

DISSERTATION

WOMEN IN THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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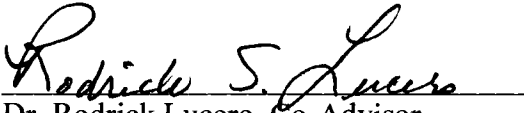
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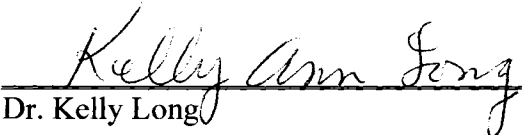
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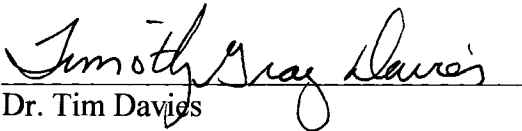
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

WOMEN IN THE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

Women are underrepresented in the ranks of the high school principalship. Long hours and lack of support may make the job unappealing for candidates. As America “grays” there is a predicted shortage of principals to lead our schools.

The study examines, through the words of three women, how they think and speak of their journey to a principalship. Their experience can guide aspiring administrators. This study is an interpretative phenomenological analysis. Five themes emerged: perceptions, leadership traits, support systems, career paths and lesson to share.

The participants (self) tape-recorded their responses to a series of reflective questions that describe their experiences as high school principals. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and analyzed. The data was collected in three phases; spanning a total of eight-weeks. Each phase required a two-week window for the participant to think about the questions and respond. The participants reflect on barriers to obtaining a principalship, career paths, and counsel that they have for aspiring secondary women principals.

The literature review examines the issue of continued under representation of women in the high school principalship, leadership styles and traits, and ways to meet the increasing demand for public school leadership in the 21st century. The study was also

reflective of the limited number of available participants in the regional area examined.

The participants mirror the literature by underscoring the following areas: leadership training, understanding the work of the principalship, networking and mentoring as tools to assist women in being successful in the high school principalship.

This study draws from aspects of an ambitious, complex, and broad-based need to understand the female experience in relationship to the high school principalship. The perspectives provide a context for success as practitioners.

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I was successful because you believed in me.

Ulysses S. Grant

Completing this degree has been an eight-year journey. I have found it to be at times frustrating, exhausting and rewarding. I did not take this journey alone. Along the way I have met some dedicated scholars who encouraged and supported me. I said goodbye to five advisors, who have moved on to other pursuits. Thank you to Dr. Ann Miser, Dr. Ann Foster, Dr. Lynn Safarik, Dr. Jean Lehmann and Dr. Barbara Nelson.

During the course of my studies both of my parents passed away. I know how proud they would be at this accomplishment. They taught me to value education and that learning is a life-long process. My father was a high school drop out in 1935. He was disappointed by my vocational choice. He once said, "If you are going to be an educator, be the best. Don't let the system do to kids what it did to me." My mother was a high school English teacher and a graduate student. In 1950 she married my father, left those pursuits to raise a family; never returned to them. To both of them I owe my greatest gratitude.

Dr. Donna Cooner Gines, Dr. Kelly Long, and Dr. Tim Davies I am particularly thankful that you took on the extra challenge. Dr. Lucero, thank you for the support to finish the race. Your influence in my life has been immeasurable.

I extend my appreciation to the participants in this study. The three women principals who participated in my study are role models for women in education. Thank you for sharing your journey with me.

To my administrative team, Andrea Tribelhorn, Michael James, Scott Torvik, Sheri Campbell, and the staff at Fossil Ridge High School, thank you for your support. The intersection between educational theory and clinical application has formed the foundation for a 21st century schoolhouse. What lies ahead of us is a great opportunity.

My husband, Don Cook, has always believed in me, supported my professional aspirations, and educational pursuits. For not bothering me when the door was closed, being by my side, and believing that all women should have the opportunity to be whatever they want to be, thank you.

A challenge to my daughter Christen, create your own path in life; use your education as a guide and your heart as the measurement of your success. Life truly is a journey. Look for the good, the true and the beautiful. Take the time to reflect upon where you have been and where you want to go.

I believe that nothing in life is an accident. So many doors have opened to allow me this opportunity – I want to thank the God for answered prayers.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all women who seek leadership in traditional male dominated professions. Never stop finding a way to have your voice heard. We have come a long way in forty years, but we have a long way to go. Continue to pioneer the way for others.

“Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.” Earth Charter 2000

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“The traditional public perception of being a woman and being a leader has long been in conflict. Historically, it seems that a woman cannot be both – if she is a ‘true’ woman, she cannot be a leader, and if she is a leader, she cannot fulfill her duties as a woman” (Harris, Ballenger; Hicks-Townes,; Carr, & Alford 2004, p. 1). Is it that on-going conflict that has left women under represented in secondary school administration?

In 1909 John Brown wrote a book entitled *The American High School*. John Brown had very specific beliefs about the significance of gender qualifications for the high school principalship.

Generally speaking, men make better principals than women, especially in large schools. They [men] are stronger physically; they possess more executive ability; they are more likely to command the confidence of male citizens; they are more judicial in mind; they are more sure to seize upon the essential merits of a question; they are less likely to look at things from a personal point of view; they are likely to be better supported by subordinates; and simply because they are men, they are more likely to command fully the respect and confidence of boys (pp. 241-242).

It is a sad commentary that John Brown’s 1909 ideas still ring true today. It appears that communities still question the abilities of women to lead public high schools and that research has fallen short in exploring the reasons why women are under represented in the ranks of high school principalships.

Our most conservative values are played out in schools. Society still wants women – the teachers – to take care of the children, nurture them and make sure that they are safe. Men are there to be top administrators who step in and oversee the school

family. It all comes down to how people think about power, which is along gender lines (Guthrie, 1999).

Just as there is a shortage of teachers, public education is facing a shortage of principals. The graying of America is impacting the candidate pool of educators. There are many indicators that predict a shortage of qualified candidates to fill the principalships (McAdams, 1998). According to researchers, the high school principal who once inhabited that office – white, male, married – is no longer the only choice for the position. The traditional acceptance of female principals at the elementary level needs to expand to the secondary level in order to fill the shortage of high school principals (Barker, 1997; Keller, 1998).

“Women are still under represented in educational administration. When one compares the number of women teachers, with the number of women in administration, the number is disproportionate” (Hudson, 1998, p. 1). “Women have influence and have made notable contributions throughout the history of education, yet – although women continue to represent the majority of teachers – the representation of women in administration continues to be disproportional” (Restine, 1993, p. 15). Under-representation of women in administration is not due to a lack of ambition for these positions, but rather variables such as males having advanced degrees, males having more years of experience and males having greater administrative course work (Pfalzer, 1990).

I remember the first time that someone asked me, “How did you get your position” (as a high school principal)? I was a little taken back and assumed that this individual wanted a run down of my resume. As I started to recapture the experiences that lead me to my position, they stopped me. “No, how did you get the position.” The question I was

asked implies a gender bias toward women as high school principals. The assumption made by the question I was asked refers to the competencies and abilities of a woman to lead a high school.

Only two other principals, both males, had served the alternative high school that I became principal of in 2002. Each of those gentlemen served as principal for ten years. Within that school community, having a female principal increased awareness of the leadership differences between males and females. The previous principals were very authoritarian. Their leadership style fit the norm for school leadership in the 1980s and 1990s. Once structures were in place, change was slow. Students at that school were underachieving and the school was rated by the state as a low performing school. By shifting the power base and decentralizing decisions, teams of teachers moved a low performing school to the status of average, a significant accomplishment for an alternative school.

The toughest of the tough students who had not been successful in traditional schools attend that school. Could a woman handle those types of students and their education? So, I asked myself the tough question: How did I become the principal of a high school? What was my journey? What was the journey of other women? Did I face gender bias and preconceived ideas about what a woman could achieve as a high school principal? My quest is to understand the uniqueness of the female experience, as a high school principal, has shaped this study.

“Where this next generation of women will make their mark is in expanding opportunities for women throughout all sectors of the economy and in obtaining positions of power. Here you will have to start fresh paths, navigate obstacles, sometimes stand your

ground” (Vrato, p. 67). These words by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor remind us how important the work and achievement of equality is. Gains have been made over the last several decades, but the work is not yet done.

Equity must be on the forefront of the American political agenda and the agenda of every school district in our nation. Equity for women in all walks of life has been the goal of feminists for more than four decades. It has been 20 years since the *Wall Street Journal* authors Carol Hymowitz and Timothy Schellhardt and *Adweek* author Gay Bryant described barriers to reaching the top of institutional structures as the “glass ceiling”. Education, like all professions, has seen a glass ceiling for women who chose to move beyond the classroom and into upper level positions of authority and power.

Former President Bill Clinton said, “During the past four decades, America has made real progress on our journey toward equality and justice for all. American women, who just over eighty years ago were prohibited from voting, now serve at the highest levels of government. But this progress has not come easily or without cost” (Vrato, 2004). Former President Clinton had several women who were strong role models for him including his high school principal. All of these women inspired a president on his journey.

From presidents to common working people, women educators have played a significant role in shaping the future of America. “Women have always been teachers. Our mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers – rare are the women who have not instructed children. Yet it is only in the last 150 years that teaching has been a paid profession for women” (Hoffman, 2003, p. 1). It has been a great accomplishment for women to have the

opportunity to compete with men for top leadership positions. The climb for equity in educational leadership continues.

In her book, *Counselor's*, Elizabeth Vrato introduces us to 18 courageous women who have changed the world. Robert Hirshan, president of the American Bar Association, in his review of the book says, "By sharing their histories, 18 American heroes underscore the wondrous future that awaits us if we commit to the full and equal participation of women within our society." Research on women's journeys to educational leadership is no less important. We must stop having to asking the question, "Where are all the women?" Through sharing the stories of women who have made the journey we can inspire others to step forward. Women need to hear that we can have multiple roles. We can be a wife, mother, community volunteer, professional, and any combination of complex and demanding opportunities.

As the march toward educational transformation moves forward, there are many educational reformers including: Deal, Fullan, Senge, and Sergiovanne, who focus on collaboration, transformation, and clear communication as crucial to the future of public education. These traits are traditionally attributed to women and women's leadership. Questions abound about whether differences in leadership style and preferences are gender related. Acceptance of altered or new styles of leadership also comes into question. Women demonstrate a preference for democratic rather than autocratic organizations and cultures that are inclusive and collaborative. Women develop differently; they are more likely to be grounded in an ethic of care through relationships rather than laws (Eby, 2004).

Historically, education and educational leadership was in the male domain. Until the 18th century, men were the only paid professional teachers. And often men were the only students to be educated. By the middle of 19th century single women became a cheap source of educational labor. Female teachers could be housed with families in the community and paid with room and board. In 1870, 60 % of teachers were women (Sigford, p. 2). By 1905 the majority of female teachers were at the elementary level. It was felt that men were better suited to deal with older children.

According to Shakeshaft (1989) it was believed that women could not handle the discipline necessary at the higher grades. During World War II, with men serving in the war, women were in greater demand as upper level educators and administrators. From the late 1930s until in late 1940s women held 40 % of school administration positions in elementary through high school.

During one of the most vocal periods of the Women's Movement, female high school administrators were at the lowest percentage in history. Only 1% of high school principals in the 1970s were female (Fishel & Pottker, 1974). By contrast, in 1980 the percentage of female administrators increased to a combined total (elementary and secondary) of 20 % (Paddock, 1980). The majority of the positions retained were at the elementary level. By the mid 1990s, it is estimated that 13 % of high school principals were women (Digest of Education Statistics, 1996).

Statement of Need

As the educational workforce ages and the demand of the principalship increase, the need for skilled and eager high school principals will continue to grow. According to a

study by Gross and Trask (1976) a very small percent of women held principalships of secondary schools. Another statistic in a study conducted by *The Executive Educator* and Xavier University and reported through the National Center For Educational Statistics (1994) 12 % of high school principals are female. It is easy to see that there was little movement in increasing the number of women who became high school principals in three decades. The growth of female representation in high school principalships is not keeping pace with males or in proportion to the percentage of teachers who are female.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) commissioned a 1988 study to review and address a perceived shortage of available school administrators, both male and female. They found three top reasons for the actual shortage were low pay, too much stress, and too great a time commitment (Adams, 2004). “However, these results fall short of explaining why 75 percent of women hold jobs as teachers in public education while men hold 60 percent of the administrative positions” (Adams, 2004, p. 209).

“We had grown up with traditional sex-type norms and expectations, which then changed with the most recent women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s” (Freeman, 2001, p. 27). Career paths for women began to change during this time of social change. Doors began to open due to social and political pressure. Have the schoolhouse doors opened far enough to create equity in leadership opportunity for all women?

To disband any concerns or questions regarding a woman’s ability to do the work of a high school principal, women must be highly qualified. In most states, a graduate degree and licensure is required to be a principal. Since the ratio of female administrators

to male administrators is so skewed toward men, it causes one to question if women are seeking the positions in proportion to their presence in the degree pool.

Tallerico (2000) reported that the administrative shortage might stem from barriers within the system or the job itself. “System wide obstacles, including social norms, biases and concerns over women’s commitments to their families, have led to an under-use of women candidates in hiring” (Adams, p. 209).

The work hours required of a high school principal seems to be a barrier. According to one high school principal, “time is a huge issue” (Davis, 2003). Luther, a single mother struggled to balance her role as principal of Port Washington High School and her time with her children. Christine Horbas, principal of Kewaskum High School echoes those same thoughts, “making this the right time to take on the challenges of school administration – my children are grown” (Davis, 2003).

As the women’s movement of the 1960s and 1970s moved into the 1990s, it appears that the same old stereotypes were keeping women from moving into top positions both in education and business. At a Leadership Summit (July, 2000) participants were asked to identify reasons why educators might not pursue principalships. Ninety women responded to the question of why female educators might not pursue principalships. Five factors were identified: (1) demands of the job [discipline, reports, and personnel issues], (2) low salary, (3) time [50-70 hours per week], (4) lack of support [teachers and parents], and (5) lack of respect (Kennedy, 2000).

The voices of women who have achieved the position of principal in high schools need to be heard. Little has been written about the female experience in the high school principalship. The experiences to be described in this interpretative phenomenology will

reveal the journey that women have taken to achieve a position of power and authority in a typically male dominated field. This study will build upon the experiences shared from the participants and provide an avenue for women to learn from each other. I feel compelled to be a voice, not only for those who have not been given a voice through a system that marginalizes women, but to allow women who have voice to join together.

Meaning must be gathered from the experiences of those who have worked from the margin. The numerical data tells us that there is not balance in gender representation or opportunity in school leadership, but the stories will give insight into the experiences. We must explore meaning for what it is like to be a woman in what has been a historically male dominated position. The question of why women are not equally represented in school leadership must be explored.

Academic institutions across the country have answered the call for leadership training in response to a shortage of school administrators. Programs to meet the demands of leadership are available in a variety of formats. On-line courses, distance learning, cohort groups and traditional courses are available to prepare educational leaders. Will those training opportunities open the door for aspiring women administrators? Are women who make up the majority of schoolteachers, preparing to take on the challenge of leading schools?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to share the reflections of three selected female high school principals, in a northern section of a western state, in order to understand how their experience can illuminate the way for aspiring female administrators. By analyzing the

reflections of these women, we may come to better understand the experience of women in school administration.

The dominant discourse in school leadership is the male normative, which reflects the idea that showing emotions is weak; being female is weak. Through the analysis of female high school principal's narratives, the demystification of stereotypes may occur.

Research Questions

The issues that surround school leadership and gender are very diverse. This study focused on providing insights into women's experience as they seek positions of power in public high schools.

These overriding research questions focus on discovering the essence and meaning of the high school principalship experience from a female perspective. The three phases of the data collection, and the demographic information gathered are framed around several overarching questions, which are narrowed to more specific research questions. The broad questions include: Are there shared characteristics (traits, factors, obstacles) of women who have become high school principals? What motivated women to take positions of power? What factors, stepping-stones, obstacles, or support systems are present in their journey? Investigation of this issue will include the following research questions:

1. How do these women describe their experience in becoming principalship?
2. What lessons can be shared with female educators who seek the principalship?
3. Is there a common the career path that women high school principals have taken?

4. Are there perceived barriers or roadblocks that are specific to women principals?

Significance of the Study

It is time to explore the experiences of female public high school principals. Their voice, how they think, how they speak of their world, their journey and their story needs to be explored if the doors are to be open for more women.

Traits of collaboration and inclusion are marks of female leadership (Hudson, 1998). Those traits have developed through the socialization of women. In a time of educational reform and change, women have innate traits that are essential to the evolution of education in the new millennium. It is incumbent upon the schools, therefore, to equalize the opportunity and promote the leadership that will move education forward. The new age of educational leadership requires the principal to balance a variety of roles, attitudes and beliefs in order to ensure the success of students. The principal must now be skilled in listen, speak effectively, facilitation, teaching, encourage, supporting and promoting their school.

