

WOMEN'S ASPIRATIONS FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP: A
HEURISTIC PHENOMENOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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University of Missouri-Kansas City, 2019

ABSTRACT

In the United States the teaching profession is primarily comprised of female teachers. However, men continually hold a disproportionality large percentage of the high school principalships. This qualitative study explores the experiences women in a Midwestern metropolitan area encounter in their professional and personal lives, and how those experiences inform their aspirations regarding their procuring and holding the principalship. An internet survey was completed by 68 female participants, and from there eight co-researchers were chosen to represent a continuum of work experience and became co-researchers in the exploration. Through demographic data collection, narrative writing, and in-depth interviews, the essence of meaning women make of their experiences was explored.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Education, have examined a dissertation titled “Women’s Aspirations for the High School Principalship: A heuristic phenomenological inquiry” presented by S. Nacole Boan, candidate for the Doctor of Education, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Growing up, I received the message implicitly and explicitly that I could do or be whatever I wanted. Hard work and kindness were appreciated more than intellect and ability in dream-chasing. This unequivocal support and emotional fortitude was taught however, against a backdrop of protestant domesticity and the domestic sphere of influence in which women have traditionally existed.

As a college student studying political science and history, I was fascinated with the women pioneers of our nation, and how they refused to conform to a time and place expected of them. Despite that interest, I found myself scoffing at the Women's Studies programs on campus, and instead enrolled in a generalized leadership minor. Having been told all my life that I was a "natural leader," I exerted traditionally male leadership traits.

After college, I joined Teach For America and found myself teaching social studies on the Northside of Houston, Texas. I was 24. In my interactions with my female students, I realized they had few, if any, role models that existed in spheres outside their homes. Their educational experiences confirmed the accepted pattern that women teach and men lead schools. Simultaneously, I was starting to recognize that the life I wanted did not conform to the Midwestern Protestant upbringing that my past dictated. As my study of social justice, privilege, and educational disparity grew I shifted away from projecting traditional male leadership traits, to a more natural, relational style of leadership (cf. Sergiovanni, 2007). As I reflected on my first years of teaching and my future pathways, I realized that I refused to become one of the approximately 50% of teachers who leave the field in their first five years (Research, 2017). I was determined to exceed that mark.

In those years, I began a self-directed study of feminism. I rapidly taught myself the traditional schools of thought, revisited first and second wave feminism and tried to make sense of my experiences from the vantage point of the feminist theoretical framework. This evolution facilitated a transition in my self-perception as a leader and woman. I began looking for opportunities to lift up other women and female students. I again realized that the students in my class had few examples of female role models in leadership positions in their school. I had the opportunity to identify several places that female leadership would greatly strengthen the all-male leadership team. It was at this point, I began thinking about the principalship.

As my self-actualization of identifying as a feminist was occurring, I reached my goal of *not being an education statistic* and started looking toward what was next. Reviewing the research and numbers regarding female principals, I once again committed to beating the odds: I was going to become one of the 30% of female teachers who became a high school principal (Taie & Goldring, 2019).

My aim is to utilize phenomenology (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015) to identify the themes and factors that contribute to the continued disparity in female leadership (Grogan, 2000). I recognize that as a female educator who aspires the principalship, my experiences will not and cannot be equated to a generalized voice. However, my experience with the traditional female role and domestic sphere, in combination with the feminist framework, creates a foundation to understand and explore the experiences and desires of female teachers and administrators.

While the feminist framework offers explanatory relevance, it is the combination of this framework with the understanding of democratic leadership, democratic schools and

participatory leadership that ground my work. As a student of history and political science, my interest in public education as a driver of representative democracy is the foundation of my belief in the system. The combination of these interests represents the intersection of my research. Without the voice of female leaders, public schools cannot claim to be representative of all students.

Problem Statement

The field of education continues to be dominated by female teachers, and while women have secured educational leadership positions more frequently in elementary and middle schools, in the high school principalship, they continue to be under represented. According to Grogan and Shakeshaft, (2011) accurate data are hard to find because no national association – including the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2014) – collects administration data by gender on an annual basis. Therefore, the literature relies on associations, organizations, or intermittent NCES surveys to track the percentage of women in administrative positions. Most recent studies, according to the NCES, report 33% of secondary principals are female (Taie & Goldring, 2019) however, approximately 75% of the public-school teaching force is made up of women (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; NCES, 2014).

In administrative certification programs women outnumber men two to one (Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2015). Additionally, doctoral programs continually report a higher percentage of female students, and women hold two-thirds of educational doctorates (Sommers, 2008), but men hold a significantly greater percentage of high school leadership positions (Bassett, 2009; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Tallerico, 2000). Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011b) cite that while representation has increased, “women still do

not fill administrative positions in proportion to their numbers in teaching, or in proportion to those who are now trained and certified to become administrators (p. 28). Therefore, when compared to the percentage of female teachers in the high school and preparation/certification programs, there is a disproportionate number of male principals in 9-12 secondary schools.

Research regarding the barriers women face in attaining the secondary principalship is clear. Schnabel Katulla (2011) posits that these barriers create a process in which “becom[ing] a principal is often gender-based” (p. 20). Eagly and Carli (2007) argue that the preverbal glass ceiling is often more of a labyrinth in which women forgo “a complex journey toward a goal worth striving for. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one’s progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead” (p. 64). The labyrinth metaphor illustrates the many roadblocks and barriers women face in reaching the principalship. These barriers begin with a common set of beliefs that reinforce the glass ceiling including:

- Women are not as proficient in leadership as their male counterparts,
- Women are less likely to uphold the role of disciplinarian,
- Women lead with too much emotion,
- Women experience increased role conflict regarding home and work life balance,
- Preparation programs are unrealistic (regarding theory instead of practice),
- Women are “tapped” for positions too late (age and experience level),
- Women lack mentorship needed to be successful in the secondary principalship,
- Women decline membership into professional organizations,
- Urban/Rural/Suburban settings each have unique barriers including “old boys clubs,”
- Women must have a higher level of educational attainment for access to the principalship,
- Bias exists in the hiring process,
- Women cannot handle the required supervision duties (night-time scheduling). (Bell & Chase, 1993; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Hale & Moorman, 2003;

Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, 1999; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001)

While the above beliefs reinforce the glass ceiling and professional labyrinth women navigate in their principalship aspirations, researchers have found several other causes contributing to the disproportionality of female principals at the secondary level. Women face several other barriers to the principalship including internalized beliefs about their capability and the desirability of the position, necessity of mentoring/nurturing by more experienced principals, and the persistent existence of “good old boy” networks.

In her 2007 qualitative study of five female principals who had previously served as assistant principals in Southwestern Ohio, Gregg expands Kattula’s (2011) barrier beliefs. She found that women aspiring to the secondary principalship lack educational leadership opportunity, are held to different performance measures, and offered less training than male counterparts. Additionally, Gregg found women struggle to find work/life balance and require mentors to support or encourage their administrative aspirations. Further, once in the male-dominated sphere of the principalship, they struggle to uphold their unique feminine identity.

Gregg’s findings are echoed by Pounder & Merrill (2001). They studied 170 high school assistant principals and middle school principals in their quantitative study on principalship desirability. Their sample was 71% male and 29% female, demographic statistics that are representative of overall principalship trends. Their findings support that women do not desire the secondary principalship because of the time demands, ethical dilemmas, student behaviors, termination of unfit employees, and union grievances (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). This lends credence to Antonucci’s (1980) synthesis of

literature stating “the lack of leadership roles occupied by women is not solely a result of external forces acting on women but also results from internal socialized biases that are counterproductive to the success of women aspiring to leadership roles” (p. 185). Internal beliefs about the desirability of the principalship are not the only obstacle to minimizing gender stratification of the principalship.

The disproportionality of male principals at the high school level is compounded by the persistence of “old boys clubs” and nebulous hiring processes. These factors continue to impact the principalship pathway for female applicants (Walker & Kwan, 2012). Eckman (2004) theorizes the “glass escalator” in which male teachers are quickly whisked to the top, and Walker & Kwan (2012) contend, “principal selection has not received sufficient substantive attention by researchers [...] [c]onsequently little beyond anecdote and hearsay is known about how or why principals are selected” (p. 189).

It is important to also consider that women are still not being internally groomed in educational leadership. Gender stratification occurs not only in the hiring process but before hiring as well; this stratification and organizational structures make it easier for men to act on aspirations for school administration and harder for women to overcome the stereotypes of being poorly suited for this responsibility (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993).

Seeking to understand the obstacles women face in seeking the principalship, Kruse & Krumm (2016) interviewed four secondary female principals in Oklahoma and utilized feminist standpoint theory to identify factors influencing female access to the principalship. They found that for women to access the principalship they need to be nurtured by current administrators (especially male administrators), be emotionally invested in their school community, and self-confident about personal areas of strength

necessary for the principalship, including successful performance of traditionally masculine leadership characteristics.

Despite possessing the same qualifications, or better, than their male counterparts (Blackmore, 2011; Eddins, 2012; Nogay & Beebe, 2008; Kattula, 2011; Tallerico, 2000), women often do not see themselves as educational leaders (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993; Gregg, 2007) capable or qualified for the principalship. In their quantitative research study regarding female secondary principals in Ohio (38 male and 38 female), Nogay & Beebe (2008) studied gender perceptions of teachers, principals, and superintendents on principal instructional management. They assert, “the problem of underrepresentation of women in positions of educational leadership will cease only when gender is irrelevant in hiring, and when qualified women are as routinely included in the decision-making process as white males are today” (p. 600). Identifying perceived differences in leadership based on gender, they conclude:

Until the issue of gender in school administration becomes insignificant, female aspirants will continue to face difficulty in achieving their goal of high school administration. Although some women benefit from male encouragement and attempt to advance in the field through established male networks, others lack the sponsorship and must create their own compensating support systems. Women possess as many or more of the abilities and skills needed to be as successful in administrative positions, if given an opportunity, as their male counterparts. By changing society's misconceptions about women in leadership roles, we have the opportunity to enhance our educational system. The negative image of female administrators is not corrected by the occasional successful female. (Nogay & Beebe, 2008, pp. 600-601)

Internalized beliefs about their qualifications, the desirability of the principalship, lack of mentoring, external hiring practices and the existence of “old boys’ clubs” reinforce the glass ceiling in educational leadership, and lead to the continued gender stratification of the secondary principalship.

No matter the cause, the continued gender stratification of the secondary principalship creates an environment in which female experience and voice is absent from education policy making (Kerr, Kerr, & Miller, 2014). This absence indicates a failure to uphold the tenets of democratic education and social equity. Borrowing terms from the fields of public administration and public policy, the continued gender stratification of the secondary principalship leads to a lack of representational parity in the public-school system (Kerr, Kerr, & Miller, 2014). Representational parity is understood as “an even, balanced, or comparable presence (for example, approximately proportionate to the gender distribution in the population)” (Rodriquez-Ruiz & Rubio-Marin, 2008, p. 287). In their quantitative study analyzing parity levels in U.S. School Districts (as determined by data gathered by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [EEOC]), Kerr, Kerr, & Miller (2014) found “that women are still under-represented compared to their numbers in the population in administrative, principal, and assistant principal positions” (p. 386). Representational parity at high level positions is a component of social equity in the field of public education (Kerr, Kerr & Miller, 2014). Grogan (2000) argues that a more socially committed superintendency begins with an increase in female administrators because “[i]t has long been recognized that the increased representation of women in the upper echelons of bureaucracies is likely to be associated with improved communication, more inclusive leadership styles, greater levels of democracy, and empowerment” (Kerr, Kerr & Miller, 2014).

Without the democratization of the secondary principalship, and realignment of the position to represent more equitably the preparation pipeline, women are left out of important decision-making. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916; 2005) argued

that our schools should not only represent society, but they should be a driving force for change. If public institutions are the forefront of globalization and a diverse electorate, our school leadership cannot remain homogeneous. Understanding that the primary path to the superintendency is through the secondary principalship; the disproportionality of secondary principals hinders access to those positions of influence for female educators. This means “women’s influence on policy changes, decisions, and practice in the field is limited” (Mahtivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). Women cannot wield influence if they lack access to positions of power and in the school administration pipeline and the secondary principalship is the primary driver to the superintendency (Brunner, 2000) where access to the power and structures needed to influence policy, decisions, and practice can be made.

While the gender stratification in the secondary principalship is not new - educators have known for one hundred years that in U.S. schools women teach and men lead (Gregg, 2007) – practitioners, theorists, and researchers articulate a need for further study of gender disparities in secondary administration. Lee, Smith, & Cioci (1993) suggest a need for more ethnographic study into the reasons why women continue, “to be denied equal access to principalship in secondary schools (p. 173). Almost a decade later, Kattula (2011) further articulates the need, “the ongoing disparity with respect to gender confirms the fact that additional research needs to be conducted to discover why women continue to struggle to earn equal representation at the high school administrative level” (p. 10).

Purpose

The purpose of this heuristic transcendental phenomenological inquiry was to understand the meaning women attribute to the continued disproportionality of the high school principalship. The research was viewed through feminist standpoint theory. This

understanding was sought through the exploration of the internal and external factors (Pirouznia, 2006) contributing to the unequal gender stratification of the secondary principalship. Gender stratification is defined as the continued disproportionality of female principals in secondary schools (grades 9-12) (Basset, 2009; Bitterman & Goldering, 2013; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; NCES, 2014; Tallerico, 2000). This research focused on the experiences of female teachers in high schools regarding their career aspirations and attainment. Specifically, subjects' experiences were analyzed from a continuum sampling perspective where participants have varying experience levels in education (Patton, 2015).

A phenomenological method was employed because it facilitates understanding of subjects' lived experiences and processes of making meaning (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenology, the study of human experience, (Perry, 2013), seeks "to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon" (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010).

Patton (2015) argues that "heuristics is a form of phenomenological inquiry that brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher" (p. 118).

Specifically, the heuristic inquiry tradition of phenomenology was employed because as Douglass and Moustakas suggest:

heuristics is a passionate and discerning personal involvement in problem solving, an effort to know the essence of some aspect of life through the internal pathways of the self. The private and imaginative nature of heuristic inquiry introduces a unique challenge in research investigations and in philosophical conceptualizations of human science. When utilized as a framework for research, it offers a disciplined pursuit of essential meanings connected with everyday human experiences. (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 39)

This study sought to make meaning of female educators' experiences in relation to their aspirations to, or away from, the principalship at the secondary level. It utilized a two-phase inquiry in which participants answered an internet-based survey, and then participated in-depth interviews to distill meaning from their experiences. Central to all phenomenology is an intentionality explained as "the connection between the mind and the world of objects" (Perry, 2013, p. 264). As female educator who aspires the principalship and currently holds an administrative position in a high school, this intentionality connects my personal experiences to the research; however, I recognize that experiences cannot be equated to a generalized voice. Through heuristic inquiry I used my experiences as the initial framing of subjectivity (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985).

Heuristics seeks to identify meaning in experiences through focused examination of data but departs from traditional phenomenology in several ways. Douglass and Moustakas contend:

Whereas phenomenology encourages a kind of detachment from the phenomenon being investigated, heuristics emphasizes connectedness and relationship.

Whereas phenomenology permits the researcher to conclude with definitive descriptions of the structures of experience, heuristics leads to depiction of essential meanings and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that imbue the search to know.

Whereas phenomenological research generally concludes with a presentation of the distilled structures of experience, heuristics may involve reintegration of derived knowledge that itself is an act of creative discovery, a synthesis that includes intuition and tacit understanding.

Whereas phenomenology loses the persons in the process of descriptive analysis, in heuristics the research participants remain visible in the examination of the data and continue to be portrayed as whole persons. Phenomenology ends with the essence of experience; heuristics retains the essence of the person in experience. (1985, p. 43)

Using the heuristic framework, the research distilled participants' experiences into an essence of understanding and meaning. Lonergan (2003) identified four cognitive processes essential for the heuristic exploration of meaning: (1) experiencing data, (2) intellectual understanding, (3) rational verification and judgement and (4) decision making and action. He describes this process and pattern of operations as the transcendental method (Lonergan, 2003). Perry (2013) furthers this process is “central to human consciousness” (p. 264) and developed the “transcendental method into an explicit method for research with human subjects” (p. 66). He explains:

[a]s with other forms of phenomenological research, this involves guiding study participants into a self-reflective mode of inquiry. With transcendental method, however, the interview questions are structured in such a way as to explore the cognitive operations and transcendental precepts described by Lonergan. (p. 266)

Transcendental phenomenology uses bracketing (sometimes known as epoché) to place a researcher's personal experiences, beliefs, and assumptions aside while making meaning of participants' experiences. Utilizing the transcendental process allows the research to be structured in a manner that allows for participants to cognitively process their experiences in a way that distills meaning and understanding from the phenomenon studied.

Combining heuristic and transcendental phenomenology allows me, as a researcher, to acknowledge the shared experiences I may have with the participants of this study, while critically examining my own consciousness in an effort to “concentrate fully, to listen and hear the participants' presentations without coloring [them] with my own habits of thinking, feeling, and seeing” (Moerer-Urdahl, 2004, p. 8)

Additionally, this exploration is inherently feminist as it seeks to describe the experiences of women and the essence of their career aspirations within the field of education (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980). Writing almost four decades ago, Biklen and Brannigan (1980) contend that women must uncover their own positions and power in schools. As Doucct and Mauthner (2006) conclude, “[f]eminist research has become a well-used term for the work that feminists do when they take on either qualitative or quantitative research that is driven by, and aimed toward, a desire to challenge multiple hierarchies of inequalities within social life” (p. 1). While this research certainly is driven by a desire to understand, if not challenge, the inequities found in the gender disparity of the secondary principalship, it is worth noting that not all female administrators consider themselves feminists:

[a]lthough some women who hold administrative positions in the public schools do not see themselves as feminists, and some even apologize or disassociate themselves from the more active “troublemakers,” the rebirth of feminist consciousness cannot be separated from changes that are occurring in our schools. (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980, p. 241)

Feminist standpoint theory rests on a social inversion stating that marginalized individuals (like women) may, in fact, hold privilege in some respects, “[t]hey may know different things, or know some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience.” (Wylie, 2003, p. 26). Standpoint theory is a feminist theory of knowledge indicating an individual’s standpoint offers unique ways of understanding. Standpoint theory:

is often assumed to be a theory about the epistemic properties of a distinctively gendered standpoint: that of women in general, or that defined by feminists who theorize the standpoint of women, where this gendered social location is a

biological or psychoanalytic given, as close to an “indifferent” natural kind as a putatively social, “interactive” kind can be (to use Hacking’s terminology). The claim attributed to this ‘women’s way of knowing’ genre of feminist standpoint theory is that, by virtue of their gender identity, women (or those who critically interrogate this identity) have distinctive forms of knowledge that should be valorized. (Wylie, 2003, p. 26)

Underpinning the research with feminist standpoint theory allows the participants to project their internalized experiences in a way that creates not only an essence of meaning, but also new knowledge unique to their given standpoints.

The combination of standpoint theory with heuristic and transcendental phenomenology offer an analytical framework that can help illuminate the experiences and beliefs women hold about their roles as female leaders positioned in the larger context of educational leadership and the secondary principalship. Phenomenological inquiry’s foundational desire to discover and understand uncovers these experiences through research questions tightly aligned to the problem, purpose, theoretical framework, and methodology of the study might lead to new standpoints from which to find meaning.

Research Questions

To understand the meaning women make from their experiences with the continued gender disparity of the secondary principalship, I guided my heuristic phenomenological inquiry through standpoint feminist theory, with research questions formulated through “inward clearing, and an internal readiness and determination to discover a fundamental truth regarding the meaning and essence of one’s own experience and that of others” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 4). Moustakas also contends that in heuristic research questions should be “simple, clear, and concrete” (p.5). Therefore, the predominant question I

investigated was “What meanings do female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools?” This overriding question includes the three more specific and concrete prompts:

1. What essence of meaning do female participants contribute to internal factors related to the disproportionality of male principalship at the secondary level?
2. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to their aspirations toward the principalship?
3. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to barriers to the principalship?

Essentially, why are there not more women serving as principals of American high schools? These questions served to guide my methodological decisions and structured the development of the theoretical framework, while focusing the inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). Analysis of the data was based upon a four-themed theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical or conceptual framework directs research design and understanding (Given, 2008; Maxwell, 2013). Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the conceptual framework includes the connected concepts that form a study in visual or narrative form, while Ritchie and Lewis (2003) believe the theoretical framework illustrates how the study is informed by, and builds on, existing theory. Here, theoretical framework refers to “empirical or quasi-empirical theory [...] that can be applied to the understanding of phenomena” (Given, 2008, p. 871). The theoretical framework for this investigation served to define, index, and inform the study, as well as to introduce the key components of gender stratification of the high school principalship (Creswell, 2013; Ritchie & Lewis,

2003). Theoretical frameworks blend the personal and the literary to focus and guide the study and are useful to help inform the researchers intentionality as intentionality requires that we be present to ourselves, to things in the world and that we recognize that self and world are inseparable components of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological inquiry, methodology is not specific, but instead “begins with immersion, self-dialogue, and self-exploration, and then moves to explore the nature of others’ experiences” (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 43). Further, the theoretical framework “situate[s] the research in a scholarly conversation and provide[s] a vernacular” for understanding (Given, 2008).

My undergraduate study in political science and history prior to entering the field of education has always influenced my understanding of public education and its relationship to democracy. As a classroom educator, I considered my work vital to maintain the United States system of representative democracy. As a school leader, understanding the symbiotic relationship between democracy and education is paramount. As Dewey (1916) directed, public schools must both represent and shape a democratic society. This understanding led me to choose democratic education as the guiding theory for this research. Democracy can be considered an ethical term as well as a political one (Beckner, 2004). Dewey’s democratic education philosophy (Calabrese, 1990) that posits that schools should operate according to an “ethical democratic community” (Beckner, 2004, p. 137) is also a critical component of the framework.

This background, combined with my professional aspirations seeking a high school principalship, predicate several assumptions influencing this qualitative research. First, I believe democratic leadership, decision-making (and larger, systems of government) are

the fairest, least corrupt, and most utilitarian (offer the greatest good for the greatest number of people) (Beckner, 2004). Second, I believe our nation must continue to embrace, uphold, and celebrate public education as a driver of democracy: without an educated populace self-government fails. Third, I believe some women have internalized beliefs dictated by a patriarchal society and religious teachings that influence their professional pathways. Specifically, I believe many female educators do not believe they can balance the time commitments of the high school principalship with raising children and taking care of a family. Fourth, I believe some women have internalized beliefs about power and leadership that prevent them from seeking positions of influence. Fifth, I believe the existence of “good ol’ boys” networks continue to permeate hiring practices in school districts across America, specifically in suburban and rural areas. Sixth, I believe there are some male educators who continue to feel uncomfortable with female building leadership and these unspoken power dynamics affect hiring practices. Most of all, I believe that to shape a democratic society, schools must accurately reflect the demographic makeup of that society. When compared to the teaching and graduate school pipelines, the continued disproportionate number of male principals at American high schools is not an accurate representation of society.

Despite being a predominately female field, educational leadership at the secondary level continues to be disproportionately held by men. The percentage of women principals at the secondary level has remained stagnant for decades (Eckman, 2004; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011a; NCES, 2014). Brunner (2000) even contends that little changed regarding women secondary principals for most of the Twentieth Century. The principalship continues to be the driving factor in school culture and achievement; and

principals are increasingly held accountable for the success and/or failure of their schools. Moreover, the gender stratification of the secondary principalship diminishes the opportunity for women principals to serve as role models for female students and decreases mentoring opportunities. Perhaps most important, however, the continued disproportionality of male secondary principals hinders access to important policy, decision-making, and entrance to the superintendency for female educators.

Research indicates women are just as, if not more, skilled in the realm of educational leadership. Therefore, the first element of the theoretical framework is educational leadership. Further, educational research has illustrated a shift in the role and responsibilities of the principalship over the last several decades. (cf. Fullan, 2007) This research has almost unanimously found that the principalship has grown to include more responsibilities, longer hours, more stress, and increased politicking: thus, the role of the principal is the second element of the theoretical framework. This expansion and growth of the principalship contributes to a high turnover and decreased desirability of the principalship generally. Therefore, the factors that influence female perceptions of the principalship specifically, make up the third element of the theoretical framework. These perceptions of the principalship are influenced by the way women perceive themselves, leadership, power, and the ways in which they come to know these things as explained by feminist standpoint theory. Finally, lack of access to decision making and disproportionate representation of women at the highest levels of educational leadership indicate public schools are failing to practice democratic education where all voices have equal influence (Mullen, 2008). Consequently, the last element of the theoretical framework is democratic education. These findings indicate women are more likely to lead in a democratic or

transformational style; and that, male or female, democratic and transformational leadership styles are preferred.

Educational Leadership

Because of a long and well-developed history of school leader development (Huber & West, 2002) the bank of literature on educational leadership – types, traits, models, and skills – is both deep and wide. Welch (2014) summarizes, “a comprehensive review of leadership theory and its evolution can be tracked over the past 70 years from the “great man” notion of heroic leaders, through trait theories, behaviorist theories, situational leadership, contingency theory, and transformational leadership theory” (p. 13).

Transformational leadership theory, introduced by Burns in his 1978 work on political leaders, contends that transformational leaders leverage personality and moral decision making in motivating teams to achieve vision and goals (Burns, 1978). Most recently, and almost unanimously, researchers, authors, and theorists have concluded that transformative, democratic, distributive, collective, or collaborative leadership (regardless of the terminology used to describe it) is preferred by both staff and students in the school setting (Fullan, 2014; Lambert, 1998; Owens & Valesky, 2011). These leadership styles “[promote] shared meaning-making within a community of practice grappling with issues of equity and diversity” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2013, p.111).

Tosas (2015) argues that we must separate education management from education leadership. The former is relegated as subservient to the latter; management meant to serve leadership. While there is still a gap in understanding how educational leaders are identified (Huber & West, 2002), education leadership is comprised of leadership dispersed between individuals, “institutions, theorists, and state agencies” (Tosas, 2015 p.

355). Duignan (2014) adds that authenticity is required for leaders to remain true to their ethical, moral selves. Further, his research supports that distributed types of leadership require authenticity to uphold moral decision making when leading complicated, vibrant institutions.

In her qualitative life-history/career-history study of seven female principals of secondary schools, Hansen (2014) created a narrative form of each participants life-career history by interviewing the women, an external participant they each shared to offer perspective to their life work and reviewed their resumes as a point of triangulation. She found to overcome the continued disproportionality of the principalship several myths must be broken; including: “(a)men manage the schools and women nurture the learning, (b) females cannot discipline older students, particularly males, (c) females too emotional, (d) females too weak physically, and (e) males resent working for females (Hansen, p. 196, 2014). The external participants provided to Hansen provided their observations of the seven female participants and concluded the female principals operated with a focus on inclusive and collaborative leadership, were excellent instructional leaders with academic scores increasing under their tenure, and were profound problem solvers, often thinking creatively for solutions to complex problems. To achieve the high levels of success Hansen’s participants had, they identified support and mentorship as a crucial component of managing the principalship. Hansen reported:

The women who have become leaders, who have traveled through sociopolitical adjustments, and found their new psychological identities may have an obligation to other women educators [...] Encouragement, endorsement, and support for women in leadership positions is not only contagious but one important implication of this study is that educational leaders should intentionally provide such assistance to women wanting to enter positions of leadership. (p. 222)

Encouragement, endorsement, and support is necessary for female principals because of the complexity and range of skillsets necessary in the principalship.

Role of the Principal

A review of the literature unanimously contends that the scope of the principalship has grown from its singular historical focus to a broad position requiring competency in numerous fields ranging from facilities management to financial and budgeting jurisprudence. Spillane and Lee (2013) conducted a mixed-methods longitudinal study examining the experiences of 17 novice elementary principals from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) during their transition into the role. In the two years they studied novice principals, Spillane and Lee utilized data from the Principal Policy and Practice Study (P³ Study) centered out of Northwestern University's School of Education and Social Policy (Spillane & Lee) and a series of questionnaires, interviews, case studies, and CPS data. They found "new principals, despite their extended apprenticeship of observation to the occupation, are not immunized to the tensions that accompany a shift to [the principalship]" (p. 437). These tensions are not unique to the novice principal. The principalship is a position of immense and decisive responsibility. Historically, the principal "served as the school's disciplinarian and the teachers' boss" (Mills, 1974) and today has grown in complexity and demand (Lynch, 2012). Complex and demanding, to be sure, and some researchers (i.e. Fullan, 2007) even identify the modern principalship as unclear, ambiguous, and in a state of transition (Mestry, 2013). Mestry summarizes,

[t]he duties of principals extend beyond that of instructional leaders to one that is administrative and managerial. The principal's day is filled with activities of management – scheduling, reporting, and handling relations with parents and

community, dealing with multiple crisis and special situations that are inevitable in schools. (p.1)

Included in this complex day, Blasé, Blasé, and Phillips (2010) argue are new responsibilities and duties added to the principalship without the removal of old duties. These growing demands have resulted in a position that is composed of responsibilities that are often in conflict. Specifically, the balancing of instructional leadership and administrative obligations can create role conflict (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Spillane and Lee (2012) summarized several decades of literature by identifying the principalship as a diverse role requiring skilled maneuvering of the managerial, instructional, and political realms while having a tendency “to be fragmented, fast-paced, and varied; [involving] long hours and a relentless workload” (p. 432).

A review of the literature identifies “seven characteristics of the contemporary principal’s role” (Lynch, 2012): (1) personnel manager, (2) student manager, (3) government and public relations liaison, (4) external development manager, (5) finance manager, (6) vision/mission creator, and (7) instruction and academic performance manager (Colvin, 2007; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Leithwood et al, 2004; Portin, 2004). Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) surveyed 255 principals in their quantitative study of rural principals in Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Of the 255 respondents, 31% were secondary principals and 30% of the principals were women. Cruzeiro and Morgan (2006) found that principals reported only 12% of their time spent on instructional leadership “despite the empirical evidence that instructional leadership is the most important responsibility of the principal” (Lynch, 2012, p.41). Further, “principals are now expected to be coaches and teachers. They are to play an active role in the professional development

of their teachers as well as use research and data to inform instruction” (Wilcher, 2014, p.61).

It is without argument that the secondary principalship is a complex and demanding job. The ever-changing duties and extended time commitment required, combined with political pressure and role conflict contribute to low retention and job satisfaction. These factors contribute to the women’s perception of the principalship and what it entails daily.

Women as Secondary Principals

While there is little research on the specific perceptions’ women have regarding the principalship (Young & McLeod, 2001), data on job desirability, combined with research on the gender differences regarding job satisfaction, principal characteristics, and removal reasons illustrate generalized perceptions female teachers maintain. Spencer and Kochan (2000) utilized a quantitative survey of Alabama principals to determine “the status of women administrators in the[sic] Alabama in terms of demographic and career patterns” (p. 3). After sending a survey comprised of demographic data and state principal competencies to every principal in Alabama, Spencer and Kochan reported the findings of 514 Alabama principals (those who indicated a gender on their responses). They found that women principals have more classroom experience and higher levels of education than their male equivalents. However, when ranking concerns of the job, female principals ranked workload and time commitment higher than their male peers.

Seeking to understand female aspiration to the principalship, Smith (2011) conducted open ended interviews of 40 female teachers and their aspirations to the headteacher (equivalent to the principalship) comprised of 10 individuals that encompassed the categories of early career, mid-career, late career teachers, and head teachers in Great

Britain. Smith reported three themes emerged from the interviews regarding participants' aspirations to the headteacher: societal, institutional, and personal factors. He found women did not see the Headteacher as a mechanism for increased job satisfaction because of the isolation, perceived hierarchy, political gamesmanship, and workload.

In their descriptive, qualitative study, Young and McLeod (2001) utilized semi-structured interviews and recorded reviews of 241 graduate students (171 women) enrolled in one educational administration program in their examination of reasons women educators in Iowa entered educational administration. They found the three most important factors influencing female teachers' decisions to aspire the principalship to be the existence of an administrative role model, exposure to non-traditional leadership styles, and professional endorsements/support. Similarly, Donaldson (2000) conducted an interpretive qualitative study in which surveys were given to 38 female assistant principals in Calgary and 10 women were followed up with in-depth interviews. Donaldson discovered two recurrent forces influencing the women's motivation for entering the secondary principalship: mentoring, and a "willingness to take on new challenges and a desire to make a change in their own lives and in the lives of others" (p. 98). This moral imperative regarding education and others is replete throughout the literature, and when deciding to seek the principalship is regarded as more important than the negative factors the position can entail.

Democratic Education

Underpinning the current study, is the idea that American schools exist to further democratic ideals. Hernández (1997) offers "the language of democracy as the one offering the best vision for personal and collective development in terms of values such as freedom,

equality, and solidarity” (p. 24). Without a consensus definition of democratic education or democratic schools, the literature indicates American schools have always existed to further democratic principles.

In his quantitative study of 336 undergraduate institutions, Youngberg (2008) examined the democratic social purpose (DSP) of university mission statements. Youngberg investigated the DSP through a Jeffersonian lens in which public education and democracy position themselves together in a symbiotic relationship for self-governance. He sought to identify similarities or differences in public, private or non-profit funding of higher education institutions. From his findings, Youngberg (2008) posits that public funding for education is based upon the fact that “broadly educated citizens are better prepared for responsibilities of democratic citizenship” and a “democratic education system should seek to educate the entire citizenry” (p. 1).

In *The Philosopher and the Democratic Construction of Society*, Polanco (2006) argues the philosopher’s role is to democratically construct society, not construct a democratic society. So then is the educator’s role. Schools create society (Feinberg, 1993), and must democratically construct, not merely construct democracy. Democratic education, then, for this study refers to education that is modeled after democratic governance (Steiner, 1994). While “the language of democracy is anything but uniform. Democracy carries the most diverse and conflicting meanings and concepts, which are not always liberating enough, and sometimes not liberating at all” (Hernández, 1997, p. 31). In her seminal work, *Democratic Education* Gutmann (1987) theorized that democratic education should be based upon “conscious social reproduction,” that is, “a shared commitment to distribute educational authority” (Steiner, 1994, p. 10). Gutmann (1987)

offers two tenets by which to measure democratic education: (a) education policy must not discriminate or repress and (b) it should urge public discussion. Including a multitude of perspectives in decision-making is a major emphasis of the modern understanding of distributed leadership.

In the tradition of democratic schools and striving for equality of voice in decision making, this study explored the meanings women attribute to the both the internal and external factors reflected in their aspirations for attainment of the principalship. These meanings are elucidated through qualitative inquiry and situated within the feminist tradition of research.

