

Relationships: How Gender Impacts Relationships and Opens Opportunities to the High
School Principalship

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who were the first and most amazing teachers in my life. They taught me the fundamental truths of life and happiness. Words like dedication, volunteerism, commitment, and love were the foundation of my childhood. They did not teach through words, but by their actions.

They showed me love every day of my life. They modeled commitment through church, family, community and work. I saw their dedication through early morning rides and attendance at football games, concerts, and parent conferences.

When I began this amazing journey they were both my biggest cheerleaders! As I end this journey they are both angels in heaven supporting me through the amazing memories I keep close to my heart.

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Abstract of Dissertation

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The purpose of this study was to hear both female and male voices of high school principals related specifically to how they fostered and built relationships with five distinct affiliations (colleagues, family, superintendent, confidant or significant other, and self). Multiple studies have focused on examining the lack of female superintendents and the career paths to the superintendency (Coleman, 2001; Katz, 2005), whereas few have addressed the lack of high school female principals. The high school principalship is a stepping stone to the superintendency (Coleman, 2001; Katz, 2005). This notion was of interest to the researcher, a standing female principal, as she wanted to focus on the stepping stone of the high school principalship to the superintendency.

“The absence of women at senior levels of administration, particularly the superintendency, in K-12 institutions means that women’s influence on policy changes, decisions, and practice in the field is limited” (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006, p. 486).

Keywords: female principal, high school, gender, educational leadership

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

“From its inception, school administration has been male dominated and male defined (largely White male): that is, explained, conceptualized, and seen through the eyes of males” (Mertz & McNeely, 1998, p.196). Despite the fact that women have made significant progress in the fields of business and education during the past century, disparities continue to exist regarding their underrepresentation as high school principals. “The absence of women at senior levels of administration, particularly the superintendency, in K-12 institutions means that women’s influence on policy changes, decisions, and practice in the field is limited” (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006, p. 486). The purpose of this study was to hear both female and male voices of high school principals, specifically related to how they fostered and built relationships with five distinct affiliations (colleagues, family, superintendent, confidant or significant other, and self).

The disconnect. How can the K-12 American public education system, which is dominated by women, continue to have a gap between women in the field and women in the top leadership positions in public school systems? Greater equality for women has been achieved with regard to opportunities, but a glass ceiling still exists (Kim & Brunner, 2009). How is this possible in education? Education is deemed to be the equalizer. Educators teach children to dream that any job or position is possible, yet female educators remain underrepresented in the mainstream of the highest levels of public school leadership: the high school principalship and the superintendency. The public school system remains in conflict with a core educational belief. Despite years of

research available on women in the roles of high school principal and superintendent, numbers still show that with the present rate of growth, females will not reach equal representation in the superintendency and be able to achieve earnings comparable to their male counterparts until 2044 (Hartman, Sorokina, & Williams, 2006; Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2011).

The current reality. Research regarding the high school principalship and the superintendency is shared in this chapter to connect this study to prior research using the Self in Relationship interview protocol. The statistical information regarding the underrepresentation of female high school principals mirrors the lack of female superintendents. In 2007 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that only 26% of secondary principals were female (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2007). As part of this current study, I sought to find connections with the Self in Relationship data found in the research regarding superintendents and high school principals (Coleman, 2001).

Glass wrote in 2000, “Today, approximately 75% of elementary classroom teachers are women and nearly 75% of superintendents did not teach at the elementary level prior to working as a central-office administrator or superintendent” (Glass, 2000, p. 29). Coleman (2001) cited an international pattern as evidenced by statistics from New Zealand, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Africa, Central America, and India: Although at least one half of secondary teachers were women, they were the minority in secondary administrative positions. Farmer (2007) noted that five common pathways to the superintendency existed but the most common was that of secondary teacher, secondary principal, and superintendent.

The pattern of females' being in the minority can be seen throughout elementary, secondary, and central office positions; traditionally, males have followed a more self-directed and streamlined path to the high school principalship whereas females have delayed career advancement. Advancements for females often were delayed due to family responsibilities as well as their needing more encouragement from others to consider the high school principalship (Eckman, 2004). According to Eckman, the high school principalship, valued as a higher ranking than the elementary or middle school principalship, is the most common link to becoming a superintendent.

Women remain underrepresented in the position of high school principal, which has led to continued underrepresentation in the superintendency. According to a 2003 report, females accounted for more than 82% of public school teachers (GuideStar Compensation Report, not in ref 2003; National Center for Education Information, not in ref 2005). Despite the fact that 82% of teachers were females at the beginning of the 21st century in the United States, only 26% of secondary school principals were women (Young & McLeod, 2001). This gap has been studied in the field of education, yet progress toward closing the gap has not advanced.

The percentage of female superintendents in the American public school system has shown growth since 1905 when Ella Flagg Young boldly forecasted that females were certain to lead the schools of every district (Hansot & Tyack, 1981). Young's forecast still waits to be realized. Growth has been documented since 1905, yet it is not enough. When women hold less than one fourth of the positions, the gap has a major impact upon the policy decisions made at that level. The most recent American Association of School Administrator (AASA) decennial study of the superintendency

revealed that female superintendents accounted for 24.1% of superintendents nationwide (American Association of School Administrators [AASA], 2013). The numbers also were broken down based upon enrollment size of the district. The highest percentage of female superintendents was in districts having fewer than 300 students (29.8%), and the lowest percentage of female superintendents (20.4%) was noted in school districts with 25,000 or more students (AASA, 2013). These numbers reflected a gain of 12.1% for districts serving fewer than 300 students and a 15% gain in the largest districts (AASA, 2013). A gap continues to be evident although progress is evident. Research is now able to define some strategies that have supported the growth being observed.

Statement of the Problem

Currently, the fields of both education and business are reporting concerns with attracting and retaining leaders. The problem must be addressed not only due to the shortage described previously but also because women leaders in public high schools have beneficial managerial styles that can positively impact the schools at large (Jacobson, Palus, & Bowling, 2009). Although women continue to fill the pipelines for leadership roles, increasingly earn doctoral degrees, and occupy more middle level leadership positions, they continue to be denied opportunities to lead at the top levels. Gatekeepers, “good ole boy” networks, perceptions, and gender barriers are all documented in research as reasons for a gender gap in the high school principalship (Dowell & Larwin, 2013; Ibarra, Ely, & Kolb, 2013). Are educators creating a leadership crisis by allowing these obstacles to prevent women from filling the high school principalship?

The perception. Women are available with the needed qualifications to fill these positions, yet a recurring theme throughout the literature review for this current study indicated women's sense that it often takes multiple times to be "heard," as a woman, and recognized as a viable voice (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008). One woman stated it this way:

I think what I sense and learn is that I can say something again and again but people don't hear me until the 11th or 12th time. I feel often frustrated by how many times I have to say something, do something, or show something for people. (as cited in Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 13)

Other female participants shared similar feelings in comments such as "Men can say it and it is done" and "Sometimes [as a female] you get that questioning look or questioning tone" (as cited in Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 13). Is there a leadership crisis because women are not being heard? Continuing to ignore this imbalance will further impede both the female high school principal and the female superintendent from moving forward in today's global workplace.

This research narrowed the focus to the high school principalship. The extremely low numbers of females in the public high school principalship is a problem that has persisted over time (Bell & Chase, 1993; Mertz & McNeely, 1990; Porat, 1985; Schneider, 1986). The high school principalship is one of the most common stepping stones in the career path to the superintendency (Lyons, 1984). I selected the high school principal for the topic of this study as it connects to a larger body of research using the Self in Relationship survey with female superintendents. The lack of higher level female leadership and the conflict often associated with the disparity in numbers is not new. As far back as 1915, William Chancellor stated that "the principalship would 'worry' women too much, and that it was well known that women preferred teaching under a male principal who was more just, patient, and sympathetic" (as cited in Smith, 1978, p. 115).

I not only interviewed women to hear their voices, which have been well documented throughout research (Loder, 2005), but I also documented the male's voice. Hearing these voices with regard to how males and females build relationships with five different entities allowed me to analyze their responses on the same instrument, looking for trends.

From qualified to position. Mertz and McNeely reported in 1998, that since the 1970s, females had shown advancement in two positions that had been the most dominated by White males and the most resistant to accepting females: the high school principalship and the superintendency. Although advancements have been made, many districts continue to struggle to fill administrative vacancies (Myung, Loeb, & Horng, 2011). "Tapping" and mentoring by both males and females in leadership positions present opportunities to reduce this disparity and create a more balanced gender representation of high school principals (Myung et al., 2011). In the Eckman (2002) research, 4 of 35 women involved in the study were mentoring other females at the time of the study. The mentors considered it a responsibility to help other women aspire to the high school principalship: "I feel that it's important to mentor women I work with who might, with some encouragement, be interested [in the high school principalship]" (as cited in Eckman, 2002, p. 64). Participants in the study felt strongly about the role model they provided for female students and teachers in the schools they led. One of the participants expressed the sentiment as follows: "I am proud of being a high school principal. I'm very aware when I walk down the halls of being a role model for the girls" (as cited in Eckman, 2002, p. 64).

In 2005, Katz noted that there were more women than men in graduate programs preparing school administrators. Earlier, educational preparation programs had reported females to be more than half of the graduates, potentially creating a large candidate pool (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Although females outnumbered the male students in school administration preparation (Katz, 2005), in the United States, only 26% of secondary school principals were women at the beginning of the 21st century (Young & McLeod, 2001). Women definitely hold the qualifications to apply for the positions and are trained in greater numbers than males, yet males have continued to dominate the high school principalship (Katz, 2005). The glass ceiling, discrimination, and barriers continue to impact the ability for increased numbers of females to gain access to the high school principalship.

Barriers and discrimination. A recent researcher wrote,

The exclusion of women from the workforce in the U.S. dates to the beginning of the industrial era in the early nineteenth century. For the last 150 years, women were openly discriminated against by employers, who either refused to hire them under any circumstances or who rejected them if they were married or had children. (Pirouznia, 2013, p. 1)

Although class, gender, and ethnicity can be disaggregated in the study of women in educational leadership, it is apparent that the majority of women leaders, regardless of these descriptors, consistently juggle many competing roles while in leadership positions, for example, wife, mother, caretaker of aging parents, and the like (Loder, 2005). Other researchers reported, “When speaking with all of the women principals about their current family situations, we repeatedly heard stories about the struggle to balance family and work” (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 11). Although a woman may not openly be

denied a position for having a family, women have reported this situation as a barrier that exists today.