Traditional top leadership positions in public schools have been male dominated. A quick review of the comprehensive high schools in five districts in this geographical location indicated there are three women high school principals and nine male principals. Several of the school districts have no female high school principals. Only one district has a female superintendent.

The experience shared by these women, provide insight into the journey that they have taken to obtain a leadership position. The reflective text, describe traits, experiences,

barriers and lessons. This study explored what it means to be a woman high school principal and how to motivate and guide other women to achieve positions of authority and power.

Narrative reflections create constructs, ways of knowing. Narrative text has as its object of investigation the story itself (Reissman, 1993). Qualitative research captures the personal and human dimensions of experiences. Human lives are storied lives. Daily encounters and interactions form the plot. Meaning is created from both the sharing of the experience and the analysis of its themes.

This study contributes to the description and development of female leadership. It develops leadership profiles and specific leadership characteristics, which women principals describe as key to obtaining a principalship and succeeding there.

Delimitation

Due to the under representation of women in high school principalships, the study was limited to 3 women who serve or have served as a comprehensive high school principal in the last five years.

Limitation of the Study

The study is specific to a regional location. However, given similar participants, in another location, another researcher should be able to develop similar emergent meanings from the experiences of the participants. It is assumed, in qualitative research, that the findings are open to different interpretations.

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One includes an introduction, statement of need, statement of purpose, research questions, limitations and definitions. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature. Chapter Three describes the research methodology used in this qualitative study, data collection methods, and analysis process. Chapter Four provides the findings. Chapter Five presents conclusions, advice from the participants and recommendations for future studies. The Appendices include the informed consent, interview protocol and questionnaire.

Researchers Prospective

Fifteen years ago I stepped out of the classroom as a full-time teacher to accept a quasi administrative assignment. I was given the title, Director of Student Activities. The title gave me hope that I would someday become a *full-fledged* high school principal. I enjoyed the challenge I was given, but upon completion of my administrative certification, I wanted both the salary and the authority that comes with a *true* administrative job.

In 1995 I was hired to be an assistant principal in a junior high school. This was an opportunity to learn about discipline, evaluation, instructional strategies and coaching of teachers. After three years as an assistant principal, I wanted to do something with greater challenges, more authority, and a broader scope of responsibility. I applied for a high school principalship in a town an hour away. The school would be a challenge; there was a significant decline in enrollment and multiple funding issues. The farming community had not yet had a woman as their high school principal – the selection again was a man. This was the first of four high school principal positions that I would interview for, and the

position be given to a male. Each man had equal or less experience than me. I began to wonder where all the women high school principals?

In the spring of 2002 I was hired as the principal of an alternative high school. I served that school for three years. I was the first woman principal of that school. Three years later I was hired as the principal of a new comprehensive high school. I replaced a male principal who resigned after two years on the job. The superintendent that hired me was the first female superintendent in my district.

Finding the right opportunity to become a high school principal was a personal journey. This journey that has taught me about leadership styles, political structures in educational organizations, and the perceptions that exist about women's abilities to lead in non-traditional roles. This study was born from my own journey and the desire to assist women who want to lead a comprehensive high school.

My researcher bias -- I am a feminist. I believe that all individuals should have the opportunity to pursue opportunities without the fear of discrimination. I also believe in the value of qualitative research as a tool to open doors and give voice to marginalized individuals. For me, research is more than reporting numbers, it is the conduit for answering the question, "So, what?"

My research bias comes from two sources: (1) my desire for political action, which gives voice to life experiences, and (2) from my own lens as a woman, a leader and a seeker of scholarship.

In a narrative course at Colorado State University, I was taught that "language is the chief repository of meaning." Theory, frameworks, paradigms, lens, methodologies all

seek to unlock that repository. The work of a researcher is to find the right key to open the door.

Implicit within this study are several assumptions. First, the study is specific to a regional area where the representation of women in high school administration is higher than the national average, but not proportional to male representation. Secondly, there is a small population to gather data from, which limits the size of the study. Thirdly, my twenty-four year career as an educator, and my current position as a principal may influence this study. Fourth, the primary focus of an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach is to create meaning to a lived experience.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

History

Since 1850, women have made strides toward leadership in public schools. Their stories are heroic, engaging and set the tone for on-going marches toward equity. As America moves toward equity for women, public school leadership also moves forward. In education, politics, business and medicine, women have served in supporting roles. When the circumstances have been right, or the women were persistent enough, doors into management have been opened. The responsibilities of motherhood and marriage have often come before careers. Working outside of the home has long been an opportunity for women. What has become a challenge over the last century has been the desire of women to not only work, but also have careers where opportunities for advancement are equal to those granted men. A review of the literature is thin in regards to specific studies on public high school principalships, although parallels can be drawn between women in any male dominated leadership position and the attainment of power.

Sue Freeman (2001) outlines the discrepancy that women face as they gain power in positions of authority. She notes that there is a contrast between manager and leadership roles. Management roles are those that hold the status quo and leadership are those positions that create a vision for the organization. Leadership is understood as a form of social authority, something that women have not been given.

If management and leadership are distinct constellations of skills and tasks, the managers of either sex should experience a glass ceiling between their current positions and the executive suite. As it is, only women do. This is not to say that all male managers advance to leadership positions, but 95 percent of those who do are men (Freeman, p. 31).

Since the turn of the eighteenth century there has been a “great man” theory that tells us that certain men are born with a destiny by birth to lead. Business, politics, government, and education have all been led by men for hundreds of years. Since theory is derived from empirical example, the predominantly white male leaders have been given their positions of leadership as a birthright. Their right to privilege has filtered women out of the leadership pool and created the glass ceiling. To move past the “great man” theory and break the glass ceiling women must overcome the stereotypes that repress their movement forward and accept responsibility. It appears that since men have been given the privilege to hire, women are less likely to be chosen by men to take leadership positions. The National Center for Education Statistics (2004) indicates that there are twice as many male principals as female principals in U.S. public high schools.

White males have lead American schools for over two centuries. There has been an underlying assumption that male coaches have earned their place in leadership. There is an old joke that states a high school principal is a coach with a few losing seasons. Before the age of school accountability there were parallels between coaching and the principalship. Male coaches have proven to be strong disciplinarians. They have succeeded in creating and motivating teams to action. They can manage budgets, uniforms and schedules. These men have a public image that has created confidence in their abilities to be principals of our secondary schools. It is that public sense of confidence that has kept them in the forefront of public school leadership.

Until the early 1960s women had little exposure to those athletic based leadership skills. Leadership phrases have included sayings like: level the playing field, get in the game, that's out in left field, we must rally the troops and who is going to carry the ball. Females have been viewed in education as the caretakers and the nurturers, not disciplinarians or business managers. So, at the elementary school level, where nurturing is highly valued, women have been able to carve a space for themselves in leadership positions. At the high school level, the ability of women to handle the discipline, long hours, and the demands of older students has not been fully recognized.

Women seeking formal leadership roles in traditionally male industries must find ways to understand the culture of leadership. They must also seek inroads to empowerment. The women's movement has been helpful in recognizing the need for women's administrative parity. But the movement has not given tools or pathways for women to enter the center of organizations and move upward. I believe that women are looking for role models and guides to show the way in how to achieve positions of leadership that have been denied women for years.

The impact of the Women's Movement in leadership is reflected in the roles women have been able to obtain. To have women represented in positions of power has not come without struggle.

Although equality is still a good way off, the changes of the last generation are nonetheless remarkable. What are the factors behind this development? First, one must note the importance of structural social change. The failure to nominate women (for the Nobel Peace Prize) clearly related to traditional sex role patterns and a woman's limited opportunities to exert their influence during the first part of the 20th century.... Female representation in political and decision-making was for the most part, totally absent, as was women's participation in leadership positions in the world of business and academia (Nordeval, p. 74).

The National Women's Hall of Fame gives a historical review of women who have made a difference in our world. Three of those recognized women are Susan B. Anthony, Mary Burnett Talbert, and Mary Jane McLead.

Susan B. Anthony taught school in New Rochelle, NY. When she discovered that male teachers were paid several times more than female teachers, and as history tells the story, she demanded equal pay. Her journey, which began as a pursuit of equality, changed the face of women's rights in America and established equal pay for all educators.

Mary Burnett Talbert was the first woman named assistant principal of Little Rock's Union High School in 1887. Her determination to clear the glass ceiling was achieved a few years later when she was named principal. She was the first female principal in Arkansas.

In 1904, Mary Jane McLead saved \$1.50 to start a school. She had five students in the newly formed Daytona Literacy and Industrial School for Training Negro Girls. The school grew and grew. Thirty years later that school became a college serving Negro students.

Another story of courage includes Ella Flagg Young. Young had many firsts as a woman. She was the first female superintendent of any public school system. In 1909 she was selected superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools. Young was elected as the first female president of the National Education Association in 1910. Until she was elected, women were allowed full membership in NEA, but could not speak from the platform. The conflict that developed over a woman in power, led to a decision by NEA that requires a rotation of the NEA presidency every other year between males and females.

This rotation is still in place. At the turn of the 20th century she received a Ph.D. The title of her dissertation should not be a surprise, “Isolation in School Systems” (Hoffman, p. 314). Ella Young’s journey is an inspiration for all women.

The literature explores the extent to which female administrators, seeking high school principalships, have fallen victim to perceptions, stereotypes; or misconceptions of the work to be done. Anna Hicks tells her story in the book *Speak Softly and Carry Your Own Gym Key* (1996). Anna’s journey in a principalship lasted four years. “My ambivalent journey in this profession has revealed to me the uniqueness of the high school principalship with its traditions, assumptions, and rites of passage that often create barriers for women” (p. 2). Anna became a teacher because she enjoyed school and excelled in it. She loved English and thought that she could be one of those teachers that she had loved. When there was an opening in her school for a principalship she applied. The process was three months long. “I soon began to realize that a few men had a problem envisioning a female in the job, but many women did also (p. 4.) In the final interview the superintendent asked her, “Just how tough are you?” She got the position only after the male candidate turned the position down.

There is still sexism in school administration; human capital is not being fully utilized in leading our public high schools. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (1989), only 11 percent of high school principals were female. According to Grogan (1994), gender is a factor as to why women are not equally represented in the ranks of the upper level school administration. Scholarly research for over 75 years relied primarily on white male participants. It is only during the past 20 years that one finds research that focuses on women administrators (Tallerico, 1999).

Need for Leaders

Predictions that there is a shortage of qualified candidates to fill the administrative positions have been stated by futurists and statisticians (Whitaker, 2001). A study conducted by the Educational Research Service concluded that indeed filling principal positions over the next few years would be difficult (Educational Vital Signs, 1998). The study goes on to tell us that there will be at least a 10% increase in the need for school administrators as early as 2005. Going hand-in-hand with those studies is research done by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) that school districts reported a shortage of qualified candidates to fill their positions (Keller, 1998). With a large number of veteran educators reaching retirement age, and a growing American population, the need will continue to grow for qualified individuals to teach and lead our schools.

“In the next 10 years, 2.2 million new teachers will be needed, more students will be added to the nation’s school systems, and additional positions will be created as the systems grow” (Keller, p. 5). Since the principal career track moves individuals from the teaching ranks into administration, the number of individuals seeking teaching positions is not keeping pace with retirement and population growth rate; a shortage of qualified principal candidates is certain.

“Policymakers have begun to wonder whether state-level certification requirements deter people from becoming school administrators. In a review of state-level policies 49 out of 50 states required a special certification to hold an administrative position” (Gates, 2003, p. 31). If principal positions require additional certification and the

work is not perceived as desirable due to long hours, unrealistic expectations, and lack of public support, it will become difficult to fill the leadership needs of our schools.

School Leadership for the 21st Century

A review of literature captures our understanding of leadership skills; traits of women in leadership, potential leadership shortages, and factors that make the job of high school principal seem unattractive.

Dr. Marilyn Grady focused her career on the promotion of women in school leadership positions. Her work focused on implications for gender equity across the United States including three progressive educational states: Colorado, Texas and Oklahoma. Grady's work was presented in the *Journal of School Leadership* under the title: "School Administrators: The Next Generation" (Grady, 1992). In 1987 she organized the first national conference on women in educational leadership at the University of Nebraska. The focus of this national conference was to guide women in development of realistic career expectations and learn about issues critical to successful educational leadership (Grady, 1998). Grady promoted the belief that women can have top positions but they must work together and within the system to achieve these aspirations. Grady's work sets the stage to build leadership for the future.

Leadership styles for the 21st century need to be different than those of past generations of school leaders. "Both Grogan (1996) and Aburden and Nasibett (1992) report that, "Women's leadership style tends to be more transformative, collaborative and inclusive than that of their male counterparts making females more capable of adapting a

collaborative management approach than men. These researchers add that this style is the preferred one for today's schools" (Spencer, 2000, p. 2).

Leadership for Student Learning: Reinventing the Principalship (ISL) was a taskforce project directed by Michael Usdan, Barbara McCloud, and Mary Podmostko (2000). Over a period of less than one year the project staff and team put together a review and suggestions for educational leadership for the 21st century. The ISL Institute funded the study for Educational Leadership. Their report illuminates trends and skills need in leadership. It goes on to suggest that the principal of a 21st century school must be a new kind of principal. This new principal must be an instructional leader, community leader and visionary leader. This study focuses on the concentration of female principals at the elementary level and their absence at the secondary level. Their suggestion is to increase the investments in recruitment and retention that focus on leadership for student achievement (p. 10). That level of investment promotes women who are seeking leadership positions. It is the responsibility of school districts to open the doors and universities to prepare women to lead.

The Milken Family Foundation funded four studies over the last forty years. The National Association of Secondary School Principals conducted the research. Each study reflects on the work of secondary principals during that decade. These studies have defined how principals spend their days, how they view their training and their desire to manage less and lead more. These studies are meant to address the challenges of the high school principals.

The 2000 study gives a snapshot of a "typical" high school principal. "The typical high school principal is a man, who leads a school of fewer than 750 students, and who

has been in his position for more than 15 years” (Principal Leadership, Dec. 2001). The good news is that typical profile is changing. In the 2000 survey, one respondent in five was a woman. And those women have been on the job less than five years.

Leadership Differences

The traditional bureaucratic model of school leadership is led by male administrators who governed teachers, students and staff through formalized goals and procedures (Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1996). In a top-down hierarchical organization, authoritarian leadership is most often the pattern for school administration. Public perceptions tend to favor men as better able than women to handle discipline, particularly at the secondary level. Men were also viewed as more suited than women for working with predominantly male boards of education and dealing with political influence “unfortunately, research suggest there remains a substantial degree of sex-role stereotyping that limits the perceived fit of women for certain administrative positions” (Bass 1981; Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970; Hofstede, 1991; Shakeshaft, 1989). “These perceptual biases may be causing school district leaders and board members to fail to identify highly qualified candidates who don’t look like their predecessors” (Pounder, 2001, p. 6).

In 2000, Ann Sherman investigated barriers to the advancement of women in the field of educational administration. “Research has identified many barriers to female advancement in the field of education. Styles of leadership different from the traditional masculine model have been identified” (p. 133). It appears that identifying the differences is not as difficult as legitimizing the way that women lead.

Most leadership theories focus on specific traits that have made a difference in an organization. It is important therefore to look at the function of leadership and the impact that leadership has on the organization. Since the 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk*, public education has been under fire to prepare students for a global world. The success of schools has been questioned, evaluated and given quantitative scores. The success of public schools, in America, has not gained public approval. The organizational leadership of public schools has not changed since that publication. The call for accountability, assessment, merit pay and curriculum alignment are driving forces, which are moving education toward a new paradigm of leadership. The new paradigm of leadership, which is more inclusive, and data driven, supports educational innovation.

“In the mid-1970s, our [women’s] notions of school leadership were formed primarily from watching the administrators around us, all men. We began by mimicking what we saw, learning to administer by modeling ourselves after the men around us. We harbored a secret belief that we would develop into better administrators than our models” (Regan, 1995, p. 9). Similarly this modeling was also seen in business (Book, 2001, p. 5).

Leadership style emerges into substance. Leadership is about creating a vision, alliances, trust, dealing with conflict, team building. Women bring an authentic concern for democratic schools (Harris, 2004, p. 78).

L. Nan Restine’s work has focused on women in leadership. “The gender-role stereotypes that pervade our culture continue to produce people who function within the parameters of their socialization, which is more often than not restrictive and narrow” (1993, p. 16). If women are to lead, the stereotypes must be dismissed.

In a paradigm of collaborative leadership it appears that inclusive style better suits the goals of moving individuals and school organizations forward. “There must be a shift in leadership training that acknowledges and addresses the female interactive leadership style, which is a style of empowerment, productivity and outcomes” (McGrew-Zouili, 1993, p. 43).

Leadership Development

The number of women who are entering graduate programs to become school administrators has increased. Seeking advanced degrees is crucial to women’s advancement. Without academic preparation you cannot become a principal. It is crucial for women to understand that preparation is necessary to seek upper level public school leadership positions. Without the credential, the opportunity for upward professional movement is not possible (Glass, 1992).