Overview of Design and Methodology

While there is no one correct way to do qualitative research, its structure factors ontology, epistemology, purpose and goals, researcher characteristics, and audience into design (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Qualitative research is especially suited for discovery and understanding (Creswell, 2013) and this study the heuristic, feminist, phenomenological inquiry method serves to explore the meanings female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools, the barriers to the principalship, and women's aspirations in seeking that role. In this exploration, a qualitative research approach emphasized the lived experiences (Maxwell, 2013) of female educators and the essence of meaning ascribed to those experiences. Because gender stratification of the secondary principal is not a new phenomenon, the focus on understanding the meaning of experiences for female educators in the present illuminates an understanding of the continued disproportionality in a modern context. Research or inquiry that seeks to understand the female experience (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980) or

challenge a societal inequity (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006) is a part of the feminist tradition; therefore, because this research seeks to understand and make meaning of female educators' experiences and offers a female voice to the body of literature (Grogan, 1996) in the feminist tradition.

Phenomenology is chosen because of its inclination to make meaning (Creswell, 2013). Perry (2013) summarizes that phenomenology is the study of human experience and this study seeks to understand the factors that contribute to the lived experiences of female secondary educators and their aspirations, or lack of aspirations, to procure the principalship. Phenomenology aims “to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, pg. 13). Seeking to understand the meaning of internal and external factors that continue to contribute to gender stratification of the secondary principalship allowed for an understanding of both personal and societal factors that contribute to this phenomenon, and “ultimately both personal and social knowledge are needed to arrive at valid understandings of reality” (Moustakas, 1994, pg. 62).

As a female researcher who currently serves in an assistant principal in a high school and seeks the principalship, heuristic phenomenological inquiry offers a perspective that allows exploration of my own experience and the experiences of others. In doing this research, I fulfil the two components of heuristic inquiry; first, experience with the phenomenon, and second, intense interest in the subject (cf. Douglass & Moustakas, 1985). This dual concentration “is the combination of personal experience and intensity that yields an understanding of the essence of the phenomenon” (Patton, 2015, p. 119). The

knowledge uncovered in this process creates a significant conceptualization of the experiences of women in the field of education, leading to a richer meaning.

This study was conducted in two phases. The first part of this study was comprised of an internet survey which served the dual purpose of data collection and sampling. From the survey results, phase two participants were purposefully selected using a continuum sample (Patton, 2015). Continuum sampling is a type of comparative (Patton, 2015) or criterion (Creswell, 2013) sampling in which researchers utilize purposeful strategies to identify similarities and differences in cases (Patton, 2015). It “derives from some kind of conceptual framework that distinguishes people, programs, organizations, or communities along a continuum” (Patton, 2015, p. 281). Phase two took place in a Midwestern midsize metropolitan area. This city has a variety of urban, suburban, and even rural school districts from which to sample. In focusing this study on the secondary principalship, schools composed of grades 9-12 were utilized. This site selection is useful because of its myriad school systems and sizes. A continuum sample produced 8 participants identified from early service (1-3 years), to mid-career (8-15 years) teachers, assistant principals, and retired principals. I sought a diverse sample based on race and ethnicity as identified by demographic markers in phase one. This sampling will be further explained in Chapter Three.

In line with the nature of qualitative research, data was collected from documents, in the form of narrative writings, and interviews (Patton, 2015). Participants from the first phase internet study provided a written answer to the question “Do you desire the principalship? Why or Why not?” In addition to the document analysis of participant narrative writings, I utilized multiple in-depth interviews. Utilization of interviews from an

identified criterion sample is considered both standard (Moustakas, 1994; Perry, 2013) and best phenomenological practice (Creswell, 2013), and the most comprehensive mechanism in discovering meaning from participants in phenomenological inquiry (Moustakas, 1999)

In acknowledgement of beginning researcher error (cf. Creswell, 2013), data was analyzed as it was acquired in the field. This means interviews were transcribed and sent to participants for accuracy as interviews were conducted. In the tradition of Moustakas (1994) analysis utilized a structured approach that included epoché, reduction, variation, texture, and structure; the process will be further explored in Chapter Three. Data as stored electronically, both locally and on the cloud behind a password lock, with only the researcher having access to both. Identities were blurred or concealed with unique identifiers.

Significance

Through this study, understanding the continued contributing factors to gendered educational leadership disparity in the high school could further the literature and offer more gender inclusive perspectives for improving educational policy. This study contributes to the female voice in literature by identifying the meaning women place on the internal and external factors that influence their career aspirations regarding the high school principalship. These experiences continue to underwrite the gendered disparity at the building leadership level.

First, this study is an essential attempt at understanding “women’s decisions to enter the field of educational administration and the factors affecting their decisions” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 465). This greater understanding could serve to inform teaching faculty and hiring managers about how they should recruit and support “the entry

of talented women into educational leadership” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 465). Better informed teaching faculty and/or hiring managers at the district level could expand the recruitment and mentoring of female educators resulting in increased representation by female teachers at the high school principal level.

Sherman and Wrushen (2009) contend that exploration and understanding is necessary because understanding leads to a decrease in barriers resulting in increased women in the position. “Raising the number of women in secondary leadership will contribute to an administrative pool that is more reflective of the overall composition of educators working in secondary settings. This also ensures role models and networks of support for those who aspire to leadership and locates women in the most coveted line positions that lead to the superintendency (p. 175).

Second, a more balanced composition of secondary school principals regarding gender will also impact the superintendency pipeline. An increase in the number of women in the superintendency pipeline would result in increased representative voice and access for decision making and education policy. Increased female voice and access to decision making at the superintendency level leads to increased political power. An increase in the democratic nature of the superintendency primes the system of public education for the creation of education policy influenced and shaped by leadership that is representative of the entire field.

Lastly, this heuristic phenomenological inquiry could identify or expand the understanding of the personal and professional identities of women as they desire/lack a desire to enter a traditional male culture that “perpetuates existing gender segregation” (Polnick, Reed, Sylvia, Taube, & Butler, 2016, p. 1) in schools. Further, Normore and

Jean-Marie (2007) indicate that “[a]s women achieve positions of influence and participate in policy decisions, they have opportunities to open up access to knowledge and resources to those with less power” (p. 185). Without a relevant, up to date understanding of the meaning women place around the barriers they face in seeking the principalship, those positions of influence and policy participation will continue to disproportionality go to male educators resulting in a decreased access to knowledge and resources to those with a lack of power.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The field of education continues to be dominated by female teachers, and while women have secured educational leadership positions more frequently in elementary and middle schools, in the high school principalship (and superintendency) they are underrepresented proportionally to the teaching force (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011a). The purpose of this study is to understand why this disproportionate representation continues to exist by examining the meaning of internal and external factors women identify in their professional aspirations regarding obtaining the high school principalship. In the trajectory of my own professional aspirations, I have grappled with a multitude of factors driving my principalship ambitions. Driven often by a desire to beat the odds, I began considering becoming a principal around my fifth year of teaching. Through graduate coursework I continued to believe in a democratic system in which teacher voice was heard by school and policy leaders. As I moved through my administrative internship and into my first years as an assistant principal, the skills necessary to be an educational leader coupled with the daily realities of the job began to shape my perspective on the principalship; not necessarily away from those achievement aspirations, but with a lens that allowed me to understand why other women would not choose this path.

This chapter will present an overview of literature related to the continued gender disparity at the high school principalship. It focuses on the current state of educational leadership, the modern role of the principal, uses standpoint theory to illustrate women's perceptions of the position, and concludes with the theoretical understanding of democratic education.

The literature search utilized academic databases such as, but not limited to, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Education Fulltext (UMKC), Thesis and Dissertations (UMKC), ERIC- EBSCO, and Google Scholar. The journals *Journal of School Leadership*, *Education Administration Quarterly*, *Journal of Women in Educational Leadership*, *Democracy and Education Journal* and *Advancing Women in Leadership* were particularly insightful. Search terms included, female, woman, women, perception, view of, high school, secondary, principal, principalship, role of, leadership, educat*, desirability, role conflict, admin*, feminist, feminist theory, feminist research, feminist history, democracy, democratic, democratic education.

Prior research focused on identifying the barriers women face in seeking the principalship and, or, their leadership style in comparison to their male peers. When focusing on the meaning of their experiences and their aspirations to the principalship, the research in these areas is fairly limited with several gaps. For instance, a search for “female principals” in the ERIC-EBSCO database returns 369 results, while “female principals + democratic education” returns the phrase *your initial search query did not yield any results*. Similarly, the search “female + high school principal” results in nine findings in the Education Full Text database. In JSTOR the search female + secondary principals resulted in about 1,000 hits over the last decade, but when the term democratic education is applied to the same search, JSTOR returns zero findings. The literature search also naturally explored resources listed as references in seminal or often-cited authors. Research began with research in usage of reference pages and organically found authors and this method of finding literature was more successful than database searching.

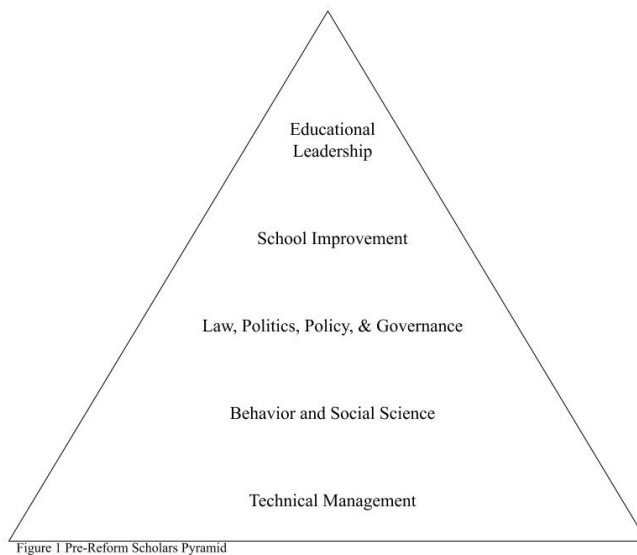
The first section presents the concept of educational leadership including ethical, instructional, and transformational leadership styles. Second, the role of the principal is addressed to illustrate what the position has historically, and is currently comprised of, including the desirability of the position. Third, feminist views of the principalship illustrates how women view the secondary principalship and its desirability as a career choice, and finally, democratic education and the importance of proportionate representation in decision making in achieving democratic schools is discussed.

Educational Leadership

Once seen primarily as a technical manager, the modern principal does more than manage the daily operations of the school building (Rousmaniere, 2007). In the 21st century the principal must do more than merely manage, but also lead “personnel, students, government and public relations, finance, instruction, academic performance, cultural and strategic planning” (Lynch, 2012, p. 40). This broad demarcation of job responsibility illustrates challenges women face gathering support and confidence in their leadership ability. Sperandio (2015) articulates that women continue to face challenges securing the principalship because “perceptions by school board members and the public, about women’s leadership abilities as lacking fiscal acuity and organizational management skills, continue to perpetuate a belief that women are ill-suited for educational leadership” (2015, p. 417). If board members and public perceptions around educational leadership are centered around fiscal responsibility and organizational management, an opportunity for comprehensive evaluation of female leadership is missed as the job requires broader leadership capacities than only those. Gordon, Taylor-Backor, and Crouteau (2017) undertook a systematic review of the scholarship on educational leadership in an effort to

identify and categorize desired leadership capacity in the pre-reform (1976-1985) and reform (2006-2015) eras and their relationship with the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (formerly ISLLC standards) (CCSSO, 2015). They describe these dates as significant because of they represent the pre-reform and modern scholarship on educational leadership capacity.

Their study analyzed journal articles that focused on particular leadership capacities, journal articles that recommended a set of capacities, books that focused on particular capacities, and generalized books on educational leadership. They reviewed 171 publications from the pre-reform era, and 50 publications from the reform era. They found that in the pre-reform era educational leadership capacities focused on technical management; applied behavior and social science; law, politics, policy, and governance;



school improvement; and instructional leadership. Gordan, Taylor-Backor, and Crouteau (2015) represent the frequency of these capacities in a pre-reform scholar's pyramid

(Figure 1). During the reform era the pre-reform categories of improvement, instructional leadership, technical management, and law, politics, policy, and governance were present with the addition of social justice and professional, personal, and spiritual dimensions

(Figure 2). They contend:

[t]he 2006-2015 decade saw a huge increase in the literature on school improvement and instructional leadership capacities and large decreases in publications related to technical management; law, politics, policy, and governance; and application of behavior and social sciences, with so few publications in the latter area that it was not assigned a segment of the pyramid. (Gordan, Taylor-Backor, & Crouteau, 2017, p.195)

The reform era publications also stressed that educational leaders needed to have the

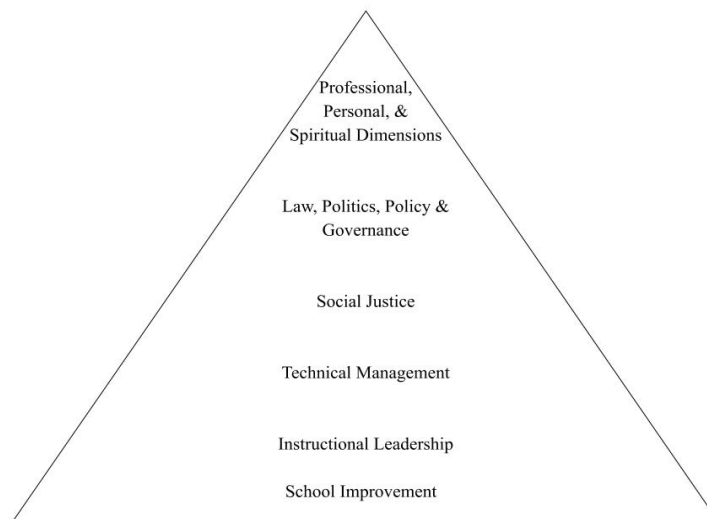


Figure 2 The Scholars' reform pyramid (2006-2015)

capacity for social justice and ethical leadership capacities. In the post-reform era, Mullen (2011) suggests women in educational leadership “need to be better positioned so that they can help to address some of the unresolved issues raised, such as transactional modes of learning and leading that stultify human and creative potential” (p. 76) Gordan, Taylor-Beckor and Crouteau (2017) include understanding of “feminist theory, history, and

pedagogy in educational leadership” (p. 197) into the educational leadership category of ethical leadership and argue women need an understanding of “self, power relationships, privilege, sexism, and oppression” (p. 197) to lead in this realm.

Ethical Leadership

A seemingly broad category, a commitment to ethical leadership is a key priority of school leadership today. While few acting principals stop to think about the theory grounding the decisions they make daily (Beckner, 2004), the sheer number of decisions a principal makes effecting the daily lives and educational outcome of students requires a foundational commitment to ethics, the educational equivalent of the Hippocratic oath, promising to do no harm. To this end, philosopher and educational theorist John Dewey articulates that schools must operate on the principles of an ethical democratic community. Calbrese (1990) summarizes that schools must be places “where justice prevails; where equity is cherished; where integrity is a driving force in all relationships; where full participation is an expectation; where inclusion is a norm; that distribute resources equitably; and that allow members recourse to redress grievances” (p.12). Roles and responsibilities principals must take in providing ethical leadership can be identified such as (a) commitment to equity; (b) inclusive practice; and (c) democratic leadership.

Principals who operate from a position of ethical leadership display seven characteristics in their interactions with students, staff, and other stakeholders:

- Commitment to the democratic way;
- Capacity for complexity;
- Obligation to equity;
- Collaborative philosophy;
- Patience and Persistence;
- Confidence in the mission; and
- Long range view of sustainability. (Apple and Beane, 2007a)

When taken as a whole, these characteristics indicate ethical leadership necessitates a commitment to democratic leadership, in which the decision making is shared among a diverse sample of stakeholders.

Eranil and Özbilen (2017) investigated the relationship between ethical leadership and positive school climate in their 2015 quantitative study by studying teacher perceptions of ethical behaviors by principals as they relate to organizational climate. Surveying around 380 teachers using ethical leadership and organizational climate scales, they found teachers perceived female principals to have a higher capacity for ethical leadership than their male counterparts.

Building on prior research regarding teacher perceptions of gendered differences in the principalship, Lee, Smith, & Cioci (1993) also conducted a quantitative study sampling of 8,894 teachers and 377 principals measuring gender related perceptions of leadership and power in secondary schools. Their findings indicate that female leadership styles are often preferred to their male counterparts (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009), specifically noting that women are more democratic and transformative than their male counterparts who tend to rely on hierarchical or traditional leadership styles (Gregg, 2007; Mims, 1992; Serigovani, 2007; Welch, 2014).

Because principals are held accountable for student achievement (Spillane & Hunt, 2010) and impact student learning (Fullan, 2014) successful leadership is paramount at the building level. Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008) synthesize a quarter century of research to indicate that effective principal leadership significantly impacts on school and student outcomes. This could suggest that a failure to rectify the disproportionality of

female principals at the secondary level hinders academic achievement in our schools. Lee, Smith, and Cioci (1993) conclude:

[R]esearch on principals' leadership behaviors suggest that female principals are at least as effective as their male counterparts and that there is somewhat different pattern of leadership behavior for the two genders. Female principals operate in close contact with the teacher's students, and parents of their schools, while male principals spend less time in direct contact with teachers and students. (p. 157)

Additionally, the disproportionate number of female high school principals leads to a lack of female role models in positions of power or leadership, and "[o]ne element that is essential for nurturing and fostering student learning, aspirations, and goals is the presence of effective role models" (Kattula, 2011, p. 1). Not only is this lack of mentorship disadvantaging adult females in secondary schools, it also affects the perceptions of teenage girls enrolled. Duff (1999) articulates, "women have always learned from women. They have learned by watching their mothers, grandmothers, aunts, teachers, coaches, counselors, professors, sisters, and friends. Women have passed onto other women lessons on how to live through stories and examples" (p. 37).

Antoncci (1980) contends that while the concept of role modeling has not been readily applied to the leadership skills of women, the research strongly supports use of role models. Witnessing female leaders while attending high school would open the door for mentorship and role model learning through stories and examples at a pivotal developmental time.

Building on prior research, Lee, Smith, & Cioci (1993) conducted quantitative study sampling 8,894 teachers and 377 principals' gender related perceptions of leadership and power in secondary schools. Their findings indicate that female leadership styles are

often preferred to those of their male counterparts (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Lee, Smith, & Cioci 1993); specifically noting that women are more democratic and transformative than their male counterparts who tend to rely on hierarchical or traditional leadership styles (Mims, 1992; Gregg, 2007; Welch 2014, Serigovani, 2007, Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993) and that democratic leadership is thought to be the most effective leadership style regardless of gender (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Some women chose to seek the high school principalship to advance a moral agenda in line with the power conferred to the principal. Smith (2011) found that women in the high school principal roles use their power to advance student-centered values. She contends that women are more likely to desire the principalship if they consider it a viable pathway to furthering equity and justice issues. This underpinning utilizes collaborative and transformative leadership as a means to furthering democratic education. This student first mindset is best illustrated by a participant in the Smith study:

[m]y real aim, as a [principal], is to provide the best possible education for the [students] that are here, to make sure that we provide a place where they're happy, where they're secure, they feel safe, but at the same time academically they're challenged and encouraged to do their best. (2011, p. 519)

Further, the women participants in her research indicated a strong commitment to equal opportunities, and social justice, supporting Grogan and Shakeshaft's claim that many women administrators have a "social justice agenda" (2011b, p.18). Framing the principalship in this manner, lends itself to democratic schooling; the principalship is a pathway to ensure that students' needs are met (Smith, 2011) and decisions made are good for the collective group.

Collective Leadership

As the conversation in American educational leadership shifts to a collaborative, moral imperative where power and influence are not a matter of winning and losing (Serigovanni, 2007), women are in an excellent position to utilize relational or collaborative power to achieve the representative processes necessary for schools to achieve the democratic goals of public education; “[s]haring power means more power for everyone – power has the capacity to expand, and distributing more power within an organization resulted in more power for everyone” (pp. 114-115). This distribution of power can transform unequal and disproportional organizational structures and make it easier for women to seek and obtain the principalship. Simultaneously, distributive power empowers other women to find and utilize their own agency (Blackmore, 2011; Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). Additionally, distributive power builds trust and supports feedback as opposed to hierarchical approaches which can manipulate subordinates and peers alike (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011b).

While there can be a significant difference in definitions of collective or shared leadership “most definitions imply an expansion of roles so that more people take on leadership within a more hierarchical organizational structure” (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 7). The inclusion of collective decision making as a component of socially just ethical leadership, demonstrates the shift from a leadership viewpoint centered on the technical management of schools to transformational leadership that has occurred in educational leadership scholarship in the last half of the 20th century.

Stewart (2006) summarizes the scholarship by categorizing two dominate conceptual models: instructional leadership and transformational leadership. She contends,

“instructional leadership and transformational leadership have emerged as two of the most frequently studied models of school leadership (Heck & Hallinger, 1999). What distinguishes these models from others is the focus on how administrators and teachers improve teaching and learning. Instructional leaders focus on school goals, the curriculum, instruction, and the school environment. Transformational leaders focus on restructuring the school by improving school conditions” (p. 4).

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leaders are principals that “work deliberately in ways that promote innovative and healthy learning environments that positively impact school performance” (Wagner & Wagner, 2015, p. 93). Instructional leadership was birthed from the reform movement in the 1990s, however No Child Left Behind “firmly shifted the primary role of school principal from more managerial functions and behaviors toward school improvement, instructional leadership, and supervision” (Wagner & Wagner, 2015, p. 93) and by 2015 “the requirement for principals to assume central responsibility for instructional leadership pervade[ed] education systems throughout the world” (Hallinger, Dongyu, & Wang, 2016, p. 93). Female principals are seen as more functional instructional leaders (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Krüger, 2008). One hallmark of instructional leadership is a focus on curriculum and instruction or teaching and learning at the building level. Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008) contend that the more concentrated principals’ focus on teaching and learning is the greater influence on student outcomes. Ensuring rigorous and relevant curriculum that matches clear standards is the priority of instructional leaders. This means, not only guaranteeing a general curriculum that is adequate, but offering interventions for students at both ends of the

achievement spectrum. When differentiated instruction is guaranteed, academic achievement is shown to improve (Reis & Renzulli, 2010).

Over the last several decades “a key line of empirical inquiry” (Hallinger, Dongyu & Wang, 2016, p. 568) into hallmarks of strong instructional leadership has been personality or individual characteristics of the building leader. They contend that for more than 50 years gender has been a “principal characteristic” (p. 568) investigated in the scholarship. Their assertion that researchers have “suggested that female principals may be more active instructional leaders” (p. 569) is methodically reviewed in their (2016) meta-analysis of 40 data sets from 28 different studies in gender and educational leadership. Through this critical analysis they examined if there were “differences in the *levels* and *patterns* of instructional leadership practiced by male and female principals. They found female principals “engaged in more active instructional leadership than male counterparts” (p. 568) in a small, but statistically significant difference.

Huber and West (2012) contend that powerful connection between leadership style and organizational culture moves leadership from a traditional transactional or hierarchical perspective of leadership to that of the realm of transformational leadership.

Transformational leadership “focuses on the people involved and their relationships, and requires an approach that seeks to transform feelings, attitudes and beliefs” (p. 1073).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership as a concept was first put forth by Burns in his 1978 seminal work *Leadership*. Burns introduced the concept regarding political leaders.

According to Burns, transformational leadership creates substantial change in both people and organizations and is heavily based on the leader’s personality. He contends that by

identifying followers' leaders can move work performance to a higher level. Eagly and Carli (2007) add that transformational leaders motivate employees by considering their higher order needs. They motivate using transformational leadership behaviors outlined by Bass and Avolio (1990). Those behaviors include:

- 1.) Idealized Influence – in which leaders utilize role modeling behavior to gain trust and project integrity; and
- 2.) Intellectual Stimulation – in which leaders encourage creative thinking and innovation; and
- 3.) Individual Consideration – in which leaders channel their support from the group to individual needs and ideas; and
- 4.) Inspirational Motivation – in which leaders utilize clear vision to channel excellence in achieving challenging objectives.

In exploring these behaviors, Munir and Abodiullah (2018) built on a limited foundation of empirical data exploring gender differences in transformational leadership. In their quantitative study of 235 principals and 2,350 teachers, they adapted The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire and the Leader and Rater scales to assess leadership behavior. They found that leaders identified no difference in transformational leadership skills according to gender.

While Munir and Abodiullah might not have found gender differences, Hauserman and Stick (2013) were able to isolate the transformational leadership traits most valued by teachers. In their 2013 mixed-methods study Hauserman and Stick also gave The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to teachers in 135 Canadian public schools and asked them to rank the transformational qualities of their principals. From those surveys, they conducted in-depth interviews with five teachers who identified their principals as having high levels of transformational leadership skills, and five teachers who identified

their principals as having low levels of transformational leadership skills. They found that teachers most value principals with high levels of individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, regardless of gender.

When looking at the capacity for principals to exhibit leadership and institute large scale change, transformational leadership is a clear component of educational leadership today. Munir and Aboidullah (2018) explain that the democratic nature of female leadership stems from the gendered perception that they are more genuine and talkative than their male counterparts and therefore perceived as more transformational. While the scholarship on educational leadership centers on theoretical nuance and detailed descriptions of ethical leadership, instructional guidance, and transformational leadership the practical day-to-day role of the principal is a challenging and complex position requiring a multitude of talents beyond leadership theory.

Role of the Principal

Practitioners and theorists continue to articulate that the principal is instrumental in the culture, achievement, and direction of schools (Blasé, & Blasé, 1998; Fullan, 2007; Glickman & Lambert, 1998; Reeves, 2004; Ross, 2013; Stronge, Richard, & Catano, 2008; Walker & Kwan, 2012). The principalship today is a multifaceted position that requires a wide range of skills and abilities. Principals act as the bridge between their buildings and the needs of individual students, and the greater educational complex of policy and bureaucracy. Writing in *The Atlantic*, Rousmaniere (2013) summarizes the principalship as:

the most complex and contradictory figure in the pantheon of educational leadership. The principal is both the administrative director of state educational policy and a building manager, both an advocate for school change and the

protector of bureaucratic stability. Authorized to be employer, supervisor, professional figurehead, and inspirational leader, the principal's core training and identity is as a classroom teacher. A single person, in a single professional role, acts on a daily basis as the connecting link between a large bureaucratic system and the individual daily experiences of a large number of children and adults. (para 2)

Spillane and Lee (2012) summarize several decades of literature by identifying the principalship as a diverse role requiring skilled maneuvering of the managerial, instructional, and political realms while having a tendency “to be fragmented, fast-paced, and varied; [involving] long hours and a relentless workload” (p. 432). Eckman and Kelber (2010) assert the principalship has evolved throughout the twentieth century, furthering Lashway's contention that “[d]uring economic depression, principals were expected to be thrifty stewards of limited resources; in times of war, they were expected to mobilize the next generation to defend democracy; amid fears of declining achievement, they were expected to be instructional leaders” (2006, p. 27).

Blasé, Blasé, and Phillips (2010) contend new responsibilities and duties have been added to the principalship without the removal of old duties. These growing demands have resulted in a position that is composed of responsibilities that are often in conflict. In their secondary analysis of two prior quantitative studies addressing role conflict and job satisfaction, Eckman and Kelber (2010) compared the experiences of 102 female principals in traditional principalships with those in co-principalships. They found the traditional principalship cultivated role conflict regarding privacy, personal/social commitments, and expectations of self as the highest drivers of role conflict. Additionally, the balancing of instructional leadership and administrative obligations can create role conflict (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) and women tend to experience greater role conflict than their male peers as

they find managing personal and professional lives more difficult than their male counterparts (Eckman & Kelber, 2010).

Near the turn of the 21 century, the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) recognized the dichotomy between managerial, or administrative functions and instructional leadership. They supported that the focus of the principal should be on student learning (IEL, 2000). While that goal is honorable, the reality of today's principalship is broader and more complex. Chirichello's 2004 study relied on the self-reported responses of 77 principals who examined job-related activities (2004). Principals were asked to identify three activities they spent the most time on, and three activities of which they spent the least amount of time. Chirichello found that principals' self-reported school management, supervision of staff, and discipline as the top three ways they spend their time, with curriculum and instruction issues as job components they spend the least time. The predominant time commitment for school management, supervision, and discipline is a component of the principalship that is vastly different from that of classroom teachers. This shift in time and skill may influence the job desirability of the principalship for female aspirants.

In their quantitative study of counselor perceptions of principal roles and responsibilities, Cisler and Bruce (2013) surveyed 89 principals using a 16-point Likert scale in which principals ranked the importance of different job components. They found that the principal role contained three main categories: managing school personnel, parent and community collaboration, and school climate. In terms of managing school personnel, they identified communication and personnel hiring as the most important components. They found that male participants viewed these responsibilities as less important than

female participants. Regarding parent and community collaboration and the inclusion of parents in decision making processes, Cisler and Bruse (2013) found that female participants again “believed involving parents is an important responsibility of the principal” (p. 12) more than male participants. Regarding school climate and safety, specifically regarding school discipline, female participants again “deemed this as more critical than male principals” (p. 12). They conclude:

it seems that female participants in this study perceived the roles and responsibilities of the principal in their entirety as essential to the functioning of the school environment. Females may hold a more holistic view and welcome a collaboration without feeling threatened. (Cisler & Bruse, 2013, p. 18)

While female participants believed each of these roles and responsibilities was essential to their role as principal, balancing the varying components with a high level of skill, competency, and urgency requires a large skill set, and large capacity for multi-tasking. As this complexity in the principalship grows, the skills necessary to effectively manage a high school building impacts the job appeal of the position.

Job Desirability

Originally undefined and non-professional, the role of the principal has consistently evolved and been reimaged under the lens of various leadership theories (Bolden, Gosling, Marturano & Dennison, 2003). Today, the role of the principal is both managerial and instructional. Effectiveness requires a broad range of skill and tireless commitment. Seeking to identify the attributes that make the principalship appealing to some, and unappealing to others, Hancock, Hary, and Müller (2012) contend three areas negatively affect the recruitment and retention of principals: a) stress, b) low salaries in relation to the responsibilities of the position, and c) job complexity and time demands.

However, Davis et al, (2005); and Leithwood & Jantzi, (2008) indicate that the principalship has a significant influence on student learning and female secondary principals consider the principalship an important component of advancing student-centered values and instruction (Smith, 2011). Job desirability of the high school principalship is dependent on the balance of these components.

In the early stages of principal professionalization, when the principal became a separate entity from the superintendent, Koch surveyed 154 superintendents and 116 principals asking, “as differentiated from those of the superintendent, what are the unique powers and responsibilities of the principalship?” (p. 577) and, “[w]hat are the pros and cons of the principalship as a life-work for ambitious school men?” (p. 577). Results indicated the principal held closer relations with students, had a distinctive relationship with personnel, and maintained relationships within personnel as positive attributes to the principalship. More specifically, almost 49% of the superintendents studied referred to these components, as did 52% of the principals surveyed (Koch, 1934). Unfavorably, 28% reported inadequate financial rewards, almost 13% indicated too much politics, and approximately 12% viewed the principal as having limited authority. Koch concluded that favorable attributes of the principal (when compared to the superintendent) outweighed negative attributes and summarized “[a] high-school principal has an opportunity to be both gentleman and scholar, whereas a superintendent needs to be neither, only a good politician” (Koch, 1934, p. 585). This seminal work on the principalship has withstood the test of time regarding fundamental attributes of the job, and the foundational understanding of the profession’s desirability.

While Koch's study would have modern issues of reliability and validity, specifically in the open-ended nature of the questions and selection of recipients, which were excluded from the report, it offers a historical starting point at which the principalship, specifically the high school principalship, was being advocated for as a career goal. The attributes Koch identified, both positive and negative, are repeated in further research. For instance, in 1998, the Education Research Service (ERS) found that inadequate compensation, stress, and time commitment to be the primary detractors from the principalship. In 2003, Chirichello identified stress, accountability pressure, insufficient compensation, and lack of personal time as major sources of reluctance for the role.

Utilizing job-choice theory, Pounder and Merrill (2011) investigated the job desirability of the principalship by "examining (a) the perceptions of position attractiveness the potential candidate holds, and (b) his or her career intentions with regard to the position" (2001 p. 28). Job-choice theory posits that the choices of job applicants are influenced by attributes at the job and organization level (Young, Rinchart, & Place, 1989).

Pounder and Merrill used a survey of job attributes and attitudes resulting in 170 responses from high school assistants, and middle/junior high principals from a singular western state. While the sample is proportionate to national administrative percentages (71% male and 29% female) it was disproportionately White and urban (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). They found that there is only a moderate desirability of the high school principalship with the driving factors being educational improvement through influence, and salary/benefits package in comparison to teaching. On the downside, the time commitment, role conflict, and ethical considerations lead to high stress levels (Pounder &

Merrill, 2011) and contributed to the undesirability of the position. Pounder and Merrill (2011) report,

[t]he question of whether to seek a high school principal position may ultimately come down to, How much can I afford to sacrifice in terms of my personal life and overall quality of life to fulfill my desire to achieve or influence education and make more money? Or similarly, how much money do I need to make to be worth the loss of personal lifetime? (p. 47)

These questions are what certified candidates must ask themselves before advancing to the principalship. While 66% of those surveyed indicated the high school principalship as a *somewhat desirable* position, less than 30% indicated they had plans to move into that position in the next five years. This indicates that somewhat desirable is not good enough, and the critical component of job choice theory speculates that the role of the principal will have to be redefined in future years. Regarding the specific components of job desirability of the principalship, previous scholarship addressed lack of a breakdown of job desirability by gender. This area of the literature could be expanded to articulate and understand how components of job desirability relate to identified internal and external barriers women face in seeking the principalship.

Sergiovanni (2005) articulates how the role of the principal is growing to include an increased responsibility and expectations from everyone. This compounds the isolation that is often felt in the role (Dussault & Barnett, 1996; Daresh & Playco, 1995; Jones, 1994; Mercer, 1996). In their 2008 study, Howard and Mallory interviewed ten principals, five men and five women. While the intention of this study was to better understand the isolation principals experienced, the nature of the gender divide revealed differences in the experiences of male and female principals. This qualitative analysis consisted of five research questions (Howard & Mallory, 2008): (1) Do high school principals perceive

themselves to be isolated? (2) How do selected demographics, such as gender, age, years of experience, size of district, and marital status affect the experiences of isolation among high school principals? (3) How do high school principals perceive that the culture of the principalship influences their feelings of isolation? (4) In what ways have experiences of isolation impacted the lives of high school principals? and (5) What strategies do high school principals use to cope with isolation? The pertinent findings indicate 100% of principals experienced feelings of loneliness and isolation in their position at the head of a high school. Males, however, articulated that they had increased support systems both within (mentorship, camaraderie) the school, and at home (spouses, close family, friends). Women reported increased concerns sharing work concerns with their husbands in fear of being “viewed as a damsel in distress who needed male assistance” (Howard & Mallory, 2008, p.17) or attending meetings and conferences with male colleagues and perceptions of impropriety (Howard & Mallory, 2008). While all respondents articulated that the principalship forced principals to live inside a magnified fishbowl, the effects of isolation and loneliness were magnified for the women because they perceived fewer coping mechanisms to life under the microscope (Howard & Mallory, 2008). This increased isolation indicates a decreased desirability of the high school principalship for female candidates.