Grogan wrote, “Negative gender stereotypes about women that are prevalent in society have become barriers for women, because they reinforce discriminatory practices and are perpetuated by our institutions” (Grogan, 1996, p. 8). Beyond the traditional forms of discrimination, women have continued to report in current research the role confusion and conflicting demands associated with having family responsibilities. The “norms” for a high school principal require a number of evening events and a long work week (Munoz, Pankake, Murakami, Mills, & Simonsson, 2014). These norms were originally created around the demands of males rather than females; they have not taken into account updated family assumptions about the role women and men play in the modern family and society (Marshall & Kasten, 1994). As early as 1981, researchers wrote, “The divided role of professional and homemaker is one of the biggest barriers to women’s career development” (Paddock, Schmuck, Charters, & Carlson, 1981, p. 191).

Gender and style. As gains in female leadership became evident the debate began to be fueled regarding differences, or the lack thereof, between male and female leadership styles. Research can be noted on both sides of the argument. Shakeshaft (1987) and Bell and Chase (1993) argued that males and females lead differently, whereas researchers Eagly and Johnson (1990), Astin and Leland (1991), and Eagly, Karau and Johnson (1992) asserted there is no significant difference in the way men and women lead. Prior to Eagly and Johnson’s and Bell and Chase’s research studies, Mintzberg (1973) studied high school principals and characterized three major gender differences. Women principals were reported to behave in ways that provided more

democratic and participative styles of leadership that were generally considered more effective (Mintzberg, 1973). Mintzberg's study also noted that females had a more personalized leadership style in that they tended to spend more time in the classrooms and in discussions with staff members. According to Mintzberg's research, both activities had a positive impact on the school. In 1982, Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee completed an extensive literature review indicating that women were more willing to share information, worked more hours, and were more innovative than their male counterparts.

Specific leadership traits of females and males have been extensively studied (Bossert et al., 1982; Jacobson et al., 2009; Mertz & McNeely, 1990). How principals develop relationships with multiple stakeholders, as well as people in their personal lives, is an area with little available research. This doctoral study adds to the limited body of research regarding both male and female voices concerning relationships. The study analyzed how female and male high school principals saw themselves in relationships with their supervisors, subordinates, family members, confidants or significant others, and themselves. I analyzed the data using coding, themes, and the previously established a priori codes.

Role models. It has been very difficult for women to identify successful female role models that have been able to juggle effectively job, family, and long-term relationships. In one study, a participant stated, "When I was teaching and had different principal mentors and so forth, they were all divorced women!" (as cited in Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 11). Because of the number of females in the pipeline that are unable to move forward despite research support for the positive impact of female leaders on

achievement and climate, there are valid reasons for concern about the gender gap at the high school level (DeAngelis & O'Connor, 2012; Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993; Nogay & Beebe, 2008).

Purpose and Research Questions

Research was available for the past 30 years documenting inferences, perceptions, barriers, leadership, and gender effects, yet answers or direction regarding the next steps in addressing the lack of female high school principals was very limited. I explored the following research questions:

1. How do women and men develop relationships in the high school principalship?
2. Are there differences?
3. If there are differences, what are the implications?

In the current climate of school accountability, “evidence suggests that principals’ attitudes and behaviors play a large role in shaping how schools create a context in which students can effectively learn” (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 20). In discussing attitudes, behaviors, and dispositions, I began to question whether connections between gender and principal leadership existed. Perhaps females are less likely to display the attitudes, behaviors, and dispositions school boards are seeking in a high school principal.

Current research included a wealth of studies exploring the female voice as well as the voice of minority women, but very little research was available that applied the Self in Relationship research instrument with regard to both male and female administrators and that related to research on relationships and their impact on

advancement. Using the identity control theory as the theoretical framework for this study effectively linked with the Self in Relationship protocol to study how the relationships that female and male principals build, both professionally and personally, may be impacting their advancement.

Connections between the theoretical framework and the current research support the importance of this type of study. This research was needed to address the lack of a larger body of knowledge based upon the study of females and males through the administration and analysis of the results of the same instrument.

Having the opportunity to analyze the words females and males used to describe their relationships with five distinct groups helped me to make connections to Holland and Stryker's work (as cited in Holland, 1975; as cited in Burke, 2004). Holland and Stryker sought to determine "where identity standards originate and why self-perceptions are relevant to those standards and how identities come to be activated" (as cited in Burke, 2004, p. 575). If relationships are developed in unique ways by female and male high school principals, learning more about this development can help bridge the female-male gap in the high school principalship.

Statement of Significance

Importance of the work. Minimal research was available regarding how males and females build relationships in the high school principalship. Studies regarding females' addressing barriers, role conflicts, and career paths were well documented throughout the literature review for the current study. Few studies existed with an inclusive focus on both the male voice and the female voice within the same study of the principalship. I believed that learning more about how women and men build

relationships could add significant information regarding the shortage of female high school principals, as well as the ways in which a female principal's relationship style might impact the academic success of the school.

Recent literature has shown that the styles of women can be more beneficial to the organization, compared to the styles of men (Meier, O'Toole, Boyne, & Walker, 2007); yet the overall body of research regarding gender management presented varied findings and conclusions that required additional research (Jacobson et al., 2009).

School leaders and the culture they develop are significant to the academic success of the school (Murphy & Myers, 2008). As issues related to student achievement, scrutiny from the media, and fiscal shortages have continued to impact the building level principal at an unprecedented intensity, retirements have been on the rise (Reames, Kochan, & Zhu, 2013). "For example, in the New York City public school system more than 50% of the 1,400 principals left their jobs between 2000 and 2006" (DeLeon, 2006, p. 2). Shortages were noted as far back as 1998 by the Educational Research Service, which reported that 47% of urban districts, 45% of suburban districts, and 52% of rural districts cited a shortage of qualified candidates.

In light of the shortages being reported, increasing pressures, and growing rates of retirement, determining whether the gender gap is due in part to relational issues might help to lessen the impact of the shortage by encouraging the promotion of many of the qualified women who are not being tapped for these positions. This research can support both males and females by providing insight into the effective ways relationships can impact one's success as a principal regardless of gender.

Impacting the practitioner. “The more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes” (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 636). Relationships can directly impact the success of a principal’s school, yet little research has been available regarding the differences or similarities in how males and females build relationships as principals. In interviewing the participants using the Self in Relationship interview protocol, I allowed the participants to examine their own career paths and the challenges they had faced so as to enable them to better serve themselves and upcoming female and male leaders of the nation’s high schools. The protocol involved a two-tiered interview, beginning with open-ended questions and followed by the Self in Relationship protocol, including a required hands-on activity, in which participants selected, categorized, and analyzed words that they believed described themselves in their relationships with (a) colleagues, (b) family, (c) the superintendent, (d) confidant or significant other, and (e) self. After selecting five words for each entity, participants were asked to categorize the words as either positive, negative, or both based upon their experiences. Once each word had been categorized as positive, negative, or both, the 25 words were placed on a bullseye based upon perceived importance. Once the bullseye was completed, each participant was asked to answer open-ended questions based upon the bullseye he or she created. The protocol took approximately an hour to an hour and a half for completion. Findings supportive of specific, significant differences can be used to open the dialogue between female and male principals and can be shared with those females already in the pipeline for the position of high school principal.

Supporting the profession. Districts continue to focus efforts on recruiting and retaining quality principals. This process is often difficult because of the increasing demands and expectations principals are required to manage on a daily basis (Reames et al., 2013). If exclusionary practices are impacting females, the shortage is only exacerbated. Focusing this research on the intricacies of relationships opens the doors to dialogue between districts and states regarding more effective ways of supporting females aspiring to the high school principalship. Based on differences noted, the dialogue can focus on how both parties can benefit from hearing the voices of the opposite sex and sharing how relationships have impacted their career opportunities.

Policy implications. U.S. Secretary of Education Ron Paige stated in June 2002, “Without a doubt, Title IX has opened the doors of opportunity for generations of women and girls to compete, to achieve, and to pursue their American Dreams” (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Although more than 40 years has passed since the inception of Title IX, representation of female voices at the levels of Secretary of Education, state superintendent, superintendent, and high school principal is still substantially below male representation. This continued gap leads to a larger concern about having policy created at these high levels with limited female representation.

The findings from this research encourage dialogue that will provide opportunities for more female voices to be heard at the policy-creation level. Once the female voice is heard more clearly at the policy level, educators can begin to address the gaps in a more effective manner with both parties at the table.

Relationship research. The literature reviewed for this study identified barriers, role conflicts, and career paths but included very little research presenting male and

female voices focused on relationships in the high school principalship. Little research was available on how to actually begin to embed strong practices and connections to allow the eventual closing of the gap between males and females in the high school principalship and the superintendency. In addition, limited research was found that included both the male and female voices of the high school principal within the same study. I sought to add findings to influence policy and inform practice. The more opportunities educators have to hear all voices the more effectively the system can address shortages and close the leadership gap within the high school principalship.

Theoretical Framework

Paradigm shifts. Breaking down and rebuilding paradigms, patterns, and perceptions must occur if the cycle of males' dominating leadership roles in the high school principalship is to be broken. If females are to be equally represented in both the workforce and top leadership ranks of this profession, a paradigm shift must take place.

Currently females are up against the "norm" or the "well established culture" when seeking the high school principalship. The pattern of the old paradigms' being culturally acceptable must be challenged to allow for the oppressed population to create new paradigms and establish a new culture.

The current reality for women is to "fit in" with the well-established male culture, yet a constructivist seeks understanding and believes there are multiple realities or ways to interpret single events (Merriam, 2009). In support of the constructivist approach, I framed the work through the identity control theory (Burke, 2004). The identity control theory provides the theoretical structure for organizing issues females face when navigating male norms. Females have reported having to act in certain ways to identify

with existing group norms; by identifying with the group norms, women have avoided being stereotyped based upon female behaviors (Eckman, 2004).

Two researchers prominent in the field of identity study are Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker. I selected the work of these two theorists to frame this work with the Self in Relationship interview protocol for both female and male high school principals because females must negotiate and navigate the still prevalent “good ole’ boy system,” or “identity standard.”

According to the literature, the identity control theory bonds well with struggles females have shared and how they often feel they need to act in a certain way to “fit in.” The theory connects the perceived meanings of the self through situations to the meaning held in the identity standard and remains in a cycle until the discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards is eliminated (Burke, 2004). Previous research has supported the notion that a discrepancy exists between what is expected for men and women within the same roles, thereby impacting the identity of the females (Loder, 2005).

The Self in Relationship interview protocol in this structural symbolic interaction connects to the ways in which women are facing the social structure of a male-dominated position, such as the high school principalship. It also connects how the self affects social behaviors as women find they may need to adjust their behaviors in certain situations to be able to accomplish their goals (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The connection this framework brought to the Self in Relationship interview protocol allowed for the participants to relate how they perceived they must act to how that feeling impacted their personal and professional relationships.