“For nearly twenty years, efforts to reform administrator preparation programs have produced little progress” (Achilles, 2001, p. 8). The current system for preparing school leaders meets a basic standard but is it preparing a diverse pool of leaders to take the helm of schools? The addition of on-line universities that administrative educational programs are on the fast track to meet a growing need, but the quality of those programs have not been assessed.

One way of assisting women in the transition into male dominated leadership roles has been to help them adapt their leadership style into that of a traditional male style. Professional training has included aspects such as dress, stance, voice and use of metaphors. Pat Heim’s research has captured that level of training, “The Power Dead-

Even Rule” (Heim, 1991 & 2005). She describes five concepts that have created the “different” rules that each gender responds from. Her five include: (1) lessons from childhood, (2) hierarchy vs. flat-structures, (3) process focus vs. goal focus, (4) linear vs. multiple focus, and (5) talking vs. giving the answer. Heim’s research addresses the idea that from childhood we are taught how to interact with the world. Boys play games that build on hierarchical structures and girls spend time role-playing and building friendships. Boys learn to compete through win and lose. Girls learn to play nice and preserve relationships.

Authors including Nancy Fredericks, *Dancing on the Glass Ceiling*; Lois Frankel, *Nice Girls Don’t Get the Corner Office*, and Gail Evans, *Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman*, capture the strategies of teaching women to succeed by understanding and adapting to the male model of leadership. Women can learn the games that men play. These three authors believe that by understanding how men lead, women can demystify the male work culture. In fact, Evans sets out to guide women with ground rules for the game including how to play it, what to wear and how score is kept (Evans, 2001, pp. 1-69).

The significance of the work that Kouzes and Posner (2003) have done created a gender-neutral guide to leadership development. They have taken out the bias as to which leadership responses, skills, or traits might typically be male or female. Their guide focuses on what individuals can do to develop their leadership potential. Creating a level playing field where skills matter more than stereotypes or gender bias. That clarity is crucial in breaking through the glass ceiling barrier.

Training for women to develop the capacity for leadership has also been impacted by the theory of a glass ceiling. Shakeshaft (1987) divided the glass ceiling theory into two areas: internal and external barriers. The internal barriers are self-created roadblocks to success. These are things like self-image, confidence and desire or a belief that one can succeed. These barriers can be overcome with support and a change in how women view themselves. The external barriers are social, cultural and political roadblocks that require us to seek institutional change. The external barriers are things like: lack of networking opportunities, lack of educational preparation programs or more so the quality of those programs and social stigmata's attached to gender roles and responsibilities. In order to develop women's leadership capacity both internal and external barriers must be addressed.

Shakeshaft discusses andocentric bias in her work as the reason women are underrepresented in educational leadership. I agree with her bias and believe that we must seek transformation in the way theory and practices are carried out so that they reflect a more balanced perspective.

Most observers believe that school leadership is crucial to realizing the high expectations for student achievement. There is a growing consensus regarding the attributes of effective leaders. However, many of these attributes are difficult to clearly define and more difficult to objectively measure. Thus, despite a great deal of conventional wisdom and folklore about school leadership, little is actually known (Papa, 2002, p. 1).

Evans gave her students at Emory University an assignment to interview successful executives, both men and women. The students were to identify qualities of good leaders and report on their findings. What surprised Evans was the language difference in how successful men and women were described. Men were described as

“quarterback, aggressive, holding power, and part of a dog-eat-dog world” (Evans, 2001, p. 17). On the other hand, women were described as “cooperative, socially involved, and willing to share power” (Evans, p. 18).

For women to be prepared for principalships in high schools they must understand leadership, school cultures, and have an appreciation of the conceptual framework that allows clear communication and dissolved gender bias. Women need to clearly understand their leadership strengths (Evans, p. 261).

There are unique female qualities that allow women to move easily into the new paradigm of collaborative leadership. Both Stephan Covey (1989) and Jim Collins (2001) have identified that the *WE* in leadership supersedes the *I*. Decision-making, which is shared, gives a holistic force to empower groups. Whether through socialization or innate process, females gravitate toward shared, collaborative and inclusive type of leadership.

Profile of High School Principals

In a discussion of the priorities and barriers in high school leadership Patricia George (2001) gives a snapshot of the typical high school principal’s characteristics and perceptions. Her work is based on the response of 3,359 high school principals from across the country. First, who are these leaders?

The typical high school principal is a man who leads a school of fewer than 750 students and who has been in the position for more than 15 years. But that profile seems to be changing. The survey revealed that more women are entering the principalship than in the past. Although the percentage of women principals remained fairly constant from 1965 to 1987, in the 20000 surveys, almost one out of five respondents was a woman (George, p. 2).

George goes on to define how these principals spend their time.

Typical high school principals work more than 62 hours per week on administrative duties, not including student activities, special events, and the like. Most reported that their time is spent attending to parent issues, community-related tasks, discipline, and facilities management. Although principals believe that instructional leadership is important, very little of their time is devoted to instructional leadership (p. 2).

Traits and Characteristics of Leadership

Donadio, Book, Naisbitt, Aberdene, Cattell, Harris and Thurman all identify leadership traits that define successful leaders. Each has a unique list of traits.

Patrick Donadio (2005) identifies 22 traits that successful leaders possess. He does not identify traits by gender, but rather skills that allow for advancement within a company. His identified traits correlate to increased performance by those individuals who work for outstanding leaders. These traits set leaders apart. His list includes: visible, consistent, initiate, positive, responsible, listening, two-way communication, recognition, and fun.

Book (2001) discusses the seven key characteristics of the new paradigm leadership. Those seven characteristics are: (1) the vision, (2) reinventing the rules, (3) a laser focus to achieve, (4) maximizing high touch in a time of high technology, (5) turning challenge into opportunity, (6) an obsession with customer preference, and (7) courage under fire (Book, pp. 8-15). Each of these characteristics will define the world of business, politics, and education in the 21st century. For each of these characteristics there are models of women who have broken through the glass ceiling to succeed. As a reporter, Esther Book observed, collected, and analyzed women who were the first in corporate America to take the helm of male dominated business. What she learned about these women is that their leadership was marked by those seven characteristics. In a competitive

educational environment where choice plays a greater role than ever in where students will be educated, Book's characteristics equally apply to educational leadership.

Leadership characteristics or traits can be divided into two categories: traditional (assumed male) and women's leadership. The work done by Aberdene and Naisbitt (1992, 2000) in their books *Megatrends for Women* and *Megatrends 2000*, outline key leaderships traits and how traditional male leadership strategies are different from women's leadership strategies. This husband and wife team has discussed how women are building a new social order, which includes anti-authoritarian leadership styles.

Traditional leadership commands how a task should be done. This is usually a top down matrix of defining what needs to be done, by whom and by when. This is a very directive form of leadership; a form of leadership that does not seek to obtain a broad perspective before decisions is made. It is not collaborative or inclusive.

On the other hand, "women's leadership" is based upon modeling for others what the leader wants to see accomplished. It is not just telling, but showing which distinguishes the two forms of leadership. Another women's leadership skill is questioner. Traditional leadership has the leader knowing all the answers and does not ask the questions. Women's leadership asks the right questions to find the appropriate answer or solution for the situation.

Identified leadership skills can help women move toward positions as high school principals. Kouzes and Posner (2003) identified leadership development as self-development. Their research identified five practices of exemplary leadership.

We've been conducting intensive research on leadership since 1982. During that entire time, in selecting the people to interview and survey we've consistently not focused on famous people. Instead we have wanted to know what the vast majority

of leaders do – those ordinary people who get extraordinary things done in organizations” (p. 3).

In their research thousands of people have responded to a personal-best questionnaire. What they have discovered are five practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. Traits that were identified from their research include: credibility, vision, collaboration, and ability to giving hope.

Gupton and Slick’s study (2004) reveals a pattern of behaviors and traits that participants felt guided their success. The skills that they identified for success include: cultivate a desire to succeed, learn to be comfortable pursuing power, and use participatory leadership.

In a study conducted by the Self Renewal Group (2005), they identify traits shared by all leaders. Leaders must be willing to stand out, to differentiate your self, and risk rejection by being different. Determination, curiosity, a questioning mind, self-belief, thick skin, and learning from mistakes are the other traits of successful leaders.

“Raymond Cattell, a pioneer in the field of personality assessment, developed the Leadership Potential Equation in 1954” (Women’s Business Center, 2005). Cattell’s work focuses on the following traits: emotional stability, dominance, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, social boldness, tough-mindedness, self-assurance, compulsiveness, high energy, intuitiveness, maturity, team orientation, empathy, and charisma. “Circumstance and persistence are major components in the developmental process of any leader. So, if your goal is to become a leader, work on developing those areas of your personality” (p. 3).

In Harris's study of women leaders, she concluded that there are three personality traits of women school leaders: (1) humble, (2) energetic, and (3) resourceful (Harris, 2004, p. 64). These traits allow women in school administration to gain the respect of their students, staff, and parent community.

Kentucky State Board of Education provided a 360-degree descriptive analysis from key individuals that worked with three women principals in that state. The general population of teachers at those schools perceived that ethics, fairness, and integrity were the most important characteristics of principal leadership (Thurman, 2004). They also revealed that visibility, modeling, valuing diverse student populations, and inviting parent and community partnerships were essential to the success of the principal and the school. Sharing power was one way that those women accomplished the creation of a strong learning environment.

Role modeling is a significant leadership trait. Leaders leave a legacy. One part of that legacy is their style of leadership. As women define their style and learn new skills they will influence the opportunities women have.

Barriers

Barriers to the mobility of women in the workforce have become a top agenda item for most corporations and the government. "Barriers not only hinder the individual, but they deprive the economy. Assisting women in overcoming barriers will put them in line for the positions they seek. Barriers are prejudice, unsupportive working environment, lack of organization savvy and poor career planning" (Adair, 1999, p. 36). In order to

remain competitive organizations must utilize all labor including marginalized groups such as women and minorities.

Prior to the Principals' Leadership Summit held in Washington, D.C., in July 2000, participants were asked about challenges that face individuals pursuing the principalship as a career goal. One high school principal remarked, "The job requires confidence and moral courage. Not everyone has that" (Usdan, 2000, p. 7).

Cantrell's insight into leadership outlines obstacles that leaders must overcome. Including: 1) working long hours that are a prerequisite for leadership; 2) rapid change which requires that leaders know everything; 3) leaders recognize that more can be done through empowerment of others; 4) leaders have empathy and can foster team cohesiveness (p. 2).

"It is interesting to note that current leaders are substantially less likely to be female than either certified non-practicing leaders or other public school professionals" (Papa, p. 9). The reasons might be linked to the demands of the job: great time commitments, stress and difficulty in implementing change due to organizational, political and legal constraints (Pounder, 2001).

One of the obvious obstacles to female representation in leadership positions is who holds power. Without the ability to develop a power base, gaining a leadership position is impossible. Marginalized groups sit on the outside of opportunity because those with privilege and authority often hold perceived power.

Cunanan (1994) creates several explanations for the lack of female representation in school leadership, including inadequate preparation of women for the positions and lack of personal, political and professional power. In the past women were neither recruited nor

offered support necessary to allow them the education to seek leadership positions. The position requires a powerful person who can make decisions and take pressure from a variety of community sources. Cypress Brunner (2000) said it best, “Doors open around power. Women are not viewed as having it the same as men.” It is time that those doors open for women.

Legal Interventions

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on religion, national origin, and gender. There have been several interesting cases that attest to the obstacles women face in search of a principalship. One is the 1982 case *North Haven Board of Education v. Terrel H. Bell*. This case was settled after an extensive review of sex discrimination concerning women in school administration. In 1988 *Irene C. Spears v. Board of Education Pike County, Kentucky* was settled after the plaintiff succeeded in establishing that she was better qualified for the position after it was revealed that the superintendent stated he wanted someone who could instill the discipline of a football coach. In the case, *Rita Melius v. Waukegan Public School District No. 60 and School Directors of District No. 60, County of Lake and State of Illinois*, Rita established that she had been discriminated against for gender and retaliated against for a previous legal action against the district.

The perception that female administrators do not possess the knowledge, courage, or tenacity to do the job as a high school principal has been illuminated through these court cases and the Glass Ceiling Commission Report, 1995.

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1991 created a bipartisan commission. The U.S. Department of Labor established the Commission to review the claim that artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organization bias prevented qualified individuals from advancing within their organization. The report suggests recommendations that will assist to dismantle the glass ceiling. In the report, the creation of job flexibility is a recommendation. This includes family leaves and flexible work hours that allow for either male or female employees to balance both work and family commitments. Family friendly policies should not exclude or prohibit individuals from moving through the ranks in an organization. The end result should be to retain talented individuals within the organization and maximize their potential.

A series of other glass ceiling reports have followed the initial 1995 Department of Labor's report. In 2001 Washington State law firms did their own survey and response to the impact of the glass ceiling on women in the legal profession. Maybe it is time that U.S. Department of Education conducts a glass ceiling study?

What Does It Take?

Naomi Wolf's (1994) work on how women are socialized around the concept of power is useful in analysis of this phenomenon. She identifies that there is a taboo that makes it virtually impossible for women to claim power and achievement. The perceived taboo topic is that women do not possess the emotional strength to stand firm. Through the socialization of women in America we have created a mental model for women that it is not acceptable to step forward and be bold in accepting responsibility and demanding a place to stand in the corporate and social sector. To overcome this perception, women in

leadership positions must respond to stakeholders with proof of competency. That competency comes from being prepared and self-reliant in order to exceed the expectations of those who are skeptical of women in power.

Gupton and Slick (1996) surveyed 151 women and in the analysis of the data gave eight insights into preparing women to be principals. Those eight guidelines for aspiring women include: (1) be prepared with proper credentials; (2) do strategic career planning; (3) persevere despite barriers associated with gender bias; (4) be diligent and professional; (5) honor, preserve, and protect your integrity; (6) develop personal and professional support systems; (7) mentorship, and 8) develop leadership styles and strategies that fit with your beliefs.

Sandra Harris has identified “Bridges to Our Selves”. In her book *Winning Women*, she has identified nine winning women and shared their stories with us. Themes emerged connecting the stories of those nine women. “Three major leadership themes connected all of the stories: (1) joy, a deep abiding joy in serving others; (2) excellence; (3) spirituality – sense of power nurtured in spirituality” (p. 112).

The theme of support is clear in the literature. The value of family and spousal support aligns with the Bush’s research. Bush studied ten female superintendents of urban systems and found that all ten spoke of strong family support. She found some common characteristics of the female school leaders she interviewed. Of the ten she interviewed all were minority, nine were between 50-55 years old, all had doctoral degrees in education, nine were married and better educated than their husband.

As a U.S. District Court Judge, Norma Shapiro outlines what women need to excel in their professional lives. First, you need a mentor. She suggests that helping others light

their way keeps your own light shining. Secondly, women need to construct a network. Third, women need to improve their communication skills. “Improve your reading and writing, your speaking and listening skills. Spend time with words. Read books by good writers, in an information society, words are what we exchange – our handiwork” (Vrato, p. 196). Her last suggestion on “what it takes” is to not assume that mistreatment or anti-feminine prejudice is based on anything you say or do, but rather it is a “defect of the discriminator and a sign of their insecurity” (p. 197).

Ellen Delisio (2001) writes about equity from her understanding of Dr. Marie Bush’s work. At the Conference of the Counsel of the Great City Schools in 2001, Bush’s work motivated women to pursue equity in educational opportunities. Seeking to be equally respected, “A female school administrator has a tough time getting female subordinates and other administrative peers to take her seriously” (p. 1). A female leader must be consistent to gain respect. That consistency means a strong centering in the beliefs held by the administrator. What gives a sense of weakness is the uncertainty that comes with being inconsistent with how situations are handled. Consistency gives strength and allows subordinates to trust leadership. It is that sense of trust that opens doors for women in leadership.

“What does it take for a woman to be a successful administrator in education?” One answer to this question is offered by Gupton and Slick (2004). Their study of the journey of 15 successful women administrators, suggests that development of a support system and strong networking will help women overcome the status quo. By developing avenues to use participatory leadership, pursuing a power base and have a strong support system to depend on, will help women overcome obstacles to success.

Succeeding “like a man” is the theme of Ester Book’s 2001 book: *Why The Best Man For The Job Is A Woman*. In her opening chapters she looks at the role models shared by the first generation of workforce women in the 1970s. “At that point women imitated the qualities of their male colleagues. Those included authoritarian leadership structures” (Book, 2001, p. 3). “Women took on male methods to excel because the negative stereotypes associated with their own gender” (p. 5). It was assumed that women were too helpful and failed to take charge. The next generation of leadership will need to be able to perform at a level that links with buzzwords such as: integration, consensus, collaboration, and visionaries. These are the skills that will assist women in moving upward in management (p. 5). Women appear to have the essence of the new paradigm of leadership.