These finding echoes that of Eckman’s 2004 investigation into the similarities and differences of role conflict, commitment, and job satisfaction between male and female principals. Burke and Nelson (2002) contend we need more research on women in management positions (across all fields) so the perceptions and experiences of women are highlighted. Eckman (2004) notes that there is much research on the job satisfaction of the

principalship, it is consistently aggregated and not disaggregated by gender (see Bacharach & Michell, 1983; Fishel & Pottker, 1979; Gross & Trask, 1976; Malone, Sharp, & Thompson, 2000). Eckman identifies three variables that work in conjunction to influence job desirability: role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction. Role conflict is defined as the clash between professional and personal obligations, role commitment is the prioritization of professional or personal components, and job satisfaction is the overall view of professional gratification. Eckman (2004) explains role conflict occurring when “individuals attempt to balance their family and home roles with their professional roles” (p. 268, 2001). While previous research indicates that balancing personal and professional roles is one of the primary causes of stress in the secondary principalship for both men and women (Kochan, Spencer, & Matthews, 2000) female principals mention this concern nearly twice as often as their male counterparts.

Job Satisfaction

Eckman hypothesizes that the combination of role conflict and commitment lead to overall job satisfaction. Role Commitment is defined as the prioritization of professional responsibilities over personal responsibilities. As role conflict increases, job satisfaction decreases (Thompson, McNamara, & Hoyle, 1997). As seen in Table 1, Eckman utilized three survey instruments; a Role Conflict questionnaire, a Role Commitment Question, and a Job Satisfaction Survey with 164 female principal, and 175 male principal respondents.

Female principals reported a slightly higher role conflict (4.04 average) than male principals (3.89); however, there was no significant difference between the two genders (Eckman, 2004). Regarding role commitment, the female average (4.54) was slightly lower than the male average (4.68) but with no statistical variation (Eckman, 2014). However, when itemized, “female high school principals expressed significantly higher levels of conflict than did the male high school principals on the questions concerning time for social commitments, household management issues, and the ability to fulfill self-expectations” (Eckman, 2014, p. 377). The only attribute on which men indicated higher levels of conflict regarded monetary concerns (Eckman, 2014). Likewise, on the Job-Satisfaction female principals on average scored a 2.83 and males a 2.89: these results are also not statistically different.

Table 1
Survey instruments used in Eckman 2014

Instrument	Author and year	Design
Role Conflict Questionnaire	Neville & Damico 1974	9 item Likert type scale from 1(not at all conflicted to 7(extremely conflicted
Role Commitment Question	Napholz, 1995	1 item question with three distinct options a. significant relationships first b. work equals relationships c. work first
Job Satisfaction Survey	Mendenhall, 1977; Schneider, 1984	27 item Likert type scale from 1 (very dissatisfied) to 4(very satisfied)

However, Eckman did identify statistical demographic differences between male and female principals in the age of first principalship, the years of teaching experience before

principalship, marital status, and status of children at home; this raises questions around why males are motivated to enter high school administration at a younger age than their female counterparts.

Williams (1992) posits that perhaps this is because of a glass escalator that rapidly moves men into leadership positions in female dominated fields. Alternatively, Eckman contends there are other role expectations and conflicts occurring the high school. Male principals indicated greater conflict regarding money; therefore, they seek the principalship sooner in their careers. Women indicated higher role conflict when balancing teaching, family, home, and career; perhaps female teachers delay their entrance to the principalship until children are older (Eckman, 2014).

Women as Secondary Principals

Moderate satisfaction with the job (Eckman, 2004) coupled with common job detractors such as work/life balance, isolation and loneliness, and inadequate monetary compensation lead to only a moderate job satisfaction among high school principals. These factors, coupled with a feminist standpoint theory and gendered socialization factors, might serve as a framework from which to understand the disproportionality of male leadership in secondary schools.

Hancock, Hary, and Müller (2012) utilized a survey with a semi-structured qualitative interview of 20 U.S. teachers and 9 German teachers enrolled in administrative graduate programs. This method discovered that the factors that both motivate and dissuaded U.S. and German teachers were similar. Specifically, teachers indicated that they desired administrative roles because they wanted to have a positive impact on students and teachers, wanted to make a difference in the learning environments of schools, and to act

as a change agent. Additionally, they were excited about the opportunity to experience the professional challenges of leadership positions (Hancock, Hary, & Müller, 2012). They also found significant detractors including, the amount of paperwork/bureaucracy, time commitment, distance from students, and lack of autonomy (Hancock, Hary, & Müller, 2012). These detractors universally decreased the perception of job desirability of the high school principal for both U.S. and German teachers enrolled in administrative graduate programs.

Smith (2011) addresses the issue of principal aspirations for women by contending, “[w]omen are not, it seems, progressing to secondary headship in great numbers, either because there are still too many barriers to progression for women, or because they are *opting out*, choosing not to pursue senior positions” (p. 517). Her qualitative study recorded forty open-ended interviews intending to capture the reasons why women are opting out of the principalship. Smith chose 10 new teachers, 10 mid-year teachers, 10 late-career teachers, and 10 head teachers (principals). While this sample provided a comprehensive range of female experiences, Smith acknowledged that it was a disproportionately White sample; therefore, it cannot be generally extrapolated to represent all female teachers (Smith, 2011). This is especially important when considering the validity of the results for U.S. teachers.

Twenty-eight of Smith’s 30 teacher interviewees “were adamant that they would not consider [principalship] as a career option” (Smith, 2011 p. 517). They viewed the principalship as moving them away from students, and student-centered decision-making, changing workplace relationships (isolating them from colleagues and becoming unpopular) and little time for personal commitments outside of school (Smith, 2011).

The principals interviewed, however, “derived the greatest satisfaction from working with young people and seeing them develop” (Smith, 2011, p. 519). Additionally, they viewed their position as a commitment to lifelong learning and equity for students. Generally, the female principals saw their roles as challenging and rewarding. They vocalized closeness with students and a moral imperative for the work that they do. Smith contends that the disconnect between the teacher perception of the principalship and the self-reported satisfaction from principals creates an understanding or knowledge gap about the principalship.

Shields’ (2005) feminist analysis of the way women work indicates a needed shift from analysis of leadership style to power and how it is used. Smith asserts,

consider how the [principals’] and teachers’ contrasting perceptions of the [principal] role illustrate a key difference in terms of personal agency, which might be defined as an awareness of one’s capacity to take control of an aspect or aspects of one’s life (and by extension, career) (p. 530).

Smith (2011) continues that the perceptions of power, toughness, isolation, and unpopularity made the principalship undesirable as female teachers were disinclined to put themselves in positions that risked marginalization and condemnation (Lahtinen & Wilson, 1994; Sharpe, 1976). Smith concludes there is a set of perceptions about the principalship that prevents female teachers from aspiring to the position. However, she further contends that alternative views, such as those found in the principals interviewed, should be promoted. This promotion of a new narrative about the principalship could encourage women educators into the role of the secondary principal.

While the role of the high school principal is complex for all who choose the endeavor, the detractors listed previously indicate a unique viewpoint for women aspiring

to, or whom hold the principalship at the high school level. This investigation of the female experience with the principalship would be incomplete without an exploration of female viewpoint.

While Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007) sought to understand the experiences, women have in relation to their views of the principalship, they suggest that the disparity occurs because of an environmental reflection of stereotypical attitudes furthering the believe that women lack the skills necessary to lead schools. In their qualitative study of 11 secondary female leaders from six school districts, Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007) utilized open-ended, semi-structured interviews to find that issues of gender were embedded in the leadership experience of the principals. Their participants reported they felt they were inadequately mentored by other women (as opposed to large webs of supportive male networks for their male counterparts), more likely to be negatively judged in their balance of professional and personal responsibilities, forced to exhibit traditionally male-behavior (assertiveness) and a found a continual need to prove themselves.

Standpoint Theory

Building from Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007), Sherman and Wrushen (2009) utilize feminist standpoint theory to frame their qualitative inquiry of 8 female principals.

Harding (1991) articulates the point of standpoint theory is to

suggest a way of knowing from the meanings women give to their labors. The search for dailiness is a method of work that allows us to take the patterns women create and the meanings women invent and learn from them. If we map what we learn, connecting one meaning or invention to another. we begin to lay out a different way of seeing reality. (p. 129)

Standpoint theory is a component of broader feminist theory that “professes that because women’s lives in almost all societies are different than men’s, women hold a different type

of knowledge” (Kruse & Krumm, 2016, p. 29). Sherman and Wrushen (2009) collected the personal standpoints and lived experiences of eight participants utilizing a purposeful sample of female secondary principals from three areas in the Eastern United States. They found that female principals shared similar leadership skills and traits and fostered a deeply held passion for leadership and learning. They articulated a viewpoint that placed themselves inside a team “[a]ll of the women described themselves as parts of a greater leadership whole with the understanding that the most effective leader acts as a servant to the people” (p.183). They consistently described their leadership style as relational and collaborative and indicated that these styles often lead to conflict in buildings where past leadership was a more traditional or hierarchical style. Sherman and Wrushen (2009) conclude

As indicated by the women's own words, they are proud of who they are as leaders and what they stand for, but much room is left for the "smudging of edges" in regard to leadership schema. These women are still trying to break molds of tradition in regard to what a leader should be and how a leader should lead. (p. 184)

In their journey to break molds, participants noted the necessity for female mentorship in securing the secondary principalship.

Kruse and Krumm (2016) also use standpoint theory in their case study identifying access factors for female principal aspirants. They identify the following components of standpoint theory:

- A standpoint is a place from which to view the world that determines what we focus on as well as what is obscured from us.
- The social groups to which we belong shape what we know and how we communicate.

- Standpoint theorists suggest that societal inequalities generate distinctive accounts of nature and social relationships.
- The perspective from the lives of the less powerful can provide a more objective view than the perspective from the lives of the more powerful.
- Inequalities of different social groups create differences in their standpoints.
- All standpoints are partial. A person can have many standpoints at a time.
- All the social communities that a person belongs to create their overall standpoint. (Wood, 1993, pp. 29-30)

Feminists argue that the standpoints and perspectives of women are uniquely different than their male counterparts because “the lived realities of women’s lives are profoundly different from those of men” (Hartstock, 1983, p. 284). Harding (2001) supports that women can provide an experiential perspective for areas in which their viewpoints have traditionally been left out. Educational leadership and the secondary principalship would be an illustration of this void. In seeking female perspectives, Kruss and Krumm (2016) focused on “positive solutions [to the under representation of women in secondary principalships] gained from lived experiences of practicing administrators” (p. 30). Their case study investigated the experiences of four female first-time principals in the state of Oklahoma. Echoing the need for mentorship by other researchers (Sherman & Wrushen, 2009), Kruss and Krumm (2016) found that three common standpoints were revealed:

each of the participants was nurtured through the process of transitioning from classroom teacher to administrator. In three of the cases, males in superior positions sponsored the participants into administration. All of the participants had a strong emotional investment in the schools and communities where they became principal. All of the principals experienced rites of passage as they attained the principalship. (p. 34)

Standpoint one: nurtured. The prevailing theme found that the female principals had been nurtured or mentored in their professional and personal lives. Further, “The data

suggest male gatekeepers encouraged these participants to continue their educations, take the principal's test, and apply for positions" (Kruss & Krumm, 2016, p. 33). These experiences suggest that women are more likely to aspire to the principalship if they are "tapped" or recruited. Hoff and Mitchell (2008) summarize, "[w]omen also waited for someone else to "tap" them for the role and encourage them to apply, clearly needing more affirmation before proceeding into administration than men did" (p. 7).

Standpoint two: invested. All four principals identified community involvement, educational and work experiences, and professional associations in their narrative. Additionally, "They all expressed doubt about their job skills when they first moved into administration; however, compared to males in similar studies, they were more prepared in terms of years of classroom experience, advanced degrees, and lower-level administrative work" (Kruss & Krumm, 2016 p. 35). Standpoint two identified a shared investment in their communities through family history, embedded children schooling, or other ties to the community as a tool to overcome the doubt about their skills.

Standpoint three: rites of passage. Each of the four participants identified different rites of passage through work experience, self-identified leadership traits, and finding their personal leadership style. They each noted experiences that prepared them for the job of principal, including years in the classroom, extra duty assignments, or National Board Certification (Kruss & Krumm, 2016). They believed in the idea of starting from the bottom and working to the top through professional and personal improvement and found it difficult to move from the classroom to the principalship without other administrative positions. Overall, Kruss and Krumm (2016) identified that:

making a connection with a male in a superior leadership position was the most important employment factor. The participants had strong male mentors who served as sponsors in assisting their advancement, were highly vested in the communities in which they served and followed a path appropriate for their successes (p.35).

As the standpoints Kruss and Krumm found indicate, standpoint theory offers one framework in which to explore female experiences regarding access factors of the principalship. While “women appear to be a segment of the population qualified but underutilized to serve as high school principals” (Kruse & Krumm, 2016, p. 28) it is prudent to explore the job satisfaction of women who do hold the principalship to better understand the continued disparity in the position.

Standpoint theory supports that “because women’s lives in almost all societies are different than men’s, women hold a different type of knowledge” (Kruss & Krumm, 2016, p. 29). However, caution is prudent when utilizing standpoint theory because it refers to the experiences of groups in that “[g]roups have a degree of permanence over time such that group realities transcend individual experiences” (Collins, 1997, p. 375). Collins suggests that utilizing standpoint theory or group experiences as a substitute for individual experiences can be problematic because:

[s]tandpoint theory’s treatment of the group is not synonymous with a “family resemblance” of individual choice expanded to the level of voluntary group association. The notion of standpoint refers to groups having shared histories based on their shared location in relations of power- standpoints arise neither from crowds of individuals nor from groups analytically created by scholars or bureaucrats. (Collins, 1997, p. 376).

Therefore, while standpoint theory can help contextualize the meaning individual women make of their experiences by offering an understanding of group experiences, those experiences cannot be extrapolated to all individual experiences. While standpoint theory

“aimed to bring women’s group consciousness into being” (Collins, 1997, p. 380) individual voice cannot be ascertained without a commitment to the intersectionality of women’s identity.

Intersectionality “refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power” (Davis, 2008, p. 68). Originally put forth by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), intersectionality attempts to address the schism between the experiences of Women of Color and White women in feminist theory and thought. She maintained gender, race, and other facets of identity interact to shape the experiences of women. Guillory (2016) explains, “she considers how racism and sexism combine to affect Black women. Calling attention to the simultaneity of multiple oppressions working against Black women” (p. 204). Today, intersectionality “initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated” (Davis, 2008, p. 79).

Bloom and Erlandson (2003) explored the intersectionality of Black Women Principals in their qualitative effort to “illuminate and expose the lived experiences of three African American women principals who have effectively led in urban schools” (p. 340). Bloom and Erlandson (2003) framed their qualitative study around Black standpoint theory based on Collins 1991 work indicating Black women viewed the world from unique positions based on their own identity markers and lived experiences. Collins (1997) writes, “Black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American

women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women” (p. 22). Bloom and Erlandson (2003) contend there are four assumptions to this epistemology:

First, that the content of thought cannot be separated from the historical and material conditions that shape the lives it produces. Thus, only a Black woman can produce a Black feminist standpoint. Second, an assumption persists that Black women, as a group, will share certain commonalities. However, third, diversities between and amount Black women based on class, religion, age, and sexual orientation are real. (p. 342)

They found that while they were inclined to identify the single “truth” in each life experience. What was found were multiple truths for all three women. Although some of their stories overlapped in theme and contour, this was not universally characteristic” (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003, p. 362). These findings illustrate the caution necessary in utilizing standpoint theory to substitute group understanding for individual experience. When exploring the views women have of the principalship, their experience of internal and external barriers and the understanding individuals have ascertained from those experiences, current feminist theory and prudence dictate the inclusion of intersectionality in seeking meaning from those lived experiences.

As a greater understanding of the meaning women attribute to their personal experiences and principalship aspirations is sought, an understanding that the current disproportionate distribution of women in secondary principalship roles fails not only in replicating society, but also in creating a new vision and direction for which the public should move. Hoff, Yoder, and Hoff (2006) contend, “[a]s citizens of a complex nation and infinitely complex world, we have no choice but to gain broader perspectives and greater acceptance if we are to survive and prosper. Schools hold the key” (p. 240).

Recently, the discourse around public education and the reform movement has included language referencing democratic ideas (Ryan & Rottman, 2009). Typically, the inclusion of democratic ideals in policy, scholarship, and education practice are supported because, “they represent an important antidote to the cumbersome, dysfunctional and inequitable bureaucratic sensibilities that have dominated educational organizations” (Ryan & Rottman, 2009, p. 473). To understand why the continued gender disparity in the role of the high school principal continues to exist, is an issue central to democratic education. It is necessary to understand the historical and modern interpretation of democratic education before addressing the barriers to implementation in twenty-first century education.

Democratic Education

Public education in America exists to further democracy and a civic-minded society. Our founding fathers wrote enthusiastically about the need for an educated citizenry (Hoff, Yoder & Hoff, 2006), and the republic depends on well-educated and contemplative citizenry to further the goals of self-government. Blackmore asserts, “[e]ducation is a means by which to achieve social and economic change and individual opportunity and is an institution serving the wider public good” (2011, p.26). There is an established pattern of American educators advancing this idea of schooling. Moreover, public schools have the responsibility to create society, not merely reflect it (Feinberg, 1993). When continued gender disparity in leadership exists, America’s public schools fail to shape and reflect their community.

History of Democratic Education

Without a consensus definition of democratic education or democratic schools, the literature regarding democratic education indicates that American schools have always

existed to further democratic principles. This pedagogy is rooted in the work of John Dewey (1916); however, it builds upon Jeffersonian ideals written during the Nineteenth Century:

I know of no safe deposit of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education. (Jefferson, 1820)

Hernández (1997) offers “the language of democracy as the one offering the best vision for personal and collective development in terms of values such as freedom, equality, and solidarity” (p. 24). Dewey (1916) argued that democracy “is more than a form of government” (p.87) but instead is a participatory form of society. During the early 20th century, Dewey put forth the idea that education is a function of democratic society in which philosophy was “made practical through education” (Jenlink, 2009, p. 25). Through this framework, he believed that knowledge could be distributed throughout society, no longer just a product of the intellectual elite, resulting in the expansion of civil society and self-governance. Dewey believed education should be open and free for all individuals in access and practice, and that in a democratic society education must extend beyond traditional philosophical reason and explore complex, engaging experiences (Jenlink, 2009). The democratization of education could, in Dewey’s mind, balance the inequities in American society because knowledge was power, and when inclusive, helped share power throughout all segments of society. Jenlink (2009) summarizes:

Dewey’s basic argument, profoundly democratic in its implications, is that all knowledge – academic no less than practical – is social knowledge, the product of an interplay of experience, testing and experiment, observation, reflection, and conversation. All have the capacity and right to participate in knowledge-creation. In Dewey’s view, a commonwealth knowledge comes into being when all work is understood in terms of its educative capacities and human and social

properties. Dewey argued that education – even more than politics – should promote the practical over the abstract. To pursue change through politics can be frustratingly slow; using education to change the world, for Dewey, is more efficient.” (p. 26)

In *The Philosopher and the Democratic Construction of Society*, Polanco (2006) argues the philosopher’s role is to democratically construct society; not construct a democratic society. Such is the educator’s role. Schools create society (Feinberg, 1993), and must democratically construct, not merely construct democracy. To this end, democratic education is education in which equitable representation is present in decision making and the continued disproportionality of male principals creates unequal representation of the teaching force in school, district, and policy decision making.

Democratic education, then, refers to education that is modeled after democratic governance (Steiner, 1994). While “the language of democracy is anything but uniform. Democracy carries the most diverse and conflicting meanings and concepts, which are not always liberating enough, and sometimes not liberating at all” (Hernández, 1997, p. 31). Gutmann (1987) theorized that democratic education should be based upon “conscious social reproduction” - that is “a shared commitment to distribute educational authority” (Steiner, 1994, p. 10). Gutmann (1987) offers two tenets by which to measure democratic education: (a) education policy must not discriminate or repress and (b) it should urge public discussion. Consequently, “the justification for a democratic decision is that citizens arrive at it through a democratic procedure [...] this means every (sane) adult must be an informed and contributing party to any political decision” (Steiner, 1994, p. 12). Including a multitude of perspectives in decision-making, is a component of the modern understanding of democratic leadership for democratic schools. Further, Darling-

Hammond (1996) argues that democratic education must “nurture the spirit as well as the mind, so that each student finds and develops something of value on which to build a life” (p. 5). Therefore, democratic education promotes equality of access and decision making while offering students a relevant and interesting curriculum.

If democratic schools are institutions that seek these outcomes, democratic fruition requires two lines of work: “[o]ne is to create democratic structures and processes by which life in school is carried out. The other is to create a curriculum that will give young people democratic experiences” (Apple & Beane, 2007b, p. 10). When schools seek alignment with these principals several qualities occur:

- The curriculum includes space for working on social issues through integrative unit themes, discussion and debate, and service learning to allow students and teachers to explore authentic problems and issues.
- Important decisions about policies, governance, and emerging problems are made through participatory processes, such as leadership teams that include teachers, administrators, and other school staff members as well as students. In addition, students have a voice in classroom decisions about curriculum and organization.
- Emphasis is placed on genuine intellectual engagement with topics and issues. Activities and resources call for critical thinking, in-depth projects, discussion and debate, data gathering, and other kinds of genuinely intellectual endeavors. Moreover, teachers expect all students to engage in these activities and respect students' different levels of contribution and achievement.
- School structures are set up to encourage equity. All students have access to the best programs and outcomes the school can offer through heterogeneous grouping, a common core curriculum, inclusive practices, and other equitable arrangements.
- The school is connected to its community as much as possible. School activities, such as parent and guardian organization meetings, are arranged so that all families may participate; local issues and local service learning projects are integral to the curriculum; and the school is available for community meetings. (Apple & Beane, 2007a, p. 36)

Democratic education not only increases equity within the school, but better positions students for active participation in civil society. Youngberg (2008) posits that “broadly educated citizens are better prepared for responsibilities of democratic citizenship” and a “democratic education system should seek to educate the entire citizenry” (p. 1).

Democratic education also serves in the promotion of classic liberal ideals including individualism, guaranteed rights, and local decision-making (Dewey, 1916; von Duyke, 2015). Additionally, democratic ideals often create the foundation for change and reform.

More abstract than concrete, Boreman, Danzing, and Garica (2012) contend that democratic education serves the public good. Where the public good “is a collective reflection on values held in common” (p. viii). Education is the tool through which students learn how to participate in a democracy; it “provides access to the very language and thought required for democratic deliberation of the public good and reveals the importance of schooling to achieve these understandings.” (Boreman, Danzing, & Garcia, 2012, p. ix). Schools that provide opportunity for students to learn how to navigate community and construct public knowledge uphold the value of democratic education by offering (a) inquiry and exchange of ideas, (b) collaboration for the common good, (c) inclusion of the least powerful, and (d) non-traditional school structures while emphasizing shared learning, understanding, and decision making (Boreman, Danzing, & Garcia, 2012). The inclusion of these components in schooling increases the autonomy and student choice of learning, while providing the skills and traits necessary to participate in civil society and advance the public good.

Women are uniquely situated to lead in this arena because they are more likely to value influence than power (Noremore & Jean-Marie, 2007). Women value relationships,

instruction, and view their role as educational leaders as a moral imperative (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009). Female leaders are “democratic, participative, inclusive and collaborative” (Noremore & Jean-Marie, 2007, p. 185). This collaborative leadership serves the goals of social justice by increasing meaning making and addressing issues of equity and diversity (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2013). To continue the pursuit of equity and democratic education, educators must turn critical eye to the lack of female administrators at the secondary level, “a key, but overlooked component of social equity in public education is the distribution of jobs, especially high-level positions in U.S. school districts” (Kerr, Kerr & Miller, 2014). It is only when schools are equitable that democratic education succeeds.

The unbalanced representation of women in the secondary principalship will continue until qualified women are regularly included in positions of power and in decision-making; and when gender is irrelevant in hiring (Nogay & Beebe, 1997). Multiple studies have confirmed that women are as capable, (if not more so by some leadership measures) to lead high schools (Adams & Hambricht, 2004; Nogay & Beebe, 1997; Tallcerio, 2000;). The administrative pipeline (teachers, assistant principals) is overwhelmingly female. However, hiring practices continue to favor male applicants. This skewed representation fails to create schools that are democratically accountable (Mullen, 2008). If our educational leadership is not democratically accountable, by association our schools cannot achieve their goal of democratic education. Mullen (2008) asserts that democratic schools are:

1. Where the voices of all teachers, advocates, parents, community members, and students are heard; and

2. Actively supporting equality, and diversity; and
3. Working toward value creation and community sustainability.

A field that is overwhelmingly female being led by a majority male population fails all three of these standards; whereas a more equitable representation of female high school administrators would better serve the goal of democratic education. Democratic education is both a process and a goal (Serigovanni, 2007), and the process is best served when leaders are committed to advancing a moral imperative. Evaluations of the way women lead have shown that women frame their work in education as a calling or life mission more than men do. Often this mission-oriented leadership is considered under the umbrella of transformational leadership. However, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009) identified 5 themes of female leadership: (a) social justice, (b) spiritual, (c) relational, (d) instructionally focused, and (e) balance seeking. Leadership for social justice, sometimes called collective leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011a) is the best foundation for democratic education. Women are more likely than men to lead in this fashion (Eddins, 2012). In fact,

[a] meta analysis of gender differences in leadership found that the only consistent gender difference across studies was that women are more democratic or participative in their styles, while men are more autocratic or directive. It is important to note that a democratic or participative leadership style is generally considered more effective than a hierarchical or autocratic style. (Lee, Smith & Cioci, 1993)

Successful collective leadership shifts the conversation around educational leadership from traditional, hierarchical forms of authority and leadership, to one of distributed power. The combination of these leads to truly democratic leadership.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic education is not only about the experience of students in the schools, but it is also aligned with the decision making and leadership in schools. Democratic schools require democratic leadership, “[if we decide to believe that the policy makers want to have democratic schools that foster the next generation, we have to review the style of leadership used in our schools” (Johansson, 2004 p. 620). Democratic schools’ foster curiosity, and a well-rounded education while upholding “individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people and equality between women and men” (Johansson, 2004 p. 621).

Borrowing from Mullen (2008), democratic leadership is a driving force in the work of social justice and social justice is the key component of modern democratic education. Normore and Jean-Marie (2007) summarize the literature on social justice by indicating while there is not a clear explanation of social justice there is a framework for describing it. Lee and McKerrow offer such framework in two dimensions. First, social justice is defined “not only by what it is but also by what it is not, namely injustice. By seeking justice, we anticipate the ideal. By questioning injustice, we approach it. Integrating both, we achieve it” (2005, p. 1). The second dimension focuses on the practice of social justice: individuals for social justice seek to challenge political, economic, and social structures that privilege some and disadvantage others. They challenge “unequal power relationships based on gender, social class, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, language, and other systems of oppression” (2005, p. 184).

Specifically, the dialogue and literature on educational leadership has shifted advocacy to a form of leadership that is inclusive, distributive, and collaborative. Some (see Blasé and Blasé, 1998; Glickman, Allen, & Lunsford, 1994; Lieberman & Miller,

2004; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995; Spillane, 2006; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001) seek to promote the inclusion of all members of a school, especially those traditionally underrepresented, like women and people of color. Others extend social justice or moral leadership further:

[p]roponents of various forms of democratic, social justice, and inclusive leadership recognize the deep-seated nature of exclusion and oppression, seek to craft leadership practices that move beyond participation in decision-making, and do what they can to work for inclusion, equity, and social justice. (Ryan & Rottman, 2009, p. 475)

Leadership centered on the ideals of social justice can be called by many different terms: distributed, distributive, collaborative, collective, moral, or democratic.

Klinker (2006) offers that democratic leadership is defined ambiguously because “democracy is based on the premise that no member of the group is superior to other members” (p. 6). Most importantly, leadership for democratic education must be inclusive because “modern concepts of democracy propose that human beings who are affected by decisions should have some say in influencing those decisions” (Beckner, 2004, p. 137).

Inclusivity and a social justice framework encourage meaning making through collective voice and shared understanding; whereas traditional hierarchal power structures that are inherent in educational organizations make seeking the ideal of distributive, democratic leadership difficult. Traditional hierarchal power structures center decision making, access to power and authority with a few key stakeholders, leaving the rest of the school community without input or decision-making autonomy. Bogotch (2005) challenges these systems by indicating that education, broadly, and social justice, narrowly, requires “the moral use of power”

(p. 184). The moral use of power and distribution of autonomy and agency can be seen in non-traditional leadership structures, like the women's web of leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009). These non-traditional decision-making frameworks offer a more democratic leadership structure through the building of collective engagement which furthers democratic ideals.

The current disparity between the percentage of women who make up the teaching force and the percentage of women who hold the principalship illustrate a lack democratically aligned education. The funneling of the leadership pipeline persists in furthering the voice of a select portion of educators and minimizes shared decision making.

If democratic leadership and democratic schooling serve the purpose of preparing students for active citizenship my personal definition of democratic education rests on the idea that all stakeholders can contribute to the structure of school; while advancing equity, diversity, and practical application and construction of knowledge.

Democratic education is dependent on democratic leadership. Democratic leadership is the key to socially just schools and society. This type of leadership is collaborative and distributive in nature and promotes the inclusion of all stakeholders involved in schooling. Democratic leadership challenges traditional hierarchical leadership structures and places value on the moral use of power (Bogotch, 2005) through the granting of autonomy and agency. These concepts underpin the literature surrounding educational leadership in the 21 Century.

As women were beginning to be formally educated around the turn of the Nineteenth Century, student, Ann Negus, delivering a Valedictorian speech at the Young Ladies' Academy in Philadelphia testified, "[y]ou well knew the kind of education our

state of society required ... You were perfectly aware that it was of the utmost importance to our country, that this privilege should be directed with propriety” (McHahon, 2009, p. 475). She went on to list the benefits of women’s education by emphasizing progressive effects on community, society, and the country as a whole, “suggesting that she considered her pursuit of education not only as an individual endeavor but also in the service of a larger social and political aims” (McHahon, 2009, p. 476-478). Two centuries later, communities, society, and the country benefit from an increased female representation in the high school principalship. Equitable representation at this level is of the utmost importance for democratic education in the Twenty-first Century; and doing so would indicate a value shift in public schools that promotes social justice, democracy, and equity (Noremore & Jean-Marie, 2007). Capitalizing on the modern discussion that frames the principal as an instructional leader, and therefore celebrates collaborative leadership, women must continue to reimagine their perceptions of leadership. No longer is the education of women enough; equal representation in the principalship is of the utmost importance. As the voice of women increases in secondary administration “women [will] work to alter the undemocratic culture and structure” (Lee and McKerrow, 2005, p.1) of our nation’s schools. Gender inequity in high school leadership fails to uphold the democratic purpose and vision of U.S. public schools, while traditional hierarchies perpetuate tiered power structures that undermine democratic education. Democratic education requires a focus on equity and social justice that requires strong educational leadership

Summary

There continues to be a disparity in the percentage of women who teach in public high schools and the number of women who seek the principalship at the secondary level. Because the principalship is the driving feeder to the superintendency (Brunner, 2000), and the implications of policy that are made in that position. A continued disparity in leadership diminishes the identity and validity of democratic schools in America. Without an equal voice in decision making that is representative of the teacher and preparation pipelines, a failure of democratic leadership leads to a failure of democratic education. Further, the scholarship on educational leadership posits that school leaders must do more than manage their buildings but transform the culture through strong ethical and instructional leadership. Those core goals are compounded and threatened by the day to day complexity of the principalship, leading to dissatisfaction and role conflict for all principals, and especially for female ones. Standpoint theory helps identify female perceptions of the principalship while marking the lived reality of women's aspirations inside larger experiences and scholarship.

While past scholarship has investigated the leadership traits and skills, access factors to the principalship and other facets related to the disparity, this study utilizes the experiences of female teachers in seeking to understand the continued disparity in education with the unique focus on the impact the disparity has on democratic schools.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

As discussed in Chapter One, there is a pronounced gender stratification of the high school principalship. While the public education sphere is comprised of 75% female educators, only 30% of the high school principalship is female (NCES, 2014). Women continue to hold more doctorate degrees in education and are more than twice as likely to be enrolled in administrative certification programs (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Guramatunhu-Mudiwa, 2015) but continue to be disproportionately represented in the high school principalship. This stratification has changed little in the last 100 years (Brunner, 2000).

Women often lead in democratic or transformative styles which are preferred to the hierarchical tendencies of male educational leaders (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993). Democratic leadership is often thought as the preferred and most effective style of educational leadership regardless of gender (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Effective leadership at the forefront of our schools is vital because of the clear relationship between leadership and academic achievement and learning (Spillane & Hunt, 2010; Fullan, 2014). In addition to the suggestion that an increased female representation in the principalship could lead to increased academic achievement, the lack of female principals also represents a void in the mentorship and role modeling for teenage girls (Antoncci 1980; Gregg, 2007). Further, the disproportionate number of male principals constricts the pipeline for the superintendency limiting women's access to positions of political power and influence.

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to understand the meaning women attribute to the continued disproportionality of gender in the high school

principalship. In pursuing an understanding of these meanings, I seek to understand the meaning female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American public schools. This overriding question is anchored with three sub questions:

1. What essence of meaning do female participants contribute to internal factors related to the disproportionality of male principalship at the secondary level?
2. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to their aspirations toward the principalship?
3. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to barriers to the principalship?

These research questions guided the explorations of women in the field of secondary education and offer a foundation to explore the perspectives of female practitioners about the principalship and relevant education policy. Further, this inquiry added female voice to the body of literature surrounding the secondary principalship, and female voice is an important agent of change (Grogan, 1996).

Most importantly, however, this research expands the understanding of the personal and professional characteristics of women, and both the internal and external barriers shaping their desire to seek or not seek the principalship. Further, investigating women's experiences in education and their views of the principalship serves to inform university preparation programs and district hiring managers. A greater understanding of these aspirations leads to an increased representation in the principalship, and with increased female voice in that role, the increased opportunity for women to yield political influence and participate in policy making could occur. This result in a public education system with

more democratic leadership and education policy more democratically influenced through those leadership positions.