Methodology

Through the opportunity to use the Self in Relationship interview technique I sought to gain an in-depth view of the values and beliefs embedded in the participants' personal and professional relationships. The constructivist viewpoint, as described by Merriam (2009), considers learning to be an active process that uses input from which it must construct meaning. This process closely aligns to how a person uses input in the identity control theory to find a common ground without discrepancy. Until researchers begin to make sense of the data being collected and organize the data to support changing the embedded practices and mindsets of many educators, a gap between qualified female and male leaders' being allowed access to the top coveted position of high school principal will remain.

Data analysis methods. After completion of all the interviews, I analyzed the data, using a multifaceted approach. According to Maxwell, coding data is “the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). Merriam wrote, “assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories” (Merriam, 2009, p. 179) in the initial analysis process.

I reread the interview transcripts and reviewed all notes, journal entries, and memos. The coding journal and log also were reviewed during this process. The open-ended question responses were analyzed first and organized by complementary and/or emergent themes. I first analyzed responses to the open-ended questions to find any themes that might have arisen with regard to consistent barriers encountered or paths taken by the participants en route to the principalship. I then coded the data according to three primary, researcher-established, a priori codes derived directly from the identity

control theory, the theoretical framework for the study: (a) social expectations (role identity), (b) social structures, and (c) perceptions. The remaining coding was inductive, seeking to recognize frequency of repetitions and responses to create links between the research questions and the interview findings.

Delimitations

I limited my selection based upon principals who had earned a master's, EdD, or administrative certification through The George Washington University. I did include the option of snowballing, obtaining three interviews from this method. All of the interviews were conducted in the State of Virginia, and all participants were principals of traditional 9-12 public high schools. Therefore, the findings were limited to a small percentage of the overall number of high school principals across the State of Virginia.

Limitations

Certain limitations exist for this study due to the selection criteria of high school principals. The decision to select high school principals from two large districts in Virginia limited the input from rural and urban high school principals. The research findings are specific to the Tidewater and Northern Virginia regions of Virginia.

The structured interview also may be a limitation, not allowing for participants to fully share other factors that could contribute to the overall results. The Self in Relationship survey instrument is very prescriptive, asking the participant to detail specific relationships using five key terms of their selection.

Finally, my own bias may have served as a limitation to the study, as my past experience as a female moving through the system could influence the findings. Although little could be done to eliminate these limitations, I continuously focused on the

responses of the participants in an effort to minimize the impact of my own experiences and relationships during the data collection process. I also kept a reflective journal to assist me in “stepping back” to allow for an unbiased view.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions are presented:

Identity control theory (ICT). An aspect of role theory that focuses on how human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable based upon their respective social identities and the situation at hand (Biddle, 1986)

ISLLC. Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium

ELCC. Educational Leadership Constituent Council

Large high school. A school housing Grades 9-12 and having more than 1,500 students within that grade configuration

Relationship. A connection that is developed while a male or female is serving in the capacity of the high school principalship

Principal. The instructional leader of a high school including Grades 9-12, who has the responsibility to oversee all instructional and noninstructional decisions

SIR survey. Self in Relationship survey

Summary of the Chapter

In a field in which professionals are asked to teach children to dream and to instill the belief of education’s being the ultimate equalizer, females continue to be on an unequal plane with males at the top leadership levels, specifically the high school principalship. I sought to hear both female and male high school principals’ voices, specifically related to how they fostered and built relationships. With the support of the

theoretical underpinnings of the identity control theory (Burke, 2004), I analyzed the interview data to answer three research questions regarding the development of relationships, differences that may exist, and how those differences may or may not have implications related to the gender gap in the high school principalship.

To fully explain the current status of the situation and where the gaps existed in the literature, the next chapter leads one from the historical perspectives of the principalship through changing roles, leadership perceptions, and barriers with which women continue to struggle in attempting to attain the high school principalship.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature regarding the principalship, changing roles of the principalship, relationships, career paths, crises in the principalship, and perceptions regarding gender and power. A multitude of studies can be located regarding the woman's voice from the superintendency position and the principalship but few studies that hear both female and male voices within the same study. This gap in studies hearing both male and female voices, using the same instrument in the same study with high school principals in conjunction with previous studies employing the Self in Relationship interview protocol, was the foundation for this study.

Chapter 3 expands the concepts of methodology and design of the study, including the epistemology, methods of data collection, and information about validity. The chapter includes an overview of the constructivist view and its connection to the identity control theory from the perspectives of Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The chapter also details the participant selection process, the interview protocol, and the instrumentation that were used in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Females must continue to fight norms, preconceived notions, and barriers if American K-12 public school systems are to see an increased number of female high school principals. The purpose of this study was to hear the voices of both female and male high school principals, specifically related to the ways in which they fostered and built relationships with five distinct affiliations (colleagues, family, superintendent, confidant or significant other, and self). It is critical that the numbers of females increase as the shortage in the principalship continues to grow (Myung et al., 2011).

The purpose of this literature review was to analyze a variety of studies dealing with female high school principals and superintendents and the continued fight against gender discrimination. The initial search focused on the history of the principalship and the gender differences already studied in business and school leadership with regard to leadership and power. The search then moved into roles of the principalship, specific barriers females encounter, career path choices, and the role conflict that many women continue to face. Following the review of a multitude of such studies, it became clear that role conflict was often a common theme among the research studies. To understand how role conflict impacted the day-to-day progress for women, I changed the key search terms to *roles*, *identity*, and *control*. Through these key terms I located the identity control theory, which served as the framework through which the data were collected and analyzed.

The literature review provided a substantial body of research confirming the struggles women face as well as the continued prevalence of biased gender perceptions.

Little was noted in the research about the ways in which males and females foster relationships and the possible impact of such methods upon their attainment of positions. The lack of relevant studies involving both males and females also was noted.

For the purpose of this study, the literature review incorporated research conducted between 1987 and 2014. Sources reviewed to obtain research studies included Google Scholar, Education Research Information Clearinghouse (ERIC) database, Proquest, Academic Search Premier, and Lexis Nexis Academic. Key words included in numerous search combinations crucial to the subject included the following:

superintendent, principal, women, perspectives, leaders, perceptions, females, barriers, family, motivation, high schools, identity, relationships, secondary education, and challenges.

The goal of this research was to add to the body of literature available regarding the high school principal gender gap in K-12 public school systems in the United States. The specific focus of this study was on the ways in which relationships might provide insight regarding how the gender gap in the high school principalship can be narrowed. The full literature review examines the history of the principalship up to the current role, including studies addressing the shortage of principals, roles of the principals, gender-related perceptions in leadership, and career paths of the principalship. The literature review concludes with discussion about the studies on role conflict as well as the theoretical framework to support this research.

The Principalship

History. Early research regarding the historical perspective of the principalship and how it has evolved regarding expectations, gender biases, and accountability

expectations was limited. Early in the literature review the following statement was found: “The principalship is missing from both the political history of school administration and the social history of schools. It’s as if the principal did not exist at all” (Rousmaniere, 2007, p. 4).

The research that was reviewed focused primarily on district-level leadership, and Rousmaniere (2007) suggested three reasons this might be the case. First, nonhistorians who tended to focus more on the advice the researchers provided rather than the historical aspect have written the majority of historical accounts of schools. Second, the research appeared to combine in the same category all administrative positions including principals and superintendents. Interestingly, the third reason was that historians generally have found no interest in studying the principal, as many of them have little recollection of the person, and if they do, the recollection is often of a disciplinary nature (Kafka, 2009). Rousmaniere then offered a fourth reason: that the historians have focused their work mainly on the political and institutional history of schools or the social history, thereby allowing the history of principal leadership to fall between the cracks.

The one thing that appears consistent throughout the history of the principalship is that “the role has always been complex and demanding” (Kafka, 2009, p. 4). Even in the absence of a strong historical perspective, the influence exerted by a principal was evident as far back as the mid-1800s. In 1884, the Chicago district superintendent described the principal as “the prime factor in the success of an individual school,” adding that “no amount of itinerant supervision can supply his place” (as cited in Pierce, 1935, p. 39). The Chicago superintendent willingly acknowledged the importance of the

principal; in 1930, almost 40 years later, the St. Louis superintendent made the following statement:

The principal is regarded as the executive head of his school. He stands in the line of authority and every element of local school control is exercised through him. Corollary to this fact the principal is the responsible agent in the school for all phases of management and instruction. It is the business of the principal to secure the best possible educational results and to do this with the utmost efficiency. (as cited in Pierce, 1935, p. 56)

These two statements made over 100 years ago continue to be relevant with current research regarding the critical role of the principal in the success of children: “Our results indicate that highly effective principals raise the achievement of a typical student in their schools by between two and seven months of learning in a single school year; ineffective principals lower achievement by the same amount” (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013, p. 5).

Initially, schools had single teachers or masters that served in a leadership type of capacity, who were also accountable for answering to the local community. As is the case today, these educators answered to the community through the local school boards, who were either elected or appointed, even in the late 1700s (Kafka, 2009). During the early 1800s, as schools grew into larger communities and grade-level classes became more common, the position of principal teacher was established. A man usually held the position, and responsibilities included both clerical and administrative duties, such as class assignment, discipline, attendance, and building maintenance (Kafka, 2009). As the late 1800s approached, the principal teacher lost his teaching duties and his role evolved into that of manager, administrator, supervisor, instructional leader, and political figure (Kafka, 2009).

As long as the position has existed, the principal has had power over the teachers and the community at large. During the mid-1800s, some principals already had gained formal institutional power, and by the end of the 19th century in most large cities the principalship was considered a powerful position (Kafka, 2009). Over time the prestige of the principalship grew and the position became more professionalized. In 1916 and 1921, respectively, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) were established. At the beginning of the 21st century, researchers wrote, “Evidence suggests that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school leadership strongly affects student learning” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LA Pointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 3).

History of Female Leaders in Education

In 1950, Ella Flagg Young prophesied that women were “destined to rule the schools of every city” (Hansot & Tyack, 1981, p. 1). Despite this prophecy, current statistics have continued to support the fact that women remain fundamentally underrepresented in the American superintendency (Grogan, 1999). With the passage of Title IX and the Education Amendments of 1972, many educators believed Young’s prophecy might finally be realized (Mertz, 2006).

From the first known use of the word *schoolmarm* in 1831, referring to a woman teaching school in a small town or country, to 183 years later, in 2014, with women serving as state superintendents, superintendents, and high school principals, women have been leaders in education. Nevertheless, even with this notable progress, a gender gap still exists in educational leadership (Loder, 2005). Women have strived and will

continue to strive for equity. Notable women, such as Maria Montessori, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Eleanor Roosevelt, shaped the early educational landscape. When Montessori graduated from the University of Rome in 1896, she became the first female doctor in Italy, and in 1907 she opened her first Montessori school to support all children's learning. Bethune knew that education was the equalizer between race and gender and in 1904 singlehandedly opened the Daytona Normal and Industrial Institute for Negro Girls. Her passion for education also propelled her to found the National Council of Negro Women in 1935, through which she was able to advise the White House and actually to counsel Franklin D. Roosevelt during the New Deal negotiations. In 1927 Eleanor Roosevelt took over the operations of the Todhunter School for Girls in New York. After her husband's death, she campaigned for a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These women led the trail that eventually allowed females such as Jo Lynne DeMary and Patricia Wright to become Virginia State Superintendents. Despite all of these accomplishments, a gender gap still exists.