Recruitment and Retention of Principals

Impediment of hiring women as school principals resides in entrenched patterns of recruitment. Because a high school principal has always looked like a man, hiring authorities naturally tend to recruit individuals who match the stereotype, making it difficult for women to succeed in the hiring process. Breaking those patterns includes diversity on hiring committees, clearly defining the characteristics for the position and hiring processes that allow an in-depth look at each candidate.

History showed that women are more likely to gain positions of leadership in schools when demand exceeds supply. Leslie Fenwick, a former school principal in her monograph *The Principal Shortage: Who Will Lead* states, “The discussion on principal shortage continues to be devoid of any real examination of the underlying forces energizing it” (2000, p. 37). If 47 percent of the teachers hold master’s degrees, there is no

shortage of individuals available to fill the positions. The question is why aren't educators stepping up to positions of leadership?

It is reported that during the 1999-2000 school year, approximately 13% of upper level school leadership positions were held by women (Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000).

“Women, in particular, are a potentially large candidate pool because, for approximately 25 years, more than half of the administrative degrees and licenses awarded by administrator preparation programs have been earned by females. In fact, our study indicated that proportionately more females expressed a desire to seek a high school principalship than did their male counterparts” (Pounder, p. 6).

“A National focus on the recruitment of school leaders has followed the 20th anniversary of the landmark report, *A Nation at Risk*, and the widespread and bipartisan acceptance of the need for America's schools to improve” (Hale, 2003, p. 5). Hale's presentation at the Institute for Educational Leadership, Washington, D.C. in September of 2003 captures several areas that are key trouble area for recruitment of school leaders. They include: lack of definition of good leadership, absence of collaboration with school districts and universities, systematic professional development, poor candidate preparation programs and licensure programs that do not promote excellence (Hale, p. 6).

“There are so few effective educators with strong leadership skills and dispositions seeking the role of school principal, especially the high school principalship where the gravest shortages seem to exist” (Pounder, 2001, p. 1). Retention of principals will require an in-depth review of the expectations and responsibilities of the position. Issues such as salary alignment to match the responsibility and time commitment, along with public support for the work that principals do must be studied.

“It is predicted that half of all current U.S. principals will retire within the next five to ten years” (Klauke, 1988, p. 1). It is the selection and retention of new leaders that will enable the public school systems to meet the demands of the 21st century. In a time when intense political pressure and scrutiny is being applied to schools in order to ensure adequate yearly growth for all students, filling those leadership positions with qualified leaders may be difficult.

Coaching and mentoring new leaders is a powerful way to ensure that the educational leadership workforce will be prepared for the challenges that face them. The scaffolding of mentoring, staff development, computer-based simulation programs, coaching, and principal academies are ideal ways to grow and nurture principals (Lovely, 2004, pp. 1-7).

Career Paths

In *Women at the Top* (Vail, 1999) we learn that most superintendents started their career in the classroom. There is also an unofficial path to the superintendence, and it traditionally begins with the high school principalship. Female administrators need to shore up their resumes with advantages that school boards and hiring committees are looking for. “Women tend to become administrators at an older age than men do. Many women become teachers so they can keep the same hours as their children. Only when their children grow up and go to college are these women ready to take on an administrative job” (p. 7).

Individuals leading a comprehensive high school have all of the essential leadership traits necessary to lead a school district. Most superintendents were first

principals. In large urban districts, high schools are larger than in most rural districts. The under representation of women in the upper level school leadership has prompted many researchers to investigate the reason why more women are not superintendents (Bjork, 2000).

The Rand Research Company has studied the career path for public school administrators. Their research offers several issues for consideration including: supply of administrators, progress toward workforce diversity, retention of administrators and promotion of teachers from different gender and ethnic groups. In a three state study analysis of North Carolina, Illinois and New York they found that the rates of promotion for men and women differ substantially.

“In 2000, over 70% of the teachers in each of the three states (North Carolina, Illinois, and New York) were female. The percentage of female administrators still remains below that of female teachers. Moreover, the research indicates that, in each of the states analyzed, female teachers are less likely than their male counterparts to move to administrative positions” (p. 3). University of Maine assistant professor Dianne Hoff was interested in why there are so few female administrators in the state of Maine. “After all, women make up the majority of classroom teachers as well as participants in UM’s educational leadership program” (Cohen, 2006, p. 1).

According to Hoff’s work, women make up only 18-20 percent of superintendents and high school principals – positions that carry the most influence in education. Hoff along with Sidney Mitchell conducted a two-year study of more than 400 male and female administrators in Maine. Their conclusions indicate that in order to have more women in

higher positions the role of high school principal needs to be more family friendly and attention needs to be paid to career paths for women.

The Rand report goes on to say that in the year 2000, 94 % of North Carolina's elementary teachers were female compared with 63 % at the high school. Over half of the elementary principals were female and one-quarter of the high school principals were female. A closer review of the Rand report suggests two conclusions. First, females are not seeking positions as high school principals. And secondly, schools and districts are less likely to hire women for such positions.

To combat the Rand conclusions, early career mentoring or support for female educators might be an effective policy lever for encouraging gender parity in the transition to school administration (Rand Corporation, 2004). Mentoring and coaching females would increase the likelihood that women will seek principalships.

The literature provides a broad base to support on-going research. The issue of women in school leadership is not a new concern, but it appears that there is limited literature available to guide women as they move into power-based positions of leadership. In order to meet the educational challenge of preparing students to compete in a global the 21st century marketplace, training, mentoring and support from universities will be crucial in order to provide skilled leadership.

The review of literature has revealed that women are underrepresented in high school principalships. The obstacles of perceptions, training, and opportunity have been documented. There is a shortage of potential school administrators across the nation, which calls for us to open the doors for both men and women to lead. To meet that 21st century need, changes must occur in the length and expectations of work hours,

community support for principals and political agendas that limit the power of leaders to lead. In order to establish a strong candidate pool, old perceptions and stereotypes must be replaced with theory and practice that is inclusive of women.

The review of literature confirms that indeed there is a social historical male dominance in school leadership and that dominance has impacted women's pursuit of high school principalships. The work of researchers such as Shakeshaft, Grady, Tallerico, Freeman, Book, and Hoffman outline for women the way to be bold in using their skills, talents and training to step forward and lead our secondary schools.

The compelling argument for change in leadership styles has been defined by Gupton, Slick, Harris, and others. Both internal and external barriers have limited women from breaking through the glass ceiling. Now is the time for universities to work with school districts in preparing leadership that will respond to political critics of public education and create equity in leadership opportunities for all.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology selected for this study. It includes an overview of the qualitative paradigm and an explanation of interpretative phenomenology. In addition, this chapter includes a discussion of participant selection, data collection, and the data analysis process.

Qualitative Research

What sets qualitative research part from quantitative research is the use of words rather than numbers to create meaning. Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, fluid, descriptive, units of meaning in identifiable local contexts. “With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events let to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). Qualitative research is the model by which voice informs life experience. This study gives voice to the experiences of women high school principals. It identifies the context in which they journeyed to a principalship and the lessons that they reflect upon from that journey. Qualitative research gives a natural flow of thought from the participants. Critical awareness develops that allows the participants and the researcher to understand the essence of things that are going on and find ways to improve the situation.

“Qualitative research is a term used for a broad range of research strategies that has its roots in the research of the social sciences” (Hittleman & Simon, 1997, p. 42). “The basic qualitative research purposes are to describe, to interpret, to verify, and to evaluate. The issue of context is central to qualitative research” (p. 43). Qualitative research therefore is inductive and draws meaning from socially constructed context in which one lives. Fluidity allows for movement within the analysis. In this study, themes and patterns about women in leadership emerged from the data. Those themes begin with a broad view of how women moved into principalships to the more narrow lessons they share. “The personalities and experiences of people involve the inevitability of contradiction and the existence of parallel and opposing truths within the accounts” (Winter, 2000, p. 4). The reflections of the participants gave voice to their experience. The data reveals tension between the experiences, sometimes guarded and other times very transparent. Trends emerged from the data. The methodology allowed for refinement and development of emergent themes as they unfolded.

The very nature of qualitative is emergent, fluid and meaning is created through understanding of the experience. Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research this way:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of information, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15).

Creswell emphasizes a complex, holistic picture, which “takes the reader into the multiple dimensions of a problem or issue and displays it in all of its complexity (p. 15). The creating of meaning from human experience is very complex and the qualitative research relies on a few cases with many variables.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) outline a basic qualitative research design. The design includes: determine a focus for the inquiry, fit the paradigm to the study, and decide where and from whom data will be collected, determine phases of inquiry, and determine if instruments beyond the human instrument are needed, define research questions, faithfully reproduce data, and plan analysis. The nature of qualitative research allowed the data in this study to drive the paradigm. The broad question of, “Where are all the female principals?” that I asked in 2002 was narrowed through the design process. Data collection occurred in three-phases. Each phase had a series of tape-recorded response to open-ended questions. The study looks at the experience of three women high school principals within an identified geographical region.

“Within that paradigm rests ambiguity, which is often difficult for the researcher, and requires the researcher to create decision process within a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 2). In this study, that ambiguity developed in data collection. Miles & Huberman (1994) outline reoccurring features of qualitative research. Seven of their features are used in the design of this study.

First, this study is conducted through lived experience with the “field” or life situation. Each of the women is a current high school principal of a comprehensive high school. Second, the researcher gains a holistic overview of the context of the experience. The participants share a broad view of how and why they became principals. Third, data is collected on the perceptions of “local actors” through attentiveness and understanding of their worlds. Each of the participants, in the study, spoke of their own experience, through a series of self-taped recorded responses to open-ended questions about the principalship. Fourth, the data is kept in its original form. Taped narrative was transcribed exactly as

recorded. The experiences become narrative text, which creates a way to describe, interpret and evaluate meaning from the experience. Fifth, I studied and analyze how the “actor” interacts and manages their day-to-day situation. This study links the experience of three women high school principals, through their words. Sixth, there are many qualitative interpretation allowed from the data. Themes were extracted, compared and narrowed. Lastly, the analysis was done with words (pp. 6-7). Each of the participants is an actor and as the researcher I have collected their scripts to analyze the interaction for patterns, analysis and interpretation. Meaning is created through analysis of extracted themes.

Qualitative researchers look for patterns that emerge from the data. Upon careful analysis of the data they seek to answer the questions of “how” and “why” and create meaning through the analysis process. The process provides insights allowing the data to “come to life” and be given meaning, which did not previously exist. The data are gathered from documents, which might include personal diaries, transcribed interviews, essays, field notes, questionnaires and reflective responses to open-ended questions (Patton, 1990). In this study the data are nine transcriptions from the three phases of reflective interviews.

The journey to self and social awareness is revealed through the framework of qualitative research. Allowing women to tell of their experience in the high school principalship contextually gives meaning to the experience, while creating social awareness from the experience for others. We learn from the sharing of their lived lives. The data is words, not numbers, which are rich in contextual experiences.

Introduction to phenomenology

Within the qualitative research paradigm phenomenology is a broad term that encompasses both the philosophical movement that Husserl (1936/1970) initiated as a way of discussing philosophy and his attempts to construct a philosophical science of consciousness. Phenomenology is the study of essences. Phenomenology asks the question of what is the nature or meaning of an experience. In this study I am interested in the experience of women high school principals. The approach attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment in order to reach openness (Moustakas, 1994).

The researcher, who uses phenomenology, studies how events emerge to individuals through the individual's experiences. Phenomenology deals with persons as opposed to subjects. A person is a whole being, complete with past experiences, attitudes, beliefs and values. They live in a world of experience, with both cultural and social influence (Willis, 2001; Van Manen, 1990; Caelli, 2000). In this study, the journey of women emerges in reflection of their experiences as high school principals. Each participant has a unique journey based upon her individual beliefs, cultural background, family, and professional experiences.

Phenomenology is the descriptive methodology of human science, which seeks to explore and describe experiences as they present themselves in the lives of individuals. The end goal is to find the meaning of the phenomena for itself. Its origins are rooted in philosophy. It is a discovery-oriented method where the observer needs to have an attitude of openness to let the unexpected meanings emerge (Giorgi, 1997). The women in this

study describe their experiences in obtaining a principalship and through that process I was able to allow meaning to emerge from their narratives.

Phenomenology seeks to uncover the meaning of a phenomenon by peeling back the various layers of moral, ethical, social and cultural influence a person encounters. Phenomenology does not produce new information but rather appropriates and interprets a meaning already implicit to lived experience as its truth (Burch, 1989).

As these women share their experiences the layers are peeled back. From surface demographics to choices they have made to pursue a principalship. From the broad layer of a career choice to the deeply rooted belief system that drives their advice on ethical ways to handle the work of the principalship, the layers have been peeled back. Each layer has meaning from the lived experience of the participant. The pathway to a principalship, the people that supported them and the barriers they faced shape their reflections. However, there are more layers to peel back. Other study could look at the socialization of these women in relationship to role development and enculturation.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) support the idea that qualitative methods can be used to better understand any phenomenon about which little is known and to gain understanding and to describe or interpret a situation. Phenomenology is, pre-reflective of external influences; turning inward to find meaning from the experience (Mostert, 2002). The lessons learned by these three women serve as a guide to other women who aspire to a principalship. The experience of these participants in the study served for them as an internal lantern for them to discover what was meaningful in their journey, and from that can light the way for others.

Interpretative phenomenology

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) focuses on lived experiences of the participant. It tries to make sense of the meaning of events, experiences and states to the participants themselves (Smith, 2003). To determine if the account given is valid or true, the researcher must determine if what is being measured is clearly what they think they are measuring (Kerlinger, 1964, pp. 430, 444-445). Interpretative phenomenology therefore allows the researcher to look at transcribed narrative texts of the participants experience and pull out data about the phenomenon being studied and see what the experience means to the participant, articulate meanings, and practices. This is accomplished through sorting and reduction of emergent themes.

IPA is a recent qualitative analytic method. It acknowledges the role of language in the construction of reality and its aim is to explore an individual's personal perception or account rather than attempting to produce an objective record of events, times or places. "As a methodology, it is concerned with the process by which people define their world. It recognizes life as dynamic and interactional, and is concerned with persons and individuals rather than actuarial statistics and variables" (Smith, Harre, & Langenove, 1995, p. 3). The women in this study used their voice to define their worlds and select the events and perceptions that represented their experience. Individual constructs created from the language of the participant defines the work of the principal. Data collection focuses on the participant's reflections and perceptions of their lived experience. The use of language in expressing those reflections creates a vivid context of the experience. The

text is accurate, rich and expressive. IPA in this study applied analysis to the transcriptions of the participant's response to three phases of questions.

Data collection involves a homogeneous sampling, with flexible interviews (in contrast to structured interview) and verbatim transcription. The analysis is systematic, searching for themes in the first case, forging connections between themes and then moving across case with the aim of establishment of expansive themes (Smith, 2003). IPA uses open-ended questions within a semi-structured interview to generate transcripts. Three women, all current high school principals, in a regional area, were selected for the study. Each of the participants had a framework to respond to, and from those nine reflective interviews, I generated nine verbatim transcripts.

One theoretical current for IPA is hermeneutics- the theory of interpretation based on qualitative research into first person accounts. Each of the participants has given her own account of the experience. The research is focused on reflexive thought from lived experiences. Meaning is opened from the text that has been collected. "The meanings which individuals ascribe to events are of central concern, but those meanings are only obtained through a process of social engagement and a process of interpretation" (Smith, 2004). In the analysis of the collected texts, I searched for words that came from the gestalt of the participants experiences.

Research Questions

These overriding research questions focus on discovering the essence and meaning of the high school principalship experience from a female perspective. The three phases of the data collection, and the demographic information gathered are framed around several

overarching questions, which are narrowed to more specific research questions. The broad questions include: (1) Are there shared characteristics (traits, factors, obstacles) of women who have become high school principals? (2) What motivated women to take positions of power? (3) What factors, stepping-stones, obstacles, or support systems are present in their journey? Investigation of this issue will include the following more specific research questions:

1. How do these women describe their experience in pursuing a principalship?
2. What lessons can be shared with female educators who seek the principalship?
3. Is there a common the career path that women high school principals have taken?
4. Are there perceived barriers or roadblocks that are specific to women principals?

Participants

The participants were chosen had to meet three criteria. They must: (1) be willing to share their experience as a high school principal, (2) they must have been a principal of a comprehensive high school for at least three years, within the past five years, (3) their principalship experience must have been in the identified northern region of a specific western state.

The participant selection process was twofold. First, I solicited volunteers from women that I know are currently serving in principalships that met the established criteria. Secondly, membership directories from a high school activity association were reviewed

for past principals. The potential candidate pool was very limited. I identified eight women.

Participant recruitment was done using the Internet. Email addresses were taken from school websites. An introductory email was sent to the eight potential participants with a description of the study. Three women sent a positive response that they were interested in the participating. They were sent a follow up email that outlined the human subject process and notified them that they would receive a letter in the mail about the study and a human subject informed consent form. Once the informed consent form was returned a data collection packet was sent to the participants.