In the creation of this study my goal was to understand the perspectives and experiences of multiple women at various points in their career. This study was designed in two parts. First, an internet survey conducted via a snowball sampling method served as both a data source and a sampling technique. From that survey, interviews with participants were the primary data source in phase two. The method of design for this phenomenological inquiry is outlined in this chapter. Additionally, the rationale for this method, the theoretical traditions, and my role as researcher were delineated. Further, this chapter explains the setting, participants, sampling method, and data collection and analysis. Consideration to data management, and ethical considerations including limitations, validity and reliability are also discussed. I begin with the rationale for qualitative research and the theoretical traditions of heuristic inquiry, transcendentalism, and feminism.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The research questions in this study identify the meanings of factors – both internal and external – that continue to contribute to the small percentage of women who serve in the high school principalship. Fundamentally, these questions serve to direct the investigation as it addresses the experiences that women have gone through and how these affect their views of, and aspirations to, the principalship. Because qualitative research is primarily suited for exploratory inquiry and understanding (Creswell, 2013) this inquiry is best served with a qualitative research framework.

Qualitative research “attempts to broaden and/or deepen our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world” (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, while this study is designed to deepen understanding, it also involves a complex understanding of how different people interpret their reality and the how those experiences impact their behavior and professional decision making. This complexity is better aligned with the elucidation and understanding that qualitative research brings (Hancock, Ockleford, & Windridge, 2009) rather than the casual relationships that quantitative research often seeks. This study does not seek to explain the cause, or a concrete, statistically significant, reason the stratification of the high school principalship exists. Instead, it focusses on the experiences female educators have regarding their own career aspirations and a continued lack of representation in the role of secondary principal.

Qualitative methods provide an opportunity to give participants increased voice and power over how their story is told, which are key themes in feminist research. Because qualitative methods encourage the researcher to take into consideration small aspects and nuances of data, it provides researchers with a base that allows for examination of a various data interpretation and the discovery of themes that emerge (Miner & Jayaratne, 2014).

Qualitative research can be hard to define (Yin, 2011) but universally includes the following five features:

1. Studying the meaning of people’s lives, under real-world conditions;
2. Representing the views and perspectives of the people (participants) in a study;
3. Covering the contextual conditions within which people live;
4. Contributing insights into existing or emerging concepts that may help to *explain* human social behavior; and

5. Striving to *use multiple sources of evidence* rather than relying on a single source alone. (pp. 7-8)

This inquiry endeavored to include each of these five components while investigating the factors contributing to the continued gender stratification of the high school principalship.

As this research seeks a deeper understanding and a distilling of meaning, there is no delineated starting point. Qualitative research is best for this type of study because it does not rely upon a formulaic or predisposed design and instead “involves interconnection and interaction among the different design components” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 3). While qualitative research includes many design strategies, the design of this study utilizes the theoretical components of feminism, and both heuristic and transcendental inquiry in a fluid nature. The fluidity of these traditions allows for theoretical input in both the frame of the study, and the critical analysis of data.

As a female educator who aspires the principalship, I share with participants much of the phenomenon being studied. This conjuncture indicates that a heuristic inquiry allows for the problem to be best explored through an embodiment of the question. Voegelin (2000) believed that this embodiment of the question sanctions the constant internal seeking individuals undergo to understand our external environment. “This questioning involves effort and, if pursued conscientiously, can take us to fundamental questions that concern the nature of our existence” (Kenny, 2012, p. 7). However, because I am seeking a broad understanding of the meaning women place on their experiences in a manner that goes far beyond my own, the transcendental framework for data analysis allows me to set aside my experiences and systemically analyze the data from participants’ lived experiences. Because women’s experiences are explicitly and categorically identified as

the focal point of this study, the inquiry is feminist. Research is feminist when it is rooted in traditions that raise experiences, voice, and issues specific to women. (Hesse-Biber, 2014). This study investigated the experiences of 8 female secondary educators and the experiences that lead them to seek or not seek the principalship.

Theoretical Tradition of Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the primary research paradigm for this study. Phenomenology uses thick, rich description (Patton, 2015) to closely analyze and describe the meaning found in the experiences groups of individuals have with a phenomenon. It differs from narratology or case study in the synthesis of meaning from multiple individuals who share a common experience. Engrained in the methodology of phenomenology is its foundation in early 20th century Germanic philosophy. Edmund Husserl, a German mathematician, began writing about phenomenological thought in 1913 and posited that researchers should “search for the essential, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience” (Miller & Salkind, 2002, p. 151). Philosophers Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty contributed to the early foundation of phenomenology (Spiegelberg, 1982), and it is frequently found in social and human sciences; including the fields of sociology, psychology, nursing, and education (Miller & Salkind, 2002). Stewart & Mickunas (1990) identify four themes central to Husserl’s phenomenological thought:

1. Research should return to traditional, Greek exploration – seeking wisdom and not empirics;
2. All judgement regarding reality should be suspended (the process of epoché);
3. Consciousness Intentionality where an objects reality is tied directly to one’s consciousness.
4. Removal of subject/object separation – reality is only perceived through meaningful experience.

Despite the complicated philosophical foundation, research situated in the phenomenological method seeks to understand how the average person attaches meaning to events (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, phenomenology is not focused on complex, causal relationships, but instead seeks to create reality through lived experiences. Grbich (2013) offers that “various forms of phenomenology have developed over time” (p. 97). The present inquiry utilizes both heuristic and transcendental phenomenology strands.

Heuristic inquiry. Building on Husserl’s method, Moustakas (1990) sought a paradigm “that would meaningfully encompass the processes that [he] believed to be essential in investigations of human experience” (p.9). Searching for a paradigm removed from *epoché* and reduction, he encountered heuristic inquiry. Heuristic inquiry is rooted in the Greek words *heuriskein* and *eureka* – meaning to discover or find relevancy in both personal experiences and group occurrences (Kenny, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; Reis-Pinheiro & McNeill, 2014).

According to Reis-Pinheiro & McNeill (2014) “[h]euristics is part of the scientific method that strives to achieve new developments or empirical discoveries” (p. 45). Heuristic inquiry, popularized by Moustakas (1990) “as an organized and systematic form for investigating human experience” (p.10), is rooted in the fields of psychology and personal knowledge (Patton, 2015). Heuristic inquiry is a form of phenomenological inquiry that places self at the center of the investigation and “brings to the fore the personal experience and insights of the researcher” (Patton, 2015, p. 118). As the founder of this methodology Moustakas (1990; 1994) identifies six phases of heuristic research used to discover relevancy in both personal experiences and group occurrences: 1.) Initial engagement; 2.) Immersion into the topic and question; 3.) Incubation; 4.) Illumination; 5.)

Explication; and 6.) Creative Synthesis. These steps will be described in the data analysis section.

Patton (2015) suggests that heuristic inquiry is a rigorous methodology because of the methodological self-dialogue and observation of others meshes with the deep and detailed interviewing of co-researchers. While heuristic inquiry does not seek to prove influence of an experience, it does seek to explain the unified experience with a phenomenon (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985).

Heuristic inquiry is a fitting framework for this inquiry because, as a researcher, I have held an intense interest in the lack of female principals in the high schools in which I have worked for a decade. This initial engagement in conjunction with my own aspirations to the principalship has brought me to the immersion stage at the time of this proposal. (cf. Maynard, 1994).

Although I have spent years immersing myself in the themes and questions of this research, fully understanding and validating the meanings that women make of their experiences is much larger than my own individual story. While heuristic inquiry offers a framework for the research, the transcendental method of phenomenology offers a structure for data analysis and generalized meaning from the participants' experiences.

Transcendental Phenomenology. Transcendental phenomenology offers a framework for analyzing data by “reducing information to significant statements or quotes and combines the statements into themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). Husserl’s original phenomenological methods are understood today as transcendental phenomenology. “Pure [transcendental phenomenology] is grounded in the concept and conditioned upon setting aside all preconceived ideas (epoche) to see phenomena through unclouded glasses,

thereby allowing the true meaning of phenomena to naturally emerge with and within their own identity” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 11). Transcendental phenomenology describes “the structures of the world and how people act and react to them, in particular the structure of consciousness, intentionality and essences in an external world” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Transcendental inquiry is informed by Moustakas (1994) and includes 1.) Epoche (suspension of previously held ideas); 2) imaginative variation; 3.) data division; 4.) theme identification; and 5.) textural synthesis. This process takes the individual experiences of participants and allows them to be analyzed and distilled to the essence of the experience, “these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced” (Patton, 2015, p. 116). Using a rigorous analysis framework is key to distilling participants’ experiences into essential meanings. The essence of shared experience is the key to the transcendental framework. (Eichelberger, 1989) posits that a [transcendental] phenomenologist “assumes a commonality in those human experiences and must use rigorously the method of bracketing to search for those commonalities” (p. 6). Bracketing prevents me from relying on my own experiences and knowledge while forcing my “full attention [on the] instance of the phenomenon” (Giorgi, 2006, p. 355) The transcendental method maintains that appropriately understanding *epoché* is key to identifying understanding (Moran, 2012).

Utilizing *epoché* and intentionally bracketing my own perceptions and experiences allowed me to utilize a data analysis framework that set aside my own notions and allowed me to distill the meaning of my participants’ shared experiences. Despite the bracketing of my own experiences during data analysis, I have engaged in and considered these research themes for some time as I have worked my way through graduate school.

This immersion has led me to an early understanding that this inquiry seeks access into both the private and public lives of women. Ribbens and Edwards (1998) caution that qualitative research that seeks such access can highlight “theoretical and practical dilemmas [...] especially where there is a concern with retaining research participants’ ‘voices’ in the production of research accounts” (p.1). In *Thinking about Women, or “Women’s Work is Never Done”* Minnich asks

if we do not study women, with all our differences, how can we believe that our studies adequately concern humankind? However (sic) we have made meaning of the diversities of humankind, however those meanings have themselves differed through time and across cultures, where they exist they are real in their effects. (2005, p. 2)

As this inquiry is focused on the meaning of the lived experiences of female educators and challenges an engrained hierarchy of power, it is placed inside the feminist research tradition (Biklen & Brannigan, 1980; Doucet & Mauthner, 2006). In the modern era, research is feminist when it is framed with a notion of justice and focuses on the transformation of societal norms.

Theoretical Tradition of Feminism

While there is no singular consensus (Westmarland, 2017), in qualitative research a feminist perspective is, generally, one that supports that “common social as well as methodological relationships (e.g., interviewer and interviewee) embed oft-ignored power relationships that can nevertheless affect the findings of a research study” (Yin, 2011, p. 209). Traditionally, the qualitative method of interviewing can illuminate the power imbalances between the interviewee and interviewer, but a feminist approach to interviewing, in which the goal is subjugated knowledge of diverse female experiences, can be key in allowing feminist researchers to “generalize their findings to a wider

population” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 185). Parr (1998) contends that female researchers can create a collaborative interviewer/interviewee relationship by placing themselves alongside the participants.

Inherently collaborative, feminist inquiry posits a “participatory process that support[s] equity and mutuality” (Patton, 2015, p. 339). In the heuristic tradition, identifying participants as co-researchers aligns with the feminist collaboration necessary to identifying the institutional barriers (internal and external factors) impacting the gender stratification of the principalship. Minnich (2005) argues that to locate those factors we must utilize:

- realism
- critique
- philosophical comprehension
- strategies
- flexibility
- persistence
- honesty
- imagination. (pp. 274-275)

Further, Hesse-Biber (2014) contends that feminist research aspires social transformation. In searching for understanding in the experiences of women educators, it is my hope this research impacts the recruitment of female principals. This stated desire for transformation aligns this heuristic inquiry with the feminist tradition.

Last, Grogan (1996) articulates that research that lends a female voice to the literature is feminist research. Wambui explains,

the general consensus of feminist scholars is that feminist research should be not just on women, but for women and, where possible, with women (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Feminist research is expected to adopt critical perspectives toward dominant intellectual traditions that have in the past ignored and/or justified women’s oppression (Acker et al., 1983). It is intended to bring to the surface voices

that are often excluded from knowledge production and policy making, and critically reflect upon how it can all be done better (Frisby, Maguire, & Reid 2009). (2013, p.1)

This study illuminated female voices, and position findings inside a framework of democratic education which will impact policy and decision making. Further, the investigation into these women's experiences is inherently critical of the structures that uphold the continued stratification of the principalship.

As a female researcher who seeks the high school principalship, my role is in collaboration with my participants. I hope to uplift their voices in the discovery of meaning from their experiences. In doing so, the general goal of this study is to transform the high school principalship into a more democratic, collaborative position.

Researcher's Role

As a female educator who aspires to the principalship, I share several characteristics with the study participants. The close identification with the subject material not only lends itself to the heuristic tradition, but also frames the goals of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell explains that our personal, practical, and intellectual goals all affect the design of a study. In addition to the design, the goal trifecta can impact the validity of the conclusions drawn from data. As previously mentioned, I am a female educator who aspires the principalship. I spent eight years in the classroom teaching various social studies courses, and over the course of those years, I recognized that only 20% of the head principals I worked for were female, and not a single female colleague aspired to become a principal. These experiences motivate me to understand the experiences of other female educators. Further, qualitative research offers fieldwork strategies that align with my interest and talents (Maxwell, 2013). Utilizing a heuristic

framework allowed me to confront my own experiences and bias within the phenomenon, and to use the shared phenomenon experience to illicit meaning. (Patton, 2015).

In this investigation, I offer an emic, or insiders, perspective through the utilization of myself as a research instrument. This self-utilization is evident in the collection, analysis, and explanation of data (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, this chapter positions my experiences alongside participant experiences, and allows for the practice of reflexivity (Patton, 2015). Patton explains,

[r]eflexivity encompasses reflection – indeed, mandates reflection – but it means to take the reflective process deeper and make it more systematic than is usually implied by the term reflection. It may sound pretentious and can elicit negative feedback for sounding academic and highfalutin, but the purpose is not pomposity. The term reflexivity is meant to direct us to a particular kind of reflection grounded in the in-depth, experiential, and interpersonal nature of qualitative inquiry. (p. 70)

This type of reflexive practice leads to researchers attending to both what they see in data and what they do not see (Russell & Kelly, 2002). This reflexive practice extends to the choice of voice utilized here. I offer the first-person voice of reflective practice alongside the traditional academic (third-person) usage. This allows me to position myself where needed but focus on the meaning illuminated from the participants' experiences most often (Patton, 2015). The inclusion of the first-person voice is also in the feminist tradition (e.g. England, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Minnich, 2005) that “highlight[s] and deepen[s] our understanding of the intricate and implicate relationships between language, voice, and consciousness” (Patton, 2015, p. 74).

In this spirit, before any other fieldwork is addressed, I wrote a narrative of my own experiences as a female secondary educator and my beliefs and bias about the lack of

women principals. Pieces of that narrative have been incorporated into the introduction of this research study.

As Bach (2002) explains, “[t]he self of the researcher is present throughout the research process; while advancing knowledge of the topic, the researcher is experiencing self-awareness and gaining personal insights into the phenomenon and its universal themes” (p. 93). Including self-interpretations in the process is a key component of qualitative data collection where the researcher is the key instrument and external experiences are filtered through internal processes. Thus, the experiences I witness and how I interpret and report the meaning behind those experiences are the foundation of my data collection (Yin, 2009). As a researcher, I kept the model of heuristic inquiry in mind through the analysis of all data sources to discover meaning in both my personal experience and the larger group occurrences.

My goal, then, for this study was to uncover rich experiences of women that contribute to a greater understanding of why the continued gender stratification of the principalship exists. Using a reflexive practice and inclusive voice, I seek to explain the contributing factors in an accessible and easily understood manner (Patton, 2015; Roberts, 1981). It is my hope that the results of this study can not only be used in university and certification programs, but also in our schools. These locations are critical to our efforts at the recruitment of women into the secondary principalship. In the coming sections, I explain the design used to seek the understanding of the participant experiences. This includes the setting, sampling methods, data sources, data analysis, and storage and reporting of data.

Design of the Study

This study operated in two phases. The first phase utilized an internet survey which served as both a data collection tool and a sampling method. The former function will be addressed later in this chapter. As for the latter function, sampling method, the survey was virtually distributed to my personal networks (school districts, alumni groups, organizations, etc.) asking female educators to complete. Distribution methods included e-mail and social media. Participants were encouraged to share the survey with their own networks. In this form, phase one utilized a snowball sampling method (Patton, 2015) resulting in participants without geographic boundary. From the phase one survey, I selected 8 participants for in-depth interviews for phase two of the investigation. Data collected from phase one was analyzed for descriptive statistics. These data illustrated the demographic diversity in respondents, as well as situated phase two participants experiences in a larger context.

In phase two, the primary setting of this study was the metropolitan area of a midsize Midwestern city. The metropolitan area includes over 100 school districts spreading across two states (Pseudonym School District, 2017). This area is comprised of rural, suburban, and urban school districts with varying socio-economic compositions. Because this study is focused solely on the high school principalship, seven female participants were selected from female educators in high schools serving grades 9-12. The many sizes and types of schools are useful for creating a broad foundation from which to examine the experiences of a multitude of participants regardless of race, religion, income, or other demographic factors.

From the data on survey respondents, I utilized purposeful selection for a continuum sample (Patton, 2015). Continuum sampling is a type of purposeful sampling in which participants are selected across a linear range. Continuum sampling has illustrated effectiveness in evaluating women's experiences; most famously it was utilized in Belenky et al's., seminal "Women's Ways of Knowing" (1986) in which Belenky articulates the levels of understanding women go through in gaining their voice. The continuum to be used in this study is the years of experience. The purposeful selection allowed me to select participants who were placed at various stages along the continuum. The goal being some beginning, middle, and end of career educators. In addition to the continuum of experience, I purposefully selected a range of educator roles and responsibilities.

Creswell (2013) indicates that phenomenological research must use criterion sampling. In the design of both the snowball and continuum sampling, the underlying framework is criteria-specific. All participants must be female educators because as Creswell notes, "criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (2013, p. 155). Patton, (2015) identifies continuum sampling as a type of criterion sampling. The inclusion of multiple sampling techniques (purposeful, snowball, criterion, continuum) and the inclusion of multiple individuals (cases) in the study framed the investigation in a manner, offers credibility and clarity to the findings (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

According to the University of Missouri-Kansas City policy, the selection and participation of human participants complied with the policies of the Institutional Review Board. This includes considerations standardized in the Belmont Report, including voluntary participation, minimization of harm, secured privacy, and minimization of harm

(Human Subjects, 2016). When followed, the guidelines inherent in The Belmont Report support research that is just and benevolent and upholds respect for all persons involved (United States, 1978). All women who choose to participate acknowledged their voluntary contribution in the phase one survey, and if selected for further participation were given a formal participation letter (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) before interviews were conducted. Pseudonyms are used in place of names to protect the identity of participants and to ensure anonymity. These precautions create a solid foundation of trust before any fieldwork or data collection begins.

Data Collection

Qualitative research is appealing, in part, because it is a form of research that necessitates real-world interaction, and that interaction takes place in multiple settings. In the process of data collection those real-world interactions are how data collection is undertaken in the field (Yin, 2009). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007):

the term data refers to the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; data are the particulars that form the basis of analysis. Data include materials the people doing the study actively record, such as interview transcripts and participant observation fieldnotes. Data also include what others have created and the researcher finds, such as diaries, photographs, official documents, and newspaper articles. (p. 117).

In the tradition of qualitative research, seeking meaning from experiences is facilitated through the analysis of several data sources (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2015; Patton, 2015).

Maxwell (2015) suggests that multiple data sources serve two purposes: the first, crystallization, serves as a check on the validity of the data and will be addressed later in this chapter. The second offers complementarity and expansion opportunities for the data

sets which work to identify different components of the phenomenon. The multi-lens approach allowed me to examine the experiences from several perspectives, and piece together meaning and understanding from the comprehensive review. Grbich (2013) explains, “your intuiting (through close observation and listening) should enable the essence of the phenomenon to become more visible, allowing you to build up a picture over time in terms of emerging patterns, relationships and interconnections” (p.95). Grbich further states that phenomenological data need to release “complex layers of human experience” (p. 95) through interviewing, reviewing documentation, and observation. In this investigation the use of documents, including surveys and narrative writing, and interviews were undertaken.

Survey. The survey utilized in phase one collected demographic data centered around pieces of participants identity (such as age, race), their professional careers (such as education attained, years worked), and perceptions of their own leadership experiences (see Appendix A). The survey was distributed via e-mail and social media sharing. Creswell (2013) contends that qualitative data collection via the Internet is advantageous in that it is cost effective, saves time, and allows participants to think and give deeper thought to their participation. Further, online data collection is nonthreatening and creates a comfortable environment that increases the comfort level of participants (Nicholas, Lach, King, Scott, Boydell, Sawatzky, et al, 2010). Additionally, the phase one survey was analyzed for descriptive statistics.

Documents. Patton (2015) explains that document analysis is a form of unobtrusive data collection, and unobtrusive techniques are helpful in identifying factors contributing to the problem being studied. Traditionally, some researchers have viewed

document analysis as a last chance effort when other data sources are not found, because when using documents an unwanted distance is placed between the researcher and “real people” in the study. However, in the modern era, documents are most often used as a supplemental data source because they reflect the circumstance the phenomenon exists in (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). It is in this manner that documents serve the research.

Narrative writing from phase one survey participants supplemented the in-depth interviews drawn from the sample.

Bogdan & Biklen (2007) instruct that documents are often used in conjunction with interviews to support the meaning uncovered there, but Prior (2003) articulates that documents can and should be at the forefront of social research. Document analysis includes a wide variety of sources including:

autobiographies, personal letters, diaries, memos, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, codes of ethics, statements of philosophy, year- books, news releases, scrapbooks, letters to the editor, "Dear Abby" letters, newspaper articles, personnel files, and students' case records and folders are included in the data. Other documents can be found in the files of organizations, the desk drawers of principals, the attics of buildings, and in the archives of historical societies. (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 133)

In this study narrative writings were utilized as documents as a further way to crystalize findings and illuminate meaning. Crystallization is the process of converging multiple data sources in order to strengthen the validity of a study (Ellingson, 2009). To accomplish this, in addition to the survey and interview questions participants were asked to write open-ended responses to the following prompts:

- Do you desire the principalship? Why or Why not?
- What characteristics do you possess what would make you a good principal?

While these narrative writings certainly serve as a source of rich description (Patton, 2015), it is interviewing that is the heart of phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 2015). In depth interviews were used using the transcendental method of analysis which will be further described in the data analysis section.

Interviews. This data collection method is the primary tool for transcendental phenomenological data collection (Creswell, 2013; Miller & Salkid, 2002). In phenomenology, researchers seek to understand the lived experience of the individual (Moustakas, 1994) and “often data collection in phenomenological studies consists of in-depth and multiple interviews with participants” (Creswell, 2013 p. 81).

In the social sciences, there are three types of qualitative interviews: structured, unstructured, and open-ended (Fontana & Frey, 2005). In deciding what questions best will illicit rich descriptions (Patton, 2015) necessary in qualitative research, interviewers may choose one of the following three approaches:

1. Informal conversational interview
2. The interview guide
3. The standardized open-ended interview (p. 437)

For this inquiry, I utilized the interview guide and informal conversational interview methods in alignment with the transcendental model. Each interview began with 9-15 questions (Appendix D) which sought to illicit understanding about participants career and future aspirations, and a critical reflection regarding their professional experiences with the principalship. Moustakas (1994) instructs that meaning is derived in interviewing through two broad questions:

1. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
2. What context has influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

While interview guides can be highly scripted or relatively loose (Kennedy, 2006) they all serve to align questions with each person to be interviewed (Patton, 2015). Interview guides are a form of prior instrumentation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) that can be designed after some data collection has been done; in this way interview guides provide for a “deeper and broader understanding” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 40). In phenomenological inquiry specifically, the goal of understanding the lived experiences of the participant is the desired outcome of an interview. In this vein, interview guides can “provide some structure for the encounter, getting all the questions answered or all the areas covered is not the purpose of the interview. The researcher has to be captive to the larger goal of the interview – understanding” (Bogdan & Biklen 2007, p. 106).

However, Moustakas (1990) argues that the informal interview offers the framework “most clearly consistent with the rhythm and flow of heuristic exploration and search for meaning” (p.47) because informal interviews illicit a truer dialogue and conversation. In this regard, my interviews began with the prescribed questions, but also included an informal conversation in which I share both my experiences and the experiences of my participants and let the conversation move in whatever direction it took.

As indicated earlier, the interview participants were selected from survey participants who have granted consent. Utilizing the continuum sampling method, I identified 8 women in various stages of their educational career from various demographic backgrounds (for example varied socio-economic, religious, race/ethnicity, and urban/suburban/rural experiences). Participants were able to choose the interview location of their choice – provided it was a quiet environment conducive to recording. Interviews

were audio recorded for transcription and analysis. Participants had the opportunity to review interview transcripts and clarify any meaning before analysis took place.

Process of Data Analysis

As earlier indicated, this study is shaped by several theoretical traditions. Heuristic inquiry provides an overarching framework that guides the entire process and transcendental phenomenology offers concrete notations for data analysis.

Data analysis in heuristic inquiry includes a process in which data from multiple sources are gathered and organized in a way that tells the story of each participant.

Moustakas (1990) explains,

essential to the process of heuristic analysis is comprehensive knowledge of all materials for each participant and for the group of participants collectively. The task involves timeless immersion inside the data, with intervals of rest and return to the data until intimate knowledge is obtained. (p.49)

As heuristic inquiry is the overarching framework of this inquiry the immersion intervals offer an ongoing framework from which I, as the researcher, interact with the data.

However, as earlier described, in seeking the essences of shared experience, transcendental phenomenology offers a framework for detailed data analysis and was explored in the illumination phase of the heuristic process. The heuristic process begins with engagement and moves through creative synthesis.

Engagement

Engagement began long before I articulated a research question for this proposal. My engagement with the phenomenon began early in my teaching career when I began to question my own ability to lead a high school as a principal. Engagement has continued through the completion of my master's degree and through the coursework required for

this Educational Doctorate program. Engagement continued through the creating and distributing of the phase one survey, the selection of phase two participants, interviews, data analysis, and findings.

Immersion

Immersion moved me deeper into the phenomenon as I analyzed the phase one survey for descriptive statistics and read, and re-read narrative writings using document analysis.

Documents. For the narrative writings a two-step coding process helped move analysis to the understanding of participant experiences. For the analysis, I used a multi-interpretive framework utilizing invariant constituents and interpretive concept codes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The coding of narrative writings in this way allowed my interpretation to be rooted in the literature surrounding female perceptions of the principalship, the frameworks of feminism and democratic education, and in the lived experiences of co-researchers.

During the first cycle of coding invariant constituents, and concept grouping (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014) was used to identify individual units of meaning. In the second cycle of coding invariant constituents were combined according to patterns and other similar characteristics. To identify these patterns and similarities, I utilized digital chunking and jottings (Patton, 2015). This process helped me move back and forth through the immersion and incubation stages of heuristic inquiry.

Incubation.

In between cycles of immersion of the data, I stepped away from the data to offer myself time to form new perspectives. From the immersion and incubation stages

descriptive, first cycle invariant constituents were grouped into similar patterns. And during the illumination phase interpretive concepts began to uncover meaning units prevalent in each participant experience.

Illumination

During the illumination phase, I finalized the analysis of my narrative writings and analyzed data using inductive and deductive coding methods outlined in Patton (2015), Creswell, (2013), and Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, (2014) among others. This process includes the identification of invariant constituents before meaning units emerged. Invariant constituents served as units of meaning for transcendental analysis (Moustakas, 1994) and by returning to the data with those units of meaning a researcher can begin to understand the “why” inherent in the experience of the phenomenon. After units of meaning are identified in the narrative writings I turned to the in-depth interviews.

Interviews. Moustakas (1994) offers a procedure for identifying and understanding meaning of experience that is exact yet manageable for qualitative researchers. Urdahl and Creswell (2014) explain the process as:

[th]e inquirer describes their own experiences with the phenomenon (epoche), identifies significant statements in the database from participants, clusters these statements into meaning units and themes. Next, the researcher synthesizes the themes into a description of the experiences of the individuals (textual and structural descriptions), and then constructs a composite description of the meanings and the essences of the experience. The illustrative project on the experiences with the ripple effect that follows illustrates this process. (p. 21)

It is this model of transcendental analysis that I used for analysis of my interview data. For each participant along the continuum, Moustakas (1994) instructs the analysis of interview data is first done through *horizontalization* in which all relevant commentary is listed.

Next, to *reduce and eliminate* I decided if each of the recorded statements is can be reduced by asking two questions:

- 1.) does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?
- 2.) is it possible to abstract and label it? (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121)

If the answer to those questions are affirmative that expression is kept. Next, I *clustered and thematized* the experiences by labeling core themes of the experience. Then, *theme identification* was checked against the transcript by asking:

- 1.) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription?
- 2.) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed?
- 3.) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant and should be deleted. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121)

textural/structural/composite description. Next, using the themes identified in the prior analysis step, Individual *Textural Descriptions* were created that utilize word for word examples from the interview. After textural descriptions were recorded, I used *imaginative variation* in which underlying themes or universal structures are identified to create a *structural* description of the participants experience. Finally, I constructed a *textural-structural description* of the participants experience before finally combining the all participants textural-structural descriptions in the development of a *composite description* “of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Explication

After the analysis of both the documents and the interviews, explication guided my re-immersion into the entity of the data. Bringing the data from the narrative writings and data from the interview together in this way informed the writing of a common narrative

identifying the essence of meaning women place on their experiences as a female educator regarding the principalship. After a common narrative was written, I returned to the individual raw data and created profiles of a few participants that illustrate, illuminate, and demonstrate the meaning identified.

Creative Synthesis

Finally, I creatively fused the essence of meaning identified in the participants experiences with my personal understandings to create an original characterization of the phenomenon.

For all analysis, a digital analysis was implemented. In this process data was kept intact for the first cycle of analysis, and then digitally chunked and manipulated in the second. In this process, I placed pieces of the coded data next to each other. After manipulating the data chunks in the incubation stage, I entered a cycle of rest and stepped away from the data. Upon returning to the data, I verified to see if the patterns and similarities were constant. This grouping, ungrouping, and manipulating of the data's physical location allowed me to become intimately familiar with the similarities and differences in the data before clustering and identifying themes from identified patterns as I worked through the process.

As the data was analyzed, I utilized the frameworks of feminism and philosophy of democratic education to help frame the experiences of participants within the bounds of the study. I outlined here how the physical manipulation of data fit into the transcendental inquiry model resulting in a generalized synthesis of the participants experiences with principalship aspirations. Despite careful attention to privacy, accuracy, and significance, I

am aware of the limitations, ethical considerations and issues regarding truth, value, and replicability could occur.

Data Management

As phenomenological inquiry moved through a cyclical process of data collection and analysis, an organized data management system was both important for the practical use, but also as a safeguard for the security of information participants provided. This assurance is known as procedural ethics (Tracy, 2010) and “encompasses the importance of accuracy and avoiding fabrication, fraud, omission, and contrivance” (p. 847). Working with two different data sources, the storage and security of my data comprises of several facets. First, the digital data collected through the survey was secured under a password protected Google account with no sharing permissions granted. Identifying factors were removed from the results and replaced with a pseudonym. A master list of participant names and pseudonyms was kept in password protected Dropbox account. All audio recording of interviews, data matrices, and other electronic data is housed inside Dropbox. Dropbox “is designed with multiple layers of protection, including secure data transfer, encryption, network configuration, and application-level controls distributed across a scalable, secure infrastructure” (Security Architecture, 2017, p. 1).

Storing files on Dropbox in the cloud preemptively protects electronic data from physical damage and minimizes the need for multiple copies of data files. Physical notes, jottings, memos, and other written fieldwork was stored in my home office, of which I am the sole resident and key holder. These security measures allowed participants to reasonably expect their identity to be kept private and worked to “safeguard participants from undue exposure by securing all personal data” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). The storage of

electronic data in a singular cloud based encrypted system systematically organized a multitude of data to be easily accessed for the continued data collection and analysis cycle heuristic inquiry requires.

Limitations, Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

The study was designed to acquire thick amounts of data with rich descriptions (cf. Patton, 2015), but as with all qualitative studies there are limitations. As with any research, this investigation is limited in scope. Most significantly, this study is delimited to women only. While the inclusion of male participants could serve as a counter point to the experiences of female participants, that exploration might serve as a potential follow-up study to this one, and thus is outside the boundaries of this proposal. While the survey could, theoretically, be distributed nationwide, the geographic limitations placed on the continuum sample of women interviewed could limit the understanding. Geography plays an important role in many aspects of personal belief and cultural factors, and thus the experiences of women in the Midwest might not be representative of the experiences of women nation, or world, wide. Women in other metropolitan areas, or from more or less rural/urban areas could experience principalship aspirations differently than those in this setting. Next, my personal bias, as outlined previously, could color the data collection and thematic coding necessary to study the phenomenon. Despite the careful consideration to design, safety, privacy, and the handling of data errors in analysis and management of data could occur. These contingencies are often referred to as validity and reliability concerns. Data is valid when it is credible, and reliable when it is true (Maxwell, 2013). Determining what is valid and reliable, however is debated among theorists. Here, validity and reliability will be referred to as “the ‘soundness’ of the research in relation to the

application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the final conclusions” (Smith, 2015).

Validity

In qualitative, as in all research, the primary quality control measure is that of validity (Yin, 2009). While validity can be a controversial term in qualitative research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013) Yin contends that “a valid study is one that has properly collected and interpreted its data, so that the conclusions accurately reflect and represent the real world” (p.99). Maxwell (2013) contends validity is relative and “has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research” (p.121). Maxwell also offers several strategies for increasing the validity of research conclusions including:

1. intensive, long term involvement
2. rich data
3. respondent validation
4. intervention
5. discrepant evidence and negative cases
6. triangulation
7. numbers
8. comparison

However, he also warns against boilerplate language that pays homage to the terminology of validity without utilizing methodology that decreases validity threats. In effort to minimize lip service to validity (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013), I made sure that the experiences identified are described in context and with great detail, while utilizing specific and robust language that results in a thick description of the phenomenon experienced. Further, I utilized member checking of each account to increase the accuracy of reported experience while utilizing multiple data sources to crystalize the data.

Crystallization is the process of converging multiple sources of data and comparing perspectives to verify findings (Patton, 2015; Yin, 2009).

