimes took the form of "tweaking" policies or procedures and at other times reinterpreting them to the benefit of the students. Examples of creative insubordination principals cited were interpreting retention policies, curriculum mandates, and suspension policies in ways that provided opportunities for children to succeed. The African American female principals described in this article employed alternative practices considered as "transgressive" and "subversive (bell hooks, 1994)."

Pastoral Care

During cross-narrative analysis, the themes of social justice and care overlapped. Although social justice issues have become a priority of educational leadership, discussions concerning these issues are often gendered, color-blind, moderately liberal, and separate from the Black religious experience (Thompson, 2004). Although a White, androcentric form of justice has profoundly affected education and educational leadership, the concept of care has been cited as immensely important in schools (Shapiro & Gross, 2008). Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) conceptualized four multiple paradigms (justice, care, critique, and professional) of ethics in educational leadership practice. This multiple paradigm perspective highlights not only the racial justice imperative, but also the interrelatedness of values and beliefs to practice and political and moral choice (Post, 2003). The unique notion of care as *pastoral* highlighted in this research and closely mimicking the six pastoral functions outlined by Lattimore, opens a new door between care and justice, and removes it from one that is raced, gendered, and classed. The idea of care in this research critiques traditional notions of care that have claimed a universalistic, White, middle class approach. Unlike established notions of care that are often race, gender, and class neutral, the unique care these principals engaged in sought to address interlocking systems of racial, material, community realities, and spiritual realities. Eradicating these realities of injustice was interwoven into each narrative. When asked what they believed was the biggest problem they had to overcome, they cited inequities as rooted in race and offering care that ameliorated these inequities. It was also clear from the participants' responses that the idea of race and class issues were entwined with one another in the idea for social justice. Although the participants saw some of these inequities in schools as rooted in other socio-cultural issues, they also saw inequities as spiritual issues that needed to be overcome.

The care exhibited by the research participants focused on others and not on themselves. The historians indicated a belief in the inherent worth of each of the students. This belief in the inherent worth of students has been associated with educational notions of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 2003). "Care means liberating others from their state of need and actively promoting their welfare" (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 4). Pastoral theology has been called a "practical" theology (Burck & Hunter, 1990). The ordinary, practical everyday spiritual lives make up this research. However, a theme of this research clearly asserts that religio-spirituality overlaps the school setting. While traditional ethics of care in schools present a dichotomy between care and spirituality, the kind of caring enacted by the spiritual historians do not. For this reason, I have termed their caring as *pastoral care*. Pastoral care differs from the traditional

theories of care in that it is concerned with spiritual development in the concept of caring for the whole child.

Customary concepts of care do not interrogate patriarchy, privilege, and power inherent in exclusion and inequality (Iverson, 2007: Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004). The care, which they described as being inextricably linked to social justice, is pastoral and rooted in the spiritual, however, highlighted by "creative insubordinate practices" on behalf of themselves and their students. For the participants, spirituality became a way to interrogate marginality and initiate social justice in schools (Lomotey, 1989).

The conversation concerning care became important in the discussions with the participants as care was a source of social praxis, empowerment, and an agent to re-center marginalized groups. Data analysis revealed the participants' application of pastoral care positioned leadership with and through others, and power became collective. The interlocking constructs of equity and voice and the re-distribution of material resources and power all were of particular importance to the participants.

CONCLUSIONS

The principals in this study indicated a strong commitment to social justice and identified this commitment as their mission. There are real questions about how personal and professional needs are identified and the correct response to them. For example, the women in this study had a spiritual response to what they perceived as the needs of their schools and their students. What exactly was their mission? They indicated a clear desire to make things better for the students that they serve. Although these women did not necessarily call social justice by name until specifically asked, many of their beliefs about schooling and the principalship extended to what they believed were fairness, equality, and equity. This idea of social justice also did not correlate with "following the rules" either. As one participant put it, "sometimes the rules have to be broken to achieve social justice." While recognizing the needs of their students and the limitations of the policies dictated by local, state, and national policies, these African American female principals acted individually and collectively to counteract the effects of these policies without violating "the letter of the law." Among the examples of creative insubordination, principals cited (re)interpreting retention policies and homework policies in ways that provided opportunities for children to succeed.

As the educational leadership literature moves toward a social justice framework, administrative practices become more of a focal point in analyzing how administrators engage in the process of social justice. For the participants, spirituality was not neutral in matters of social justice and leadership in schools. Certainly, social justice and the spirituality often collide and are closely related. For them, to be spiritual *is* to be socially just. "Historically, many African Americans have felt strongly that . . . theology is central to . . . justice" and vice versa" (Siddle Walker & Snarey, 2004, p. 4). Romo and Roseman (2005) have said that social justice is an outcome and a process. This research illuminated how the process of social justice was articulated as spirituality and how social justice is pursued and achieved as an outcome and expression of certain acts in schools.

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