Data Collection

IPA is depended on words, interviewing became the way to gather the data. Three types of interviewing are outlined in Patton's work (1990). The first type of interviewing is the informal, conversational method. The interview leads where it may and is fluid. The second type of interview is more structured, there are predetermined inquire areas, yet the interviewer is free to probe and explore in-depth with the participant. The last interview structure is standardized, open-ended interviews, which aims at a more systematic and comprehensive approach to data collection. In this study the questions were semi-structured, open-ended with predetermined inquire areas. The questions moved from seeking "how" and "why" the participants became principals to their interpretation of how their experiences could help aspiring women. The self tape- recording of the responses draws upon the individual's experiences, feelings, thoughts and encourages self-reflection.

I sent a packet to each of the participants containing a guide sheet (See Appendix C) new tape recorder, batteries, three new tapes labeled with the participant's letter (A, B, C) and numbered by phases of research (I, II, III), return mailers, and the interview questions broken down into three phases and general survey of baseline data (See Appendix B). The start and end dates of each phase was also included in the package.

Each participant submitted the demographic questionnaire to me prior to the first tape being returned. That demographic information is recorded in Table 1 (See Appendix B). A visual organization of the participant identifies their shared characteristics. The homogeneous status of the sampling is reflected in the chart (See page 60).

Time between each of the phases gave the participants a period of reflection before they recorded their responses (see Appendix C). A six to eight week window for the study was created. For each phase the participant was to reflect upon the questions and respond at a time that was flexible for them within a two-week window. The process allowed for emergent thoughts and ideas to weave through their reflections. The additional time was for return mailing of the tapes.

Patton (2002) describes three types of data collected in qualitative research: interviews, observations, and documents. For this study I modified the interview format to include a series of open-ended formatted questions designed to allow each participant an opportunity share her experiences. The interview questions were answered by the participants and then became transcribed documents. Those text documents were then analyzed for themes.

For accuracy, in the transcription of the tapes, a professional transcriptionist was hired. When the tapes were mailed back to the researcher, I listened to them and hand

delivered them to the typist. She typed and reviewed each tape three times before returning the transcription and tape. The transcriptions were then electronically sent to the participant for review.

There were two unique aspects of this method of data collection: (1) the participant had flexibility in scheduling her taping session; (2) the responses are truly directed by the participant which allowed for emergent thought.

The first phase gave the participants a two-week window to respond to three broad and open questions: (1) Tell me about becoming a high school principal? (2) What factors shaped your career choice? (3) What motivated you toward school leadership? The participants returned the tapes within a two-week window; the tapes were transcribed and sent to the participant for review. Corrections were made and the approved transcriptions were returned to me.

In phase two, the participant tape-recorded their response to the next set of questions: (1) What were the challenges that you experienced in becoming a high school principal? (2) Do you feel your challenges are unique to women? (3) What were the support systems you experienced? The participants returned the tapes in a two-week window; the tapes were transcribed, sent back to the participants for review and returned to me.

The third phase follows the same format as the other two phases. In this final phase, the narrative developed around lessons learned and what the women want aspiring female leaders to know. There were only two questions asked: (1) What lessons did you learn that you would like to share? (2) What do you feel is important that aspiring

administrators know? The tapes were returned, transcribed and reviewed by the participants.

The personal nature of the responses required a pseudonym as a way to protect the names of the participants, their current school of employment, and any other identifying indicators. The names Abby, Betty and Cathy were assigned to the participants in the order that their human subjects form was returned.

Data Analysis

The text was analyzed for patterns, trends, and themes that emerged and developed through the participant's responses. Confidentiality was handled by allowing the participants to return labeled tapes that only contained a school letter and participant letter; no names were attached to the tapes.

The inter-relationship between what is studied and who studies it, entwines the two. My subjectivity was drawn upon in the analysis of the data. Whenever possible I used the direct words of the participants in the analysis. Analysis focused on similarities in the journeys and responses that these women reported. After the transcripts had been typed, and electronically sent to the participants for approval, they were returned to me prior to analysis.

The text gives a snapshot of what it means to be a women leader, in a secondary school position. Reisman, (1986) defined five broad steps in the analysis process. I read all descriptions in their entirety, extracted significant statements from the data, formulated those statements into meanings, and cluster the meanings into themes and those themes into a narrative description.

The first step in the analysis was to read each of the transcripts separately. I compared that reading to my original notes. I then listened to the tape, as I read the transcript, searching for key words that emerged thematically in responses to the formatted questions. Key words that denoted the experiences were highlighted for each transcript. Predominant themes were extracted. After all text for a single phase was highlighted, the text was electronically clustered into those extracted themes. Those themes were then grouped again by similarities. Each of the themes was reported out in the exact words of the participants. The final step was to cluster those texts into a narrative description of the participants' experience. The process was repeated for each of the three phases.

Study findings are limited to the population of women high school principals and can only be tentatively compared to the findings stemming from other studies on women in the principalship. The analysis revealed five emergent themes: perceptions, traits, support systems, career paths and lessons learned. Each of the themes is further developed in Chapter Four. The voice of each woman is heartfelt. The courage to share their experiences is textural in their reflections. When you read the words of the women you are touched by the tension between what is expected and what is shared; sometimes guarded and sometime brutally transparent.

The methodology allowed emergent and fluid thought to be revealed. The participants and the analysis created meaning through both the act of reflection. IPA allowed me to gain a view into how each participant's makes sense of the world, through her experience as a high school principal.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

During my own journey into this research through the literature review, methodology development, and application for human subject research, I felt myself wanting to hear what other women high school principals had to say about their journey to the principalship. Every class I took, every book I read, every article I found, led me closer to my goal of giving voice to the journey of women. How different would their story be from mine? Where had their journey taken them, were there barriers? What had they experienced along the way that motivated them? What would they want aspiring women to know about their experience?

Just before I received approval from Human Subjects to begin my interview process, my school district's mentor coordinator approached me. Her request was simple. There was an aspiring woman leader who was disenfranchised by male leaders in her school. She carried the same title of assistant principal that three of the other men did, but most of the meetings were behind closed doors without her. Decisions were made that affected her without her input. Her response had been one that had been modeled for her – get angry. The more she responded out of fear and anger, the further her hopes of being a recognized leader with a solid powerbase became. Out of frustration and the desire to quit, she began to search for answers. Through her search process, I was given her name and the opportunity to put what I have discovered in my own journey to work. What haunted

me most about her request was the overarching and yet unspoken need for women to hear the stories of other women's journeys. Where can aspiring women turn for answers and support? Aspiring women need a road map, tool kit, and a guide to how they can leave a trail and move toward their goal of being a principal. This study will assist in answering some of those questions.

Participants

The three participants for this study are referred to by pseudonyms. Each pseudonym has no connection to the participant or her story. All three women are experienced leaders. To protect the process and any possible repercussions their identities have been masked by using pseudonyms.

Abby.

Abby is currently 51 years old. She accepted her first high school principalship at the age of 43. Abby has been principal of her current high school for eight years. She is Caucasian. Prior to accepting her position as principal she was an assistant principal for eleven years. Abby spent ten years as a classroom teacher teaching both at the middle school and high school level. Her content area was social studies. She is married with two grown children. She holds a M.A. in Education Leadership and Policy Studies. Her current level of career satisfaction is high. She plans on staying in her current principalship until she retires which is in the next three to ten year range. Upon retirement she will pursue work outside of public education.

Betty.

Betty is currently 54 years old. She accepted her first principalship at the age of 47. Betty is Caucasian. Prior to accepting the principalship she served for twelve years as an assistant principal. Betty taught high school math for 14 years in two states. She is married with four children ages 26, 24, 20 and 16. Betty describes her job satisfaction as very high and plans on retiring in her current position.

Cathy.

Cathy is currently 45 years old and accepted her first principalship at the age of 39. She is Caucasian. Prior to accepting her first principalship she was an assistant principal for six years. Cathy is currently in her second principalship. She served one high school for four years before accepting the position at a larger suburban school. She is married and has two sons ages 18 and 15. Prior to becoming an administrator she taught Spanish at the high school level for nine years. Cathy rates her current level of job satisfaction as high and is uncertain how long she will remain in her current position. She is interested in staff development and may aspire to serve in that area at some point in her career.

All of the participants hold a Principal License and have served as a principal of a high school in the same athletic conference. Those schools have student populations between 650 – 1600 students in grades 9-12. All of the high schools in the conference are comprehensive high schools with a wide range of activities, athletics, and academic offerings.

The following table is a visual guide to our three participants. It outlines their basic demographic data. The chart includes the participant's pseudonym, current age, age they

accepted their first principalship, marital status, highest degree, and total years they have worked in public education. Abby and Betty are more similar to each other demographically than they are to Cathy. All three women are married. Through the responses we are introduced to the fact that Betty has been divorced and remarried. All of the women hold similar educational credentials.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Pseudonym	Current Age	Age accepted first principalship	Marital Status	Highest degree	Total years worked in Public Education
Abby	51	43	Married	M.A.	29
Betty	54	47	Married	M.A.	33
Cathy	45	39	Married	M.A.	21

All three of the participants are articulate, positive, and professional in their grooming and appearance (personal meeting). They all have a spark that is magnetic. When you meet them, you are drawn to them. They are warm, outgoing, and confident.

Phase One

Career Choice and Motivation.

The first sets of questions that the participants were asked to respond to are: (1) Tell me about becoming a high school principal? (2) What factors shaped your career choice? (3) What motivated you toward school leadership?

Abby became a high school principal after 11 years as an assistant principal and middle school teacher. Most of her experience was at the middle school level (grades 6-8). She came to the high school level because she was encouraged to do so.

I ended up becoming a high school principal because of a number of people who encouraged me to pursue that. Most of who were male administrative types, who very much hold you accountable for performing at a level. That's what they expected, in terms of doing the same amount of coverage, working hard, and developing professional reputation that people regard and respect. And so there was a lot of encouragement in that realm.

In Abby's reflection of being encouraged to move toward a principalship, "Along the way I had many mentors, primarily male, which is interesting to me, but one female mentor, that had a great deal of influence on why I decided to stay in leadership." Abby's choice to become a high school principal was encouraged and supported by male administrators. What we do not know from Abby's response is why her support came from male administrators.

It was not an intentional set of circumstances that moved Abby from the classroom, where she taught social studies, into the role as an assistant principal at the middle school where she was working. She describes herself as being thrown into a leadership position without it being her choice. She adds that she believes others saw potential in her that she did not necessarily see in herself.

Eighteen years ago I was thrown into leadership when the assistant principal at our middle school was fired. Through no choice of my own, I guess other people saw leadership potential in me and encouraged me to stay both the remainder of that year, and then to pursue my administrative credentials, which I did.

In Abby's reflection of what motivates her to stay in an administrative role, she acknowledges two factors. The first factor was her long-term association with the people in her community. The second factor is the trust that has been developed over the years. Abby has defined for herself a position within that community and that gives her an internal motivation to continue her work.

I've lived here for 50 years, and my serving students on the north side of our city for 24 years has allowed me to have the benefits that other people don't. Parents don't question my judgment. I've done a number of things with families and whole generations of families. And people trust me, and I think that's a huge reason why I've stayed in this career -- because people in this community regard me and support the choices that I make. I'm not hassled all the time. But that has taken years and years to build. And so positive reinforcement from many people has been -- that's been a huge piece of why I chose this career path.

A second motivation for Abby is the impact that she has on the future of public education and a belief that she can impact the success of students. In her role as principal, Abby perceives that her impact on policies and her influence on decisions, allows her to have a greater impact on the educational community.

The other thing that motivated me toward school leadership was the belief that I would be able to serve more students and more families on a larger scale, and affect change for students that was positive on a larger scale than I could in the classroom. So those are the things that motivate me; helping students be successful, influencing policies that make sense for students as we educate them for the twenty-first century, and having the ability to influence decision-making.

Betty began her career in education in 1974 as a math teacher in an inner city school. At that time to earn tenure in that school system you had to complete your

master's degree within the three-year period. She decided to pursue a master's in counseling. Betty was encouraged by a male assistant principal to pursue administration. The assistant principal took a principalship in a new school. Betty followed him to that new school. Her position in the new school involved teaching math and supporting extra curricular activities. He encouraged her to pursue administration.

The idea of becoming an administrator took a backseat to motherhood. After only one year at the new school, Betty and her family moved out of state, where Betty took a teaching job at a very traditional high school. After that move, she followed the encouragement of another male principal, and began a Ph.D. program and her pursuit of school administration. Circumstance at her school created a late opening for an assistant principal. She was hired as an internal candidate. After the year, she mutually agreed to go back to the classroom, because the impact the position had on her family time.

In early August, an opportunity was presented to me to do an interim assistant principalship, due to the fact that the administrator in the position had been offered a job in another district at the last moment. So the district allowed us to hire from within. The position I moved into was not the typical first assistant principal's job, because typically first assistant principal assignments are attendance and discipline, and my focus was on curriculum, master scheduling building and working with counseling. I completed the assignment there in the spring of 1993 and accepted a teaching position. The change was made due to a mutual agreement between the principal, and me as well a need for me to spend time with my family.

Betty had gone through a divorce and was a single mother of two. Her priority was to take care of her family responsibilities. As a single parent she knew the demands that her eighth son's school experience would have on her time. She chose the priority of family, and put her career in administration on hold.

...and needed to spend some time with my son, who was entering eighth grade, and from a high school perspective, middle school students have always been a challenge for me. So it was just an important time in my family's life.

Leadership was never very far out of Betty's sight. Within a year of her move back to a classroom position she was working part-time as an administrator. So, from 1993 – 2000, Betty worked as teacher and assistant principal with no aspirations of becoming a high school principal.

And truly I had no – in almost all of those years – had no aspiration of becoming a high school principal. I enjoyed the job that I had as an assistant principal, and truly, at that point in my life, could have been a career assistant principal.

During the 1999-2000 school year, Betty had some different thoughts about becoming a principal. The principal at her school was retiring. She was intrigued of the possibility of becoming the principal because of her loyalty to the school and the staff. There were also issues that were developing at the time regarding recognition for the work she was doing.

I was going through a time in my career where I was doing most of the work of the principal, and getting credit for it by him. It was not that I was doing his work and he took the credit, but I was feeling that I was doing most the work with the staff and with the community, and was not being recognized by the district, either with personal commendations, or financial reimbursement for the work that I was doing. So at the beginning of the 1999 school year, I was starting to look into other options.

Finding an open principalship is difficult. In early 2000 a principalship opened at the school where Betty was an assistant principal. At the time of the posting she was intrigued by it, but made a conscious decision to not apply for the position. She was remarried and establishing a family with two small stepchildren. Shortly after the posting, her mother-in-law passed away and so again she dedicated her time to family matters. "So,

I was working with family a lot of issues that I felt were much more important than me pursuing a different career option.”

Her commitment to her family is a first order consideration. Betty was an assistant principal in the school where her two children attended. Her on-going commitment to support her children allowed her to be on stage for the graduation of her son in 1998 and her daughter in 2000. Being on stage, as a school administrator, was a unique and special time for Betty and her children. There is a great sense of pride as an educator in being able to celebrate that celebration with your children.

It was time for a change in Betty’s professional life and that change was the opportunity to move from the role of assistant principal to principal. The position that had been posted in February 2000, which she did not apply for, reopened in May 2000. The district was dissatisfied with the hiring pool and reopened the search.

The district was not satisfied with the applicant pool they got the first time around, and I truly believe in signs, and that this was a sign that I should apply for it. I had long discussions with my husband and with my family -- my children regarding this opportunity. I also spoke with the district -- my supervisors at the district, as to what their thoughts were. At that point in my career, I had a very strong working relationship with an assistant superintendent, another female who I felt very loyal to and knew that she would give me honest feedback. While she could not, nor would not say that I was the best candidate, she did encourage me to go through the interview process.

The interview process for the principalship was interesting for Betty. There were four finalists for the position of principal. Two of the finalists were current assistant principals in the building. Internal politics between administrators and teachers was divisive within the school staff. After a long process, Betty was hired in May 2000 as the

principal of that school. Knowing that she made the right decision to accept the principalship has never been in question for her.

I have never looked back. I, on a daily basis, say that I have died and gone to heaven, because I believe I have the best job anyone could ever have. There's not a day that I don't get up and look forward to coming to work – to work with my staff and students.

Motivation for doing the work of school leadership is what has driven Betty's career. She has been driven by the desire to accept different challenges and to make a difference for students, parents and teachers. For Betty it is about the work of educating children. Betty chose her career path and has a great deal of personal satisfaction in what she has done. She has focused her work on teaching, helping people, working with new teachers and getting school staff to work together.

I chose school leadership, as I look back over my career. I loved every phase – I've loved every phase of what I've done. I love teaching. I loved coaching my cheers and poms. I loved assistant principalship work. And I truly love where I am now. I never moved from one job to another because I hated what I was doing. I moved because I believed that I just needed different challenges. I enjoy helping people, and I enjoy working with parents and community on global issues involving my students. I like the coaching role that I have when I'm working with young teachers. I smile because many of the young teachers I am currently working with are young enough to be my own children, so in some senses it makes me feel like I'm getting old. But I do feel that I have a lot that I can share with people on how to interact with students, and how to get them to do things and work together.