Further, I committed to a discussion around discrepant evidence in which participants' experiences were not in alignment with the comprehensive group experience, and will relay the findings in a well-defined, logical, and integrated manner (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013). These precautions increase the internal validity of this proposal. Externally, I increased validity by connecting my findings to theory, fully described the study characteristics so that others can compare the findings to outside research and chose participants along the continuum who are “theoretically diverse enough to encourage broader applicability when relevant” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013, p. 314).

Reliability

In quantitative research reliability refers to: “the degree to which a measurement, given repeatedly, remains the same, the stability of a measurement over time; and the similarity of measurements within a given time (Kirk & Miller, 1986, pp. 41-42). Smith (2015) contends that reliability is measured by the soundness of the research. Because reliability often refers to the instrument, and in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument often a demonstration of validity also ascertains reliability (Blackford, 2016). Matter of fact, the classic work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest “Since there can be no validity without reliability (and thus no credibility without dependability), a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the latter” (p. 316).

Ethical Considerations

As heuristic inquiry consists of cyclical collection and analysis there are potential ethical considerations at all stages of research (Creswell, 2013). More importantly, in conducting research situated inside the framework of democratic education and feminism. I must pay careful consideration to ethical considerations of power, privilege, and exploitation. Gilies and Alldred (2002) explain,

a feminist researcher brings to the research her judgement or assumption that there is a need for social change – a principle that lies at the root of feminism. In models of participatory research in what the end goal is not fixed at the outset, specific notions of what, where and how this change should be affected are supposed to emerge during the course of the project. But the researcher and perhaps each of the participants will have particular understandings and interpretations of the process of change being studied. (p. 44)

Feminist researchers have documented several ethical concerns with qualitative research “many of which revolve around issues of honesty and lying, power and privilege, and the overall quality of the relationships between researcher and researched” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2002, p. 1). Doucet and Mauthner (2002) contend that ethical considerations should focus on relationships and accountability. Ethical research is then achieved through transparency and responsible relationship building with participants. One concern related to the specific design of this study is that of reactivity. Reactivity occurs when researchers expose influence on participants (Maxwell, 2013). Doucet and Mauthner (2006) discuss this idea as reflexivity and contend that data analysis poses the greatest power differential in qualitative research:

[i]n particular, the data analysis stage can be viewed as a deeply disempowering one in which our respondents have little or no control. Far removed from our respondents, we make choices and decisions about their lives: which particular issues to focus on in the analysis; how to interpret their words; and which extracts

to select for quotation. We dissect, cut up, distil and reduce their accounts, thereby losing much of the complexity, subtleties, and depth of their narratives [...] [w]e categorize their words into overarching themes, and as we do so, the discrete, separate and different individuals we interviewed are gradually lost. Unlike in the interview, we can simply stop reading (or listening) whenever we choose, and thus cut off the conversation at any point without concern that we will offend the respondent. (pp. 138-139)

To combat this ethical concern, I utilized member checking of the data in several steps of the heuristic process as indicated above. Ensuring that my participants have the opportunity to confirm the meaning of their own experiences ensures that I uphold the feminist framework that posits to be “on, by and for” women (Standing, 1998, p. 186).

Further, this study conformed to the Institutional Review Board guidelines indicating voluntary participation of all participants, the benefits outweigh the harm, and risk and benefits equally distributed among all participants (Human Subjects, 2016). Finally, this investigation complies with the Belmont Report as reported earlier in this chapter.

Summary

Chapter Three: Methodology has provided an outline and rationale of this research. I have described the rationale for qualitative research, the theoretical traditions of heuristic inquiry, transcendental phenomenology, and feminist research. The design of the study was explained along with sources of data and analysis measures. I concluded with ethical considerations surrounding limitations, validity, and reliability.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

In the American public-school system, 75% of teachers are female, and yet only about 30% of high school principals are female (Taie & Goldring, 2019). Further, both educational doctoral programs and administrative certification programs are comprised of women three times higher than enrolled men (Bassett, 2009; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; and Tallerico, 2000). Even though women make up much of the teaching force and outnumber men in higher education and certification programs, men disproportionality hold the high school principalship at a 3-1 ratio. This disproportionality continues to reinforce glass ceiling stereotypes indicating women are not as proficient in leadership, they are too emotional, that experience more role conflict than their male counterparts, and they lack mentorship and guidance to the principalship position and are uninterested in the long hours the position entails (Kattula, 2011).

Research indicates that female leadership styles are often preferred to their male counterparts (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2009; Lee, Smith, & Cioci 1993); and because the research on the principal's role in culture and achievement is paramount (Blasé, & Blasé, 1998; Glickman & Ross-Gordon, 2013; Fullan, 2007; Lambert, 1998; Reeves, 2004; Strong, Richard, & Catano, 2008; Walker & Kwan, 2012) the lack of female leadership in the high school is troubling. Further, the absence of female administrators in high school buildings minimizes the opportunity for mentorship, both of female students and female teachers. Kattula (2011) argued that mentorship is essential in the learning and development of teenage girls.

Most importantly, the disparity in high school principalship leads to inequity in decision making at the district or superintendency level. Brunner (2000) conveyed that the high school principalship is the primary driver for the superintendency and without representative voice in that position women are not able to influence policies that effect a profession that is primarily comprised of female educators.

This heuristic phenomenological inquiry explored the meaning women make from their experiences with both internal and external factors contributing to the disproportionate gender stratification of the principalship and their own career aspirations. Phenomenology was chosen because of its pre-disposition to make meaning or understanding of lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenology is study of human experience, (Perry, 2013) and seeks “to explicate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experiences of a person, or a group of people, around a specific phenomenon (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2010). This study sought to make meaning of female educators’ experiences with administration aspiration at the secondary level and utilized in depth, semi-structured interview techniques (in addition with other data sources) to distill meaning from their experiences.

The foundational inquiry of this research sought to understand the experiences and professional aspirations of women in the field of secondary education. In investigating the central research question; *what meanings do female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary school and its sub* questions:

1. What essence of meaning do female participants contribute to internal factors related to the disproportionality of male principalship at the secondary level?
2. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to their aspirations toward the principalship?
3. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to barriers to the principalship?

This research endeavored to identify the meaning women make from their experiences with continued factors that contribute to the disproportionality of male principals at the secondary level.

Historically, it is believed that women do not seek the principalship because of the intense time demands, tough ethical choices, student discipline issues, evaluative and termination requirements, conflicts with unions, and uncomfortableness with power (Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Mims, 1992). In seeking to answer the research questions this inquiry used document analysis of co-researchers' narrative writings, semi-structured interviews, and qualitative statistics from an internet-based survey. These three techniques are key in the undertaking of qualitative research. Qualitative research is suited for this exploration because “[q]ualitative inquiry seeks to discover and to describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them” (Erickson, 2011, p. 43).

As qualitative research is particularly useful in making meaning from discovery and understanding (Creswell, 2013) it was qualitative research that best uncovered the meanings co-participants made from their experiences. As there is no singular way to do

qualitative research, this feminist phenomenological study built upon its purpose, goals, audience, and researcher characteristics (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003) to construct the design, methodology, and analysis. Perry (2013) outlined that phenomenology studies the human experience, and to that end this inquiry sought to utilize interviews, document analysis of narrative writings, and qualitative statistics designed to understand the meaning co-participants made of their experiences.

This study operated in phases. Phase one was the Internet survey posted and responses gathered for a two-week period. As the study was distributed via personal network during phase two, respondents predominately resided and worked in the larger geographic area surrounding the mid-size Midwestern city. However, one respondent lived and worked in a large city on the West coast. After the two-week period of response gathering from the Internet survey, survey respondents who were willing to participate in the second phase of the study were identified and grouped by the number of years in education. Participants were grouped into clusters identified by those who were in the first seven years of their career, those that had been in education from 7 to ten years, ten to fifteen years and finally those with over twenty years of experience. From there, the number of participants in each section was entered a random number generator and two from each category were contacted about further participation. Eight of the nine contacted chose to participate resulting in phase two participation to be distributed with two women in the first seven years of their career, two women between seven and ten years of experience, one woman with between 10 and 15 years and two women with over 20 years of experience moving forward to become co-researchers in the second phase of research. From here, participants or respondents refer to those who completed or participated in the

internet survey, and co-researchers refer to those women who participated in interviews, phase two of the study. Interviews and transcription took place over another two-week time span.

The interviews were held individually at a location of the co-researcher's choice with seven happening face-to-face, and one conducted via telephone. Prior to beginning each interview, I welcomed each co-researcher and thanked them for their time. For the seven that occurred in person, I bought a warm beverage of their choice and we exchanged small talk about their days, families, and my research. Next, I gave an overview of the process, including during the interview and after. I explained the recording devices, and how their privacy would be secured. I offered them each the opportunity to ask questions about the process, the structure of this research, or how I became interested in the topic. Once they were comfortable, the interview began by turning on the recording device. For the phone interview, the same process was followed with as much fidelity as the telephone would allow. Following the interview, co-researchers received a thank you e-mail with a copy of their transcript for member-checking. The average length of the interviews was around thirty minutes including an explanation of the process, data security and privacy and procedural questions. After the interviews were completed, co-researchers were informed they would have the opportunity to view their transcript and make any changes or clarifications as necessary. All co-researchers approved their transcript as recorded with no further changes or clarifications necessary. In addition to time spent with co-researchers, I spent about fifteen hours on horizontalization analysis, and textural/structural profile creation of each co-researcher. This included the review of field memos,

horizontalization, finding invariant constituents, and the creation of an organizational matrix with examples of themes.

Data Collection and Analysis

In answering the research questions, this chapter reports the findings found from the heuristic phenomenological inquiry. While the heuristic framework guided the entirety of this inquiry, as explained in Chapter 3, the transcendental methodology of Moustakas (1994) was utilized in the analysis of interview data. First, a collective descriptive overview of the co-researchers' including their professional history and a brief biography is explained. Then qualitative statistics from the internet survey including descriptive statistics of the sample pool are presented. Next, a *textural/structural* profile of each co-researcher is illustrated. Here the textural (what) and structural (how) components of Moustakas (1994) transcendental methodology are combined into a singular synthesis of each co-researcher's meaning making, using data from the internet survey, which entailed demographic and professional information, narrative writings, and in-depth interviews. Then a *composite description* of the group is identified. Next, in an effort to answer the central research questions presented prior, the analysis of composite report provides the essence of the phenomenon for the group. The use of multiple data points supported crystallization in the synthesis of findings and identification of meaning making.

Internet Survey

Qualitative statistics came from an Internet-based survey. Sixty-eight women participated in the internet survey and served three purposes. The first purpose was to find and select co-researcher participants, and the second to crystalize the qualitative data found from the co-researcher interviews (Ellingson, 2009). Finally, the third purpose of the

Internet survey was to obtain the narrative writings that will later be discussed as a data source. The survey elicited sixty-nine responses, however, one respondent was male and his contributions were removed prior to analysis. Therefore, for this research, there were sixty-eight participants ($N=68$). Of the sixty-eight responses, seventeen were in their first seven years of their career, and sixteen have been working in education for over twenty years (see Table 2).

Table 2

Respondents' years of experience

	Years of Experience in Education						
	0-2	3-5	5-7	7-10	10-15	15-20	20+
Number of respondents	7	7	3	11	11	13	16

Seventy-nine percent held a master's degree or above (Table 3), 39 were told by their peers they would make a good principal; while 21 heard the same thing from building level administration, and 13 were told they would make a good principal from a district level administrator (Table 4).

Table 3

Respondents' levels of education

	Education Degree Level				
	Bachelor of Arts	Bachelor of Science	Masters	Education Specialist	Doctorate of Philosophy/Education
Number of Respondents	5	9	45	4	5

Table 4

Respondents' experiences being identified for leadership positions

	Peers		Building Level		District Level	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Number of Respondents	39	29	21	47	13	55

Thirty-nine percent (N=27) considered the principalship for themselves, but only six currently held principal certification. Complete survey data -including motherhood and marital status are included in Appendix C. In addition to the yes/no demographic questions, the Internet survey included two open-ended narrative questions for participants to elaborate on their own experiences. These questions were *what characteristics do you possess that would make you a good principal* and *do you seek the principalship? Why or Why not?* The answers to these narrative writings were analyzed using the techniques of qualitative document analysis and will be addressed next.

Narrative Writings

For this analysis, the narrative writings of 68 survey participants were analyzed. Analyzing the writings of the larger sample allowed characteristics, qualities, and traits and units of meaning to emerge from the data. By using document analysis techniques with the narrative writings of the larger survey sample, co-researchers' experiences were contextualized in a broader experience. Narrative writings were stimulated by the open-ended questions posited in the internet survey.

These questions asked *what characteristics do you possess that would make you a good principal* and *do you seek the principalship? Why or Why not?* The use of document analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) in this manner directly allowed me to identify meanings in their collective experiences. In my analysis of narrative writings, a two-step coding process was applied. First step coding utilized invariant constituents. Sixty-three invariant constituents were then combined during the imaginative variation stage of analysis into eleven concepts based on patterns and other similar characteristics. I coded each question

separately, resulting in 41 invariant constituents and five concept codes for the first question and 20 invariant constituents and six concept codes for the second. The concepts for the first question included: *abilities, skills, actions, technical knowledge, relationship building* and *values*. For the second question, concepts were: *innate characteristics, bureaucratic responsibility, relationship building, unfavorable characteristics, professional experiences, and personal life*. Invariant constituents were grouped into five meaning units (see Table 5). These meaning units included **Personal/Professional Balance, The Principalship, Technical Knowledge, Relationship Builder, and Personal Characteristics**. All five meaning units are echoed in the co-researcher interviews where

Table 5

Meaning units and invariant constituents in narrative writings

	Narrative Writing 1	Narrative Writing 2
The Principalship		
<i>Actions</i>	x	
<i>Bureaucratic Responsibility</i>		x
<i>Unfavorable characteristics</i>		x
Personal/Professional Balance		
<i>Values</i>	x	
<i>Personal Life</i>		x
Technical Knowledge		
<i>Technical Knowledge</i>	x	
<i>Professional Experience</i>		x
Relationship Builder		
<i>Relationship Building</i>	x	x
Personal Characteristics		
<i>Abilities</i>	x	
<i>Skills</i>	x	
<i>Innate Characteristics</i>		x

they were joined by a sixth theme, **Experiences Being Female** that was not present in narrative writings.

Personal/Professional Balance. Defined as the desire for a balance between personal and professional responsibilities, through the narrative writings it is understood that women see the high school principalship as one that is incongruent with their personal goals regarding marriage and family. In 18 incidents women articulated concerns regarding the time and evening supervision, motherhood, or salary influenced their perception that the principalship was an undesirable job. Some of their statements illustrative of this belief included:

- nightly time commitment is also an issue with 2 small children
- evening time with family
- sacrifice personal and family time
- time away from family
- family takes top priority
- I am able to have a pretty balanced life in the classroom
- There is no financial benefit [moving] from teaching salary in [county] school to small town principal

Participant responses regarding a balance between their private and professional life focused on their commitment to family and the lack of perceived available time due to evening and supervision commitments. As illustrated above, the financial incentive was not strong enough to balance the hours worked in the role. This incongruence in financial incentive with time commitment is a similar unfavorable characteristic as illustrated in **The Principalship**.

The Principalship. As a theme in the narrative writings, The Principalship was defined as the various components the role includes including bureaucratic responsibility, actions of principals, and perceived unfavorable characteristics of the role. The first

narrative question regarding characteristics participants possessed illustrated 19 instances of the invariant constituent *actions* as an element of this theme. These characteristics included participants believing they were capable in the areas of compromise, conflict resolution, and consensus building. While being able to solve problems by identifying solutions and having large scale vision. **The Principals** as a theme was present in narrative writing number two regarding participant aspirations to the principalship. In this regard, participants identified *bureaucratic responsibility* – specifically district office mandates or political maneuvering nine times: and they also identified *unfavorable characteristics* including the management of others frustrations/disappointments/fears and anger, perspectives identifying the position of principal as middle management, student discipline, and the *stress/pressure* that comes with the job twenty-five times. Examples of this perspective from the narrative writing include:

- Deals with too much discipline
- I'm not interested in the district office mandates given to admin
- I teach for students, I have zero desire to become a full-time disciplinarian.
- I think it would take too much time and stress
- I also do not want the stress, or responsibility to the parent community that role would require
- I do not want to deal with dissatisfaction of the teachers in their profession, I do not want to deal with the politics of district level administration, I do not want to have to meet with angry parents all the time, I want to work with kids directly
- The administrators that I know deal mainly with district or state politics and testing, adults, and disciplining children.

Despite a solid belief that the role of the principal was not a favorable one to many of survey respondents, women participants certainly illustrated the technical knowledge and skills necessary for the position.

Technical Knowledge. Technical knowledge was defined as the education, experience, and expertise participants obtained through coursework or professional experiences. There were 16 instances of technical knowledge being referenced in narrative writing number one, and 40 occurrences of professional experiences mentioned by survey participants in narrative writing number two. Some significant statements regarding the technical knowledge held by survey participants included:

- knowledge of content area and educational practice
- pedagogical knowledge
- deep knowledge of curriculum and instruction to support teachers and students
- technology
- lots of experience in education
- multiple schools at multiple levels in different content areas
- instructional design experience
- other career experiences
- depth and breadth of experience
- level of knowledge and application of special education services
- knowledge of content area and educational practice
- pedagogical knowledge

In addition to a “deep knowledge of curriculum and instruction” as one respondent articulated, women also referenced their ability to build relationships with a variety of stakeholders.

Relationship Builder. In the narrative writing number one, survey participants referenced their ability to build relationship with students enrolled in their school 15 times, and with the guardians of those students 9 times. Additionally, they articulated *relationship building with community stakeholders* (twice) and *staff* (twice) as relevant areas of relationship building that would make them good principals. Further **Relationship Builder** was present in 28 instances in the second narrative question regarding respondent’s desire

to seek the principalship. Most frequently these significant statements articulated a desire to stay in the classroom as opposed to transition into the principalship. For instance, one participant wrote “no, I would miss being in the classroom and worry it would be difficult to build relationship with kids because of less contact.” Another respondent added that her joy “comes from working with people” and a third, “I prefer my focus be working directly with students, I enjoy my relationship with them.”

Personal Characteristics. The first narrative question, *what characteristics do you possess that would make you a good principal?* elicited 65 of the participants to list personal characteristics that would make them strong principals. From this rich description 204 invariant constituents were identified that were later grouped into four interpretive concepts: *identifying traits, skills, abilities, and values held by participants*. These four significant concepts from narrative question one were combined with the significant concept *innate characteristics* (13 instances) from the second narrative writing *do you seek the principalship, why or why not?* Respondents believe their care and concern for others, their organizational abilities, effective communication skills, confidence, work ethic, ability to listen, visionary thinking, and intelligence would make them good principals. Participants believe they would be good principals because they are:

- logical and detail oriented
- open to constructive criticism
- visionary with high level interpersonal skills
- organized, [a] good communicator, [and] effective at bringing different perspectives together
- fair, thorough [and] organized
- diplomatic, patient, [and a] problem solver
- good at compromise, seeing the big picture, delegation, [and] management.

Further, respondents identify their abilities in:

- leadership, fairness, and ability to build relationships
- clear visionary thinking
- critical thinking
- mediation
- communication

as skills that would be beneficial to them in the principal role. Further they identify themselves as:

- attentive, aware, nurturing, kind, present, and knowledgeable
- collaborative
- passionate
- smart, confident, [and] able to manage multiple priorities.

Clearly women believe themselves to be capable of the position of principal as they were able to offer significant characteristics that they believe would allow them to find success as a principal. However, despite these **Personal Characteristics**, the necessary **Technical Knowledge** and a commitment to **Relationship Building**, survey participants see **The Principalship** as a position that is complex and unappealing – due in part to the perceived time commitments and unbalanced professional duties in relationship to their **Personal/Professional** balance. These five themes are echoed in the interviews of co-researchers where they are joined by a sixth theme **Experiences Being Female** that will be explored later in this chapter.

Interviews

In phenomenology, open-ended participant interviews seek to understand the lived experience of the individual (Moustakas, 1994) and “often data collection in phenomenological studies consists of in-depth and multiple interviews with participants (Creswell, 2013 p. 81). Moustakas (1994) guides researchers to use two general questions, both broad in nature, in interviewing to ascertain the experience of the phenomenon: what

have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon and what contexts or situations have influenced your experiences with the phenomenon? These two questions, “focus attention on gathering data that will lead to a textual and structural description of the experiences, and ultimately provide an understanding of the common experiences of the participants” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). These questions provide an understanding of common experiences among participants (Creswell, 2013), but are not the only two questions utilized in open-ended interviewing in the phenomenological tradition. In deciding what questions best will illicit the rich descriptions (Patton, 2015) necessary in qualitative research, interviewers may choose one of the following three approaches:

1. Informal conversational interview
2. The interview guide
3. The standardized open-ended interview. (Patton, 2015, p. 437)

For this inquiry, the interview guide was utilized. Each interview was conducted with 9-15 questions (Appendix B) which sought to illuminate the meanings co-researchers made from their experiences and how that meaning making impacted their career aspirations. In this manner, attention was focused on the textual and structural description of their experiences providing for a common understanding of the phenomenon. The questions included in the interview guide were primarily experience/behavior and opinion/values based (Patton, 2015).

In phenomenology specifically, the goal of understanding the lived experiences of the participant is the desired outcome of an interview. In this vain interview guides can “provide some structure for the encounter, getting all the questions answered or all the areas covered is not the purpose of the interview. The researcher has to be captive to the larger goal of the interview – understanding” (Bogdan & Biklen 2007, p. 106).

In qualitative research, interviewing can either be the lead approach to data collection or, as in this case, interviews can be used in conjunction with other unobtrusive investigative techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Here document analysis and a mixed methods survey complemented the lead approach of co-researcher interviews.

While the overarching framework of this research is heuristic, interview analysis occurred during the illumination of data analysis which utilized a transcendental phenomenology framework. Explained in detail, Chapter 3: Methodology, analysis included the horizontalization, reduction, cauterization, and theme identification (Moustakas 1994) necessary for the transcendental method. Transcendental phenomenological analysis creates meaning from lived experiences when a researcher moves through the process of epoché, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and finally, synthesis of description. This process created a framework from which I describe what I saw in terms of co-researcher experiences. In witnessing their experiences, transcendental analysis required me to set aside my own understanding or experiences in effort to reduce their experiences to “what is texturally meaningful” (Husserl, 1931, p. 114, as cited in Moustakas (1994). From the full text transcripts invariant constituents were identified, clustered, and themed.

The next section of this chapter presents the individual textural/structural descriptions of the co-researchers. These combination textural/structural descriptions offer both the what and how of the phenomenon experienced and utilize data from all three data sources; including co-researcher responses on the internet survey, their narrative writings, and interview responses. Described in depth in Chapter 1: Introduction and Chapter 3: Methodology, the phenomenon being studied is the continued gender stratification of the

principalship in which a field comprised of 75% female teachers (NCES, 2014) is led primarily by male principals (Taie & Goldring, 2019). This study sought to understand the meaning women make about that discrepancy and the possible impact on their own career aspirations. These individual textural/structural descriptions are followed by a composite report in which meaning making is used to make sense of the what of the phenomenon and the how of the phenomenon for the group.

Collective Description of co-researchers

Co-researchers were given the opportunity to select a pseudonym, and if they did not have a preference one was randomly assigned from popular names around the time of their birth. One pseudonym was personally elected by a co-researcher and the other seven were assigned random names. Co-researchers included eight women; Courtney, Natasha, Tiffany, Tara, Lucy, Gail, Samantha, and Susan with secondary education experience; they were primarily White with only one co-researcher identifying as bi-racial. They spanned a professional spectrum from two years to twenty+ years in education, including current classroom teachers, former principals who went back to the classroom, and retired educators. Seven of the eight held advanced degrees, two at the doctoral level. Six are married, and five have children. Of the mothers, four have young children currently residing in the home, and one has adult children.

Textural/Structural Profiles

Courtney. Courtney is a European-American, English Language Arts teacher in her eighth year of teaching at a large suburban high school. She has a master's degree in secondary education and is working toward her Ed.D. Her undergraduate degrees are in psychology and women's studies. Courtney's intention was to study and practice law after

taking a gap year between undergraduate and graduate school; however, after taking a paraprofessional job for the “insurance and benefits” Courtney reported “I just ended up falling in love with the kiddos, so then I went back to school for education.” Courtney completed a traditional university graduate certification program and currently teaches a combination of English Language Arts courses at the on level and honors/Advanced Placement level. Courtney is married, with a young child at home. She has held various teacher leadership positions during her tenure and holds administrative certification and licensure in the state in which she teaches. However, Courtney does not seek the principalship. She explained

I don't want to be a building admin at all [...] I'm kind of real specific, I don't want to be a building administrator and I don't want to be a Super. So someone who works with curriculum and instruction, or there was an new position created for, what we're still calling right now CTE [career and technical education] [...] something a little more policy driven.

In addition to teaching, Courtney holds club/activity sponsorships and feels strongly in the connection built between teacher/sponsors and students and finds value in the “deeper, different” relationship that occurs in that space.

In Courtney's work history she has worked for five principals and three of them have been female. Therefore, Courtney's experience with a disproportionate number of males in the principalship is different than other co-researchers. However, Courtney works in a district that employs 22 high school administrators (head principals and assistants) and of those 22 positions, only five are female. She explained that in her district there is a “clear pipeline” to the principalship by administrative role, and none of the female administrators are currently “on that path.”

Because of her background as a women's studies major during her undergraduate years, Courtney has undergone significant reflection around women and the principalship. "I find it really interesting, so interesting that there's still this gap." While she was unaware of the national average prior to participating in this study, the disproportionality did not surprise her. She believes the principalship to be incompatible with a hands-on approach to family. She explained:

two of the three women who I worked for did not have children of their own, which I also found very fascinating. Um, as if there was like not a requirement, but maybe they felt it was a requirement to, to dedicate their time exclusively to being an administrator, and, three out of the five didn't have children, including one of the male, uh, figures

In addition to contemplation around the ability to raise a family or have children and be a principal, Courtney also explored the idea of emotion and empathy in the principalship.

She recounted:

One of the most empathetic principals that I've ever worked for is a male. Um, which is, is interesting. And I have actually put some thought into this before, kind of, looking at the different leadership styles. I have wondered if females, feel the need to kind of put aside any, displays of emotion, to be taken seriously in their role as a female leader. Um, because all three women who I worked for, were not super emotional in the workplace.

Courtney's favorite part of teaching is the connection she can make with students. She works to cultivate authentic connection in her classroom through literature, and through her sponsorship of clubs and activities. When working for principals who were inauthentic, or unable to display emotions, Courtney believes this decreases the connection they can make with students and staff. While she is not sure if that difference is specific to gender, she has noticed a connection to leadership style. She reflected that upon deeper thought relational leaders, who build strong connections, have often been female:

I think one of the male principals who I worked for, students in general [...] would say that they didn't feel connected to that particular principal. Um, regardless of their [the students] gender. Yeah, sometimes students didn't know who that principal was, even.

She continued,

I'm trying think of what students reported. There was a principal who I worked for, and, and she was strict and it was, it didn't matter which gender she was dealing with, when she was, I don't want to say doling out punishment, when she was disciplining she still connected with them.

Given her past reflection on the principalship, it was no surprise that Courtney has a well-developed sense regarding her abilities to do the principalship, in that she does not think the position is right for her. However, she articulates her attentive and aware nature, intellect and nurturing demeanor as characteristics that would serve her well should she choose to pursue the position. Her peers believe that she connects well with students; a key responsibility of the principalship in her opinion, and that she is nurturing and approachable. Throughout her career and across multiple buildings Courtney's peers have said to her "you know they [students] will come to you after school, just to be near you, you know, be with you, um, even sometimes socializing about nothing content related, like it's a safe space." Courtney's colleagues have also remarked that she is "very articulate, bright, good and seek knowledge of the content." On the other hand, Courtney perceives that she does not make a good first impression, "it's kind of hard to have a leader and have to say give them three months and you'll love them." Additionally, she believes that her attendance and punctuality (in that she is frequently absent or late to work) would detract from her ability to be a good principal.

Courtney's career aspirations "are kind of backwards" she believes. While she loves the classroom, both the content and the connection with students, she is seeking

advancement to the district office level while her son is growing up. She described her aspirations as:

I want to view my career backwards. So it's like, I, I would stay in the classroom right now, um, but it's not conducive with, kind of, some outside factors in my life. And, so, I'd like to jump, and to move into a role that is a little more consistent in hours, maybe a little less taxing in the unknown, and then I would like to come back down, once kids are grown, and work back in the classroom.

In seeking a role that is “less taxing in the unknown” Courtney does not want to be the public face of a building or district. She is seeking a role at the district level that is “not as reactionary” as the principalship or superintendency. Fullan (2014) contends that the characteristics that lead a strong principal to school success are vital in district leaders as well, and “[l]arge-scale success will occur only when system members begin to act from a shared, coherent mind-set” (p. 104). As part of her own doctoral work, Courtney is completing a practicum with a female assistant superintendent who has been named as the district’s next superintendent and is spending a year in transition. In working with her, Courtney has witnessed strong relational leadership and logical thinking that she finds important in a leader. Courtney reflected:

I didn't know her very well at all, before my field work started, and um, so getting to work closely with her, and shadowing her and having her build up my field work, um, has been very fascinating for me. And, what I like about this person is her background is in math, in fact she has a Masters in her content which is unusual in any content. And so I always think of math people in a stereotypical way, like black and white thinking, right. But she also has a degree in counseling. So she's a very interesting combination of these things where she's very logical in terms of decision making but she also empathetic. In a meeting I was in, a strategic plan meeting, they asked us to identify who we were by role, but then the hat that we wanted to be known as. And she said, "I will always, I consider myself a school counselor." And so I found that really, really fascinating because that's a, that's a, leader saying I will never lose sight of putting people as people first. You know, people are not numbers to me, they are people, and so I like that, um she makes a tremendous effort to get to know

people personally, she not only knows names, she knows stories. So when we did building visits for new principals and she brought them homemade cookies, she knew to ask about, "How's your daughter?" "How's your dog?" "How's your, um..."

In shadowing this female leader Courtney experienced strong, competent female leadership in a capacity that was not the building principal and that utilized a “behind the scenes” approach that she values. Courtney also experienced the inclusionary tendencies of female leaders that make them more democratic, and thus, better situated to address issues of equity and diversity (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2013; Noremore & Jean-Marie, 2007) which is aligned with Courtney’s student-centered approach. Courtney’s valuing of the democratic and relational nature of this female mentor’s leadership example is aligned with Munir and Aboidullah (2018) contention that the more genuine and relational components of female leadership are viewed as increasingly transformational in nature, and therefore increasingly desired leadership traits.

Courtney has both the interest and capability to think deeply around gender disproportionality of the principalship and has engaged in that work to a certain degree. However, deep concern or care about closing the gap and increasing the number of female principals in the field is not an experience Courtney has undergone. Additionally, while Courtney has experienced several female principals in her tenure, the experience of working for a female leader (or later, male ones) did not influence her career aspirations to or away from the principalship. Other factors, such as her own abilities, and inabilities, desire for time at home with her son and a balanced personal/professional life are more impactful in her decision making.

Natasha. Natasha, a Bi-racial public-school educator for over 20 years, knew education was her pathway in childhood. Her undergraduate pathway was through a traditional university undergraduate program and she holds a masters in K-12 Urban Leadership and her doctorate in Educational Leadership. She currently holds administrative certification and has held the secondary principalship in previous roles. Natasha is married with young children and credits an early superintendent in “seeing something” in her that put her on the path to leadership. She explained:

I was working in the context of this union representation, my superintendent recognized something in me in the meetings, and he wrote my letter of recommendation to get my masters in school administration. Um, he had met with me and spoken with me at length about what my vision was for myself and, um, he supported that, uh, completely.

Natasha’s pathway to school leadership included teacher leadership, union representation, building leadership as an assistant principal and interim principal, and then a return to the classroom while designing a public charter school she will lead in the future. Natasha has worked in almost every facet of schools, from a kindergarten volunteer, to long term substitute positions, to the health room clerk and eventually her own classroom at the elementary level. Additionally, Natasha spent time as an interim principal of an elementary school, then a teacher specialist at the secondary level serving as an assistant principal of a high school and then:

after being in administration I came back into the classroom so that I could have a baby. Um, I'm getting ready to step back out. Actually, I'm the Executive Director of an educational nonprofit that's been running for two years currently, with my working as a teacher. A fourth grade, fifth grade teacher.

In reflecting on why she left administration to return to the classroom, Natasha cites the long hours and lack of time with her family: “that was, you know, eighty, ninety hours a

week, and so, when you want to have a baby, you can't even ... you can't see your husband, you don't get pregnant." The stress Natasha experienced during her time as an administrator supports Spillane and Lee's (2012) recommendation that principal preparation programs should increase education surrounding the "emotional dimensions of the work" (p. 456).

Natasha's career has snaked through public, private, well established, and turn around schools. She currently teaches in an urban district and will be starting a charter school in the same suburb of a large West Coast city. Natasha illustrates a commitment to social justice through her work. She uses the language of inclusion and community and justice when telling her story. In the classrooms and schools that she leads

we do mindfulness in the classroom, we do restorative circles in the classroom, and pretty immediately they know that although I have high expectations and all of that, that, that I love them immediately. And how special they are and how much they matter. And I do it in, in the classroom design, and... and then if we're talking about as an administrator, um, opening the doors for teachers. One of the things that my uh, principal and I would do at length is we were in the process of uh, supporting a school that was in the midst of turnaround. Um, and so there's just a... We called it a lot of scar tissue. And you have to just open your doors and, and ears and heart and listen. Um, with compassion versus listening with judgment. Um, about different people's experience and then find ways to help support their concerns throughout the rest of the time that you work with them.

Through the various positions Natasha has held she has worked with both male and female principals and has spent a lot of time in deep reflection over and around gender differences in the role, and equity in leadership. These reflective components are in line with the way Natasha reflects on other issues of social justice such as race, socio-economics, power, and privilege. Natasha's core belief in the principalship as a position situated to address

concerns of equity and social justice is reflective of the intersectionality of her experience as a biracial, female principal (Davis, 2008).