Women have made progress over the years; yet, representation of female voices at the levels of Secretary of Education, state superintendent, superintendent, and high school principal is still substantially below male representation (Dowell & Larwin, 2013).

Women are represented in the various educational roles but not at the same level as their male counterparts. Women continue to have fewer opportunities and still hit the glass ceiling (Kowalski et al., 2011). The literature review continues to address the topic of women in the field of education through a review of the following factors: (a) the changing roles of the principal, (b) gender-related perceptions in leadership and power, and (c) career paths. A focus is woven throughout the literature review regarding how

the building of relationships, or the lack thereof, relates to the current study about the ways in which females and males build relationships within the position of high school principal.

Changing Role of the Principal

Accountability. Throughout the 20th century the roles of the principal have changed:

During the economic depression, principals were expected to be thrifty stewards of limited resources; in time of war, they were expected to mobilize the next generation to defend democracy; amid fears of declining achievement, they were expected to be instructional leaders. (Lashway, 2006, p. 27)

The principal of the 21st century is more like a CEO that can be replaced if the profit margins do not meet expectations, or in the case of education, test scores do not meet the state standards for proficiency. Focus, priority, and turnaround are all terms with which principals are familiar, regardless of the state (Ylimaki, Brunderman, Bennett, & Dugan, 2014). If proficiency standards are not met, principals know they have limited time to either improve student achievement or face sanctions and reconstitution of their schools.

As a current principal of a Title I school of more than 900 students, I was able to relate closely to the accountability stress experienced every day: “Principals’ abilities are central to the task of building schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3).

To meet the new accountability demands, principals are expected to have a much larger skill set than was required just 30 years ago. Research, along with principal evaluations and the ISLLC and ELCC standards, reflects the great number of skills principals must master to be effective leaders:

Principals are expected to be educational visionaries, instructional and curriculum leaders, assessment experts, disciplinarians, community builders, public relations and communications experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, as well as guardians of various legal, contractual, and policy mandates and initiatives. (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3)

Supporting and developing effective teachers is one key pathway principals use to influence student achievement. A second involves the implementation of effective organizational processes (Davis et al., 2005). Leithwood et al. (2004) suggested that these opportunities or pathways are supported by three sets of core leadership practices—developing people, setting directions for the organization, and redesigning the organization—all of which support the two key pathways.

Because of the need for leaders to successfully develop individuals within their schools and analyze the organizational structure to maximize efficiency, researchers have turned their attention to the person who takes on the role of principal:

Evidence suggests that principals' attitudes and behaviors play a large role in shaping how schools create a context in which students can effectively learn. There is a growing consensus regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions commonly found among effective principals. (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 20)

Discussion of attitudes, behaviors, and dispositions caused me to begin to question whether research connections between gender and principal leadership existed. Are females less likely than males to display the attitudes, behaviors, and dispositions school boards are seeking for the high school level of leadership? Upon review of the literature on the history of females in education and educational leadership, questions regarding gender, attitudes, dispositions, and shortages became more apparent.

Relationships

Building relationships and exhibiting interpersonal skills are critical components in school accountability reform. A recent study, published in April 2014, documented the

importance of these skills with regard to school turnaround (Ylimaki et al., 2014). The study, conducted in Arizona, involved 45 schools near or in turnaround status. This number represented 18% of Tier III schools across the state. Schools generally were selected based upon superintendent support of the research study. Rural, urban, and suburban schools were included in the study. The study collected qualitative and quantitative data through surveys using a modified version of the ISSP (International Social Survey Program) survey and semistructured interviews. The interviews were conducted only with participants who had completed all other requirements. The study collected a wealth of data through the survey, but the interview data were of particular interest to me, as Ylimaki and colleagues sought emerging themes based upon lived experiences and used themes to code the results as I did in using the Self in Relationship interview for the current study. The coding of the qualitative data in the study by Ylimaki et al. noted four overarching findings that were linked to the study: (a) increased leadership knowledge with regard to turnaround leadership and the ability to overcome deficit thinking, (b) more culturally responsive leadership and assumption of more collaborative approaches to change, (c) reliance on the use of professional learning communities, and (d) the importance of district support. The second overarching idea was related to the importance of a collaborative approach to change and the creation of a more collaborative hands-on approach instead of a top-down system.

This literature review exemplified how female leaders take the more collaborative approach more often than their male counterparts (Lee et al., 1993). Research has indicated that leadership styles and relationships that principals build impact schools' ability to meet all accountability measures. As principals are tasked with serving various

stakeholder groups, the next study was reviewed because of its connection to the importance of relationships in meeting accountability standards.

To reach the levels of proficiency with which all schools and subgroups are tasked in the 21st century, principals need to work more collaboratively and build stronger relationships. Research supports the idea that schools and school leaders are unable to meet these needs alone: “Rather, strong relationships between parents, communities, and educators are vital to improving student achievement and reforming education” (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 4). This 2013 qualitative study was of interest because one of the conceptual frameworks used was role theory, which I believed was related to the ICT used in the current study. Ishimaru used an aspect of role theory, as espoused by Biddle (1986), which focused on how human beings behave in different or predictable ways based upon their respective social identities and the situation. The study was conducted in a large metropolitan area of California inhabited by predominantly low-income Latino students of Mexican heritage (Ishimaru, 2013). The study included three principals in the Rockland Elementary School District of California (pseudonym) and examined how they collaborated with a variety of groups to lead three new schools. One of the principals was a White female in her late 20s, the second a White male in his mid-30s, and the third a Mexican American woman in her mid-40s.

Ishimaru (2013) used both interviews and observations to collect data and selected participants through the support of PACT, a faith-based, multiethnic community-organizing group. PACT is a member of the national organization, People Improving Communities, which has organized networks and enabled systemic solutions to support poor and disregarded people in their efforts to earn an honorable living, be healthy, and

take part in the benefits of nature. The review of this study focused only on the data from the 11 interviews completed with the three principals. The principal interviews focused on four areas but only two areas closely aligned with the current research; therefore, those two are reviewed in this section: (a) the relationships the principals built with teachers, parents, and the organizing group; and (b) the leadership approach of the principals. In addition, interviews with parents and teachers were conducted, as well as 15 ethnographic observations (Ishimaru, 2013).

One of the findings most closely aligned with the identity control theory concerned a White female who connected to the greatest extent with the role of community builder and organizer. Her collaborative style of supporting the parents as her number one priority met with the most resistance from the district, however, and she eventually withdrew from the district. The White male principal considered his role to be more closely aligned with district expectations, and he eventually moved into a principalship at one of the traditional district schools. This finding suggests that the ways in which individuals respond to role conflict can vary and can be mediated by the individuals. The researcher also suggested that future research be conducted to examine how school leaders manage role conflict (Ishimaru, 2013). Another finding, shared by all three principals, indicated that the more empowered parents become in knowing what and how to ask for what is needed, the more they will support the school, ultimately leading to increased student achievement levels (Ishimaru, 2013). For this to happen, the principal must embrace collaboration and support parental voice. As was observed in the case of the White female principal, the conflict arises when roles differ from district

expectations. The issues of role conflict and collaborative leadership relate to the ICT and leadership research used for the current study.

Ishimaru's (2013) study was recent and connected to the purpose of the current work with a few limitations. The small sample size of three principals limited generalizability. The study also focused on a narrow focus of the principalship instead of a broad view of leadership (Ishimaru, 2013). Two additional limitations included a lack of data from district-level leadership and the possibility of the reform model's impacting the principal data.

As the job of the principal has become diversified, the path females and males take to obtain the position also can be diversified; however, a more streamlined path for males has been documented in the literature compared to the varied paths for females. The career path literature also addressed the shortage of candidates supplying the pipeline or moving from pipeline to position.

Career Paths

In studying the pathway to the superintendency, Katz (2005) discovered that the typical path followed by women to obtain the superintendency was as follows: classroom teacher, principal, central office administrator, and superintendent. Katz's study was conducted in 2000-2001 and produced both quantitative and qualitative data. Surveys were sent to 210 female superintendents in four Midwestern states. Interviews were then conducted with nine women across the four states (Katz, 2005). The study focused on power and the use of power to influence the leader's followers, but career path data also were obtained. This study is examined in a subsequent section with regard to the perceptions of power.

As the high school principalship is a key stepping stone to the superintendency, I was interested in the number of high school female principals in the United States. Researchers reported in 1990 that “American secondary schools are almost entirely headed by male principals, while women make up about half of the teaching force in these schools” (Lee & Smith, 1990, p. 170). According to Pounder and Merrill, in 2001, educational preparation programs reported females as making up more than half of the graduates, potentially creating a large candidate pool. In 2005, Katz reported an increased number of women in graduate programs preparing for school administration. Although females outnumbered male students in school administration programs, Young and McLeod (2001) found that in the United States, only 26 % of secondary school principals were women.

In light of the ongoing shortage of available candidates for leadership positions, higher education institutes, in training administrative leaders, need to allow the prospective leaders to investigate the most effective ways to lead for success (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008). It also becomes the responsibility of all current educational leaders to maximize opportunities for those interested in leadership roles so that all prospective leaders can be fully utilized to continue to diversify the leadership pool in education.

According to Shakeshaft (1987), since 1977 the route to the high school principalship had typically been through the position of athletic director or high school coach. As evidenced in one study presented in this literature review, half of the males in the study had served as high school coaches prior to becoming high school principals. Traditionally, males have followed a more self-directed and earlier path to the high school principalship, yet females, often delaying career advancement choices due to

family responsibilities, have needed more encouragement from others to consider administration and the high school principalship (Eckman, 2004).

In 2000, a researcher wrote, “Today, approximately 75% of elementary classroom teachers are women and nearly 75% of superintendents did not teach at the elementary level prior to working as a central-office administrator or superintendent” (Glass, 2000, p. 29). An international pattern has existed, as evidenced by statistics from New Zealand, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Africa, Central America, and India showing that although at least one half of secondary teachers are women, they are the minority in secondary administrative positions (Coleman, 2001). Research has been conducted regarding career paths to the superintendency, and although there has been no one specific path followed, commonalities have been documented.