Cathy's story doesn't differ much from Abby and Betty's story. She was a Spanish teacher while pursuing a master's degree had to make a decision if she wanted to further her certification in Spanish or administration. She did both. Cathy's degree is in curriculum and instruction, and she added the administrative endorsement. Cathy's career path included classroom teacher, TOSA (teacher on special assignment) in administration

and assistant principal. She then, through a long interview process was, hired as the principal of the school where she had been an assistant principal.

Unique to Cathy is the fact that her father had been a high school principal, and she felt that it was something she always wanted to do. Cathy's choice to move from the classroom into the administrative office also was shaped by a desire to do something different. "I really felt like I'd been a teacher for nine years, and I wanted to do something different. I wanted to try different things, and branch out, and grow."

Much like Abby and Betty, Cathy had influential people in her life who encouraged her to move into an administrative position. Those people included her father, the male principal at the school where she was a TOSA, and a woman principal who opened a new school high school. The support and encouragement that the women found gave them direction and encouragement as they moved into leadership roles.

Cathy is motivated by a sense of enjoyment from the work. "I enjoy curriculum, I enjoy instruction; I enjoy working with people." She feels she has much to offer on how principals can interact with students.

All three participants had male administrative supporters who encouraged them to pursue a principalship. Abby and Cathy both mention a female administrative influence through mentoring, but the common thread is the support of male administrators. All of the participants moved through the educational ranks from classroom teacher, assistant principal to the principalship. The motivation to do the work is driven by both internal motivators such as enjoyment, and external motivators such as the ability to influence educational change and make a difference for students and systems. Betty introduces the choice that women make between family and the pursuit of career opportunities. Abby and

Betty found themselves on the journey to a principalship not out of a plan, but out of circumstances. Cathy prepared to be an administrator; it was a part of her professional goals. Each of the participants identified that educational preparation was a requirement of obtaining the position. All three women were “groomed” through a quasi-administrative assignment that prepared them for the duties of school administration before they were certified.

Phase Two

Challenges.

The participants shared their many challenges as they moved from assistant principal to the principalship. Each participant had the experience of being an assistant principal. They felt comfortable with duties of a principal, but aligning individuals with their leadership style and expectations of the community created some challenges. They defined their greatest challenges as gaining credibility (a belief by stakeholders that they could do the work), trust and creating a culture that best served their community, balancing family and enough time to do it all. Each challenge will be further developed through the participants words. Abby speaks of credibility with her coaching staff. Betty speaks of gaining trust with a community that was not totally in support of her being hired as the principal. Cathy introduces the challenge of balancing time.

Abby describes her greatest challenge in the journey to a principalship as gaining credibility. As discussed earlier in the work of Kouzes and Posner (2003) gaining credibility within the school community is essential in the success of the leader. For women in leadership, credibility can be defined as a school community believing that the principal can do the work, which has traditional been done by males. In Abby’s case the

credibility that she sought was with the schools coaching staff. The uniqueness of this challenge for Abby is linked to the fact that she had never been a coach and secondarily that she is a woman. It is also a part of the culture in high schools. “That unspoken culture of high school that it is hard to understand if you’ve never been there.”

Lots of culture in high school is around athletics and the fact that I was never a coach in a women’s or men’s sport created, maybe, a mindset in the minds of some of our coaching staff that I just didn’t understand the difficulties of their jobs. That I wasn’t supportive as they thought I needed to be, in terms of things like providing a zero-hour weights, where seven or eight coaches could get paid to do that work with athletes, when I didn’t have money to do such a thing.

It took time for Abby’s to gain the credibility with coaches. She listening to the coaches, made thoughtful decisions and worked closely with the Athletic Director. Over time she was able to overcome the challenge of being perceived as “not credible” in her decision regarding athletics. She proved her understanding of athletics through her steadfast support of coaches and asking the right questions. Abby listened to the needs, concerns and visions of the coaches before she made decisions.

Betty’s greatest challenge as she began her principalship was entering a new community and gaining their trust. She viewed herself as an outsider and so did the staff and the community. She had the added dimension that an inside candidate was not hired for the position; so there was some tension with her staff and the administrative team. The work she did when she took over the principalship involved bringing the staff back together and have them trust her and her ability to lead the school.

I was truly considered an outsider by the staff because the staff was split. There was an internal candidate that a faction of the school had lobbied to get the job, and truly had been groomed to take the job by the exiting principal. So when she was not selected for the position, there was some tension among the staff, with me, as well as among the administrative team. A different assistant principal, who was also a candidate for that position, was happy that I got the position, because he had

only, in hindsight, applied for the position because a separate faction of the school had not wanted the other female to get the position. So that added to some stress in personalities at the beginning of the year.

A transitional change of leadership, from one principal to another, appears to have caused a shift in the power bases for the school community. For Betty this added stress to her entry into the principalship both with her administrative team and with her staff. As Betty transitioned into the principalship in an established school, she faced an additional challenge of staff members defining their power boundaries under new leadership.

Another challenge that I faced was breaking old norms. I entered a situation where there was a definite identified 'in' group and 'out' group. And it was a challenge for me, but it was interesting watching the staff as I set the new norms that everyone was treated as an equal. And I use the term family a lot. We are a family and we treat everyone with respect, and the information that I give one person, I'm going to give to another person. I am not going to hide things and only tell those special people the information. Now, while that encouraged the quote 'out' staff, or the 'not in the know' staff, it was a challenge for the people who were used to being on the 'in' crowd and having all the information, because they felt, I think, in some ways that they had lost some of their status. But over the seven years that I've been here, we have continued to build a community where everyone has information, and that we work together.

The alignment of a new school cultural structure that had a flat power structure; combined with the process of setting the norms for the school culture, was a challenge for the staff as well as Betty. Cultural norms that are established in schools are often hidden and difficult to break. The divisive nature of Betty's school culture needed to be changed in order to create a new culture that is more inclusive and supportive of all staff members. She did this by developing open communication where everyone has information and works together.

Establishing how a team of leaders (assistant principals) would work together in guiding a building was a key step in the establishment of norms for Betty's administrative

team. It meant changing the perception of how the administrative and support staff saw the work of the principal. Betty's leadership style is collaborative and inclusive. For the staff at Betty's school this was a change in how the previous (male) principal had interacted with the staff.

I wanted to change the image that I was there to serve them; they were not necessarily there to serve me. They were there to serve the students. I was much more visible at the beginning. I shocked many staff members because I was here, and I continue to be here every morning by 6 or 6:30. So truly, I'm the first person to get here and the last person to leave, because I want to be here if anyone needs my assistance. I never give anyone a task to do that I am not willing to do myself, and again, that is a change. I will work with clerical staff, with custodial staff to get a task done. I'm not one that quickly shoots orders. Now, my staff may say differently, but the shooting orders are under stress times, where we're all working together to get a goal accomplished. Again, that was a new challenge and something different. So in that sense, it may not have been a challenge for me, but it was a challenge for my staff, because norms were being changed. The former principal, if he had a meeting at night, and was not out of the building 'til nine or ten o'clock at night, would then choose not to come in 'til nine or ten o'clock in the morning. So, that really was different for my secretary, because she was blocking out time in the morning the first couple months that I was here. And I was saying, 'Why are you doing that?' And she said, 'But you had a meeting the night before.' So again, just changing those norms and working together.

Betty worked through the need to align relationships and expectations. She had to remind teacher that they were there for students and she was there for them. She arrived at work early to be the first person there and the last person out each day. She wanted to be there to meet the needs of her staff. She models the idea that in a school everyone must work together. The previous male principal would block out time if he had a meeting the night before; Betty did not. Her norm was hard work and long hours..

A personal challenge for Betty is to balance her responsibilities as a principal with her role as a mother and wife. The responsibility to wear many different hats and know

when the time comes during the day to switch is important for the creation of harmony within the life of the female principal.

And the family joke is, if I walk in the door, and I'm still dealing with school issues, my husband – who's also a teacher – asks me the question, and it's just my clue that I'm not there yet, is 'Did you take the long way home from school?' Because the long way home from school tells me that I need to unwind, and debrief, and put a different hat on. And that's where the challenge is, is the role that I play as principal, and where I'm working, and expecting things of my staff in serving them in one way. When I get home, I have a different role as a mom and as a wife that I need to put on a different hat and work under a different set of guidelines, and sometimes that's difficult. What has helped in that transition, and what I think we can do for women, is to work with them on how to balance their personal life and their professional life. The needs of the family and the relationships – the personal relationships we build can be kept.

For Betty's family, it became a joke to see if she could separated her *work self* from her *family self*. She defines her role expectations for the person she is at school and the person she is at home. Both roles have different sets of guidelines. She reminds us that the personal relationships we build we can keep by working on balancing the personal and professional life.

Is it unique to a female principal that she would struggle with the balance between family and school? According to Betty it is.

I think it is, because I don't see those challenges for men. But that's being pretty arrogant on my part. I think in some senses it was unique to me, because I was following a male principal, and I was in a community that is very family oriented and it is – we have a large population of Mormons, and Catholics, and with that comes the tradition of the man being the head of the household, and while I respect that, and while I have worked very diligently to make that work with the families, that was a challenge for me, to build the trust with the community that a woman could do the job equally as well as any man.

Betty has not seen men struggle to balance family and school. She took over the principalship from a man. Her school is in a community that has many religious

connections through which tradition values dictate that the man is head of the house. Betty has worked diligently to make that work with the families in her school, but it has been a challenge for her to have those traditional families trust that she can do the job as well as a man and still be a wife and mother. She accomplishes this by understanding and modeling that her family is supportive of her work.

Cathy's reflection on the uniqueness of the female challenge to balance family and work mirrors Betty's experience.

Balancing home, family, motherhood, and professionalism is very difficult to do. Good thing we can multitask. But I think it is very difficult, because as women we are expected to be mothers, and homemakers, and wives, as well as hold down jobs. And as I had mentioned before, high school principals aren't just jobs, they're careers. They're very demanding. They're very stressful. I will spend time, even if I'm not actually at school, I'm spending time at home working on school-kinds of things. So I do believe that it is unique to women. A lot of times, what I do is bring home work so that I can be home with my kids, and when they go to bed, or if they have an activity or event that evening, I will work then. It is a balancing act, for sure.

There's a lot more responsibility with a principal position. The time factor was a major challenge for me. I had to decide whether or not I wanted to be a high school principal. When you work as a high school principal, you know that you don't work an eight-hour job, you don't work a forty-hour a week job at all; you work day, and night, and even weekends. It's very difficult at times to balance that with family.

Balancing home, family, and professional duties is difficult. Cathy is grateful that women are good at multi-tasking. Cathy agrees that the balance between home and professional life is unique to women. The job of a principal is not a forty-hour a week job and knowing that made the decision to become a principal hard for Cathy.

Cathy has made her work as a high school principal a family experience. She has included her husband and children in the school events that she attends in the evening. This has given opened her professional world to her family and take pressure off of the need to be in two places at one time. I really ought to tell you – a spouse is someone who has to know that the demands of the job are such that

there isn't the time to spend with that [person] that you would like to spend. Luckily my spouse – my husband, and my kids like to go to athletic events, and like to go to the different kinds of night activities that are required of high school principals. So that's been a major help for me.

Cathy faced many challenges on her journey to the principalship. Besides balancing her commitment to family, she struggled in “just getting there.” The interview process was lengthy, with many different interviews.

I'd been an assistant principal – and sometimes your superintendent, in this case, he wasn't sure he wanted to stay inside the district or he wanted to go outside of the district. And so, I had to go through extensive interviews, even though I had been in the building and had the experience, I had to interview with the superintendent, I had to interview with my staff, I had to go back and interview with the superintendent.

One of the barriers to the hiring process is the depth of the search that the district decides on. The competitive process that Cathy went through was lengthy and involved three sets of interviews. A secondary challenge for Cathy was finding an opening to apply for.

Also, high school principal jobs at that time, when I got into it, which was six years ago, they were somewhat difficult to find. Especially if you wanted to stay in a certain geographical area, you have to wait for one to open up, and it does take a while for that to happen.

Mobility for women, with the responsibility for family, and a commitment to a spouse and their job, makes relocating difficult. Cathy knew that because of family commitments she would not be able to move in order to get a principalship. Her only hope of being a principal would have to be an opening in her community and that could take a while.

The women faced a variety of challenges to become high school principals. They worked through issues from school culture, personal credibility, school norms, and the balancing act of family and career. The women describe the challenge of the duality of roles, mother and principal as the most demanding and important of challenges.

Support Systems.

When Abby took on the responsibility of principal, she had a team of all male assistant principals. The three assistant principals were all former coaches and all very supportive of Abby. The assistant principals helped Abby sort out and depersonalize and understand the culture with which she was working. Abby also has strong family support from her husband and her two children.

Betty reflects that the support she received from her school district has been very little. As a principal she was assigned a mentor. "And ironically, I felt I was helping him much more than he was helping me."

The need for mentoring is supported by all of the participants. Betty defines the barrier to those mentoring relationships this way, "It's sad that at the level of principalship, it feels like, even now, that we're afraid to ask for help from someone else. We're afraid to ask our colleagues for help because we don't want to look like we don't have the answer." She goes on to define the need to develop mentors for administrators.

There's not a structure that we have built into our daily lives to have that support. And in that sense I would say, that that is one area that I think all of us could work on. We have mentor programs for new teachers, we have mentor programs for new people in the district, but when we have people moving up the ranks, the mentor system does not seem to work as well as I would like it to be.

Mentoring has not been formally developed for administrators in the participants districts. It has been a focus to support the work of new teachers, but a similar program could be created for administrators. Cathy's support system has been her family, friends, mentors, and her association with professional organizations and networking that comes from those associations. Support breaks the isolation that comes from the work. By surrounding

yourself with people who are in the same position you can foster ideas and find solutions for problems. She stresses the importance of seeking support.

One of the major support systems that I've had is belonging to organizations, and the networking that goes with that. When you surround yourself with people who are in the same position as you, and who can understand the same, you know – or have experienced the same kinds of things that you have. That's very helpful. You can bounce ideas off people. You can seek support from people. That is very important.

Abby, Betty, and Cathy all underscore the need for mentors and networks so that principals do not have to work in isolation. Support can come from membership in professional organizations. Betty highlights that school districts have mentor programs for teachers, but have not made the effort to offer that level of support and coaching to principals. Principals need a sounding board.

Phase Three

Lessons Learned.

One of the outcomes of the study is to provide for aspiring female principals lesson that the participants have learned through their experience. Getting the job is one challenge, but when you have the job, what do you do? Abby tells us that the way you run the school will impact your success and the school's success. So there are several basic lessons that must be followed.

The first lesson is to always run a school that is kid centered and not about the adults. That sometimes that is a hard thing; adults don't always see the big picture. But your job is also to inspire adults to do the hard work with kids and in this day and age. And so allowing people some choice in their jobs, treating people respectfully, having high expectations for teachers and expect that they have the same for kids, having compassion in the middle of decisions, and also remembering that we are in a very human business. Because, in this day and age of accountability, that is sometimes hard to remember. In terms of other lessons that

you have to stay current, that you have to be flexible, that you have to realize that every single day something is going to happen that you can't predict, plan on or want to happen and that you don't have a choice but to respond to it, whether you like it or not. Always using your moral compass, not only around kids being at the center of decisions, but about doing the right things ethics matter, that your reputation matters, you are a bigger entity, you represent a school and you represent a district and always being about the right things is incredibly important.

Abby gives us nine lessons: (1) schools must be kid centered; (2) you must inspire adults to work with kids; (3) allow people choice in their job; (4) treat people with respect; (5) have high expectations; (6) stay current; (7) be flexible, unplanned things are going to happen; (8) use your moral compass as a guide for your decisions; (9) you represent a school, a community – your reputation matters.

Betty's experiences, which she did not fully understand until she had been a principal for a while, have shaped six lessons that she shares. The lessons that she shares have a universal message that are not reliant on gender, but on survival for any principal. The lessons she shares follow the 21st century paradigm of collaborative and service leaders.