She describes experiences with female principals that were both good and not so good at their jobs: and she has served on teams with and under male principals that were “morale killers.” Of the differences in female leadership she remembered:

I’m currently in a situation where we were uh, observing the school morale drop and it wasn’t from just the teachers’ perspective but it was the kids’ perspective, it was the parents’ perspectives. I’m grateful I wasn’t part of that, the initial conversation where they were bringing in lawyers and this and that. They really just wanted to run [the former] principal up the flag pole. But she really struggled with her interpersonal communication and therefore created a lot of suspicion and a lot of distrust in a staff that had been historically, you know, and still is, you know, veteran teachers, super committed, will do whatever you want. You know? Whatever it takes kind of you know, mindset. And [she] completely turned it upside down. People were, you know, went to eating in their classrooms and not wanting to come out. Not socializing, not showing up to any of the school like, functions. Um, because it’s not contract. It really kind of started to go into that uh, world of just very, it- very dark and bleak. And then that was the end of the- that’s how summer started. At the end of the summer we had a new administration, new outlook and to me, like I’m getting ready to write an article about it. It was so profound, the change in the staff and the, the parents. I mean, you walk onto campus, there’s literally- there was literally a red carpet (laughs), with music playing as the kids were coming in. The school is a celebration. And there’s just such a different vibe. The teachers are smiling, the teachers- I mean, this is the beginning of the school year and people are like, “Oh, I can’t wait to get back to work.” Everybody’s texting back and forth, “Oh my gosh, have you met her yet? She’s amazing.” And so it’s um, the impact that a principal can have, or even if you go all the way up to the superintendency, uh, the, the impact that something like that, someone like that can have on the tone of, of the entire organization is incredible. And I didn’t realize how intense it was until these experiences um, with, with my own context.

Natasha also recounted an experience working for a male principal who was very managerial in nature, and often abusive to those working with him. She described him as a leader who acted one way in front of a crowd and another in a private room and would

scream and yell. Natasha identifies the current socio-political climate as one that is ripe for female leadership. She said:

I think given how things have been going lately for women, I think it's our time. Um, I think the, the power of women has not been understood, especially in the context of social services or working with children and families and that kind of thing. Um, I think... I know this sounds hokey, but the time of, of women attempting to go into leadership and adopting all of the worst aspects of men in leadership is not the way that we need to be going. I think that we need to more lean into our femininity as a source of our power versus as a source of our, uh, a weakness, as- or perceived weakness.

Natasha has experience working with a variety of female principals and believes that encouraging female leadership is not enough; but instead careful attention of how women lead and the considerations made to support the growth of women working with them is important. She remembered:

Well I've had uh, a woman administrator who was phenomenal at building leaders. I think everyone that worked on the leadership team ended up becoming uh, a specialist or a principal that had worked under her. She was amazing. [She would ask] "What problems do you want to solve? Okay, let's see how you can solve that." And you would check in with her with your plan and then she'd help you tweak it, and then she'd say, "Go do it." And that was for us, I think the most powerful kind of leadership to have. So she was amazing. [...] And then working under someone else who was very limiting again was rough. [...] she was great but at the same time there was a... she had a work ethic that... well one, she didn't have children. Not that that's a bad thing, right? But she didn't and so she didn't quite understand uh, like when you'd call in and say, "I- my child is vomiting everywhere, I have to stay home." And she would say things like, "Enjoy the day off." Which were a ton of like, micro-digs at the fact that you're home.

Natasha has taken her vast and complex experience and decided that she wants the principalship for many reasons. She believes she has a clear vision and passion for the success of all students, and the ability to build bridges across many communities. She articulated the many reasons she seeks the principalship:

The bigger question you have to ask yourself in the morning is: If everything in life comes with problems, are these the ones you're willing to wake up for? If the answer is yes, then move forward with the principalship. The work is tough and at times relentless, you need to have a strong sense of purpose and passion to keep you going.

Natasha has spent a lot of time on, and has a deep capacity for, understanding the gendered discrepancies of the high school principalship. Her understanding of the status quo is built upon understanding intersectional identity issues women face, including but not limited to, race, economics, motherhood, religion, etc and how they intersect with professional aspirations. She knows the role to be unfavorable in its scope and sequence and has witnessed traditional and nontraditional leadership tendencies from male and female principals. Natasha places the gender disproportionality of the high school principalship in a large social context regarding the #metoo era, and a certain "coming of age" of female empowerment and leadership. Additionally, Natasha holds a belief that positions of power have continued to go to males because women, in an effort to belong, have tried to lead in traditionally masculine ways. Natasha's experience regarding the masculine ways women have traditionally been required to "try on" leadership is echoed by Kruse and Krumm in their 2016 study using standpoint theory to articulate the difference in women's experiences with leadership. She articulates that leading in ways that are authentic to womanhood could make the position both more desirable and manageable, "there's, there's a power to be had uh... a strength. A benefit, I should say, to, the organization. If we could lead with femininity versus leading with, with this something that's not of us, right?" Harding (2001) agree that the inclusion of female experiences in educational leadership roles increases access to experiential learning unique to the female experience.

Tiffany. Tiffany has spent the last six years teaching choral music at the high school level in an outer ring/rural suburban school. She teaches in the same suburban district as Courtney, with the same gendered breakdown of her administrative team; male head principal, one female assistant principal and two male assistant principals. Tiffany recounts playing school at a young age “the earliest memories of me teaching would definitely be, like, elementary school, playing school” and later teaching private cello lessons. Her childhood desire to teach music led her to an undergraduate degree in musical and performing arts and then she went on to complete her masters in music education. Tiffany, a European-American mother of young children, is married and while she has thought about a terminal degree in the future, including potential administrative certification, she chose not to pursue the principalship because “it would take me out of the classroom.” Tiffany roots her career ambitions in connection with students and staying rooted in the choral music community. She explains: “I think bottom line is like connecting with students and relationships are [...] I wanna be able to leave my mark with that, just the foundation and building relationships with the kids and making something memorable.”

Tiffany holds teacher leadership positions in her school, such as department chair, and would like to expand her impact through leadership at the state association levels or potentially in higher education later in her career. When she articulates what she referred to as the “book jacket highlights” of her career she concluded “I do see myself teaching teachers and being a mentor. I feel like that’s something I’m already interested in now, and I take those roles within my community, with my ability to lead the choir teaching teachers.” Therefore, she seeks “the terminal degree of some sort that would allow me to teach in a higher education level” Tiffany’s favorite part of teaching is the connection with

students through music, and her least favorite part is “all of the administrative busy work that comes along with a choir program.” She explains that she was running late to our interview because she was,

doing data entry on tuxedo and dress payments. And filling out forms and enrolling kids at different choir, like all that data entry is my least favorite part, ‘cause I’m not efficient. I know my fault is data entry. And its, there’s nothing enjoyable to that.

Tiffany quickly articulated her strengths in connecting with students, level headedness, and visionary thinking and believes her colleagues would describe her as

clam-mannered and able to assess, like a high-stakes of high-stress situation. In a way, to see all perspectives before moving forward. So, I, I tend to be good at like keeping emotions out of decision making, considering all factors and all stakeholders, and ultimately is boiling down to, you know, what’s best for kids.

Despite quickly being able to articulate her strengths and things her colleagues would say about her when she experienced being tapped for the department chair job, she wondered if it was due to her gender or her qualifications. She explains:

the chair position opened-up. And the person who left [was] male [...] and, I was asked [to apply] for it. And I remember thinking, [was I asked only] 'cause I'm the only female really in my departments. Or [I kept] asking myself, is my head principal asking me to do that because I'm a girl? Or because he thinks that I do get up, you know? I got inside my head a little bit with that. 'Cause there aren't...well, it's about half and half department chairs right now [male/female][...] Uh, it took a lot of time. I ended up getting jobs, and even still, I had that voice inside my head, I was like okay, I'm only getting [it because I'm female].

Tiffany has only worked for male principals but articulated that her current (male) principal mentored female and teacher leaders equally – stating that before him she never had a principal seek her out for leadership roles. In this regard, Tiffany’s experience with a male principal is one that is deeply committed to both collaborative inclusive leadership. His commitment in mentoring and tapping members of underrepresented voices of

leadership, like those of women offer's Tiffany (and her school) a strong example of democratic leadership (Lieberman & Miller, 2004; Spillane, 2006, Ryand & Rottman, 2009). Part of Tiffany's response to being tapped for future leadership was to think deeply about the gendered nature of leadership in education and she feels a sense of empowerment in being identified as a woman who has the skillset to be a future leader.

Tiffany identifies her ability to consider all facts, rationally think, keep an open mind, and build relationships as characteristics that would make her a good principal. Despite possessing characteristics that would make her a good principal and being identified by building leadership as a future leader, Tiffany does not have career aspirations to the principalship because she perceives the role as unfavorable. Tiffany believes that principals only work with students when they are struggling or at the absolute top of their game, not in between where "growth happens." She explained:

I just have this external perception of principals not seeing kids at their best. And, I have that opportunity all day, every day. And I think most inter-interactions with administration is that I, something is going exceptionally well, or something's not on target. So, um, there's the joy and just the everyday classroom teaching, you know, when, and getting to see kids operate at their best. Whereas, a principal might not get to see that.

Moreover, in thinking about the female principals she knows she reports,

I don't know how they would do it. You know, uh, most administrators, female administrators, that I've observed, their kids are well into school, like middle or high school. Um, but having you know, a small child at home and then having this 24/7 on-call situations, I don't know if I would be ready to commit to that, in my prime, which would be now.

Chirchello (2004) supports Tiffany's believe that the predominant student contact of principals is that of discipline. Further, Tiffany's understanding of the role of the principal is supported Eckman and Keller's (2010) contention that the balancing of different

components of the principalship creates an increased role conflict for female principals as opposed to their male counterparts.

Tiffany believes that the time to enter administration for her would be in the “prime” of her life. An experienced educator, Tiffany has six years in the classroom and believes she is currently able to have the energy necessary to fulfill the time demands of the role. However, this is also the time in her life where she has young children and “motherhood is a major focus, too.” Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007) found that women who entered the principalship were more likely to be negatively judged by their peers for balancing the job responsibilities of the principalship with motherhood and attempting that balancing act is not desirable for Tiffany. The perceived inability to juggle family and the obligations of the principalship, combined with facets of the job that Tiffany does not enjoy illustrate to her that despite her skillset the principalship is not a good fit for her:

I was thankful that somebody told me when I was a young teacher, that I could do this [be a leader], but I'm telling you that really empowering, uh, and heart-felt. and I've thought about it [the principalship], but I see administration with like, the stuff that I'm not good at. Like, for example, the clerical, I just find so undesirable. And once you take away the part that brings me so much joy, like taking music to kids, I don't know if I would be happy, being a principal.

The reflective nature that Tiffany applies to her thinking about her place in her school and the larger context of her career has granted her a well-reasoned explanation of her career aspirations and how they align with her talents and the capacity in which she would like to utilize her time.

While Tiffany has spent significant time in reflection on her own leadership path and the impact or affect her gender has played in opportunities she has been granted, she does not articulate concern for the larger system of education and gender discrepancies in

the position. This is in part due to her belief that the administrative team in her building works as “a team of principals” and not in a traditional head/assistant hierarchy and there is a strong female leader on that team. The lack of concern could also be a function of experience in that Tiffany works for a building with a long-standing principal and has not witnessed the way gender discrepancy plays out in the role. Further, Tiffany’s reflective capacity on gender and its relation with mentorship, leadership, or other capacity building does not go farther than surface level. She articulates several moments of questioning if opportunities were granted because she was female, but does not delve into the why, how, or what of that would be.

Tara. Tara, a European-American science teacher in her fifth-year, teaches at a large suburban school. She works in the same district as Courtney and Tiffany, but in a third high school. Tara’s high school is led by the only female secondary principal in the school district, and it is the only building Tara has worked in. Therefore, Tara has only worked for a singular female principal in her education tenure. She teaches a variety of science courses including physical science and chemistry, and a college preparedness elective course. Tara received her teaching license through a traditional university bachelor’s degree program and has completed her master’s degree in Educational Leadership. Tara is single and does not have children, although she desires marriage and children in the future. She has known since high school that she wanted to be an educator. She described that she wanted to be either a doctor or a teacher in childhood, and around high school chose the education pathway. Tara explained:

[when I was younger, I knew I wanted to either be a teacher or a doctor or something in the medical field. And, um, having a family is very important to me and so, when I was looking that those two careers I knew I would have

more time to have a family if I was a teacher [...] so that's when I decided to go into teaching.

Tara identified strong leadership characteristics as collaboration and compromise and has held various leadership positions in her building, including lead teacher in a professional learning community (PLC), member of a technology innovation team, and interim member on building leadership. She believes she is open and people feel comfortable approaching her. She likes to try new initiatives, new teaching strategies, and has strong technology skills which she views as “important for 21st century learning.” Her colleagues would articulate that Tara is a positive person who keeps students best interest in mind when she is designing new lessons or implementing a change in her classroom.

Tara has worked for a female principal for the entirety of her career and believes that having a female principal has impacted specific content areas in her building (math and science) and perceives that subconscious bias on the part of the female principal has led to an increased position of women in those fields in her building. She remarked:

I would say that with having a female principal it is surprising to see that what is typically a male dominant content area is very female dominant. I feel in my building compared to others [...] like, who they hired to do sciences [...] like the hiring practices of that. Science and math especially are very female-driven at our school. I think it could be a subconscious. But I truly don't know like what, why that is, I just know it's different than other buildings.

Further, Tara expresses that working for a female principal has allowed her a type of mentor as she navigates her own teaching pathway and career aspirations, “I think it [working for a female principal] has encouraged [me] because I think I relate more to her because she is female. And kind of like look up to her.” While Tara has experienced working for a female principal and has been mentored by her, she does not seek the principalship:

I don't have my certification but I did, I finished the program. But I, when I went into it I was like well this...becoming a principal will like, it could be a possibility. Like I was considering it. But now, after completing my masters and just working as long as I have, I think my heart is more towards the instructional design coaching rather than administration. And so right now, I would say no I do not desire.

Tara does not include the principalship in her career aspirations and will not seek principal certification, despite the educational credentials to do so. However, Tara recognizes her ability to compromise and strong collaboration skills as characteristics that would make her a good principal and she finds value and fulfillment in working with other passionate, capable adults. Instead, she articulates aspirations for the instructional coaching pathway. While Tara's desire to impact teaching and learning through instructional coaching builds on her strengths and personal goals, DiPaola and Hoy (2015) argue that "the essence of instructional leadership itself suggests that the more focused a principal's work is on the processes of teaching and learning, the more positive the influence on student outcomes will be" (p. 93) and thus school principals must be committed to the work of instructional leadership.

Perhaps contributing to her wish to move to an instructional coaching position, Tara stresses out "when it comes to communication. I overanalyze. Um so that sometimes makes it so that I don't communicate as much as I probably should. I could see that holding me back as a principal." Further, Tara can be stubborn and "occasionally I do get overwhelmed because I like to be involved with so much that here are times that things fall through the cracks because I am so involved with other activities."

In addition to understanding the internal characteristics that would prevent her from being the kind of principal she views as capable; Tara holds a belief that the principal role is one that deals predominately with discipline and with mandates from district office:

I know that principals have to deal with, um, more of kind of like the discipline, whether that is them dealing with parents or whether that is them dealing with students. And I can do that, I just don't enjoy it very often. And I feel, as a principal, yes you have a say in like, the initiatives that are...you're implementing in your school, but often its district office.

When not handling student management concerns, Tara's view of the principal is one that is isolating and removed from student and teacher interaction:

lots of meetings and being what...like, either being in their office working on whether that's district office stuff or working on, just like, administrative team stuff, but, meetings, working in their office, or occasionally out in the hallways observing students and even less occasionally observing teachers.

Tara articulates what the role of the principal should be,

I think a good principal needs to work to have relationships with the staff. I think that they need to be excited about the changes that they are implementing. And hold the staff accountable for various, whatever that is. Whether that's showing up to work on time or if that is, like, implementing these new changes that they want to make. Um, and being, just having like an open door that people feel comfortable enough to come and talk to them.

For Tara, these viewpoints outline a job that is undesirable and ineffective in building the type of capacity in other leaders that Tara feels important for student achievement and growth. This belief aligns with Spillane and Lee's (2012) summarization that the principalship as one that is fragmented, exhausting, and includes a major workload.

Because Tara has always worked for a female principal, her experiences regarding the gender disparity of the principalship are likely to be skewed. She recognizes the different impacts having a female leader has had on her building including mentorship opportunities, increased female hiring in math and science fields and a strong culture of

collaboration (Blackmore, 2011) but has not given thought to the gender disparity in the principalship across the field of secondary education. She has experienced some level of reflection on how that impacts her own career aspirations – stating she views her female principal as a mentor – but does not illustrate a larger reflective nature surrounding the impact that role may or may not have on others’ aspirations toward the principalship. For Tara, there is an absence of meaning making in her experience with the continued gender disparity of the high school principalship because she has not experienced the discrepancy and does not have a wide or deep enough level of experience in other buildings or for other principals from which to draw comparisons.

Lucy. Lucy is a young, single, European-American teacher in her second year in the classroom. She teaches social studies and speech and debate at a small rural school a few hours outside a major midwestern metropolitan area. Her teaching license was gained through a traditional university undergraduate program, and she has known that she wanted to be a teacher since high school. Lucy describes making the decision by saying:

I don't remember specifically when. I had kind of, earlier in high school had the thought that I wanted to work in a museum or do archival work, and then I realized I didn't think that I would like working in an office setting [...] and I wanted to find a different way to use my love of history, and so some point later in high school probably.

Lucy has a graduate degree in public policy and does not anticipate having children in the future. She entered the teaching profession because of a love of history, but now identifies students as her favorite component of the job:

I think my favorite thing about teaching is the students. Which is not what I originally thought my favorite thing about teaching was going to be. But, even on, we had open house last Monday, and a lot of my students came without their parents. Which I was kind of expecting, but I did not expect so many students to come without their parents and then just sit in my room for all of

open house. And I think that they're really good at making me laugh, and they work really hard, and they're not like even, and I tell them this like on the first day of school. That I don't expect them to love history the way that I do, but I always expect them to try their best. And I think that they, with few exceptions, they never disappoint me.

While early in her career, Lucy already holds teacher leadership positions, and has experienced the phenomenon of being “tapped” for leadership roles. She works for a principal who encourages her skill development and has offered her opportunities to grow but has never explicitly told her to consider the principalship. Despite explicit encouragement to think about the principalship, Lucy has experience learning from a principal with a strong commitment to shared leadership and collective decision making (Ishimaru, 2013). Lucy is a member of her teacher leadership team, sponsors numerous activities, and serves on school wide committees. Her colleagues view her as capable “they told me last year that I didn’t seem like a first-year teacher” and are curious as how she manages all that she is involved in. Lucy laughed and said my colleagues would say I:

do too much, too organized, and how do you do everything. Mostly because our teacher, our math teacher that's taught there for 29 years said all those things to me Friday after school. So, yeah I think for what it's worth. Even last year I told one of my colleagues this. That most of the people in the school don't, won't perceive me a first year teacher last year, and that was. I mean that was like nice that they thought that I was like really good at my job and things like that, but it was also frustrating because there were things that I had never had to do before. Like the first time I had to call DCF, or the first time I had to like, call a parent or something like that. That I hadn't done, and that would be nice to have people that were, like more like oh let me help you do this, let me show you how to do this form, or this like, this is where you keep your lunch or things like that.

Extremely capable, Lucy is also an ambitious woman, but upon entering education, her career aspiration was not the principalship – Lucy sees herself in advocacy, instructional work, or even politics later in her career. She remarked:

I don't know. The [state] Democrats told me, they sent me a letter and they said that they would, that I don't know the word... Support me if I did. But I was like, I don't know if I wanna run for office and I don't know if I wanna for like [...] state senator or something like that.

However, she explains that the principalship is not off the table completely:

for a long time, did not see myself being principal. I was not interested in it. I basically wanted to move directly from the classroom to policy making. But I think as I've got older I see that there's a gap that probably should be filled in those careers and [that] I would need to have more experience in school leadership.

Additionally, she has considered a way to blend her large-scale education policy perspectives with the “boots on the ground” needs in schools. She recalled that her current principal has indicated he aspires the superintendency and has mentioned to her that “he’d hire me for curriculum and instruction” roles at the district level. She reflected:

Which is not the same thing as being a principal, but I think that I would like doing curriculum and instruction more than being a principal, but honestly, I don't know, because I think when I was student teaching and working with the principal there. He made it seem like boring and terrible, and that he hated it because he. Like I never got positive vibes off of him, but now having my other principal. He makes it seem like it's the best job he's ever had. And that makes it seem a lot more appealing.

These experiences mean that while Lucy does not aspire to the principal role currently “I might when I’m older.”

Lucy believes herself too early in her career to think about becoming a principal in any real, tangible way – but believes her ability to prioritize, understand the larger education landscape, and relate to students would make her an effective principal should she choose that route later in life. If she decides to pursue the principalship later, Lucy’s organization, big picture thinking, connection with students, and understanding of the educational landscape will serve her well in establishing that leadership. She believes she

is a good leader, in part, because she models the expectations she has for others: “just do what I would expect other people to do, and mostly trust in my colleagues, that they’re doing the right things” Alternatively, Lucy has tendencies to overstretch herself and an inability to say no and worries that those tendencies combined with the scope of the principalship could be detrimental to her wellness in the long run. However, Lucy is experiencing, or beginning to experience all three of the standpoints identified by Kruss and Krumm (2016) common for female principals including experiencing a nurturing or mentorship relationship with a superior, invested commitment in the school community, and experiencing early rites of passage via scaffolded (in difficulty or complexity) leadership opportunities.

Lucy views the principalship as a position that is primarily designed for supporting teachers and students. In her experience the principal she currently works for is very visible, engaged with the school community, and spends most of his time in classrooms, hallways, and the lunchroom. Alternatively, the principal in which she did her student teaching for was very managerial, isolated, and concerned with elements such as the school budget, testing, “business type of principal.” As she reflects on these experiences she believes:

I think a principal needs to be extroverted, or at least can fake extroversion. So I've only really had two principals, the one I had when I was student teaching [and now]. And the one that I had before was a really nice guy but he never wanted to come out of his office. He was terrified for some reason. Which made him seem really scary to everyone else, that when you saw him out walking around, it made it seem like something bad was going on. But, now my current principal never wants to sit in his office, unless it's before school or after school. So, and that's good for the students too to see him out and walking around, and that every time you see the principal it doesn't like make you feel scared or something like that, and I think it's easier for me, like when you have to have those like formal observations when he comes in.

That said, Lucy understands a balance is necessary between building relationships with stakeholders and “taking care of school business.” She continued,

the principal should focus on supporting the teachers and students, but there needs to be some line between, I need to like sit in my office and get things done and need to take care of administrative tasks. Regardless of how boring they are. And then if I want to go spend time with students or teachers, do that secondly.

These experiences and the subsequent understandings of the variation in principal roles and responsibilities Lucy identifies as necessary for an effective principal align with Cisler and Bruce’s (2013) contention that the principalship contains three predominate categories: managing personal, parent and community collaboration and the school climate and that principals must be adept in all of the areas.

As someone who is concerned with women’s issues and advancing opportunities for women and girls, particularly in a politics and policy arena, Lucy believes education to be a key component in that advancement. Therefore, she is abstractly concerned about the disproportionate number of male leaders in a profession that is predominately female. However, while Lucy has thought about the gender disparity of the principalship, she believes good principals, regardless of gender, are more important than increasing female representation:

Yeah, I mean I think that you know I've probably thought about that, but um. I think on the other side of that I try not to make that like, even though I don't like that, I, you work with what you have and I don't really have complaints about my principals because they're not female. And I try not to let that like, affect things.

I think that it would be nice to see more women in leadership roles, but in my current position. I just needed a principal that works hard and is supportive of me and my students, and I can't, I feel that, I can't be too picky about that right now.

In this regard, Lucy identifies skill, talent, communication ability, and relationship building as the most important factors in recruiting and hiring principals and believes gender secondary to these means.

Lucy has the interest, capacity, and knowledge to synthesis her personal experience with a male principal and her own career aspirations with the broader context of gender disparities in the high school principal role. But she lacks the career experience to solidify suggestions or mechanisms to blend those needed attributes with female recruitment and retention in the principalship role. In this way, she does not identify meaning regarding the gender disparity of the secondary principalship on the larger education system. Further, Lucy compartmentalizes her personal and professional life when considering her career aspirations. When her interview had concluded, she remarked that she did not include information regarding the flexibility to move geographically based on her partner's career trajectory and that influence on her career aspirations. When asked if she would like to continue the interview and explore the implications of those decisions she declined. However, how women balance familial responsibilities and professional obligations is a component of understanding how women navigate their career aspirations regarding the secondary principalship.

Gail. Gail is an experienced science teacher in her 20 year in the classroom. Gail is married with two elementary-aged children at home. Despite knowing since her undergraduate study that she wanted to be a teacher, she only recently began thinking about herself as a potential principal. Gail holds a bachelor's degree in science education and is currently working on a master's degree in Educational Leadership. Gail serves as the science department chair and has held other building level leadership positions through her

tenure. Additionally, Gail has served in leadership roles at the district level, such as curriculum committees and technology task forces. Gail values her role as an educator because of the relationships and connections she can build with students and colleagues. The continued student impact she witnesses motivates her and she identifies service to others as a key driving factor in the trajectory of her career. Success, for her, is “impacting lots of kids [and] having good relationships with co-workers and peers, hopefully impacting co-workers. Making the school that I’m in a better place. Um, helping new teachers be successful.” Gail’s colleagues would describe her as engaging, easy to get along with, and having a clear sense of direction regarding school or department improvement. She also believes “they also would say that I’m pretty good at like, working the system without ticking anybody off.” On the other hand, Gail identifies that she can be perceived as “too intense” “too loud” and “one colleague [told] me that I’m too easy on the ... like that I, I’m too mama bear-ish with the kids. I don’t know if that’s a weakness. I kind of disagree with him, but whatever.” Gail believes her ability to build relationships, positive demeanor, and comprehensive understanding of school improvement would make her a good principal should she seek the position. In her current leadership role, she views her leadership style as inclusive and democratic:

So I'm the department head, right. So I'm hopefully I'm trying to get everybody to feel like a member of the team. That's kind of what I try to do. 'Cause in the department that we have going on right now, there are some teachers, there's one or two teachers that kind of feel on the outside because of their personalities, and so it's a little bit of a struggle sometimes, but I'm always trying to make sure that they feel like they're a member of the team and their voice is heard, and even though I might not agree with them the majority of the time, I still want them to feel like their voice is heard.

Gail's commitment to equal voice in her department is illustrative of her commitment to "the moral use of power" (Bogotch, 2005, p. 184) that Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009) contend is a key part of women's web of leadership.

Despite this commitment to collaborative leadership Gail is undecided if she will pursue administrative certification and/or if she will seek the principalship in the near or far future. She explains that the change in perspective regarding becoming a principal came from being approached by her current building principal:

I have not given principal a ... for the vast majority of my career, I did not give principalship a lick of thought. As a matter of fact, I was completely adamant against it until [current principal] said, "You need to consider it".

Despite having a proven track record of leadership, being tapped for the role by her current principal, and having the confidence of her colleagues, Gail worries that,

I'm not detail oriented enough. I'm worried, I worry about the big pictures more than I worry about all the details, um ... About the fact that, um, I don't even know ... Like, what would be the details that a principal would have? I- I don't even know. Board member communication, or whatever, I don't know. And that's part of the problem, is I don't really know. But, I think that would, by far, make me not so good as a principal. I [also] tend to speak before I think long and hard. Um ... and I have no concept of the athletic world, the music world, the theater world. Like those are all worlds that I don't understand anything about. Things like that. Maybe a little bit athletic, but not much. And granted you would have an AP to help you there, but, um ...

Gail views the role of the principal as being one that requires balance between policy, accountability, communication, and relationships with the school community. She believes principals should be approachable, reliable, and able to make decisions:

If you say you're gonna do something then do it. Make a frigging decision. That's it. Our current principal takes way too long to make decisions. And- and he gets really upset when you approach him with a problem, you talk about it, and then you try to press him to make a decision that's not really that hard of a decision. Just make a decision.

She also believes the role requires the ability to mediate, be ethical, and influence positive culture/morale of the building:

Kids [need to] like 'em. Someone who is able to relate to a teacher. Not so far removed that he has like no context- like, you know, I think that's one of the biggest problems with principals that teachers have, is that they ain't got no idea what I'm going through. Have a feel for the morale ... Like being aware of what the morale currently is. Being aware of what teachers, as a whole, what they need. Um ... and someone who's willing to give good affirmation.

Gail has spent most of her teaching career in one rural leaning suburban high school. In her tenure, she has never worked for a female principal, and only one female assistant principal over 15 years ago. After being approached by her building principal within the last year to consider the principalship, specifically because she was an established female leader in the community, Gail began having conversations with her colleagues and peers regarding women and the principalship. She reports she had not done much reflection on the absence of female principals prior to these recent conversations agreeing to participate in this study.

She reflected that she has been:

just kind of mulling it over, because I've been considering what the heck I'm gonna do with my life, um, so just more aware of the fact, yeah wow, we really are only male principals mostly. And there really is a need for girl principals because there's issues that males can't really touch very comfortably. So, that's kind of what I'm ... I mean, I haven't given it a ton of thought.

She continued to explain she has begun to have conversations with her colleagues about the lack of female administration in their building and in the profession:

I regurgitated that, like, conversation to all the little colleagues that I mentioned it to. And then they were all like "Huh, yeah, I guess it's a good point." So, other than that, no. It wasn't like I had these deep, thoughtful conversations about females as principals.

In referencing the fact that Gail is not having “deep, thoughtful conversations” she articulates a need for increased female participation in the secondary principalship to

address very technical challenges “I mean, a man can’t go into the girls bathroom looking for vape, ya know.” When asked if she believed her career aspirations would have changed if she saw a female in the principalship or worked under one in her career Gail responded:

Oh, that's hard for me to say. I will tell you this. I have not given principal a, for the vast majority of my career, I did not give principalship a lick of thought. As a matter of fact, I was completely adamant against it until [principal] came to me said, "You need to consider it".

She continued,

first of all, it's like, are you kidding? I mean, it's flattering, right. It's- it's certainly a little bit of flattery. And then, surprise, like are you kidding, and then confused, because you're like, "Well crap, this was my plan and now it's all jacked up and I'm not sure if this really should be my plan". So ... then a few weeks of, like, stress. And now I've just kind of like embraced it and I'm just gonna go get it [principal certification]. And if it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't, it doesn't. If the right position opens up at the right time. That's kinda how I'm feeling [...]

Gail’s reflection on her career trajectory and the impact of her principal approaching her to consider the principalship illustrates that, for women, mentorship – often by a male superior - is a vital component of leadership advancement (DiTomaso & Palmer, 2017).

As someone who newly aspires to the principal position, Gail identifies salary, time, and impact of her voice as enticing elements of the principalship:

Enticing like ... I hate to say it ... money. Uh ... This might be a false thought, but in some part of my world, I feel like when you leave the job, it's sort of ... you leave it, a little bit, where you don't have to talk grading home and stuff. I know there's things outside of the normal work-day like Board meetings and parent phone calls or whatever, things like that, or things to supervise. But I think that's different than a lot of grading and planning ... Uh, what else makes it enticing? Power to change things. My voice being more heard. A new challenge for my career.

Her consideration of the principalship identifies parents, discipline, supervision hours, loss of one on one student contact, and loss of content time as elements that detract from her principal aspirations. She continued:

what else is not enticing? The minutia of like, school finance and laws and all that kind of stuff. To me that's not enticing. Having to decide who gets to spend what money and who doesn't. What, you know what I mean, like things like that.

As Gail grapples with her own changing career aspirations she has opened herself up for deeper reflection and awareness of the gender gap in secondary school leadership. Gail's experience with mentorship and the impact it has had on her career aspirations reiterates the importance of Kruss and Krumm's 2016 findings articulating that men act as gate keepers to the principalship position and women are more likely to explore the pathway if they are tapped by male principals to do so.

While mostly still on the technical level, Gail is starting to think about systemic and societal impacts surrounding the democratization of the principalship:

I here recently recognized, holy cow there is a need for female principalship. I don't know how students would ... I mean, I think girls ... female students would probably appreciate a female administrator. I don't think they even realize the need of it, because they- they're not used to seeing it. So, we have lots of female counselors, which is really kind of funny, 'cause I think we need a male counselor. So it's almost like the gender roles in these positions are so set, they're so ... Not set. That's not the right word. But you know what I mean. Like, stereotypical. So yeah, so I'm just kinda open to the idea and ... other than really the fact that I've recognized the need for it ... I- I think it would be a little bit challenging to talk into a male principalship team as a female and kinda, uh, um ... what's the word I'm looking for? Like fight for your, like, I don't know ... Cause you're like, walking into a- a male team, and you're the female. So I'm sure it's probably going to be a little bit hard to establish your place and establish your role and be taken seriously. I don't think our administrative team would not take me seriously. But, I think there's a certain fight for power.

Gail's experiences with the disproportionality of the female principalship are unique to her experience of having significant experience as a teacher in a district that has never had female principals, and recently being approached for the role. In her consideration of her own career aspirations she has begun to view the principalship as a systemic position in a new light and continues to grapple with her place in a system in which she has identified a need for change.

Samantha. Samantha is a married high school teacher in her tenth classroom year. She teaches English, leadership, a college preparedness elective, and special education English, in a suburban high school that is starting to become more urban. Her school is comprised of about 60% European-American students, as is she, and around 40% students of color. Samantha's undergraduate field of study was history, and she currently holds her Education Specialist degree, and principal certification. Samantha is a licensed special education teacher in addition to her history and English certifications. Samantha has known she wanted to teach since high school. The desire to enter the field of education was bred "like so many people" because she had "really great teachers [and] I wanted to be to other students what they were to me in high school." When Samantha predicts what a successful career would look like she believes

I think making my career ... well, anecdotally, the ... you know, seeing the, the stories from students that, when every year, that you ask them to post [on social media] about what they're doing and where they are, and that kind of stuff, that'll, that'll make it successful for me. But I guess more tangibly, I want to look back and, having grown and evolved as a person myself. And I don't know ... and I might be jumping ahead, so stop me if I am, but- I think I'd, um, I think eventually I want to be in position where I could help maybe train other teachers in some sort of supervisory role, or, or something like that. So, my career may end in high school, and transition into something like that.

Samantha finds fulfillment in her relationships with students and staff, both in her interactions with them and in their successes:

I work with really, really, great kids who will give all of their time and all of their energy to anything that they feel passionate about. And when I see them have joy, that brings me joy, when I know that we've accomplished something. And then, the same thing with staff. I mean, there are some people who can be difficult to work with. But I work with great people who are excited about working with kids, and who are excited about their subject matter, and that brings me joy.