One study regarding career paths that was explored for the current research included a research question of significance to this study regarding the lack of female high school principals, leading, in turn to the lack of female superintendents (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). The research question explored the career paths of both female and male superintendents and how they were different. The researchers administered a survey that had been developed by Montz in 2004. The study involved the use of a stratified random sample of both females and males across the following states: Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia.

Through SurveyMonkey the researchers sent survey requests to 200 females and 300 males; 221 surveys were returned. Of those returned, 95 surveys were from females and 126 were from males. Some of the significant findings were related to the review of women’s career paths. A common path to the superintendency was the high school

principalship. At the time of the Dowell and Larwin (2013) research, 9% to 16% of high school principals were female in the areas involved in the study. The researchers also noted that, traditionally, elementary principals were women, yet the elementary principalship was seldom a stepping stone to the superintendency (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). Dowell and Larwin further noted that school boards still often do not perceive women as being able to handle the demands of the high school principalship.

A significantly higher number of women (57.9%) reported being hired from within the district in which they currently worked compared to 42.4% of males' being hired from within their districts (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). The survey results also indicated that women in the study had spent more time in the classroom teaching than had the male respondents: an average of 11.77 classroom years for females and 8.67 years for males (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). The study concluded, as had other studies, that the high school principalship remained the most direct path to the superintendency. Being a male in the high school also allowed for additional leadership responsibilities, such as those provided through coaching opportunities (Dowell & Larwin, 2013).

The decision to limit the survey to Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia can be considered a limitation to the study, along with the fact that the majority of responses came from rural (55.2%) and suburban (40.3%) areas. The other concerning factor regarding the response data was that 97% of the participants were White (Dowell & Larwin, 2013).

The importance of additional classroom time and the support of being hired from within a current district are significant to note in Dowell and Larwin's (2013) study. With the changes in job demands of the principal, and instructional leader's being one of

the most critical roles a principal now plays, having more classroom experience can be an advantage for the female candidate. Further, based upon the findings of this study, a woman's having a career path within a district offering mentoring support as well as the ability to prove herself to the current board might lead to specific career plan decisions (Dowell & Larwin, 2013).

In 1983, researchers wrote, "Career-oriented individuals eventually pursue (although they may change from one mode to another during times of transition) one of five career directions: getting ahead, getting secure, getting free, getting high, getting balanced" (Derr & Chilton, 1983, p. 12). Derr and Chilton's study included the use of structured interviews with 16 high school principals (2 females and 14 males) to gain insight into the career directionality of high school principals. Due to the age of the study and the small, limited geographical region (within the Salt Lake City region of Utah), it provided no foundational research but did reveal some of the same findings as current research and reinforced how the expectations of the principalship have changed over time. The researchers also noted a limitation that "the sample [was] mostly white, mostly LDS or Mormon (the dominant religion in Utah), mostly married, and mostly middle age" (Derr & Chilton, 1983, p. 13).

This small exploratory research was included in this review because of one of the interesting findings: The two females were the only participants that showed up in the *getting balanced* category. According to Derr and Chilton (1983), a participant in that category viewed her family as something in which she played a role as a participant, not as just a symbol of security and refuge. An additional instrument was used to gain knowledge about the participants' self-perceived career assets; the participants reported

that strength and support derived from current relationships was paramount and was tied for second place with family of origin's love, support, and values (Derr & Chilton, 1983). The authors reported, "It appears that behind these administrators, at least those with small children, were supportive spouses who maintained the home front and picked up the pieces" (Derr & Chilton, 1983, p. 15). The findings from this small study, conducted more than 30 years ago, are consistent with the gender bias and stereotyping issues women continue to face.

A study conducted by Myung et al. (2011) in the Miami-Dade County Public Schools during the 2007-2008 school year focused on how to support the pipeline of educational leadership. With more than 380,000 students, the system was the largest in Florida and the fourth largest in the United States. The study consisted of four questions dealing with "tapping." The data collected through a survey were analyzed through descriptive analysis and logistic regression; the article included information about how validity issues were managed. Tapping, or specifically encouraging another to seek a leadership position, is an effective way to supply the pipeline. The Miami-Dade study asked principals, assistant principals, and teachers if they had been tapped to pursue a leadership role or the next level of leadership. As the study received responses from 8,197 teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience, 583 assistant principals, and 312 principals, the sample size was significant. The percentages of principals and assistant principals that reported being tapped were much larger than the percentage of teachers. Principals reported being tapped at a rate of 72% and assistant principals at a rate of 52% in contrast to only 9% of teachers' reporting being tapped specifically by an administrator (Myung et al., 2011). The researchers also reported that former principals were the most

prevailing group that tapped the principals in this study. Interestingly, the study indicated that White principals tapped teachers substantially more often than did Black or Hispanic principals (Myung et al., 2011). The researchers also noted that having a race match with the principal positively influenced the teacher's chance of being tapped.

This Miami-Dade County research study also referenced a term not previously addressed in the current literature review. The term *glass escalator* was used to refer to a male's being promoted quickly up the ranks in a female-dominated field (Williams, 1992). This concept can be seen in the current literature regarding the lack of female high school principals. The other notable finding in the study was that both male and female principals were more likely to tap male teachers than female educators that were similarly qualified (Myung et al., 2011). The only noted limitation was the use of one school district and one geographical location.

Crisis in the Principalship

In recent years, a number of reports have described the principalship as being in a state of crisis, fundamentally triggered by two troubling factors (Davis et al., 2005). One factor impacting the crisis is the ability of school divisions to attract and retain highly qualified candidates for leadership roles (Knapp, Copland, & Talbert, 2003). The second factor is that principals or those seeking the position often are not properly prepared or adequately supported to be able to sustain equally the academic needs of the school and the managerial demands of the job (Levine, 2005; Young, 2002).

According to Levine, "few programs provide a coherent and rigorous curriculum specifically designed to give principals and superintendents the preparation they need" (Levine, 2005, p. 3). Levine's report discussed the concern that educational

administration students appeared to lack the academic rigor and motivation often seen in other curricular areas, indicating that more students appeared to want to gain the additional credits only for the purpose of increased salary rather than rigorous pursuit of a career in administration.

The author of a recent research study reported,

The exclusion of women from the workforce in the U.S. dates to the beginning of the industrial era in the early nineteenth century. For the last 150 years, women were openly discriminated against by employers, who either refused to hire them under any circumstances or who rejected them if they were married or had children. (Pirouznia, 2013, p. 1)

Unfortunately, in current research, women are still reporting the role confusion and conflicting demands involved with having family responsibilities. Although not openly denied a position for having a family, women have reported the situation as a barrier still existing. According to a review of research conducted by Ingersoll and Merrill in 2010, the teaching profession would likely be more than 80% female by the year 2012; the researchers were unable to predict numbers for the 2012-2013 school year. The researchers considered this statistic to be a concern in that it might reveal that women's work is still not as valued as men's work, thus indicating negative implications for the profession overall. Nevertheless, the National Center for Education Statistics reported in 2007, "Between 1993-94 and 2003-04, the percentage of public school principals who were female increased from 41% to 56 % in elementary schools and from 14 to 26 % in secondary schools" (USDOE, 2007, p. 71).

During the past century, being an effective manager was "good enough" according to a task force formed by the Institute for Educational Leadership. In 2000 the task force conducted informal surveys regarding the changing job demands and shortages

of qualified candidates for the principalship. The task force report was not strongly supported by research and was not presented in a research format. The task force was consistent in citing race and gender gaps in the principalship, including the concentration of females at the elementary level and the number of minority principals in urban rather than rural or suburban settings (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). The main focus of the task force report centered on the changing demands of the job rather than gender or relationships (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

A more recent study found that nearly 60% of college graduates were female, yet they held only 16% of corporate executive positions and only 20% of nonprofit organizational leadership positions (Litmanovitz, 2011). Education continued to have one of the largest gender gaps at the executive level of leadership. Litmanovitz noted that as the positional level of power increased, the percentage of females decreased. For example, women represented 76% of teachers yet accounted for only 50% of school principals. In addition, “just twelve out of the fifty largest school districts [had] women superintendents” (Litmanovitz, 2011, p. 1), and “there [were] a mere seventeen women state superintendents or commissioners of education across the country” (Litmanovitz, 2011, p. 1). As of 2014, there had been only two female U.S. Secretaries of Education. These statistics contribute to the trend showing that women have remained mainly in the teaching ranks, especially at the secondary level.

Litmanovitz’s (2011) work cited five potential causes of the gender gap in education, three of which have been commonly noted in a number of research findings: lack of role models, leadership stereotypes, and work-life balance. Litmanovitz’s work was of interest due to the fact that two of the other possible explanations she noted had

not shown up in the previous literature reviewed for this research study: the lack of a pipeline for teachers and males' and females' different reasons for entering education (Litmanovitz, 2011). The researcher perceived these two possible explanations as being related to how women themselves are sometimes impacting the limitations faced in the field.

The lack of a pipeline was noted in an interview of Wendy Kopp, the founder and CEO of Teach for America. She stated,

Our current education hiring system does not have a “leadership pipeline approach to leadership development.” That is, we do not systematically identify and train exceptional teachers to become principals or, for that matter, identify and train exceptional principals to become district officials. (as cited in Litmanovitz, 2011, p. 2)

The second example noted by Litmanovitz that had not been apparent in other research was the notion that women often enter education for reasons different from the reasons that men enter the field. Lillian Lowery, The Delaware Secretary of Education pointed out that sometimes women enter the field due to their love of working with children; therefore, the leadership realm is never considered or desired by them (Litmanovitz, 2011).

Litmanovitz (2011) also reported the factors that the interviewed women leaders acknowledged as reasons they were able to “make it” in a male-dominated world: mentorship, support at home, role models, and the personal will of persistence (Litmanovitz, 2011). Litmanovitz’s article provided suggestions from the interviewed women regarding what should be done to help bridge the gender gap in education.

The interviewed women cited the following strategies as ways to have the current generation of women educators change things for young, promising, female teachers:

formal mentorship programs, leadership training opportunities, complimentary day care or job-share programs, and holding the younger females to a high standard.

Included in the article were responses from women in the following positions: State Secretary of Education, State Superintendent, and Secretary of Education. This was the first study in which the researcher saw responses from this level of leadership.

According to Wrushen and Whitney (2008), Miami-Dade County women's early experiences in education often influenced their career path decisions. The early experiences were often varied but all resulted in the women's determining that the field of education was where they needed to be (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008). One woman from the study spoke of her early negative experiences in school and how the experiences pushed her to want to make school something children could appreciate and enjoy. Another participant stated that as one of six children she assumed family responsibilities at an early age and noted that education beyond a bachelor's degree was not expected for women; yet, the third participant explained that the historical setting of the era in which she grew up helped her, as she would need to compete in a world still full of prejudice (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008).