The first one is simply time management. It is very important in this job to be able to manage all of the balls that you have to keep going. Some things that I have learned have helped me truly stay on top of things. Number one, something simple, to handle a piece of paper once. When something comes across my desk, I deal with it. Where I get bogged down is when I don't deal with it. So a goal of mine, and it is a continual struggle through is to handle a piece of paper once, deal with it, and then move on. The second thing that has been an asset to building relationships and building trust with parents, students and faculty is to make all of your phone calls by the end of the day, for that day. Sometimes that does not happen with evening events. It is very easy to make a phone call and follow up with a parent, who truly does appreciate it if you are making phone calls at night. The third part of time management and staying on top of all the things you need to do, is to stay on top of your emails. Emails have become a big part of our lives and a lot of information can be shared in emails, which eliminates the phone part of our job. So being timely in emails defuses a lot of frustration with parents. The last thing which is more important than any of these I believe is when I am out in the building and students or staff members will ask me a question, or ask me to get some information for them, and very quickly I usually say, "Yes that I would be

happy to do that.” But if I don’t write those down it is very easy to get side tracked onto another project before I get back to my office. So, always carry around a notepad to document what they are asking. If I am out of the building and I don’t have anything to write with, I ask the staff member or the student to email me, because that is a record for them as well as for me, that they are letting me know what they need. The second lesson that I learned very quickly is don’t assume that everyone in your building has the same work ethic. Expect more out of yourself than you do of others. If you are coming in early and leaving late, that is a choice you make. And I have made that choice because I want to be here anytime my staff is here. But don’t put your values of working on them. Keep your expectations high, but be realistic and flexible, know that everyone has different strengths and expectations for themselves. The third area, to remember to recognize people for their accomplishments. Say thank you. Many times we are so engrossed in our jobs that we forget to say thank you to people who are doing a good job. The people who I feel get the brunt of this are the people closest to me. The people in my main office, it is very easy to forget to say thank you and that you have done a great job on something. Even if in your mind it is a small task. If they have done a good job, it goes a long way to compliment. It seems to me that that is one thing in my working in education that leaders seem to have an easier job of doing that are females. So that is a challenge for me, to make sure that I am recognizing the people who work for me. The fourth thing that I learned, which was just reinforced when I took this job, but it is a learning step each day, is to be yourself. Don’t put on airs. Don’t act outside of yourself. If you are not yourself, people are going to know that. The other thing I learned is to keep your frustrations to yourself. This job is very stressful, but it is a lot of fun. It is important that you find support, that you can be truly candid with and bare your soul. But please remember that you have to have safe people to do this with.

Betty’s lessons are: (1) time management including building relationships, responding to emails and phone calls, and follow through on what you say you will do; (2) do not impose your work ethic on others; (3) recognize people accomplishments and say thank you; (4) be authentic about who you are.; (5) keep your frustrations to your self; (6) choose the individuals that you share personal matters carefully. School principals are set apart from close relationships with staff members because of the perceived models of inner and outer circles that guard power and information. Candid conversation needs to happen with a mentor.

Cathy had a unique insight into lessons she has learned. She grew up with her father as a principal so she thought she understood the work, until she was in the principalship.

Oh boy. I feel like, even though my dad was a principal, and I've been an assistant principal, I naively assumed that going from the assistant principal to the principal, in the building where I'd been the assistant principal, would be no big deal, and that was one of the most difficult things I ever did. It was like drinking out of a fire hose.

Cathy describes her experience of moving from an assistant principalship to the principalship like, "drinking from a fire hose." The pressures are great and you need to be prepared to handle them as they come at you. Once you start the work as a principal, there is little ability to slow down the pace. She assumed she was prepared because of her previous experience to be able to do the work – "no big deal." But it was a big deal and she learned several lessons that she shares.

I will tell you that changing districts has also been that kind of experience. Even though you have experience with being a principal, and a lot of that experience is valuable and you will use, changing districts and learning new philosophies is also very difficult with that. Be prepared for the amount of work. Learn how to deal with stress, that's very important. Have fun. That's also really important. Enjoy what you do. Have passion for it. Get out and know kids and faculty. One of my mentors, taught me that you have to treat people right. You're going to ask a lot of people, you're going to demand things of them, and it's really important that you treat them right, and that you value what they do, and you let them know that. Communication skills are probably the most important thing you can have because that's what you done all the time. You make decisions on the fly, and you've got to be able to make – or you've got to be able to communicate those decisions, and have people understand why they're being made. And I had mentioned earlier, the networking piece is huge. If you can meet other people in your district, in your state, even at the national level if you can belong to professional organizations. Also, the principalship has changed, even in the small – in the short time that I've been there, which is six years. And actually that's quite a long time for a principal, if you know anything about longevity. That you really have to be a research specialist now. High schools have evolved because of 'no child left behind.' You have to know about reading, you have to know about curriculum, you have to know about athletics and activities. It's a multifaceted job, and it's a lot of learning that goes in there."

Cathy has nine specific lessons that aspiring administrator need to know. They are: (1) learn the philosophy of your district, (2) be prepared for the amount of work, (3) find ways to deal with stress. (4) treat people right. (5) communication is key, let people know about what is happening and why, (6) get a mentor, (7) join a professional organization and network, (8) learn to understand research, you need to be a research specialist, (9) the job is multifaceted you need to understand curriculum, athletics and activities.

Summary.

The participants shared 24 lessons that they learned from their work as a principal. The common lessons include: people must be treated with respect, find a mentor, the work is stressful, demanding and organizational skills can help with that. To do the job well, continue your own professional growth so that you understand research, athletics, and activities

What Aspiring Women Should Know

The participants all had tips and lessons that they wanted aspiring women to know from their experience. These traits, skills, attitudes and abilities have all been key to the success of these women.

Abby reflects on the hours of hard work necessary to gain credibility with staff, students, parents, and the community and not to expect any special treatment because of being a woman.

The first thing is don't expect someone to treat you in some special fashion because you are a woman. Your gender should make no difference. That

sometimes people expect you to work harder because you are a woman, and sometimes things won't be fair in your eyes because there is a lot of the good old boys system that is out there. Although that seems to be changing in more recent years. And yet people are fair if you work hard, you develop a sense of trust with people because you follow through on what you say you're going to do; people see you as credible; you make promises you keep them, all of those things lend to people believing that you are capable, creditable, believable, and worthy of them following you. Leadership is not something you get because you have a title; leadership is something that you earn, because if people trust you and believe that you are about the right things, they will follow you. Humans in our business want to do the right thing and love kids and being on a path that doesn't look different than that. Working hard, not expecting special treatment, the importance of networking with other people, the importance of visiting places, thinking out of the box and being creative and all of those things that women have to do because they juggle so much in their lives – pretty much a stereotype, but I also I believe a truism in my own life.

Abby is clear that if you make promises, keep them. Leadership is about the work. As a leader people trust that decisions will be made in the best interest of the school. For people to follow a principal they must believe that they are capable, creditable, believable and worthy. As a principal you have to think outside the box, network, visit other schools – work hard.

Through Betty's journey there are several things that she believes are important for aspiring administrators to know. The tone of the principal sets the tone for the building so it is important to be positive. "As we continue to increase the number of women in administration, the number one thing is to be positive." The culture of a school must be one of care, "where all people's needs are heard and attempted to be met." Betty believes that it is crucial for principals "to be fair and consistent." She reminds us that as women are taking more positions of power within the high school arena we must be guarded to not create an "in crowd" and an "out crowd" where information's power is limited to those closest to the principal.

There are people in the know and people not in the know. Or back in the old days, and it currently still happens in some arenas, but the “good old boy system” – that can’t happen if a woman is in administration in a leadership role. The good old boy system, because that is not beneficial to anybody.

Avoid the tendency to share information with a small group of staff members.

Information must be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. A principal must avoid favoritism.

In a job that requires great sacrifice and long hours. Betty shares that it is key to not show stress. “Don’t act like you are over worked. Don’t look exhausted. Take care of yourself. People are looking to you for support, but they can’t feel supported if you’re showing stress.” This is a difficult challenge for any principal.

As I listened to Betty’s journey and her words to aspiring women principals, I was saddened by the truth of her next insight. Her clear, direct and concise insight reflects deeply with me. “Be aware that some people don’t want to work for a woman, or find it difficult to work for a woman. It is very interesting because many woman, have a difficult time working for another woman. Be sensitive to that and make sure that you are meeting their needs by being fair and consistent and that you are a good listener.” What a challenge that is for women to know that a barrier to leading others rests within the perceptions of what women can do.

Over the last forty years as women have moved into careers and out of the home as full time domestic engineers, society has had to adjust. Betty reminds us that there is a responsibility on the part of women high school principals to adjust your style to families and communities where this has not been the norm.

Know your community. My community is a very conservative community, where many of the mothers are stay-at-home moms. So having a woman in a leadership position is a change for this community. You need to be sensitive to that, to be

caring to the community and listen to what their needs are. Many parents and teachers are used to having elementary female principals that is more of a norm in our profession. Just recently we have found that more women are entering the high school positions and we do it with pride. But we are entering an arena that has not been a female position. So as you are entering communities, work with your community, and get to know the community.

Working with the families is important in gaining their support. Sensitivity to the beliefs held by the school community will open communication and trust between the principal, the school, and the families.

As Betty closes her last interview she gives a very personal bit of advice.

The last thing that I would say is, and it is a personal issue and again, I don't know if it is specific to females, but it is specific to me, have higher expectations for myself than I have for others. I will not ask any of my staff members, whether it be an advance placement teacher, versus a custodian, versus a clerical, versus a Para educator, I will not ask any of them to do anything that I would not be willing to do myself. Many times we work closely together to get a job done. We are a team; we are a family. Unless we work together – we all have differently roles, but we need to work together for the achievement of our students.

Do not ask anyone to do something that you would not do yourself. Everyone has different roles, but the goal of student achievement unites everyone. What a powerful perspective it is to know that what you expect of yourself must be greater than what you can impose on others. If a principal or leader is willing to do what they ask of others the ability to motivate subordinates is increased. By walking in the shoes of those we lead, we can also see the world from their perspective. It is that perspective that gives clarity in defining the work.

From Cathy's experience and her study of gender issues she feels that two traits are a must. Women must be overt and assertive. Each are equally important.

You have to be overt, and you have to be assertive. Sometimes it's outside of a comfort zone not to be caring and compassionate. And not that you can't be those

things, but there are times when you have to, what I call 'face the ugly'. You have to deal with problems. You have to deal with people. It's not a positive situation, but it has to be done. Probably the most difficult piece of the job for me is the negative personnel issues that I face. I go into every single relationship believing that, with kids, that's somebody's kid, and they're very important to them, and I would want my child to be treated the same way. And with adults, that you know, they are – they have value and worth, and so when you have to discipline either kids or adults, or that kind of thing, it is difficult. Now as a mother, and as a woman, I haven't had trouble with my own kids and that's kind of what I've had to picture in my mind, is that, if we have to discipline our own kids, and we're okay with that, the lessons that we've learned are that they still love you, they still care about you. In fact, they're expecting you to do that. I think it's the same way in schools, but I can tell you that it's difficult to do that.

Cathy highlights for women that, because of the long hours, the stress and the general demands of the position require that you find balance, passion, and joy in the work. Being overt and assertive may be outside of your comfort zone -- Do it anyway.

Summary

The participants want aspiring principals to know that the job is hard work and the hours are long. Do not expect to be treated differently because you are a woman. Personal skills of credibility, trustworthiness and communication are key traits of leaders. Stress is high, and you have to find a way deal with it. Some people do not want to work for a woman – accept the challenge.

Bollnow, a German philosopher, defined a term to show agreement of the reader in response to phenomenological. His term is the phenomenological nod. There were nods of agreement with the essence of the lived experience as described from within the world of the participants. The sharing of the participants experience became meaningful as enlightened consciousness from my own experience.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study and a reflection on the findings including: summary of the study, reflection on the five themes presented in the research, reflections on methodology, recommendations for both school districts and licensure programs, and recommendations for future studies.

Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to share the reflections of three selected female high school principals in a western state in order to understand how their experience can illuminate the way for aspiring female administrators. By analyzing these women's reflections, we may come to understand how women view the work of the high school principalship.

The cover of the January 2007 *Principal Leadership*, the National Association of Secondary School Principals publication, highlights the 2007 MetLife Principal of the Year, Dr. Jill Martin. Dr. Martin is a Colorado high school principal, serving in a comprehensive high school in the southern part of the state. My first thought as I looked at the cover was, YEA! This is one step forward for woman. My second thought was how did she do it? A quick scan of the article highlighting her success and beliefs gave me a great sense of pride in the work she has accomplished.

Dr. Martin believes that no student or staff member is just a number. Each are individuals who need to be challenged and honored. Her philosophy of coaching teachers is a “support based” model of encouragement. She has a keen focus on training and mentoring each teacher. Her style is one of empowerment, inclusion, and collaboration. Her success is reflected in the success of her school. She has demonstrated the link between leadership and student achievement.

Dr. Martin’s career spans 38 years; 11 years she has served as a high school principal. The last eight of those years have been at the same comprehensive high school. It appears she has no plans for retirement soon.

Just as the three participants in this study have stated that male principals have encouraged and supported them, Dr. Martin also finds that same support at home. She is married to a male high school principal in another school district. “Concerns with learning and school do not end when Martin gets home. Her mentor sits across the table from her at dinner. Dr. Paul Martin, her husband and the *1984 Wyoming Principal of the Year*, is the principal at a neighboring school district (p. 41).

The three participants who took part in this study are strong, confident women. These women know that supporting other women who aspire to the principalship is a responsibility that they uniquely carry. It is a responsibility that all leaders who have broken the mold or moved in a new direction carry. For women it is a lifeline that reaches out to show the way.

This study looked at the reflections of three women as they spoke of their journeys to a principalship. The lessons shared by the participants serve as a guide for other aspiring administrators.

The literature review on leadership, women in leadership, and women in the high school principalship underscore the urgency for removing the glass ceiling and opening the doors of opportunity for women. If equity in opportunity is to exist, then the traits, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required must be articulated. Universities must prepare students, regardless of gender, to develop leadership skills that include: collaboration, data analysis, financial management, conflict resolution, coaching, staff evaluation, and how to be both instructional and visionary leader. The participants focused on these areas as key skills to lead a 21st century high school. Potential principals must be involved in dialog about how to handle pressure, long work hours, and the stress that comes from serving a wide spectrum of stakeholders. The rules and language of leadership must not be held by a few selected individuals, but openly available to those who seek to serve in principalships. The participant's responses to phase two and three questions underlined the work done in previous studies that supports the need for training, mentoring and alignment of university preparation programs.

The study gave voice to how three women think and speak of their work and their journey to achieve principal positions. Lessons learned from the participant's experiences can help aspiring administrators, school districts, and universities. One way to support principalships is through mentors, on-going professional training and development of local and statewide networks.

Each of the women in this study has a unique journey and story. Their journeys are united through shared similarities. Each participant described a career path from the classroom, to an assistant principalship, to a principalship. The women spoke of the need

for mentors and the support of family. They spoke of the long hours and the struggles to balance family responsibilities with the work of the principalship.

Through the analysis of test ways of knowing are constructed. The responses given by the participants capture personal dimensions of these women's experiences in the principalship. Strands of the stories included struggles to balance family with work, negative perceptions of their abilities to lead, difficulty in finding a principal position and a sense of isolation in the work. The study revealed how these women do not fit the typical image of high school principals. These women are not the stereotype coach who moved into leadership because they knew how to manage a team. Each of these women has demonstrated how a different style of leadership, which is inclusive of collaboration.. The study indicates that a female high school principal can balance work and family.

This study contributes to the development of female leadership. It defines leadership profiles and specific leadership characteristics, which the participants describe as key to obtaining a principalship. Hard work, clear communication, fairness and credibility are traits that the study brings to light.

Through action, traditional thought is challenged. In the public school systems that level of change seems to be slow. "For those who are not in positions of power within institutions, this is a critical realization; marginalized groups are able to transform institutions through enacting culture" (Safarik, 2000 p. 34). The participants in the study reflect on the need to enact culture to be accepted and successful as a female principal. They define their work and the work of the school in a mutually beneficial way. Clarity in school purpose, integrity in leadership and focus on inclusion are bench marks of how these

women enacted culture. The transformation, through empowered leadership, can change the future of educational institutions.

Reflection on Five Themes

Perceptions.

Abby, Betty, and Cathy discussed in their story how obstacles and challenges surfaced because they were not viewed as knowledgeable or as capable as the men principals who had served in the position before them. None of the women had been an athletic coach and they struggled to find ways to prove their competency in understanding the needs of high schools sports teams. They had to find ways to balance work and the responsibilities of being a wife and mother. They had to prove to their communities that they were instructional leaders.

As public education accepts changes in how leadership styles can be skill based and not gender based then assumptions of abilities will fade. Society will need to adjust its perceptions of school leadership. Changes in beliefs, values, and perceptions will allow schools and school districts to hire the best person for the job. Those changes will allow schools to operate not through a top down model, but from a collaboration of team members seek to put student achievement on the forefront of the education agenda.

Traits.

These three women match Harris's (2004) description of women principals: humble, energetic, and resourceful. How teachers, parents, and students respond to a principal is based on the interactions and patterns of behavior that a principal

demonstrates. Credibility and trust must be created through communication and leadership behaviors. Defining communication pathways that are unique to a school will align stakeholders with organizational goals. Pacing, priorities, and alignment of policies to the school vision will guide the leaders respond to organizational dynamics. Follow through on commitments, and speaking with confidence will create credibility. Women leaders must be resilient and steadfast. Consistency in actions creates trust in the leader.

Support Systems.