At the same time, Samantha articulates that she can find the current education climate stressful because:

sometimes I bite off more than I can chew. Um, I think a lot of teachers do that. And so it's stressful. But I also tend to thrive in that kind of environment, so I kind of like it a little bit, and may be a glutton for punishment. Um, the ... I think the, the shift in need for a ... teachers needing to know about socio- ... or, sorry, social-emotional learning, and mental health, and that kind of stuff, and the slow pace that school districts seem to be going at in getting that proper training to teachers, that stresses me out. Because I see kids hurting, and, and wondering why the heck it's taking so long for us to get to the point where we're doing something.

She continued that paperwork, meetings, and lack of her time being valued by her current administration create stress in her life. In addition to her classroom and extra-curricular roles, Samantha holds various teacher leadership positions in her building, including sponsorship, task forces, and site-based teams. While she holds principal certification she is unsure if the principalship is for her or not. She elaborated,

So that's, for me, a really complicated, multi-faceted question. And I only say that because I think that I ... I see myself as a leader, so, yes, I do want to be eventually take a, a princ- ... a principal role, or do something like, at central office. But I know the leap from teacher to central office usually has the median of principal. Because I do think I would be good at it. I think I have a lot of the qualities that, you know, districts look for when they look for people to lead a building [but] because of my experiences here, and hearing what people say about their principals, I, I have a hard time taking that leap, simply because I also (laughs) don't want to be, and this is harsh, but, the most hated person in

the building. And I know that not everyone hates their [principal], you know ... and hate's a strong word.

Samantha's desire to not "be the most hated person in the building" is reflective of the realities surrounding isolation, unpopularity, and risk factoring into the disinclination for women to seek the principalship (Lahtinen & Wilson 1994; Sharpe, 1976, Smith, 2011).

Samantha believes her excellent communication skills, ability to delegate, positivity and visionary nature would make her a strong candidate for the principalship but could also serve her well in other educational roles such as university supervision or consulting work.

She believes her colleagues would say she would be a good building leader because

I can multi-task. Great at communicating. I handle stress well. Good relationships with the kids. Um, I'm pretty laidback and funny about stuff. I mean, I describe myself as a type A personality, but here at work, with my colleagues, I feel like they know that I, I can kind of roll with things, and I'm easy to talk to. Um, but I also follow through, and I'm really dedicated.

But also, she knows that her administration believes she over-extends herself past her abilities:

I think the biting off more than I can chew, that I referred to earlier. I, I don't know if they necessarily see it as a weakness, but I think they are concerned sometimes for how much I do. Um, and I mean, I can be, I guess, sort of sensitive, and internalize things. And I will admit, I'm not great at always asking for help when I probably could use a little bit of help, because I'm just like, no, it's okay, I'll do it. And I think that they would say, you know, I just need to be okay with asking.

For Samantha, the principal role is a figurehead for the school, someone who oversees the academic components of the school, handles financial obligations, weighs in on escalated discipline matters, and is tasked with the managerial elements of running a school building. Additionally, she sees the principal as the position of ultimate responsibility in her

building. Samantha's perspective of the principalship as a complex role of ultimate responsibility is supported by Spillane and Lee (2012) who identify the weight of principal responsibilities as a source of stress and loneliness, particularly for new and novice principals.

Fifty percent of the principals Samantha has worked for have been female, therefore her experience with female principals is higher than most high school teachers. In comparing her experiences with female and male principals, Samantha suggested staff members second guessed the decisions of the female principals more than the male. She explains,

it tends to sort of come down to those decisions where you wonder, is this an emotional decision? Or you hear other people wondering if it's an emotional decision based off someone's gender, which usually gets me pretty frustrated. Um, the micromanagement, under my, under my first principal, who was a female, there tended to be a lot of, like, hurt feelings, more conversations, or things wouldn't be said because of that perception that she didn't want to have, or people didn't want to have, [difficult conversations with her. [For example] maybe more going around in circles, cutting people slack, that kind of stuff, because of that, "I don't want to be the woman who is seen as overbearing or bossy" [vibe], which we tend to think of negatively. You know, they have aa negative connotation. Whereas now, someone may disagree with my current principal, who's a male but it's just - it is how it is.

Samantha believes that women who aspire the principalship in her current building are not given the same opportunities as men with the same aspiration. Further, she articulates that female assistant principals are given assignments and duties that are vastly different than their male peers:

For instance, male assistant principals in this building are asked to schedule and oversee national testing, that we all know is super important to our buildings, um, because it tells us our score, and it tells us where we land, and all that stuff. Um, males in this building are asked to be athletic directors because, for some reason, there seems to be this perception that only men should possibly oversee the athletic schedule or sports. Um, women are asked to oversee social

committees, and to plan events to make people feel good about where they work. And I'm not saying those aren't important. But I know that women could handle much more than just planning events. And women are passed over ... I mean, first of all, the percentage of female administrators versus male administrators they have in the building is significantly smaller. Internship for principalship usually has gone to a male candidate. Um, they're [men] promoted more within the building (laughs). We have ... it's just, it kind of seems like in every way, hard to get ahead if you're a woman.

Samantha's experience regarding gender differences in role responsibilities supports Cisler and Bruce's (2013) findings that "gender differences might emerge regarding the importance of various principal responsibilities, especially those related to interpersonal connections" (p. 7). When asked about her experiences regarding gender disparity of the principalship she responded

I've been in enough classes to know that women don't hold a significant percentage of leadership roles in any fields, and in education, you know, that that stuff has impacted it more, simply because I know that female superintendents make up three percent of the population in the United States, or less, or something like that. So, like, those kind of things have impacted me. But here, I have my principal's male, and there have been assistant principals that are female. And I see all but one of the female assistant principals, because she's has a long tenure here as well, being treated as if they cannot handle things. That has impacted me pretty greatly. It's frustrating for me, because I don't know that if I really wanted a leadership role in this building, that it would be possible under the current principal.

Samantha further echoes this frustration in a feeling of being passed over for leadership opportunities in her building. She described being allowed leadership experiences that were necessary for graduate hours, but not sought out for places where her skills or experience could be utilized in a meaningful way as experiences that take away from thoughts of the principalship as a career aspiration. Samantha's experience believing herself ready for increased leadership tasks and not receiving them from a traditional style principal is reflective of Sherman and Wrushen (2009) findings that many women who

identify with a relational style of leadership clash with traditionally hierarchical styles and are thus, afforded fewer opportunities inside those structures.

Samantha's experiences with the gender disproportionality of the high school principalship have manifested in the belief that traditional male to male networks or good ol' boys clubs persist in offering leadership opportunities for male teachers over female teachers. Further, when women do serve in the principal position, Samantha's experience dictates they are treated with "kid gloves" and their decisions, emotions, and aptitude challenged. Samantha does not illustrate evidence of scaling these thoughts into a large systematic viewpoint, but rather as occurrences indicative of her individual experience.

Susan. Susan, also European-American, is a married, mother of grown children who spent 44 years in education and has been retired for one year. She served in numerous roles during her tenure including

I was a classroom teacher, working with students with, um, special needs. I was the principal of an alternative school in two different states. I was a central office administrator over a high school, secondary special education programs for the four high schools and two alternative schools in the district. I also taught at [University], and [University].

Susan holds a doctorate degree, and principal certification in multiple states. She decided she wanted to work in education during her undergraduate years but teaching was not her original intent:

I never intended to be a teacher. Um, I always wanted to work with kids, but I never thought I wanted to be a teacher [...] I was going to be a speech pathologist, an occupational therapist, and things like that, and then, um, I'm not exactly sure what happened, but towards the end of my college career, I decided to go into education, and way back then, you could take just a small number of classes and get your certification for Special Ed as well, and so I did that.

Susan worked in several different districts, in multiple states throughout her years in education, and has a solid understanding of the educational landscape across many subsections including the general and special education worlds, rural/suburban/urban populations, and private/public differences. In reflecting on her career, Susan thinks fondly on the pathway she traversed and how she defines career success:

I have just had such a broad array of opportunities that have been afforded to me because of that path that I've chosen. I think success, if you look at it, hopefully in terms of perhaps things like, um, maybe to help other lives, I've been fortunate enough to be in districts that have allowed me to develop some really amazing programs - community-based programs with kids with developmental disabilities. I have really great, really, um, innovative, wonderful friends. Um, lots of different things like that that really made me get to do a lot of different things but hopefully, the reason we did all of that was so that the students have a huge way of looking at the world that really prepared them for life after school.

When Susan considers the span of her career she believes the principalship today is much more difficult than it was a few decades ago:

when I look at the two, I was an administrator in two very different districts in two totally different states and in two very different time periods. One was in the 90s and one was just, you know, the last fifteen, twenty years and I do think the whole thing has changed. I think there is so much more pressure on the administrators today than there was when I very first started. I think all administrators and all teachers... we all want kids to do well, and we went to offer them the levels of support that help them to be the very best that they can be. I think there are so many other outlying issues today that we didn't have in education, whether it's all the crazy testing that we do constantly for some reason. Or its all the violence in school.

Despite believing that administrators today have “so much more stress [...] and a really hard role in our schools today” Susan “would do everything that I have had a chance to do if I had to it to do over again. I loved every different role.” This fulfillment in her position as a principal echoes the finding from Smith (2011) that female principals find great

satisfaction in the development of young people and see their position as a place for the promotion of learning and equity.

Susan's reflection on her career as an administrator continued with what her staff would have said about her leadership.

Um, I hope that they would have thought that I was, um, a strong leader. That I had a vision of where we were going and had some really concrete ideas on how we should get there. But I would also hope that they felt that I was always open to conversations with them in different setting or as a group. Because it's never a one-person school or building or program. It's everybody working together. I hope, I think I have my work- the same work ethic my father had, and it's kind of self-fulling, but, um, you work until the job is done. And if the job isn't done until 3:00 in the morning... There was many a night I did not leave that school until 2 or 3:00 in the morning because there was so much chaos going on when I had the role of principal.

She continued with the belief that her staff knew she supported them and was an easy phone call away if needed. She valued classroom visits and supports and "having their back." The visible support, access, Susan valued supports Smith's (2011) contention that women use the high school principalship to advance student and staff support as marker of social justice and collaborative leadership. On the other hand, Susan hated confrontation and would seek other avenues of conflict resolution before having difficult conversations. Further, she identifies "almost ridiculously high expectations of her staff" as something that could have been a perceived weakness. Holistically, though Susan credits her ability to collaborate with others, coaching mentality, and skill in navigating motivations and needs as key components that made her a successful building principal.

While Susan never worked directly for another female principal, she reports having two strong female role models at different points in her career help guide her path:

I think the first time I ever had a female mentor she wasn't my principal, she- I was applying with my masters for a grant, and she was my advisor. I think

having to have the opportunity, her name was [name], having to have the opportunity to work with [her], who was such a dynamic woman. I mean, she came in and she took charge of the group. And not because she said or did anything, but she just did. Um, I mean, she was a huge role model. And, I had [name] at the [University], and I always said when I grow up, I want to be [her] That woman was miraculous. She was the chair of the department of all of these men, and she was the chair of the research department, and she took no crap off of anyone. And she was amazing. And she was the same way. She would walk in the room, she always wore black, and she always wore these great big gigantic stiletto heels. She's probably seventy-five years old when she did this. And by the end of the night, she'd have talked us all over everything she was just miraculous, and it's like I think people like that are so inspirational.

In having these women as mentors, Susan desired to emulate their impact and presence in her own career with women who worked for her. She reflected:

[A]nd maybe more women could look at how many more women there are teachers than there are men, and then you look at how many of those people go on to become administrators. And the numbers are totally flip-flopped at that point. And it's like, that's so weird to see that. But I was lucky enough to have those two women that were huge, huge influences in my life.

The impact of these mentors in Susan's career development illustrate the timeless impact of women learning from women (Antoncci, 1980; Duff, 1999). Further, in Susan's central office capacity she worked with four secondary schools and while each had female assistant principals, none had female head principals. Susan remembers differences based on gender in supporting those administrators but also other intersections of identity:

Often times it wasn't just gender [differences]. Sometimes it was, and I hate to say this because I am one of the older ones, but it was also the age difference. Um, some of the older people, whether they were male or female, really had the attitude of my way or the highway, and I really... I'm sorry to say that. Because, and maybe that was how they were trained, or maybe that's how they grew up in school.

She did notice some differences specific to gender however,

Oftentimes, so females had a better [...] the other women truly seem to be able to listen to what the issues were with kids and, and deal with it more on an impersonal level, and even if the kids got rude or loud or obnoxious or

whatever the issue would be, they were pretty much able to deal with it in that non-confrontational way. Many of the males, on the other hand, when the kids would get like that, they would come across like "You are not going to treat me like that." And they would always some start some gigantic power struggle. And for the most part, the female assistant principals really didn't go down that road.

The breadth of experience Susan has allowed her a variety of experiences of which to weigh when considering the meaning gender discrepancy of the principalship has. Those experiences mean Susan has a stronger understanding of the intersectionality of identity impacting the role of the principal, as illustrated in her reflection around age and gender. Susan's experience is reflective of the average gender disproportionality of the high school principalship. When considering the high schools Susan reflected on (six, the two she led, and the four she supported) the breakdown of female principals was on par with the national average at 33%. Her experience with the phenomenon of gender disparity in the high school principalship is inherently different, however, from the other co-researchers in that hers is entirely reflective of her past career as a retired educator, and the other seven are still adding experiences to their stories.

The next section of this chapter will be dedicated to a synthesis of co-researcher experiences through a composite report that explores "the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Group Composite Report

This composite report synthesizes the individual experiences regarding the essence of meaning from all eight co-researchers' lived experiences. Their individual narratives have been analyzed and connected to provide a singular integrated essence of their lived

experiences. Throughout the creation of the eight- textural/structural descriptions the following six meaning units emerged: *personal characteristics, relationship builder, technical knowledge, personal/professional balance, the principalship, and experiences being female* Each of the co-researchers experienced these meaning units in some fashion (see Table 6). The creation of these meaning units is explored in the Essence of Meaning section of this chapter (see Table 7).

Composite report for co-researchers. The desire to enter the field of education began early for all the co-researchers, with each of them deciding to enter the education profession between their youth and young adulthood. Natasha and Tiffany chose education as children, “it was just something that was in my soul” Natasha explained. Tara, Lucy, and Samantha all knew in high school. The three of them expressed a love of content (science, history, and English, respectively) and strong teachers of their own influencing their decision to enter the field of education. Gail and Susan decided around their undergraduate years to enter the field, drawn by interest in content and the varied day teaching brings.

Table 6

Meaning Units by co-researcher

	Meaning Units					
	Experiences Being Female	The Principalship	Personal/ Professional Balance	Technical Knowledge	Relationship Builder	Personal Characteristics
Courtney	X	X	X	X	X	X
Natasha	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tiffany	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tara	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lucy	X	X	X	X	X	X

Gail	X	X	X	X	X	X
Samantha	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sarah	X	X	X	X	X	X

Courtney decided the latest, while she as a working professional in a paraprofessional role: “I actually just ended up falling in love, with the, the kiddos, so then I went back to school for education” she reported. All eight women express great reverence for their time in the classroom spending between two and twenty years teaching in the front of students. They represent a mix of content background, representing science, social studies, special education, choral music, English, and varied college prep and leadership electives.

Seven of the eight co-researchers hold advanced degrees of at least the Masters level, and the eighth, Gail is currently enrolled in a MA program. Natasha and Susan hold their doctorate and Courtney is enrolled in an Ed.D program. Samantha currently has her Ed.S and along with Tiffany and Lucy desires a terminal degree later in her career.

Natasha, Tiffany, Courtney, and Susan all reflected that a mentor encouraged them to enroll in doctoral work, and Lucy “has always just wanted to.”

All eight of the co-researchers have served, or currently serve in teacher leadership positions, including department chair, curriculum committees, building or site-based leadership teams, and other specialty opportunities, like technology training. Lucy, Tara, Tiffany, Samantha, and Courtney do not have experience with leadership at the district level, while Natasha, Gail, and Susan reported abundant district leadership opportunities. Natasha, Gail, and Susan are also the three co-researchers with the most experience.

Of the co-researchers, 62% have experienced a mentorship, tapping in what their principal or other building or district administrator approached them about leadership

opportunities. Gail, Lucy, Natasha, Tiffany, and Susan all recounted opportunities they were specifically tapped for. Natasha remembered,

But then my superintendent when I was working, and I was working in the context of this union representation, my superintendent recognized something in me in the meetings, and he wrote my letter of recommendation to get my masters in school administration. Um, he would- had met with me and spoken with me at length about what my vision was for myself and, um, he supported that, uh, completely.

Tiffany had a similar experience in which her building principal approached her about seeking the principalship, and while she ultimately decided a different pathway was right for her, she recounted,

My principal, [name], has told me, he's like, you know, when you get to year seven or year eight, this is in your future. [...] I was thankful that somebody told me when I was a young teacher, that I could do this, but I'm telling you that was really empowering, uh, and heart-felt.

Conversely, Tara, Samantha, and Courtney were offered opportunities when they sought them independently but they were not approached for them. Samantha explained:

I'm part of, like, an aspiring leaders program. And it's a two-year cohort, and I'm getting ready to start my second year. And they [my administrative team] know this. I'm pretty sure it's a common, you know, it's common knowledge that, when people apply for it. And yet, knowing that, there isn't still, like, that ... they don't instigate conversations like that, like, oh my gosh, like, this would be really great. We'd really appreciate this. I've also occasionally asked to jump in and, like, work on a project for the building. And I'm not necessarily told no, but, um, they don't necessarily ... they also don't seek, doesn't ... I don't feel as if I've been sought out to do some of those things. Now, when I did need to complete hours for my EDS, I asked about those, and I was given opportunities to do it.

In some capacity, all co-researchers identified the abilities to multi-task, communicate, and build strong relationships as professional attributes that would make them good principals. Their peers identify their calm demeanor, approachability, vision, and student-centered approach as characteristics that would make them good principals. Susan and Natasha have

both served in the principal role, while Courtney, Tiffany, and Tara have determined the principalship is not right for them. Lucy, Gail, and Samantha are still uncertain about future principalship opportunities but not have not ruled the position completely out. Courtney, Tiffany, Tara, and Lucy identify central office administration as a professional goal.

Courtney, Natasha, Tara, Samantha, and Susan have worked for a female principal at some point in their career while Tiffany, Lucy, and Gail have only worked for male principals. However, both Tiffany and Gail have worked under female assistant principals in their tenure. While all co-researchers have thought about the impact gender has on leadership – their own, or those of which they work for – only Samantha and Natasha have given systemic thought to the disproportionality of male educators who serve in the role.

Natasha reflected,

I think that we are more than capable of effecting a tremendous change from a different perspective. We have value to add to the society as a gender, and I think we've lost that as we've tried to, you know, move into this masculine power struggle, right?

With several decades of experience under her belt, Gail reflected that she has only worked for male principals and had a singular female assistant principal for a few years at the very beginning of her career. When asked if she has given much reflection to this phenomenon she thoughtfully answered,

Just kind of mulling it over, because I've been considering what the heck I'm gonna do with my life, um, so just more aware of the fact, yeah wow, we really are only male principals mostly. And there really is a need for girl principals because there's issues that males can't really touch very comfortably. So, that's kind of what I'm ... I mean, I haven't given it a ton of thought.

In contrast to Gail's vast experience, Lucy is still early in her career, and considers good principals more important than gender representation:

I've probably thought about that, but um. I think on the other side of that I try not to make that like, even though I don't like that, I, you work with what you have and I don't really have complaints about my principal because they're not female. And I try not to let that like, affect things. I think that it would be nice to see more women in leadership roles, but in my current position I just needed a principal that works hard and is supportive of me and my students, and I can't, I feel that I can't be too picky about that right now.

Courtney, Susan, and Natasha added that they have worked for multiple women, with some being stronger principals than others.

Overall, co-researchers hold teacher or district leadership positions, hold advanced degrees, and have both self and peer identified traits that would make them good principals. They have varied experience with mentorship opportunities and their personal aspirations to the principalship. Each has thought about gender and leadership in the context of their personal journeys or individual school settings, but lack the comprehensive vantage point to place themselves inside a larger phenomenon and understand how the systemic gender disproportionality impacts their stories, their schools, their students, and society. Therefore, the next section of Chapter 4: Findings will explore the essence of meaning women make of said disproportionality by answering the central research question, and sub questions guiding this study.

Essence of Meaning

This inquiry was driven by the central research question: What meanings do female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools? That overarching investigation was broken into the following sub questions:

1. What essence of meaning do female participants contribute to internal factors related to the disproportionality of male principalship at the secondary level?
2. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to their aspirations toward the principalship?
3. What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to barriers to the principalship?

Responses to the research questions were illuminated through the identification of meaning units (Moustakas, 1994). Meaning units are like themes and were structured by the analysis of the horizontalization of statements in each co-researcher's data.

Table 7

Invariant constituents present in meaning units

	Meaning Units					
	Experiences Being Female	The Principalship	Personal/ Professional Balance	Technical Knowledge	Relationship Builder	Personal Characteristics
Actions						X
Bureaucratic Responsibility		X				
Emotion	X					
Female Leadership	X					
Female/ Female Conflict	X					
Personal Life			X			
Professional Experiences				X		
Relationship Building					X	
Sexism	X					
Skills						X

Technical Knowledge		X	
Traits			X
Unfavorable Characteristics	X		
Values			X

Meaning units were identified from the two narrative writings, and from the phenomenological interview process and situated inside the questionnaire completed by the sample. Six meaning units were found between the datasets. **Personal Characteristics** are defined as elements of the co-researcher’s personality, skills and abilities, and values. **Technical Knowledge** describes educational and experiential learning while **Relationship Builder** relates to connecting stakeholders and communication. **Personal/Professional Balance** refers to the balance between co-researchers personal and professional lives and **The Principalship** refers to the role and responsibilities of the principal. Lastly, **Experiences Being Female** relates to co-researchers’ experiences being a female leader. Five of the six themes were present in more than one dataset, with **Experiences Being Female** only presenting in the interviews. Table 8 illustrates the meanings according to data source. Each sub-question is addressed thematically with thick description to ground the finding in theory and research. I begin with the first sub question which relates to the internal factors co-researchers experience.

Table 8

Presence of meaning units in data sources

Theme	Narrative Question #1	Narrative Question #2	Interviews
Experiences Being Female		X	X
The Principalship	X	X	X

Personal/Professional Balance		X	X
Technical Knowledge	X	X	X
Relationship Builder		X	X
Personal Characteristics	X	X	X

Sub-question #1 What Essence of Meaning Do Female Participants Contribute to Internal Factors Related to the Disproportionality of the Male Principalship at the Secondary Level?

Co-researchers articulated various experiences within their education journey and their personal aspirations as it related to their personal views of the principalship. The essence of meaning co-researchers experienced regarding internal factors relating to the disproportionality of the male principalship was interpreted through two meaning units present in all the co-researchers’ experiences: **Personal Characteristics**, and **Personal/Professional Balance**.

Personal/Professional Balance. This theme is defined as seeking a work/life balance that allows for personal fulfillment away from work. This theme was discussed in all eight co-researcher interviews and was also articulated in narrative writing number two: *Do you seek the principalship, why or why not?* Units of meaning and concepts that comprised this theme included *personal life*, *personal responsibilities*, and *career aspirations*. Co-researchers explored the theme of **Personal/Professional Balance** in their interviews. Analysis of interview transcripts illustrated that there were 44 meaning units across all eight interviews dealing with personal responsibilities and career aspirations that made up the personal/professional balance theme in the interviews. Co-researcher

discussions in this realm centered on *commitment to family, their time, and private life*. Additionally, for those co-researchers are not seeking the principalship at all, or as their primary goal (Courtney, Tiffany, Tara, Lucy, and Gail specifically) they identified district leadership, public policy, higher education, or instructional design coaching as career aspirations instead of the principalship. Courtney explained her desire for a district leadership role as being able to impact a district on a large scale, but is “behind the scenes” while Lucy, on the other hand, recognizes that while she would like to end up in education policy, the principalship has benefits for that goal. She explains,

I for a long time did not see myself being principal I was not interested in it. I basically wanted to move directly from the classroom to policy making. But I think as I've got older I see that there's a gap that probably should be filled in those careers and I would need to have more experience in school leadership.

Tara believed instructional coaching would allow her “to have more of a relationship with the staff and you have greater effect on those initiatives because you can work with teachers to implement them and you can work with teachers just making them into better teachers.” While Natasha served in the principal role previously, she left the principalship and re-entered the classroom because she was working eighty or ninety hours a week and “when you want to have a baby, you can't even... you can't see your husband, you don't get pregnant, It's kind of crazy that way.”

Almost unanimously women experienced the principalship to be a position that was unable to provide the balance between professional and personal commitment. Despite this view, participants identified a variety of personal characteristics they possessed that would make them a good principal.

Personal characteristics. This theme is defined as traits, skills, abilities, and values held by the co-researchers. Co-researcher interviews yielded 110 meaning units grouped into the significant concepts' *skills and abilities, change agent, and personal characteristics* to comprise this meaning unit. Co-researchers identified their organization and communication skills as the primary skillset they possessed that would make them a good principal. They also believe they hold general leadership skills and abilities that work to drive vision and success for both students and staff. They believe they are approachable, have a growth mindset, and a willingness to change systems when needed. They identify their ability to listen, be empathetic, and utilize a student-centered approach as positive principal characteristics they have, as well as their consistency or steadfastness. They value relationships, serving others (their school and community). Co-researchers also identified themselves as a supporter of both individual and collective teacher needs, while also valuing the craft and professionalism of the teaching field.

Courtney identified that she would be a good principal because she was “attentive, aware, nurturing, kind, present, and knowledgeable.” Natasha believes she has a clear vision and a passion for the success of everyone and that she can “build bridges across many communities.” Tiffany said she is level headed, has strong communication skills, is open minded, understanding, and has “the ability to work with all people.” Tara cited her ability to “compromise and collaborate” as traits that would make her a good principal, while Lucy believes she relates well to students and teachers and has “a larger idea of what education should look like.” Gail described her positive and encouraging nature, her ability to build strong relationships as well as “[having] a good handle on school issues and how to improve them” as traits that would make her a good principal. With a similar strength in

relationship building, Samantha also articulated her ability to delegate, high-level interpersonal and communication skills and visionary thinking as additional components that would make her a good principal. Last, Susan articulated her ability to have difficult conversations, a desire to help others develop their own skills and abilities, and a love of learning as traits that made her a good principal.

Co-researchers and survey participants alike hold numerous traits and abilities that would make them good principals and yet few seek the principalship. Through the exploration of the themes personal/professional balance and personal characteristics it was found that women place more meaning and value in the ability to find a self-identified balance between their professional and personal lives than they do in aspiring to the role, despite characteristics that would make them successful in said role. The internal characteristics influencing those decisions were articulated in isolation to their own experiences, and not regarding the gender disparity of the principalship.

Sub-question #2 What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to their aspirations toward the principalship?

The second sub question was answered through the themes **Experiences Being Female, The Principalship, Relationship Builder, and Technical Knowledge.**

Technical Knowledge. Technical knowledge was present across both narrative writings and co-researcher interviews. It is defined as education and experience imparting knowledge regarding the field of education and how to run a school. **Technical Knowledge** includes 66 instances of co-researchers referring to their *education and experience*. Co-researcher interviews included 72 references to knowledge gained from teaching and classroom experience, 16 instances of *specialized knowledge* application –

including special education, career and technical education, and technology among others. Co-researchers referenced knowledge gained from *mentorship* 36 times and an understanding of *social emotional learning* 20 times. Further, they articulated 18 instances of *experience from hard work and involvement*.

Co-researchers each felt that their unique experience and education provided them the necessary skills and abilities to be a principal – should they aspire to it. However, Lucy acknowledged that, despite a master’s degree in public policy focused on education policy, as a second-year teacher she should probably establish more classroom experience and pursue the principalship “when I’m older.” Moreover, Courtney, Natasha, Samantha, and Susan currently hold principal certification, while, Tiffany, Tara, Lucy, and Gail do not. All participants except Gail hold a master’s degree, and Gail is currently enrolled in a master’s degree program that will result in her principal certifications upon completion.

In addition to the experience and formal education comprising the technical knowledge theme co-researchers believed their experiences as a relationship builder was an external factor contributing to their aspirations regarding the role of principal.

Relationship builder. Relationship Builder refers to the building of relationships between participant and others. This theme was identified as a unit of meaning 163 times in co-researcher interviews.

Co researchers’ identified their ability to build relationships with students, staff, and the community as a key component in their understanding of their professional aspirations. The eight co-researchers expanded on these characteristics and discussed their *relationships with students* (60 times), *staff* (16 times), *parents* (nine times), and *the community* (10 times). Additionally, building relationships as a broad concept was

identified as a meaning unit in co-researcher interviews forty-three times, and co-researchers also discussed *trust* and *awareness levels* and *identifying student purpose through relationships* in less frequent, but still relevant consistency.

Self-identification as a relationship builder was present both as an element that led Natasha and Susan towards the principalship and as one that kept Tara, Samantha, and Tiffany in the classroom where they felt they had stronger connections to students. Tiffany explained that she wants to stay in the classroom because “I think the bottom line is like connecting with students and relationships are primary.” Similarly, Samantha explained that she is happy in the classroom because of

the relationships that I have with kids. And, I mean, it's, it's the fact that I, I can create this environment where kids can come in, and they can learn things. But they can also feel safe and comfortable, and they know they can come to me. So, I feel like I do a really good job of balancing, hey, I have these expectations, and we're gonna learn, and I'm gonna make you grow as a person, and I'm gonna make you think. But I also just want you to be a good person, and I can be that, that mentor and that role, that role model to you, and balance it as well.

Generally, relationships with others was an external factor that persisted across multiple data sources and was articulated as an external factor that both helped and hindered participant aspirations regarding the role of principal.

The principalship. The principalship as a theme was defined as *job characteristics*, *job desirability*, and *required components of the role of the principal*. This theme was identified in both narrative writings and in co-researcher interviews. Co-researchers described the principalship in a variety of ways. Courtney believes that the primary role of the principal is “crisis management, so it’s reacting” while Tara described the principal as primarily “[dealing] with more of kind of like the discipline, whether that

is them dealing with parents or whatever that is dealing with students.” Tiffany describes the role of the principal as someone who primarily oversees budgets, professional learning, and “is a motivator” to the staff. Lucy stated that the primary role of the principal “is to make sure that everybody comes to school, they learn something, and they get home safely.” In Gail’s experience the role of the principal has been that they “are the bottom decision maker on any policy change [...] established the morale in the environment. I think his role also is the communicator from the admin, admin, like the top admin [district office], to us [teachers].” Samantha describes the role as a figurehead for the school and overseeing academic and budgeting issues. She elaborates,

anything that falls under sort of an academic lens. Not necessarily the scheduling of those items, but kind of being the figurehead for those items, our principal is in charge of. That might mean that, if it's an awards night, an academic awards night, he would be the one that was there. Um, obviously, running staff meetings, and disseminating information to the building leadership team, which would be our department heads. And handling escalated discipline, that kind of stuff. Financial would be another thing. The financial, the budgeting.

In contrast with Courtney, Tiffany, Tara, Lucy, Gail, and Samantha, Natasha and Susan view the principalship through a different lens. Both co-researchers, who have served as a secondary principal or administrator, view the primary role of the principal as one of teacher and student support. From Natasha’s perspective, the role of the principal is to be of “contribution to teachers and to children.” Similarly, Susan reflected that the role of the principal is to support students and staff but that “administrators have a really hard role in our schools today. And I’m sure they probably feel they don’t get nearly the support they need.”

No matter how the role is defined, co-researchers unanimously articulated that the role of the principal was time consuming, stressful, and difficult to manage. In their reflections about the principal role co-researchers also articulated individual experiences they have gone through in education relating to their female identity.

Experiences being female. Each co-researcher articulated an experience surrounding **Experiences Being Female**. This theme is defined as encounters related to, or caused by, being of the female gender. Experiences being female was comprised of fifty-three meaning units from the co-researcher interviews and was not present in the narrative writings. Experiences being female was synthesized from *female leadership* (forty-two instances), *emotion* (seven mentions), and *sexism*, and *female/female conflict* with two meaning units each. Co-researchers identified experiences regarding their female gender as an external factor regarding their aspirations to the principalship. Courtney articulated that the male principals she had worked for seemed to be more able to express emotion in a more visible manner than the female principals. She describes the difference in empathy as:

Gender specific. Ironically, (laughing) probably one of the most empathetic principals that I've ever worked for is a male. Um, which is, is interesting. And I have actually put some thought into this before, kind of, looking at the different leadership styles. I have wondered if females, feel the need to kind of put aside any, displays of emotion, to be taken seriously in their role as a female leader. Um, because all three women who I worked for, were not super emotional in the workplace.

Similarly, Natasha who has served as a high school principal, articulated difficulty both in the role and serving under a female principal: "Being a female was rough. But then even being a female with a female leader can be rough. And so that, that for me was difficult

too.” She expressed difficulty ranging from being viewed as overly emotional, or her perspective not taken seriously. Samantha expressed a similar experience:

it tends to sort of come down to those decisions where you wonder, is this an emotional decision? Or you hear other people wondering if it's an emotional decision based off someone's gender, which usually gets me pretty frustrated. Um, the micromanage- under my, under my first principal, who was a female, um, there tended to be a lot of, like, hurt feelings, more conversations, or things wouldn't be said because of that perception that she didn't want to have, or people didn't want other people ... didn't want to have with other people, or she didn't want them to have with them. Um, maybe more going around in circles, cutting people slack, that kind of stuff, because of that, I don't want to be the woman who is seen as overbearing or bossy, which we tend to think of negatively. You know, they have aa negative connotation.

Alternatively, Susan expressed that in her experience, female leaders were often able to better reach difficult students because they did not participate in power struggles:

Okay. Uh, but I do think one of the things I noticed. Oftentimes, so females had a better- There's one that keeps coming out as an outlier, but aside from her, the other women truly see to be able to listen to what the issues were with kids and, and deal with it more on an impersonal level. And even if the kids got rude or loud or obnoxious or whatever the issue would be, they were pretty much able to deal with it in that non-confrontational way. Many of the males, on the other hand, when the kids would get like that, they would come across like "You are not going to treat me like that." And they would always some start some gigantic power struggle. And for the most part, the female assistant principals really didn't go down that road.

Gail believes that it can be hard to establish your place as a female leader on a male team.

Cause you're like, walking into a- a male team, and you're the female. So, I'm sure it's probably going to be a little bit hard to establish your place and establish your role and be taken seriously. I- I don't think our administrative team would not take me seriously. But, I think there's a certain struggle for power.