Although all eight of the women in the study reported both positive and negative background experiences, one theme that was prevalent, especially among the minority women and those having negative school experiences, was the desire to work in high-risk or high-need school environments (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008). Just as their experiences shaped the views these women held, gender-related perceptions regarding leadership and power were noted in the current literature.

Gender, Perceptions, and Power

Mertz and McNeely wrote, “From its inception, school administration has been male dominated and male defined (largely White male); that is, explained, conceptualized, and seen through the eyes of males” (Mertz & McNeely, 1998, p. 196). The researchers stated that during the previous 20 years, females had shown statistically significant advancement in two positions that had been the most dominated by White males and the most resistant to accepting females: the high school principalship and the superintendency (Mertz & McNeely, 1998). As gains in the numbers of female leaders began to become evident, the debate was fueled regarding differences or lack thereof between male and female leadership styles. Research can be noted on both sides of the argument. Shakeshaft (1987) and Bell and Chase (1993) argued that males and females lead differently, whereas researchers such as Eagly and Johnson (1990), Astin and Leland (1991), and Eagly et al. (1992) asserted that there is no significant difference in the way males and females lead. Studies referencing styles of leadership, prevalent in the literature, were relevant to the relationship building being studied in the current research.

Ar dovini, Trautman, Brown, and Irby (2010) evaluated male and female leaders at various management levels. They used the lens of synergistic leadership theory to study feminine inclusion. Their research included the following questions: (a) “In what ways do male and female leaders perceive the four factors of the Synergistic Leadership Theory to be interactive?” and (b) “How do female leaders at different levels of management perceive the interaction of the four factors of Synergistic Leadership Theory?” (Ar dovini et al., 2010, p. 28). The four factors are as follows:

- Female leaders are included in its development;

- Female leaders may be impacted by external forces, organizational structures, and beliefs, attitudes and values in ways male leaders are not, and visa versa;
- Female leadership behaviors may interact with the factors in ways unlike the leadership behaviors of males; and
- Leaders at various positions or levels (i.e., teacher leaders to superintendents) may be impacted by the factors of the model in different ways. (Ardovini et al., 2010, pp. 27-28)

Through a review of open-ended questions and telephone interviews, the researchers found that “females are acknowledged as ‘contributors’ to leadership theory and ‘knowers or agents’ of knowledge” (Ardovini et al., 2010, p. 48). For this study, the researchers randomly selected 243 educational leaders; from the original 243 participants selected, 34 were selected to address the qualitative research questions noted above.

Another recent qualitative study (Sperandio, 2009) collected data from female participants in two cohorts of aspiring urban principals. The study, conducted in a major city on the east coast of the United States, followed the participants for one year, throughout coursework, mentoring, and an internship experience (Sperandio, 2009). The first cohort comprised 11 aspiring leaders, including 8 women, and the second cohort consisted of 10 participants, 7 of whom were women. The selection process differed for each cohort. Cohort 1 consisted of participants that were asked to participate after being recommended by their principals, and Cohort 2 participants applied to be part of the study (Sperandio, 2009).

Semistructured interviews were conducted with all the female participants in both cohorts during the final month of each of their cohort experiences. I found the interview data to be the most informative. Examination of the data commonalities and differences regarding the women’s experiences resulted in the following categories, each of which included comments from at least 5 of the 15 women participants:

- Critical reflections on learning to lead – Are we learning to lead the traditional way?
- Ethnic and gender stereotyping in school leadership – How am I seen as a leader?
- Leading in ethnically diverse situations – How do I accommodate/relate to multi-ethnic school communities?
- Best fit first leadership position choices – Where can I best employ my experience and understanding?
- Leading for social justice – How do I lead to improve the school experience for all students? (Sperandio, 2009, p. 77)

When the women participants were asked whether they believed school administration was still male dominated, to the extent that the structures and policies of the school district, the acceptable leadership styles, and established peer networking amongst administrators in the school district reflected several generations of male leadership, all of the women in Cohort 2 agreed that this was so. One White female had “no doubts” (Sperandio, 2009, p. 78).

Examples cited were very similar to statements made by women in other studies. One female stated,

It’s really male dominated, the number of times I’ve sat in on administrative meetings and said something and the male principal says, “Mmm”; then a male administrator says the same thing and the principal says, “That’s a really good idea” and I think, “Hey, wait a minute, that was my idea!” (as cited in Sperandio, 2009, p. 78)

One comment indicated that the speaker thought the gender gap was beginning to close: “I think the day of the White male dominating high schools is shifting; they are looking pretty grey now” (as cited in Sperandio, 2009, p. 78).

Comments also included statements from women who thought their male superiors were “looking after” them and would protect them from hostile situations (Sperandio, 2009). Although, overall, the females did not believe the mentor’s gender had a lasting impact upon their experiences throughout the internship, the previous

statements confirm areas of concern that have been documented for well over 20 years. Hearing these types of comments is very concerning in that they compare closely to statements made as far back as the early 1900s, when it was opined that holding the principalship would “worry” a female too much.

Mentorships hold promise for supporting more women through the pipeline into the high school principalship. Once in the position, females also must consider how the perceptions of others might impact their ability to lead.

Lee and colleagues wrote, “A strong pattern of results shows that while female teachers feel empowered when working in schools headed by female principals, male teachers consider themselves less powerful in those circumstances” (Lee et al., 1993, p. 172). This quote was extracted from a study involving nearly 9,000 teachers representing more than 300 public, Catholic, and private secondary schools. The study was part of a larger body of work called the *Administrator and Teachers Survey of the High School and Beyond*. The major focus of the research was to investigate how the genders of both teacher and principal interact to impact teachers’ views of their experiences with power within the school. Perceptions of leadership and power in the educational setting can provide insight into the underrepresentation of women in the highest leadership positions in the field. When females are represented, they continue to have experiences such as those described in a 2004 study by Eckman: The female was expected to take minutes, as she was the only female in the meeting; further, the conversation would change when she entered the room (Eckman, 2004).

In the 1950s, organizations and schools found that the workers preferred to work for males instead of females (Kanter, 1977). Kanter discussed this finding, explaining

that people preferred “powerful” leaders, that is, males. In 1981, Wheatley replicated Kanter’s study within a school setting and also found that people wanted leaders who were perceived to be more powerful, which males were, due to other underlying issues (Wheatley, 1981).

In 2012, Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Keiser noted that the research literature on managerial gender could be complex and conflicting in the results produced. Their literature review described a fair amount of literature supporting the notion of workers’ being more satisfied with male supervisors yet a similar amount suggesting less turnover in organizations led by females (Grissom et al., 2012). They stated, “Nonetheless, this literature suggests that both male and female employees will be more satisfied and less likely to turn over when their supervisor adopts a feminine style or is female” (Grissom et al., 2012, p. 652).

One interesting finding in the results of the study conducted by Grissom et al. (2012) was that female teachers’ outcomes were reported to be very similar regardless of the gender of the principal; however, the male teachers’ satisfaction was lower in schools with female principals. The researchers suggested that there was something unique about the male teacher–female principal dyad that led to higher turnover. Nevertheless, the study failed to differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover and used a single-item measure of satisfaction.

Giese, Slate, Brown, and Carmen (2009) investigated the leadership practices of female high school principals. Of the 1,176 high school principals in the State of Texas at the time of the study, only 222 or 19% were female. These individuals were contacted for participation, and 56 completed surveys, thereby generating a return rate of 25.2%.

Of the participants who responded, 78.6% were White women and 5.4% were African American women (Giese et al., 2009). The research questions were based upon the work of Gary Yukl (1994) and his division of managerial practices; they focused on relationship building, decision-making practices, information sought, influence on people's practices, and individual traits that had led to each principal's success (Giese et al., 2009). Yukl divided managerial practices into four categories: making decisions, influencing people, building relationships, and giving-seeking information. Yukl's 14 managerial practices among high school principals were used in conjunction with Lopez's personal attributes work (Lopez, 1994) to develop the 14-question survey for the study by Giese and colleagues.

Based upon the survey results, supporting employees, developing employees' skills, and having the ability to manage conflict were among the respondents' top priorities as high school principals (Giese et al., 2009). The principals also rated sharing decision making, providing feedback, monitoring work, and clarifying roles and objectives as critical components of the job (Giese et al., 2009). Moreover, the participants noted that motivating and inspiring as well as recognizing employees were key to their success as female high school principals (Giese et al., 2009). Aggressiveness and tolerance for ambiguity were both noted as being less relevant to their success in the principalship.

In a similar study, Wrushen and Whitney (2008) conducted a qualitative investigation of eight women secondary principals across three eastern areas of the United States. Five themes emerged from the interviews: personal backgrounds and early influences, personal and professional balance, gender and leadership, ethnicity and

leadership, and power (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008). When specifically asked about gender and leadership, none of the women described leadership in traditional terms; they all used terms such as *compassionate*, *emotional*, and *shared* to describe their leadership. The participants indicated that leading with compassion allowed them to be more effective leaders (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008).

As a recurring theme throughout this and other studies, women reported not being heard the first time and having to repeat things multiple times before being validated.

One woman stated it this way:

I think what I sense and learn is that I can say something again and again but people don't hear me until the 11th or 12th time. I feel often frustrated by how many times I have to say something, do something, or show something for people. (Wrushen & Whitney 2008, p. 13)

Other participants shared similar feelings in comments such as “Men can say it and it is done” and “Sometimes you get that questioning look or questioning tone” (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 13). According to another researcher, women leaders “tend to demonstrate a strong sense of efficacy, dedicate themselves to the care of children, practice survival skills, use collaboration that is more relational and consensus building, and believe in God” (Alston, 2005, pp. 681-682). This quote appears to correlate with the finding in the Wrushen and Whitney study that the women were not comfortable in describing themselves as powerful. The women viewed the position as having inherent power but did not see themselves as powerful; the women were much more comfortable with words such as *accountable* when describing the demands of leadership. During discussion, one participant noted that she needed to use her power to advocate for her teachers and her school (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008).

In 2004, a study was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies to investigate the understandings of both female and male high school principals in Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The first phase of the study, the quantitative phase, measured role conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction in both male and female principals (Eckman, 2004). During this phase basic demographic information also was collected, such as age, ethnicity, marital status, presence of children at home, career paths, and aspirations. The Role Conflict Questionnaire (Nevill & Damico, 1974), the Role Commitment Questionnaire (Napholz, 1995), and the Job Satisfaction Survey (Mendenhall, 1977; Schneider, 1984) were all used in the first phase of the study. Phase two of the study involved the use of a structured interview guide to delve more deeply into the data reported from the quantitative phase.

Of the 564 principals who were surveyed, 60% responded, providing a strong base from which to select a representative cross-section sample of principals for the interview portion of the study. Eight women and eight men were purposefully selected to participate in the structured interviews. The interviews were designed to help the principals describe their careers and aspirations and to expand on their perspectives about role conflict, role commitment, job satisfaction, and leadership styles (Eckman, 2004).