The participants spoke of the support that they had received throughout their careers. All three participants moved into school administration because of the advocacy of other administrators, who saw potential in them.

Support was an important issue for the participants. The participants appreciated the support that they received from family and their administrative team. However, there is an identified weakness in the structured support of administrators from within the school districts for which these women work. A structured support system could take the form of a formal mentorship with time for discussion and guidance, or the form of informal networks. Seeking support and professional coaching should not be viewed as a weakness, but as leadership strength. Currently, those collegial relationships are not nurtured for principals.

I am haunted by Betty's words "I see it as very important is not to show stress." In a high stress position where public visibility is a daily role of the leader, finding solace in a safe sounding board is crucial to the welfare of the leader and the foundation of the

school. The role of a mentor seems to be a basic need to support to the success of the principal, so that stress and anxiety can find an appropriate outlet to be addressed.

Career Paths.

The participants each came through an anticipated traditional career pathway. One put her career on hold to spend time with her family. All three live with the reality of juggling work and family. The participants began their career in the classroom as teachers. The women moved from the classroom into administration because of the support and encouragement, often of male administrators. Two of the three participants moved into entry-level administrative work because of unique situations within their schools that caused last minute positions to open. Each participant spent several years as an assistant principal to a male principal.

All three participants have educational certifications that prepared them for school administration. Each holds a master degree. Only one of the participants is interested in a “central administration” job.

Abby, Betty and Cathy have a great level of satisfaction in their current positions. Two suggest that they will probably finish their career in the school that they are currently working. One is looking toward a job in central administration.

Institutions and their leaders must create opportunities for women to pursue career options. By removing artificial barriers to leadership, women may choose the career path to a principalship.

Lessons.

Abby, Betty, and Cathy all had lessons they wanted to share with aspiring women principals. One of the key lessons is to be prepared for the work of the principalship. The work is stressful and adjusting to the additional responsibilities from the assistant principalship to the principalship is difficult. Unplanned events, crises, and situations arise everyday; principals must be able to show compassion and strength. Flexibility is required in responds to unplanned events and crisis that occur in school.

Communication is crucial. Decisions are made often made quickly and must be clearly communicated to others. Listening to stakeholders will provide channels for feedback. Community meetings, forums and visibility at events will provide opportunities for stakeholders to interact with the principal.

Skills in research are a new dimension in the principalship. Memberships in professional organizations will connect you to data, trends and predictions in public education. A clear understanding of how to use data to make decisions is a leadership skill for the 21st century.

Principals must have a broad base knowledge about the work they are to do. Abby's struggle to gain trust us reflective of the need for credibility to be grounded in a strong graduate program. There is a link between university preparation and clinical application of these skills. Practitioners should be teaching within the structure of the academy, to ensure that aspiring administrations are receiving practical scholarship coupled with theoretical frameworks.

Through the reflections of these women, every principal (male and female) needs to find someone whom you can bounce ideas off of. Balancing the job requires setting

priorities. Having a critical ear to listen, someone to show a new principal the ropes and a long-term coach could assist principals in maximizing time and making good decisions. Abby, Betty, and Cathy support the findings from the Rand study that suggest mentoring is a key to the success of a principal.

Connections with the educational community are a top priority. Principals must know the staff, students and parent community. The principal must be visible at school events and make the time to listen to concerns and needs.

Reflection on Methodology

Qualitative research allows for the researcher to read, reflect and do. The process is about creating meaning from the storied lives we live. The process is not linear; but intertwined. The data collection process narrowed my interaction with the participants and limited our ability to build a shared framework. The underlying dimension that created trust between the participants and the researcher is our commonality of position. The relationship was built on both a personal level, and professional level.

There were two liabilities in this studies method of data collection. The first was an inability to clarify or dig deeper into the participant's responses. The ability to co-create meaning was lost. As a researcher, questions arose as I listened to the responses. I wanted to know more about specifics referred to in their response, but was unable within the data collection method. This data collection method depended on the participant to give as much detail as they felt necessary without the prodding of the researcher. Within the narrative, the emergent nature is strictly in the hands of the participant. The framework of

the questions belongs to the researcher, but the text belongs to the participant. The second liability was the security and timing of the tapes as they were sent through the mail.

Doing research in my own “backyard” made it a struggle to clear my own bias. I would recommend that the nature of this type of research is best conducted at a distance. A larger pool of potential participant would enrich the data.

Adding a forth phase to the study would have bridged the gap in my model. The forth phase of questioning that would take the form of a focus group. Additional questions would include gathering the participant’s direct experience with marginalization, discrimination and how they have adapted to fit into a male dominated position. In a more narrative study I would look at the socialization of women principals around gender issues and socialization with men.

The words of the participants are compelling. Through the study I have developed a connection with the women. Participating in the research was a positive experience for them. Each thanked me for allowing them to be a part of the study. The emotional response from the women, along with the development of women’s ways of knowing and mutual patterns of understanding gives both meaning and clarity to the experience of women in the principalship.

Recommendations

It appears that school districts have not joined forces to plan how to increase the percentage of women in high school principalship. The numbers reflect a disproportional number of male to female high school principals. There have been no visible steps outside

of case law to implementation strategies that promote interested and capable women to move from the teaching ranks into the administrative ranks.

Equity in the hiring of women must be a top priority for school districts. School districts must move beyond the traditional and culturally rooted perceptions of women. Opportunity for women who seek principalships must be developed and encouraged.

School systems and higher education must work together to prepare women to take the role of principal. Career advancement for women within the ranks of school administration will provide quality leadership for schools, balanced gender representation, and meet the increase need for administrators to fill the positions left open due to the “graying” of America.

Within school districts a focus on mentoring and supporting female teacher leaders is crucial. Those opportunities could include: formal cohort programs, partnerships with universities, internships, and systems to recognize and promote women. Connecting, collaborating, and coaching are all components that will build support systems for women administrators.

The development of statewide organizations that support the work of women administrators could create and maintain professional activities for women school executives. Networks provide educational resources, on-going professional growth and a forum to share best practices which link women together and foster a level of professionalism. The strategies and techniques that promote the advancement of women must be supported through formal organizations. Networking will assist women in navigating the leadership maze. Principal licensure programs must equip women with tools to overcome perceived barriers. Some of those tools include positive strategies to

have voice heard. The old stereotype that men are assertive and women are aggressive needs to be equalized so that the message is one of equity, not struggle. Skill development is needed in the areas of time management, setting priorities, conflict resolution, networking, and how to efficiently handle the work of the principal.

Women must be savvy about the politics of school districts. They must find ways of networking and self-promotion that will lead to their hired as a high school principal. Training and practice may be developed through the educational mentoring process. Stories need to be heard of women who journeyed to achieve the position of power. Higher education and school districts must work together in understanding the vision of high school principalships and redesigning the role so that barriers such as long hours and lack of support do not hinder individuals from the position.

The time commitment to lead a comprehensive high school impacts the willingness of capable women to step forward and accept that level of time commitment. A high school principal is responsible for the management of staff, teachers, budget and facilities, along with the instructional leadership of course offerings, graduation requirements, and communication with parents, the district, and the greater community they serve. One of the largest time commitments are hours for the supervision of athletics and extra-curricular events.

The women in this study all have been working mothers. They have balanced their personal and professional roles. The perception of the woman as wife, mother, and principal remains a conflict for some school communities. Latchkey children, missed family events, and the stress of long hours takes a toll on marriages and the family unit. In the title of her book, U.S. Senator Hillary Clinton notes it takes a village to raise a child.

That village needs to adjust the role responsibilities of men and women to create equity within the workforce.

Female high school principals remain scarce. The pool of candidates to lead our public schools is shrinking. The findings from this study of comprehensive female high school principals led to many recommendations for school districts and licensure preparation programs.

School Districts.

1. Equal gender representation on hiring committees to neutralize a gender bias in hiring questions, perceptions and the hiring decision.
2. Develop on-going support for principals through mentoring programs that serve the needs of principals, whether new to the position or long-term principals.
3. Develop programs that assist women in exploring principalships. Teacher on special assignment, formal and informal leadership opportunities, and internships are ways for potential principals to learn skills and abilities to lead schools.
4. Human Resource procedures including hiring, evaluation and employee policies should be gender neutral and promote the retention of employees.
5. Promote professional development that develops skill sets dealing with student achievement and community engagement.
6. Provide opportunities for administrative networking.

7. Encourage opportunities for underrepresented groups to be hired into principalships. The creation of a logical and sequential plan to identify, hire and train capable women teachers to become principals must be in place.

Licensure Programs.

1. Principal licensure programs should have a broad base of opportunities to prepare the principal.
2. Support a 21st century model of school leadership including research methods and data analysis.
3. Leadership training should be gender neutral. And provide way of managing stress along with the skills of school management, athletics and activities.
4. Provide staff development support for principals. Including frequent and meaningful opportunities that link with work of the principal as practitioner.
5. Encourage underrepresented groups into licensure programs.
6. Scheduling of courses and opportunities should align with the candidates work schedules including evening, distance and on-line courses so that principals can stay current.

Future Studies

As I answered some questions through my study, other questions surfaced. The participants in this study voiced how difficult their journey has been, the lack of district support, the balancing of responsibility, trouble finding a leadership opportunity, hurdles in the hiring process, and overcoming negative perceptions of women. Yet, each has a

great sense of satisfaction in the work that they do. Through the journey, these women have found hope and joy in their role as a high school principal.

Previous research studies have described the glass ceiling, support the under representation of women in secondary principalship, identify barriers that have created marginalized groups, studied social networks, and defined leadership styles. The ground work has been set. Further studies need to build upon that ground work.

It is difficult to answer the question, “Where are the women principals?” Hiring agents must acknowledge the disparity in representation of women in high school principalships. Until a time when it is safe to address those issues– women may not be equally represented.

Future studies should examine the candidate pool of female assistant principal. Many women may be stuck at the management level (assistant principal) of the educational structure; they need to know how to move into a principalship. A U.S. Department Glass Ceiling Report for education is necessary.

School cultures and biases within public education should be studied in order to maximize opportunities and sustainability of public schools. Public education is deeply rooted in its own culture. Betty spoke of her need to break down a negative school culture when she became principal in order to develop a collaborative school.

This study points to several efforts in school reform research. The first level focuses on leadership which defines mentor programs, alignment of staff development initiatives, and support training in leadership. The development of mentor programs, and programs that support collegial relationships is in important in breaking the isolation of the principalship. Staff development provides skills that support student achievement.

Skill development in leadership keeps leaders current in communication, trends and development of school communities. The second level focus on defining networking opportunities which support the work of school reform, retention of educators and instructional methodologies that will lead the way for the 21st century.

Future studies may identify the benefits and strategies for development of pipeline principals within school districts. The graying of America is calling for new leaders to step forward. A shortage will exist if we do not find proactive ways to fill the need. Best practices in the field of leadership development will support a public education and serve as a foundation for aspiring principals.

Shaping future educational practices include issues of power and privilege. For transform and illumination equity in opportunity must be created. The risk is wasting human potential. We must continue to invite the stories of women in leadership.

My work has just begun. It takes courage to step forward and question the status quo. If I go back to a conversation I had five years ago, “How did I get my job as a high school principal?” The answer is now a little clearer. I got my job as a high school principal because of hard work, education, sacrifice, time away from my family, long hours supporting teachers and students, and a firm belief that I could do the work.

As leaders seek to influence others, they must first take a look at themselves. My journey to a principalship also has deep reflections. I have faced barriers, but was committed to not let them stand in my way. I had male role models and mentors, because there were not women principals to mentor me. My skin is a little thicker, my hair a little grayer, and I am stronger because of my journey. I have learned to be gracious through reject and steadfast in my beliefs. I have found hope and joy in my work as a principal.

Designing educational programs that will meet the needs of students who face a global economy, and who will benefit from the flattening of the world is truly rewarding work. There is an exigency need for school leaders to work with teachers as they seek to provide rigorous and relevant lesson for students. The challenge now is to light the pathway for others.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
Colorado State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF STUDY:

The Journey to a Principalship What Women Tell Us: A Narrative Study

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Donna Cooner Gines, Ph.D.
School of Education, Colorado State University
(970) 491-1317: dcooner@caha.colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:

Dierdre Cook
(970) 488-6261: dierdrec@psdschools.org

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to discover the experiences of selected females who are or have been high school principals in Northern Colorado using narrative inquiry. The data will be gained through a series of tape recorded individual interviews with women who have been identified as holding or having held a principalship in the last ten years.

RESEARCH METHODS:

Given the emergent nature of narrative the process to gather data takes place in three reflective phases. You will be given a tape recorder, tapes and a list of questions to respond to. Your time commitment is less than one hour for each of the three phases where you will record your answers to the questions. The total time commitment expected is less than five hours including your review of the transcripts and responding to the general information questionnaire. The first phase gives you a two-week window to respond to three broad and open questions: 1) Tell me about becoming a high school principal? 2) What factors shaped your career choice? 3) What motivated you toward school leadership? You will return the tape within 7-10 days. In phase two you will respond to the second set of questions. 1) What were the challenges that you experienced in becoming a high school principal? 2) Do you feel your challenges are unique to women? 3) What were the support systems you experienced?

Page 1 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

Again, you will return that tape in a two-week window. The third phase follows the same format as phase one and two with a two-week window to respond to the researcher. In the final phase, the narrative will develop around lessons learned: What lessons did you learn that you would like to share? And what do you feel is important that aspiring administrators know?

RISKS INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES:

No known risks are expected due to your participation in this research. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

The criteria for inclusion in the study include:

- Female;
- Have worked as a public high school principal for at least one year between 1995-2005;
- That position was in Northern Colorado.

Aside from these criteria, you should not take part in the study if you cannot commit to taping your responses to the questions and returning them for the study.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

There is no known benefit for participating in this study, but we hope to share the skills, experiences and wisdom of women who have achieved the position of principal with those who might seek that level of educational leadership and have a role in identifying potential leaders.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you otherwise entitled.

Page 2 of 3 Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you give will be kept confidential and your name, school and other identifiable information will be coded. Your name will be kept separate from the research data. At no time will your name be used in this study. Any features that may reveal your identity will be altered in any publication to ensure your confidentiality. At the end of the study, the data will be kept locked at CSU for a three year period and then destroyed. All taped interviews will be transcribed and you will receive a copy of that transcription.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH?

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University’s legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions as a volunteer in this research contact, Janell Meldrem, Administrator to the HRD, at 970-491-1655, or Dierdre Cook, at 970-488-6262 or dierdrec@psdschools.org We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed a copy for this document containing three (3) pages.

_____ Date: _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ Date: _____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ Date: _____
Name of person providing information to participant

_____ Date: _____
Signature of Research Staff

Page 3 of 3 Participant’s initials _____ Date _____

APPENDIX B

WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the following questions and return them to Dierdre Cook in the enclosed envelope. If you have any questions please call: Dierdre Cook at 970-488-6262 or email her at dierdrec@psdschools.org. Information listed on this sheet will be kept confidential and not disclosed in any way that will link it directly to you as a participant in this research study. The purpose of this information is demographic.

1. What is your age currently? _____
2. What age did you accept your first position as a high school principal? ____
3. What is your race? Circle all that apply.
Caucasian Asian African American
Native American Spanish/Hispanic/Latino Pacific Islander
Other _____
4. How many years have you worked as a principal not including roles as assistant principal or other administrative duties? _____
5. Current marital status? Please circle:
Married Divorced Separated Widow
6. Do you have children if so, how many and ages?
7. What is the highest degree that you hold?
8. How many years did you serve as a teacher and what grade level(s) and subject(s)?
Years _____ Grade Level _____ Subject Area _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____ Subject Area _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____ Subject Area _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____ Subject Area _____

9. Did you serve as an assistant principal? If so, what level and how many years?

Years _____ Grade Level _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____
Years _____ Grade Level _____

10. What is your current level of career satisfaction?

None Little Some High Very High

11. How long do you plan to stay at your current position? _____

12. What other career aspirations do you have?

(To be destroyed by researcher after coding response sheet.)

Name:

School:

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Data collection in this narrative study will consist of three phases of distance interviews. Each participant will be given a tape recorder for recording their responses. During each phase the participant will receive a cassette tape, instructions for response, and the questions. Participants will mail the tapes back to the researcher.

PHASE ONE: The first phase gives the participant a two-week window to respond to three broad and open questions:

- 1) Tell me about becoming a high school principal?
- 2) What factors shaped your career choice?
- 3) What motivated you toward school leadership?

PHASE TWO: In phase two the participant will receive another tape and the second set of questions and a two-week window to respond.

- 1) What were the challenges that you experienced in becoming a high school principal?
- 2) Do you feel your challenges are unique to women?
- 3) What were the support systems you experienced?

PHASE THREE: The third phase follows the same format as phase one and two with a tape being sent and a two-week window to respond to the researcher. In the final phase, the narrative will develop around lessons learned and what they would want aspiring female leaders to know.

- 1) The first question asked is: What lessons did you learn that you would like to share?
- 2) And what do you feel is important that aspiring administrators know?