In addition to Gail's description of a power struggle between male and female leaders, Natasha and Courtney included instances of experiencing conflict with other female leaders or witnessing conflict between two female leaders. These experiences, the co-

researchers ascertained, were derived from gendered issues and outside of the experiences their male peers went through. Samantha adds in her experience working for a female principal led to more personal issues. She explains:

[Y]ou hear other people wondering if it's an emotional decision based off someone's gender, which usually gets me pretty frustrated. [...] under my first principal, who was a female, um, there tended to be a lot of, like, hurt feelings, more conversations, or things wouldn't be said because of that perception that she didn't want to have, or people didn't want other people ... didn't want to have with other people, or she didn't want them to have with them. Um, maybe more going around in circles, cutting people slack, that kind of stuff, because of that, I don't want to be the woman who is seen as overbearing or bossy, which we tend to think of negatively. You know, they have a negative connotation.

While co-researchers expressed various meanings regarding their experiences being female, both co-researchers and participants alike view the role of the principal through a lens that amplifies unfavorable characteristics and placing an increased value on those factors when considering the principalship. Further, technical knowledge had no impact on the external factors contributing to female participant aspirations to the principalship as survey participants and co-researchers alike identified ample technical knowledge and skill needed for the role.

When considering these external factors that contribute to co-researcher principalship aspirations, a consideration to external factors contributing to barriers to the principalship must also be reviewed.

Sub-question #3 What meanings do female participants ascribe to external factors that may contribute to barriers to the principalship?

In answering the question what meanings to female participants ascribe to the external factors contributing to the barriers to the principalship the themes **The Principalship**, and **Personal/Professional Balance** were re-visited. As described

previously, female participants view **The Principalship**, specifically the role of the principal, to be complex, time consuming, and unfavorable. When combined with the experiences regarding **Personal/Professional Balance** these perceptions of the role of the principal create a significant barrier to the principalship. In the experiences of survey participants and co-researchers the unfavorable characteristics and intense time demands of the role form an invisible barrier blockading the role from authentic career aspirations, particularly for women who desire motherhood and balancing their role between family and career. One survey participant summarized her feelings regarding these unfavorable role attributes which prevent her from considering the principalship by stating.

I chose not to pursue administration because that isn't how I roll. My joy comes from working with people. Administrators today (the ones I work with) don't come out of their offices, don't talk to people, only interact when forced to do so. How miserable! No thanks!

For those participants who desire the principalship, or have held one in the past, there was no meaning placed on barriers to the principalship. Neither Natasha nor Susan felt they experienced significant or relevant barriers and both Gail and Lucy who could potentially desire the principalship in the future see their gender as an asset to help them secure the position, and not a barrier to the principalship.

Summary

The co-researcher's participation offered a range of experiences of which to explore the meanings female educators ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools. Through the analysis of narrative writings, interview transcripts, and descriptive statistics from the sample pool, invariant constituents and meaning units were combined to construct six themes used to explore the meaning

women make of both internal and external factors contributing to their own views of the principalship and societal barriers that might be placed in front of them regarding the position of principal. The themes **Personal/Professional Balance, Personal Characteristics, Technical Knowledge, Relationship Builder, The Principalship, and Experiences Being Female** combine to illustrate that women place meaning on a generalized unfavorable view of the principalship as a role incongruent with the work life balance necessary to achieve the joy and success they desire. Consequently, because so few seek the principalship, they place little to no meaning on the continued gender disparity of the role. Instead viewing the position as one that is unfavorable and thus, unworthy of critical reflection regarding gender disparity in the field.

In Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations the implications of these findings will be discussed along with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5 IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

My intention when embarking on this heuristic, phenomenological study was to seek a level of understanding around how women perceive the gender discrepancy of the high school principalship. My interest in this topic began early in my teaching career when I witnessed my male peers aspiring to the position and my female colleagues never discussing it as an option. My interest deepened as I read relevant literature on the principalship (the role, complexities, and nuances of leadership styles) during my graduate coursework and was solidified by the horrified response I received from many colleagues when I began expressing my own interest in the position. When asked why I wanted the position, my answer often included an explanation regarding the female perspective and lack of female voice in positions of power. To that, I received plenty of blank faces and “huh, I’d never thought of it that way” from male and female peers alike. This led me to question if female teachers ever questioned the power imbalance, and what they thought of it if they did. I have no illusions of grandiosity in the scope of change this work can bring about – it is but an entry level research project, after all. I am encouraged, however, at the level of interest the topic gathers when I speak on it to my peers in the current status quo.

Through this experience I was gifted the opportunity to take a deep dive into the hearts and minds of eight professional educators to interpret their interpretations of the world and their experiences in it. For months on end, the words, experiences, beliefs, and standpoints my co-researchers expressed were played on loop in my brain. Voice notes, field memos, horizontalization, data clustering, and listening to the recordings repeatedly served as an addiction to the data. While I sometimes wondered if I was doing it “right” I

believe I experienced the authentic steps of the heuristic process Moustakas (2015) outlined. Acknowledging that “whatever exists in my consciousness as a fundamental awareness – to receive it, accept it, support it, and dwell inside it” (Moustakas, 2015 p. 278).

Starting my doctoral journey as a teacher and embarking on the creation of a study as an assistant principal seeking the principalship creates the intense interest, partial understanding, and shared experience of the phenomenon heuristic inquiry requires. Thus, heuristic inquiry was a fitting framework from which to position this research (Percy, Kostere, & Kostere, 2015). Further, in seeking an understanding of women’s experiences the feminist framework upheld the authentic voice of co-researchers and myself; and the inquiry is further supported by the feminist framework as it lends an additional female voice to the body of literature (Grogan, 1996).

However, in the introductory paragraphs in Chapter 1, I articulated the perspective that while the feminist framework underpinning this work offered an explanatory relevancy, it was the grounding in democratic education that interested me the most I explain:

as a student of history and political science, my interest in public education as a driver of representative democracy is the foundation of my belief in the system. The combination of these interests represents the intersection of my research. Without the voice of female leaders, public schools cannot claim to be representative of all students.

The commitment to democratic education continues to be a driving force in my aspirations for the principalship and the reason I believe the experiences women have with a disproportionate representation of men in leadership across the field of education leadership at the secondary level are valuable. I believe that a commitment to democratic

education requires democratic leadership, and democratic leadership requires equal representation of women in the principalship. Through this study, co-researchers offered an interpretation of their experiences in a field which continues to put forth a gender imbalance in the high school principalship and the meaning they made from those experiences. This chapter summarizes the major findings, discusses the implications of those findings, and provides recommendations for moving forward and future research. Last, it concludes with a final reflection.

Implications and Recommendations

Chapter 4 addressed the primary meaning making from this study. There were six themes found throughout the qualitative data sources:

- Personal/Professional Balance
- Personal Characteristics
- Technical Knowledge
- Relationship Builder
- The Principalship, and
- Experiences Being Female.

These themes explored the experiences eight co-researchers and 60 survey participants have working in a career field that is predominately comprised of women yet continues to be led by men and illuminated their understanding of how internal and external factors contribute to their career aspirations regarding the principalship and external barriers that keep them from the position.

The alignment of career aspirations with personal and professional balance was a shared experience throughout the co-researchers textural and structural descriptions. While the idea of **Personal/Professional Balance** was not universal, considerations for the principalship were rooted in the standard of living each woman desired. Specifically, the

perceptions of **The Principalship** and its daily roles and responsibilities, coupled with the time necessary to dedicate to the position influence whether women aspired to the role. These experiences echo the findings of Spencer and Kochan (2000) who concluded that women rank workload and time as significantly more unfavorable aspects of the principalship than men did.

Each co-researcher identified innate **Personal Characteristics** that would serve them well if they sought the role of the principal, and each one experienced some level of teacher leadership. They were well respected by their colleagues and peers. In their individual ways, 100% of co-researchers have the **Technical Knowledge** – including experience and education – to qualify for the position now, or in the future, and they all recognized the importance of possessing strong communication skills and **Relationship Building** habits. However, in line with the national average only 30% consider the principalship as a career goal. This personal opting out of the role is in alignment with Smith (2011) who asserts that part of the continued disproportionality of the high school principalship is because women are opting out of the principalship pathway.

Last, **Experiences Being Female** illustrate a shared commonality in navigating leadership as women. Co-researchers articulated their own instances and experiences watching other women undermined via lack of opportunity, their opinions questioned as emotional, and engagement in conflict with other female leaders, or lack of mentoring opportunities. These experiences mirror those articulated by Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007) who found women to be inadequately mentored by other women, more likely to be perceived negatively in positions of power and felt a continued need to prove themselves. Alternatively, co-researchers embraced leadership traits that have been typically

considered feminine – such as distributive or collective characteristics built upon relational power (Blackmore, 2011; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011b).

Those six themes explore the sub questions posed by this research in exploring the meaning female participants contribute to internal factors related to the disproportionality of male principalship, external factors contributing to their own aspirations, and external factors contributing to barriers to the principalship. The overarching question *what meanings do female participants ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools* is answered by understanding that female participants make very little meaning of the gendered discrepancy in the role. Instead, they articulate a greater value on seeking principals – of either gender – who are skilled, committed, and capable to handle the complexities of the role, no matter their gender. With one exception (Natasha), the experiences co-researchers articulated regarding gender disproportionality centered upon technical problems (such as female student discipline) or building specific needs. This implies women are not thinking about education – and the way their individual career aspirations fit - systematically. When making decisions regarding career aspirations around the role of the principal, none of them articulated an importance placed on what is good for the staff/students in their buildings, or for the systemic representation of female voice in school leadership.

This individualistic viewpoint undermines the value of democratic education because continued gender discrepancy in leadership upholds traditional hierarchal power structures (Bogotch, 2005). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2009 & 2011a) argued that non-traditional leadership structures such as the women's web of leadership in which hierarchal power structures are broken down and distributed amongst a web of leaders is more

reflective of the “moral use of power” (Bogotch, 2005) necessary for upholding democratic schools. The same dismantling of traditional hierarchal power structures and a move to a web of school leadership could create a position that is more desirable for women in both time and workload; therefore, increasing the elements of democratic education that are necessary for equal voice from all stakeholders. Perchance then, women would see the principalship as more desirable position to aspire to as leaders.

Perhaps most important, the implications of this exploration of women’s experiences regarding internal and external factors attributing to their career aspirations and the barriers to the principalship is the impact continued gender disproportionality has on the superintendency. As the primary driver of the superintendency pipeline (Brunner, 2000), the secondary principalship is a vital component in the articulation of more female voice in positions of leadership. If women are opting out of the principalship, then the democratization of the superintendency also continues to stagnate. Kerr, Kerr, & Miller (2014) argued that an increase in the representation of women in upper leadership positions like the superintendency results in improved communication, inclusive leadership, empowerment, and greater levels of democracy. Mahtivanichcha & Rorrer (2006) echoed that an increased female representation in the superintendency drives an increase in women’s influence on education policy and practice.

With the understanding that the secondary principalship continues to be the primary pipeline for the superintendency (Brunner, 2000), and the superintendency is the role where the greatest impact on policy making occurs, I suggest that public education must realign the principalship into a role that is desirable, manageable, and offers a commitment to democratic education. This realignment would serve as a recruitment tool for women

who currently view the role as unfavorable, unattainable, and unfulfilling. This would allow for an increased female representation in the secondary principalship as a means of achieving a system of education that is more democratically aligned than the current system. Further, I contend that the principalship must become a position of shared responsibility. Last, I conclude with a call for female mentors to step forward and guide the next generation of female school leaders.

Democratic education is vital to the principalship today as our schools become more diverse in racial, ethnic, linguistic, and economic traditions. Democratic education necessitates a paradigm shift for female education leaders. Women must understand that education is the institution in which society passes forward cultural knowledge and both reflects society at large and shapes it. Pai, Adler, and Shadiow (2015) explained:

there is no escaping the fact that education is a sociocultural process [...] from a cultural perspective, school can be viewed as the means by which each society attempts to transmit and perpetuate its notion of the good life, which is derived from the society's beliefs about the nature of the world, knowledge, and values. (p. 6)

In the current climate in which women make up much of the secondary teaching force, but men continue to lead in disproportionate numbers public education reflects a society that seemingly does not value the female perspective in leadership. Without a change, this perpetration of disproportionate male leadership will continue. As educators, we must decide what knowledge is passed forward and to do so with a commitment to equal voice and opportunity. To do so, public education must believe that women are valued in the ranks of leadership and we must adjust the expectations of the principalship to allow for the personal and professional balance they desire.

Further, as women identify themselves as strong communicators, and believe relationship building to be both a skill and characteristic necessary for success in the principalship, a systemic wide commitment to shared decision making can be utilized to re-shape the principalship. The goal should be to transform the position to one that is competitive, influential, and worthy of the time and talent female educators have to give. Democratic education requires voice and input from stakeholders and that commitment to shared responsibility realigns the principalship in a manner that is advantageous to the work/life balance women need. Additionally, shared leadership models offer a distribution of managerial responsibility that allows for more time spent on instruction and student-centered interactions, which co-researchers indicate as an important factor in their career aspirations. This further moves the principalship toward the roots of its democratic ideal. Lambert (2002) offered a framework for shared leadership that gives school leaders the capacity to commit to democratic schooling. She indicated that schools who have successfully shared leadership consist of the following features:

- *Principal and teachers, as well as many parents and students, participate together as mutual learners and leaders* in study groups, action research teams, vertical learning communities, and learning-focused staff meetings.
- *Shared vision results in program coherence.* Participants reflect on their core values and weave those values into a shared vision to which all can commit themselves. All members of the community continually ask, “How does this instructional practice connect to our vision?”
- *Inquiry-based use of information guides decisions and practice.* Generating shared knowledge becomes the energy force of the school. Teachers, principal, students, and parents examine data to find answers and to pose new questions. Together they reflect, discuss, analyze, plan, and act.
- *Roles and actions reflect broad involvement, collaboration, and collective responsibility.* Participants engage in collaborative work across grade levels

through reflection, dialogue, and inquiry. This work creates the sense that “I share responsibly for the learning of all students and adults in the school.”

- *Reflective practice consistently leads to innovation.* Reflection enables participants to consider and reconsider how they do things, which leads to new and better ways. Participants reflect through journaling, coaching, dialogue, networking, and their own thought processes.
- *Student achievement is high or steadily improving.* “Student achievement” in the context of leadership capacity is much broader than test scores; it includes self-knowledge, social maturity, personal resiliency, and civic development. It also requires attention to closing the gap in achievement among diverse groups of students by gender, race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. (p. 37).

The utilization of this framework for shared leadership would distribute the burden of the principalship from one in which “hero” leaders are sought (Elmore, 2000) to one that is deromanticized; and therefore, create a system in which women can see themselves in positions of leadership. Elmore (2002) asserted:

Leadership tends to be romanticized in American culture, especially in the culture of schooling, both because we subscribe heavily to trait theories of success—people succeed because of their personal characteristics, more than because of effort, skill, and knowledge—and because we like our heroes to have qualities that we think we don’t have. The problem with this romanticized theory of leadership is that the supply of character traits we associate with “good” leaders is, by definition, limited, or we wouldn’t envy and admire them so much in other people. Also, character traits are much less amenable to influence by education, training, and practice than are knowledge and skill. Deromanticizing leadership would have a very positive effect on the quality of schools. (pp. 13-14).

In addition to reimagining the principalship into a role that women can balance with personal and family commitments, a commitment to shared leadership practice in an effort to illuminate the areas of the role women find interesting (instruction and relationships) and a deromanticizing of leadership so that women can see themselves in the role, the field of education, and the women who hold (or have held) the principalship must increase mentorship opportunities for female teachers.

While most research on mentoring has focused on the superintendency (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006), co-researcher experiences illustrate the necessity of mentorship for building the capacity of teachers so they see themselves capable of the role. Sperandio (2015) supported these experiences with the argument that “women who have been successful in reaching their leadership goals have actively sought to learn about and evaluate the experience of those in the role they seek to obtain” (p. 421). To ensure the success of female leaders for generations to come, and more importantly, to grow the number of aspiring principals in our high schools, women who hold administration positions need to actively seek mentees and guide them along the principalship pathway. While the importance of mentorship cannot be undervalued to the co-researcher experiences, it also offers an opportunity for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

This work is important because a modern understanding of the disparity of the high school principalship is an essential attempt at understanding “women’s decisions to enter the field of educational administration and the factors affecting their decisions” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 465). Though this work is incomplete, it lays the foundation for a more complete inquiry into the meaning women have regarding the gender disparity of the high school principalship in relation to internal and external factors, and barriers to the position. As a beginning researcher, the meanings I found are rudimentary interpretations of the women’s experiences and how they make meaning from them. A more direct approach to questioning would elicit a stronger understanding of the essence of understanding and how it impacts female educators’ aspirations. Specifically, a more detailed exploration of the difference between internal and external factors contributing to career aspirations would be

beneficial. For instance, do women identify their aspirations for motherhood, or to be the primary child giver, as an internal characteristic, or an external societal pressure?

Further, because the sample of this study is situated in a specific geographic area in the Midwest, a more geographically diverse sample could illicit different understanding. For instance, Natasha, the only woman not living in the Midwest, had much stronger and well-articulated views surrounding the gender disparity of the principalship. A qualitative study that explored the experiences of women in various geographic areas and compared them would deepen the essence of meaning found here.

Similarly, future research should seek a more diverse body of participants. As seven of the eight co-researchers were European American, the discussion around intersectionality and the impact of race or other identity components was slim. A more diverse sample would offer a stronger understanding of how women of color, interpret their experiences regarding principal aspirations (cf. Guillory, 2016).

Additionally, there are several other specific components identified in this study that could be expanded upon in future research. The following are suggested components:

- Rural, suburban, and urban delineation. Two of the co-researchers in this study had never worked for a female principal, those two happened to work in more rural schools. An exploration of experiences specific to these models would offer insights generalized to those communities.
- Inclusion of an exploration regarding family structure, or a woman's place in her family/society, perhaps in conjunction with religious beliefs may be beneficial. Time away from or focused on family was a common thread identified in this study. Exploring the roles women hold in their home and how these impact their career aspirations would add to the understanding sought here.
- An identification or comparison of the beliefs, attitudes, and values of women who enter education vs other professional fields is needed area for future research as well. An inquiry of this nature could help understand why gender disparity in education continues to persist.

- An in-depth exploration of mentoring and its impact on career aspirations for female teachers would be significant. Components could include the difference in male/female mentors, the progression of mentorship, the difference between formal and informal mentoring opportunities, and the importance of belonging to professional organizations.
- A study similar in design to this, but with the added component of a focus group would serve to further validate findings. I believe there is the possibility for richer discussion and greater understanding or uncovering of experiences when women talk to each other and vocalize their stories.

Final Thoughts

Despite the fascinating, rich, and varied experiences, I have had the opportunity to dissect, explore, and appreciate in my effort to understand what meanings women ascribe to the disproportionality of male principalship in American secondary schools. I cannot help but be a little disappointed in the realization that they attribute very little meaning to the gendered reality of the principalship. Most participants had given little thought to the disparity prior to being directly asked, and had a hard time connecting their individual experiences to the larger education – or even, societal – system. As both an educator and a scholar, the role women play in the principalship, and the inclusion of their voice for democratic representation, inclusion, and equity has become so fundamental to my experience it feels elemental. Thus, to be reminded that inequality is not a primary motivator for other women was a bit disheartening. I am encouraged, however, by the realization about, awareness in, and interest surrounding the problem once explained to both participants and members of the community who have asked about this endeavor. This experience reminds me that the greatest way to bring about change is to advocate for it in daily life.

When I began my doctoral journey, I was a high school social studies teacher. Since then, I have secured and completed an administrative internship, and am currently serving in my fourth year as an assistant principal who aspires the principalship. This study has given me a multitude of perspectives from which to view my daily experiences with students, staff, and community members – but also with the two female principals I have worked under for the past three years. Simultaneously birthing this project while beginning my own journey to the principalship has afforded me valuable theoretical grounding in understanding the various trials, tribulations, successes, and celebrations I have met along the way. In interpreting the co-researcher experiences it is not lost on me that my career aspiration to the principalship is not reliant upon balancing motherhood and is aligned with my value of democratic education as a larger societal need. I have found myself championing the recommendations I make here in my daily life: managing the expectation of evening supervision and time away from home, distributing the shared responsibilities of managing the building, and committing myself to both being a mentee and mentoring those women who aspire this pathway. If this study was designed to understand the essence of meaning women make regarding their career aspirations, I can know for certain the meaning made from my own experience is to uplift, recruit, and encourage other women into the challenging – but rewarding principal pathway.

This experience has been the most exhausting, mentally challenging, and worthwhile experience – academic or otherwise - of my life. I have learned immense amounts, not only about the topic, but also the process of research, and ultimately myself through this endeavor. I have grown as an educator, an aspiring principal, and a researcher, and I stand committed to seeking the principalship. Most importantly, perhaps, I have

grown as a woman. I stand on the shoulders of giants – the female principals who have come before me – and I seek to lift up the women who come after in their own aspirations toward the principalship.

APPENDIX A
INTERNET SURVEY

Phase One Internet Survey

With what gender do you identify?

- a. Female
- b. Male

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- a. No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- b. Yes, Mexican, Mexican American, Chicano
- c. Yes, Puerto Rican
- d. Yes, Cuban
- e. Yes, other Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin (for example Salvadoran, Dominican, Colombian, Guatemalan, Spaniard, Ecuadorian, etc).
- f. Prefer not to answer

What is your race?

- a. White
- b. Black/African American
- c. American Indian or Alaskan Native
- d. Chinese
- e. Filipino
- f. Asian Indian
- g. Vietnamese
- h. Korean
- i. Japanese
- j. Native Hawaiian
- k. Samoan
- l. Chamorro
- m. Other Asian, please list
- n. Other Pacific Islander
- o. Two-or more races
- p. Prefer not to answer

How many years have you been teaching/in education?

- a. 0-2
- b. 3-5
- c. 5-7
- d. 7-10
- e. 10-15
- f. 15-20
- g. Over 20 years

What is the highest level of education you have attained?

- a. BA
- b. BS

- c. MA
- d. Ph.D

How did you complete your education certification?

- a. Traditional university undergraduate degree
- b. Traditional university graduate program/certification
- c. Non-traditional (such as ABCTE, Teach for America, TNTP Teaching Fellows, etc)

When did you know you wanted to teach?

- a. As a child
- b. High School Aged
- c. University or College Aged
- d. Adulthood

In what field is your undergraduate work? Please select all that apply

- a. Art
- b. Communications
- c. English Literature
- d. Family and Consumer Sciences
- e. General Education
- f. History
- g. Life Science
- h. Mathematics
- i. Musical Arts
- j. Performing Arts
- k. Physical Science
- l. Political Science
- m. Special Education
- n. Visual Arts
- o. Other, please list _____

If you hold a graduate degree, in which specialty did you complete?

- a. Curriculum and Instruction
- b. Educational Leadership
- c. Educational Technology
- d. English as a Second Language
- e. English Language Education
- f. History Education
- g. Math Education
- h. Music Education
- i. Science Education
- j. Special Education
- k. Other, please list

In your career, have you ever been told by your peers you would make a good principal or administrator?

Yes

No

In your career, have you ever been told by your building level administrator you would make a good principal or administrator?

Yes

No

In your career, have you ever been told by a district level administrator you would make a good principal or administrator?

Yes

No

Have you considered the principalship for yourself?

Yes, and I have my license

Yes, but I chose not to peruse my administrative license

No

At any time in your career, including at the present time, have you held teacher leadership (department chair, mentor, learning coach, etc) role?

Yes

No

At any time in your career, including at the present time, held a district leadership role (other than administrator)

Yes

No

What is your marital status?

- a. Single, never married
- b. Married or domestic partnership
- c. Widowed
- d. Divorced
- e. Separated

Do you have children?

- a. Yes, I have children aged 18 and under living in my home.
- b. Yes, I have adult children.
- c. No, but I would like to/plan on having them someday.
- d. No, I do not have children.
- e. Prefer not to answer

Is your salary the primary source of income for your household?

a. Yes

What characteristics would make you a good principal? Do you seek the principalship, why or why not?

Phase two of this research involves in depth interview of female educators. Interviews will last between 30-60 minutes and your identity will be concealed and protected. Each participant could participate in 1-3 interview totaling between .5 and 3 hours of time commitment. Would you be willing to participate in phase two?

Yes

No

(If “yes” on previous question). Thank you for being willing to participate in phase two of this research study. Please fill out the following additional information.

What is your name?

What is the best phone number to reach you?

What is the best e-mail address for future communication?

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Early, mid, and late career teachers.

1. What do you teach? How long have you been teaching?
2. Why did you go into education?
3. What would make your career successful?
4. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten? Fifteen? Twenty?
5. What is your favorite thing about teaching? Least favorite thing?
6. What about your career brings you joy? Stress?
7. What is the primary role of your principal?
8. How would your colleagues describe your strengths and weaknesses?
9. What makes a good principal?
10. What about you would make a good principal?
11. Do you want to be a principal? Why or why not?
12. If yes, what drives you to that position? If no, is there anything that could drive you to it?
13. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
14. What context has influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Principal.

1. How long have you been a principal?
2. How long did you teach before that? What did you teach?
3. Why did you go into education?
4. When did you know you wanted to become an administrator?
5. Why did you want to become an administrator?

6. What was your route to the principalship?
7. How would your staff describe you? Strengths? Weaknesses?
8. What makes you a good principal?
9. What about the principalship brings you joy? Stress?
10. What drives you daily to continue this work?
11. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
12. What context has influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Retired educator.

1. How long did you teach/work in schools?
2. What roles did you hold?
3. Why did you enter the field of education?

If never administrator:

4. What made your career successful?
5. In your opinion, what was the role of the principal in your schools?
6. Did you ever consider the principalship? Why or Why not?
7. What would have made you a good principal?
8. What would have made you a not great principal?
9. What about your career brought you joy? Caused you stress?
10. How would your colleagues have described you? Strengths and weaknesses?

If administrator:

4. What made your career successful?
5. What was the most rewarding thing about being a principal?

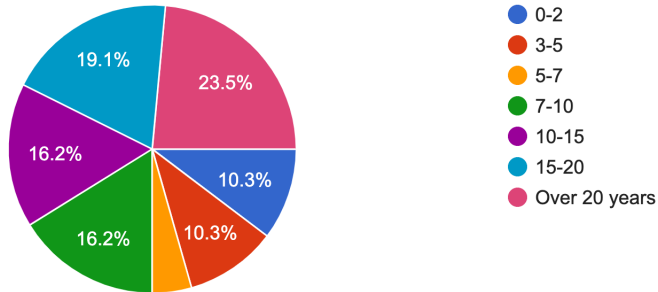
6. How do you think the principalship is different today than it was when you were in schools?
7. Would you do the principalship role again/today?
8. How would your staff describe you? Strengths? Weaknesses?
9. What made you a good principal?
10. What about your career brought you joy? Caused you stress?
15. What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon?
16. What context has influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

APPENDIX C
SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Results from Internet Survey

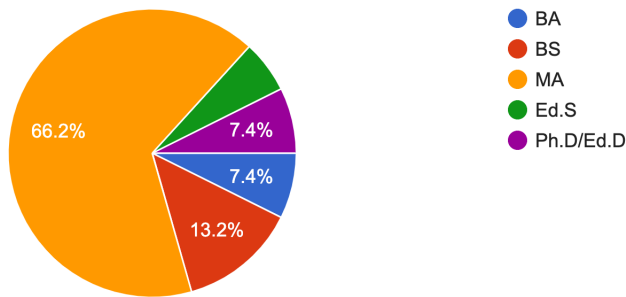
How many years have you worked in education?

68 responses



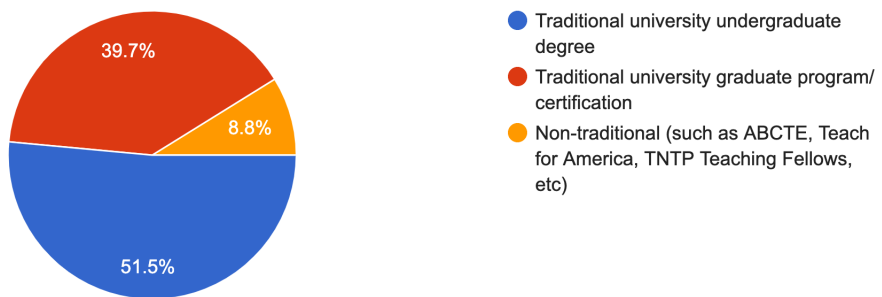
What is the highest level of education you have attained?

68 responses



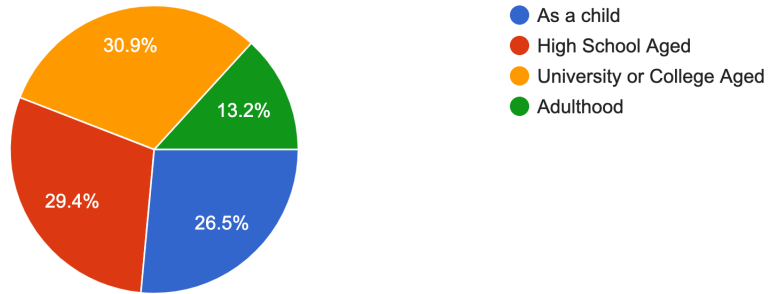
How did you complete your education certification?

68 responses



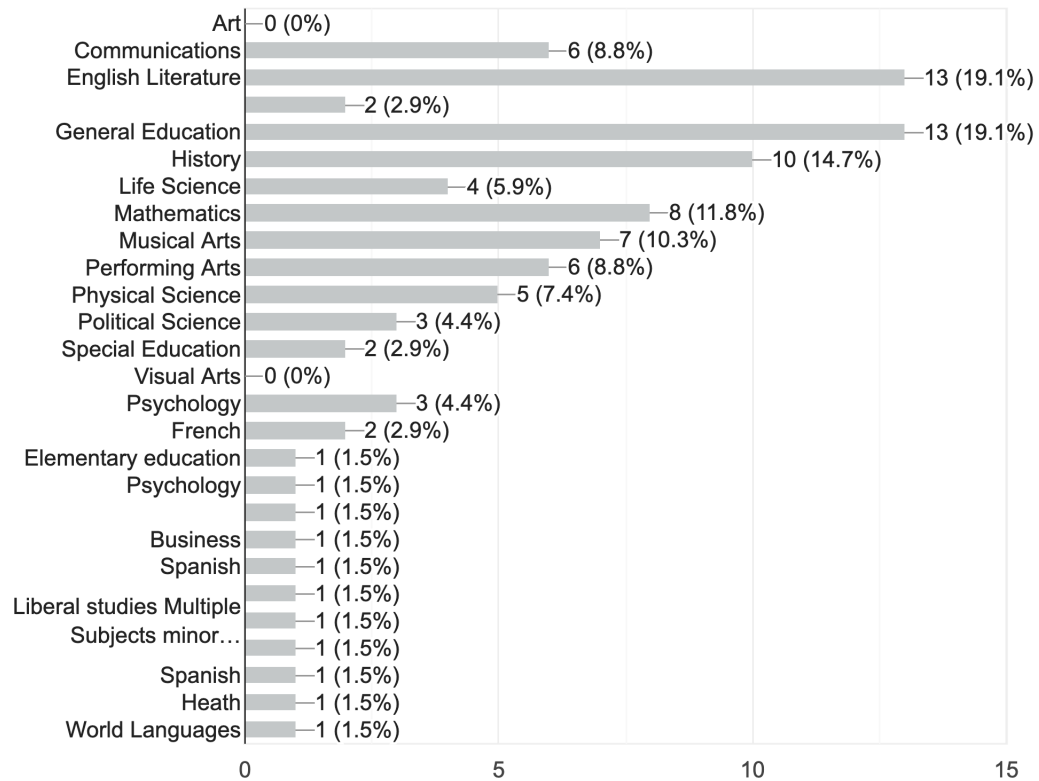
When did you know you wanted to teach?

68 responses



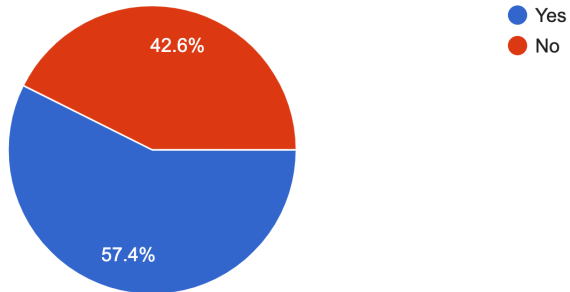
In what field is your undergraduate work? Please select all that apply

68 responses



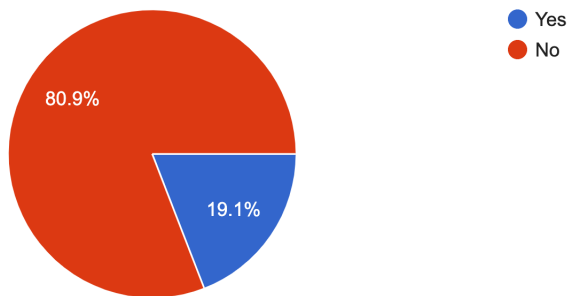
In your career, have you ever been told by your peers you would make a good principal or administrator?

68 responses



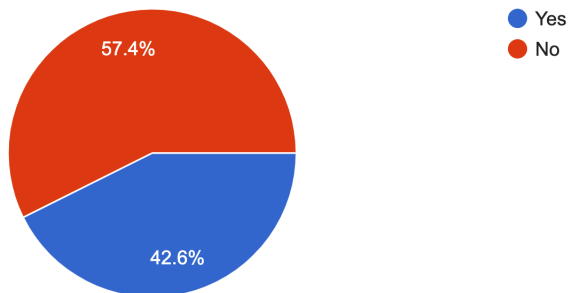
In your career, have you ever been told by a district level administrator you would make a good principal or administrator?

68 responses



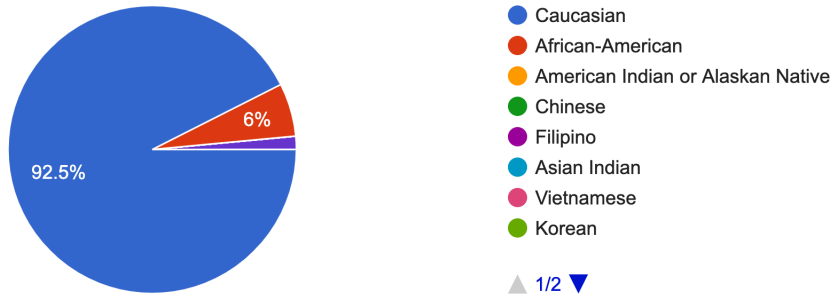
Is your salary the primary source of income for your household?

68 responses



What is your race?

67 responses



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