Two limitations of the sample were the fact that all but one of the participants were White, and in the quantitative sample only 67.9% of the women principals but 92.6% of the male principals were married (Eckman, 2004), thus validating the following statement from another study: “When I was teaching and had different principal mentors and so forth, they were all divorced women!” Wrushen and Whitney (2008, p. 11). The researcher noted in the family structure portion of the interviews that the female

principals' comments implied that they delayed careers due to their young children, whereas the males actually viewed their young children as a catalyst to pursue an administrative position (Eckman, 2004).

While reviewing the interview transcripts for experience, Eckman (2004) noted that half of the males had been high school coaches, whereas none of the females had any coaching experience. Also, at the time of the interviews, two of the females had completed their PhD degrees, but none of the males had completed such a degree. It is also important to note that the average time spent in the classroom was 10.9 years for the females and 7.8 years for the males (Eckman, 2004). With regard to career paths, all of the male principals had planned to enter administrative roles to increase their salaries, whereas none of the females had planned on becoming high school principals. Only two of the women mentioned having other female role models, whereas all of the males described someone in whose footsteps they followed prior to securing an administration position (Eckman, 2004).

When aspirations were discussed in the interview, five of the eight males expressed interest in becoming a superintendent, but only two females included the superintendency in their career path goals (Eckman, 2004). The study also indicated through the male responses that the "good old boys" network was alive and well. Six of the eight male principals interviewed described the way the good old boys' club had helped them become high school principals (Eckman, 2004). The males referenced how "phone calls" and "best friends" as well as connections with superintendents aided their ability to be selected for the position of high school principal. On the other hand, none of the females had received phone calls about opportunities becoming available, and four

females described their interviews for high school principals as “token” interviews. One of the male principals stated, “I mean, it’s very difficult for females to get into administration because they, I mean, all the good ole’ boys didn’t want to let the females in because they were afraid they couldn’t handle the discipline” (as cited in Eckman, 2004, p. 197). The females also described practices still occurring such as their being expected to take minutes when all the other attendees were males and their noticing how conversations changed when they entered the room (Eckman, 2004).

The researcher noted that in the area of mentoring there were no major discrepancies with regard to how the males and females viewed their role of either being mentored or providing mentoring for novice administrators (Eckman, 2004). Balancing role commitments and role conflicts generated the traditionally expected responses. The male principals commented on the fact that four of them had stay-at-home wives who held the main caregiver role, allowing them to be freed from the balancing act demands. The male principals also noted that their wives and children were very well known among the staff and students of the school and that family and school were merged. The majority of the females spoke more about trying to balance the demands of home and the job. They did not view the option of merging the two as a way to balance the stresses of the job (Eckman, 2004).

Although the mentoring roles were similar, the study confirmed, as other studies had, the unique differences between males and females when discussing and describing leadership styles. Five of the eight males used terms related to coaching and power whereas females described leadership in terms of listening, shared decision making, and

relationships (Eckman, 2004). The males in the study made comments such as the following:

It's great being in charge. I love being able to make all of these decisions.... I think it's more about teaming. I grew up in that laboratory, about the importance of team and the importance of recognizing your role for that team and recognizing who were the leaders of the team and then recognizing that within that team you had the coaches. The hierarchy is identical in education. (Eckman, 2004, p. 202)

In contrast, the females in the study made statements such as the following:

I rely more on relationships than the men I've worked for. I spend a lot more time listening than I do pontificating, and I think that's a female characteristic. I use a lot more feeling words and terms and strategies.... I have a real relationship with the majority of my staff. It's that nurturing, empathetic side. (Eckman, 2004, p. 203)

Eckman's (2004) study confirmed the findings of an earlier study by Mertz and McNeely (1998). Those researchers found that "males and females do the 'what' and the 'how' of the high school principalship in many of the same ways" (Mertz & McNeely, 1998, p. 203) but differ in career paths, the handling of role conflict, perceived leadership styles, and experiences (Mertz & McNeely, 1998).

Although class, sexuality, and ethnicity also can be disaggregated when studying women in educational leadership, it is apparent that the majority of women leaders consistently juggle many competing roles while in leadership positions. These roles include wife, mother, caretaker of aging parents, and the like (Loder, 2005).

Wrushen and Whitney reported, "When speaking with all of the women principals about their current family situations, we repeatedly heard stories about the struggle to balance family and work" (Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 11). Apparently, it was very difficult for women to be able to reference any successful role models they had seen that had been able to successfully juggle job, family, and long-term relationships. One

participant declared, “When I was teaching and had different principal mentors and so forth, they were all divorced women!” Wrushen & Whitney (2008, p. 11).

Summary of the Chapter

Overall, the literature revealed that women have made marginal progress in beginning to close the gender gap existing in the top leadership positions of education, specifically the high school principalship and the superintendency. Absent from the literature was the opportunity to hear both female and male voices within the same study regarding high school principals. To gain knowledge needed to narrow this gap, research must continue to look for specific areas that need to be addressed, such as how the building of relationships may or may not impact the success of a male or female high school principal. The literature clearly has showed that building relationships improves student achievement as well as providing the opportunity to tap possible principal candidates. To address this gap in the literature, I planned to study relationships with 10 to 12 principals, both male and female, through the use of semistructured, two-tier interviews.

Chapter 3 further expands the concepts of methodology and design of the study, including the epistemology, methods of data collection, and validity. The chapter includes an overview of the constructivist view and the connection to the identity control theory from the perspectives of Stryker and Burke (2000). The chapter also details the selection of participants, the interview protocol, and the instrumentation that were used in the study. Chapter 3 provides the clear vision and expectations underlying the current study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This work remains critically important as women inside and outside the educational arena continue to face questions about being able to “do it all” and “have it all.” A 2014 interview conducted by Matt Lauer on *Today* was a perfect example of the types of questions women are still being asked in both corporate and educational settings. When Mr. Lauer interviewed Mary Barra, the new CEO of General Motors, he made the following statement: “You’re a mom, I mentioned, with two kids.” Lauer pressed on, “Given the pressures of this job at General Motors, can you do both well?” (Lauer, 2014). Rarely would a man be asked this question on national television, yet such queries continue to persist for women. Lauer also referred to others who noted that perhaps Barra received the job to help alleviate the current crisis at General Motors, as a feminine approach could ease the public’s concern by presenting General Motors in a “softer” light (Lauer, 2014). Instances such as this are the reason that research regarding female leaders in education is still important.

Little has changed since 1989 when Hoschschild studied the cost for women when they are forced to make choices between home and family and their careers (as cited in Eckman, 2004). Hoschschild found that men who chose both work and relationships had a much lower level of conflict related to roles than did women who tried to equally commit to both. This phenomenon remained the case almost 25 years later (Dowell & Larwin, 2013). Women should not continue to feel as though they must choose between career and family. A participant in one of the studies reviewed for this current research project stated, “I was advised to make the move to a staff role after the birth of my second child.

It would be easier, I was told. But now I recognize that there is no path back to the line” (as cited in Ibarra et al., 2013, p. 64).

The term *second-generation gender bias* refers to research that has begun to look at more powerful and subtle invisible barriers that are continuing to keep women out of key business leadership roles. For example second-generation gender bias is present in education with regard to the high school principalship as noted in the research by Ibarra et al. (2013). Two of the more subtle barriers noted within the high school principalship as well as the business world were (a) the paucity of role models for women and (b) gendered career paths and gendered work. The first barrier referred to the lack of role models for women to emulate; the second related to embedded structures such as the ability of the spouse to move and key positions considered a path to the highest level of leadership (Ibarra et al., 2013).

Because of a lack of studies specifically focusing on how male and female high school principals build relationships, the current study adds specific qualitative data related to the advancement of female principals at the high school level. It also addresses how relationships may or may not play a role in reducing the gender gap in the high school principalship.

To conduct this research study, I used a basic qualitative design as described by Merriam (2009). The interview protocol was the Self in Relationship (SIR). I interviewed five female and five male high school principals, asking them to share specific information regarding how they built relationships and whether relationship differences were present between the sexes. The principals answered open-ended

questions and then were asked to participate in a hands-on activity with the SIR instrument.

Research Purpose and Questions

The lack of female high school principals continues to pose a barrier for women who seek the superintendency. The literature review lacked studies inclusive of both female and male voices within one study. The few studies reviewed that included both female and male voices did not focus on the relationships built within the position of high school principal. I sought insights regarding the following questions:

1. How do women and men develop relationships in the high school principalship?
2. Are there differences?
3. If there are differences, what are the associated implications?

The purpose of this study was to hear both female and male voices of high school principals specifically related to how they fostered and built relationships with five distinct affiliations: (a) superintendent, (b) subordinates, (c) family, (d) confidant or significant other, and (e) self. This research adds to the literature regarding whether or not notable differences exist in how males and females build relationships; moreover, the findings indicate whether or not this area should be further explored to begin to support closing the gap between male and female high school principals and superintendents.

Methods and Procedures

To answer the research questions, I sought participants to complete the Self in Relationship interview from the perspective of a male or a female high school principal. I used the following questions to determine the methodological approach needed:

1. What am I trying to find out?
2. What is the best approach to finding that information?
3. Am I trying to describe or interpret it to others for future use? (Merriam, 2009)

I also investigated which epistemological foundation to use in approaching the study as well as which research design would best fit with the purpose of the study. It was also important to make decisions regarding the methods to be used to collect and analyze the large amount of interview data that needed to be stored.

Methodological Approach

This research study adds to the literature an understanding of how females and males develop relationships as high school principals. One way to understand how principals build these relationships was to speak to actual principals using questions that led them to share information about relationships they had as principals. Qualitative research allows this type of discussion to occur in a formalized setting; it is the most common type of research completed in the educational field (Merriam, 2009). Merriam wrote, “A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22).

Relationships are built on interactions in various social settings with multiple expectations based upon gender and position. Educators interact with the social world on a daily basis with a variety of entities for various reasons. Therefore, principals must develop and sustain social networks and relationships to develop their leadership skills and to sustain support while holding a difficult leadership position. For the aforementioned reasons, the current research project aligned most closely with the basic

qualitative research design (Munoz et al., 2014). The following statement by Yin confirmed my selection of a qualitative research method: “You just might want to study a real-world setting, discover how people cope, and thrive in that setting – and capture the contextual richness of people’s everyday lives” (Yin, 2011, pp. 3-4). After selecting a methodology, a researcher must examine how she sees the world and develops meaning (Merriam, 2009).

Epistemology

From an epistemological perspective, I align myself with the worldview of a constructivist. The following statement about subjective meanings closely connected with the current research study, including the theoretical framework: “They are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social constructivism) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). A constructivist seeks understanding and believes there are multiple realities or ways to interpret single events (Merriam, 2009). As a support to the constructivist approach, I also framed the work through the identity control theory (Burke, 2004). This theory provides the physical structure for organizing issues females face when navigating the “male norms.” Females have reported having to act in certain ways to identify with male group norms. By identifying with these norms women avoid being stereotyped due to female behaviors.

Two researchers prominent in the field of identity study are Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker. I selected the work of these two theorists to frame this research using the Self in Relationship interview protocol with female and male high school principals to determine how females must negotiate and navigate the still prevalent “good ole’ boy

system.” The Self in Relationship interview protocol in this structural symbolic interactionism relates to how women are facing the social structure of a male-dominated position. Identity study also relates to how the self affects social behaviors as women find they may need to adjust their behaviors in certain situations to be able to accomplish their goals (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

The purpose of this research was to describe, understand, and interpret relationships (Merriam, 2009), which can create multiple realities within individuals and among principals. Cultural norms play a role in how female high school principals are viewed and how they too must construct meaning of situations among their male counterparts (Munoz et al., 2014). Coming from this worldview and being female, I needed to be cognizant of my assumptions as a researcher.

Researcher’s Subjectivity Statement

As a researcher, I was aware of assumptions I brought to my qualitative research, not only based upon my current position as a female elementary principal but also my positions as doctoral student, mother, and daughter. My assumptions and bias were based primarily upon firsthand experiences that often took me by surprise. From the principal’s perspective, when I accepted my first elementary principalship, I was amazed when I heard within the first week, “How can you be a good mother and a principal?” and “What this building needs is a man.” The second statement was actually said to me by the superintendent. It was so difficult for me to accept that gender was still a defining factor in my adult life. As a 30-year-old in 1995, I experienced my first encounter with gender bias. Based upon this literature review, my experiences appear to mirror the women about whom I read in the research. I too am divorced as well as being the sole family

support for my aging father. Being the support for my father and experiencing the recent death of my mother were both factors that delayed my ability to complete my doctoral work. Many women now find themselves in what the literature has termed the “sandwich generation” (Spillman & Pezzin, 2000). Having children later in life, women are finding they still have parental duties in raising children, as well as the responsibility of caring for aging parents. Both of these responsibilities continue to fall upon the female in the family.

As I made decisions regarding this research, a qualitative design was a natural fit based upon my experiences. As Marshall and Rossman stated, “recognizing your personal ties to the study you want to conduct can provide you with a valuable source of insight, theory, and data about the phenomena you are studying” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, pp. 25-30). Maxwell wrote, “Any view is a view from some perspective, and therefore is shaped by the location (social and theoretical) and ‘lens’ of the observer” (Maxwell, 2005, p.39). Maxwell referred to a “researcher identity memo” as a valuable experience in the researcher’s making sure to keep herself, as one of the instruments, a critical component in the study. A researcher’s remaining aware of personal assumptions and biases helps ensure that the participants’ views and not the researcher’s are properly recorded.

Participant Selection

For this research study a combination of typical, convenience, and network sampling was used (Merriam, 2009). I limited my selection based upon principals who had earned a master’s, EdD, or administrative certification through The George Washington University. I did include the option of snowballing, obtaining three

interviews through this method. All of my interviews were conducted in the State of Virginia, and all participants were principals of traditional 9-12 public high schools. I found the principals anxious to support a fellow educator and willing to share both challenges and successes of the position.

Specific participant recruitment began following approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of The George Washington University. IRB approval was significant to protect the human participants and ensure that no psychological or physical harm could be attributed to the research (Lincoln & Tierney, 2004). Upon approval from IRB, I followed protocol in Virginia Beach Public Schools and Prince William County Public Schools and e-mailed all high school principals an invitation to participate in the study. Upon receiving responses from interested participants, further contact was made.

Methods of Data Collection

I collected data using a two-tiered qualitative interviewing process. Initial interview questions were open-ended questions related to the research questions. These questions helped to gain insight regarding the individuals prior to beginning the more in-depth interview. The in-person, in depth interview employed the Self in Relationship Interview (SIR) protocol. The interview protocol and the initial questions can be found in Appendix B.

Interview Protocol

Through the aforementioned data collection method, I attempted to gain insight into how the female and male high school principals built relationships with five different entities. As early as 1892 William James referred to the multiple roles one must wade through and the conflict this process often stirs up within oneself (James, 1892). In a

1992 study, Harter and Monsour first developed and used the SIR to conduct a study with early-, middle-, and late-adolescent males and females. They studied how the adolescents viewed relationships with the following entities: self with parents, self with friends, self as student, and self with romantic other. A total of 64 adolescents from the Denver, Colorado area were selected. The male and female numbers were close: 34 girls and 30 boys. The total number of students consisted of students from several grade levels: 24 seventh graders, 20 ninth graders, and 20 eleventh graders.

Harter and Monsour (1992) asked students to describe what they were like when in the classroom as well as with their parents, friends, and a romantic interest. In reading some of the student responses included in the study, I found a strong connection between one female's comment and what was read in the current research regarding female principals and superintendents: "I hate the fact that I get so nervous. I wish I wasn't so inhibited! The real me is talkative; I just want to be natural" (as cited in Harter & Monsour, 1992, p. 257). Comments similar to this can be found in female principals' and superintendents' references to being in meetings predominantly with other males.

The researchers hypothesized that "one's positive attributes would assume more importance, whereas one's negative attributes would be relegated to the periphery of one's self-portrait" (Harter & Monsour, 1992, p. 252). They found that for all participants this pattern was confirmed and that the majority of positive attributes were at the center, meaning they held the most important position on the diagram (Harter & Monsour, 1992).

The researchers also wanted to determine how gender might or might not impact the findings of the study. To study the gender data, they connected the SIR data they had

collected to the work of Carol Gilligan, a researcher in the area of gender; from the combined data they noted the following findings:

In extrapolating from these observations, it may well be that in an effort to maintain the multiple relationships that girls are developing during adolescence, and to create harmony among these necessarily differentiated roles, opposing attributes within the self become particularly salient as well as problematic. Boys, on the other hand, can move more facilely among their different roles and multiple selves if such roles are logically viewed as more independent of one another. Such an interpretation also assumes that for girls, the self is more likely to be defined in terms of relationships, and thus the relational network impinges more strongly on the self. (Harter & Monsour, 1992, p. 259)

Upon reading these findings, I continued to see a strong connection between gender and relationships and to note how early females begin to struggle with multiple harmonious relationships that must be managed.

Females in education have been studied using the Self in Relationship protocol by Lemasters and Roach (2012), Simpson-Marcus (2012), Jones (2013), and Tanner-Anderson (2014). Both Simpson-Marcus and Jones used the instrument to study African American females who were district superintendents from the mid-Atlantic states. Lemasters and Roach also used it to study district-level superintendents.

Upon IRB approval, I contacted each school division and completed appropriate request forms to obtain research approval from the two identified school districts. After receiving the school divisions' approvals, the principal of each traditional, comprehensive high school received a letter regarding his or her interest in participating in the study. The letter also contained a basic demographic sheet that each participant was asked to scan and return via e-mail if interested in participating in the study. Upon receiving the demographic sheets from individual principals, I made a personal phone call to each participant. This phone call allowed for a personal introduction and the opportunity to set up a time to conduct the survey. The survey was completed in a location and at a time

agreeable to the participant (Merriam, 2009). After the phone call and confirmation of the interview time, date, and location, each participant was provided an information sheet detailing the purpose of the study and assuring the participant of anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

I audio recorded both phases of the interview process—the open-ended questions and the SIR interview—both of which were transcribed. Upon completion of all interviews and transcriptions, I began coding the data and analyzing the SIR graphics created.

Prior to the interview, I asked each participant to complete a brief form to provide demographic data; then I conducted the two-part interview. Part one consisted of 10 open-ended questions related to experience and values (Merriam, 2009). Responses to the open-ended questions helped me understand the path each participant took to become a high school principal, as well as the challenges or barriers faced and future career aspirations. The open-ended questions also provided an opportunity for the participant to share specific stories around the relationship theme. The second part of the process was the Self in Relationship portion of the interview. During this portion of the interview, participants were required to engage in a hands-on activity in which they selected, categorized, and analyzed five words to describe themselves in relationships they had with each of the following entities: colleagues, family, superintendent, confidant or significant other, and self. After selecting five words for each entity, participants were asked to categorize the words as positive, negative, or both based upon the experiences they had. Once the words had been categorized in this manner, the 25 words were placed

on a bullseye according to perceived importance. The protocol took approximately 60 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis Methods

After completion of all the interviews, I began to analyze the data, using a multifaceted approach. According to Maxwell, coding data is “the main categorizing strategy in qualitative research” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96). Merriam wrote, “assigning codes to pieces of data is the way you begin to construct categories” (Merriam, 2009, p. 179) in the initial analysis process.

I first reread the interview transcripts and reviewed all notes, journal entries, and memos. The coding journal and log also were reviewed during this process. The open-ended question responses were analyzed first and organized by complementary and/or emergent themes. I analyzed responses to the open-ended questions to find any themes that might have arisen with regard to consistent barriers encountered or paths taken by the participants to the principalship. I then coded the data according to three primary, researcher-established, a priori codes derived directly from the identity control theory, the theoretical framework for the study: (a) social expectations (role identity), (b) social structures, and (c) perceptions. The remaining coding was inductive, seeking to recognize frequency of repetitions and responses to create links between the research questions and the interview findings. In the analysis of the Self in Relationship diagrams, trends were used to look for differences among the male and female responses.

Once all of the coding had been completed, participants had the opportunity to complete a member check to support the validity of the study.

Validity

Validity is a key component of qualitative research. The literature is saturated with views from multiple researchers regarding the interpretation of validity and ways to validate qualitative work (Creswell & Miller, 2010). Bosk wrote, “All fieldwork done by a single field-worker invites the question: Why should we believe it?” (Bosk, 1979, p. 193). Maxwell (2005) described the concept of validity by asking the researcher to think of a way that he or she might be wrong. He also explained that there are fundamental differences in qualitative and quantitative design regarding validity threats.

Maxwell (2005) asserted that qualitative researchers must go beyond the traditional terms of member checks, bracketing, coding journals, and triangulation to ensure the validity of their research. Maxwell discussed two threats: researcher bias and reactivity. Having previously discussed the awareness of personal biases, I was cognizant of reactivity and did everything possible to control for this threat. Member checks, coding journals, bracketing, and triangulation were used to validate the responses of the participants.

Human Participants and Ethics Precautions

In-depth interviewing does not pose a life-or-death situation, but it does require the researcher to protect participants from feeling vulnerable or embarrassed (Seidman, 2013). I was aware that through the interview process participants could provide intimate information about their struggles and emotional distresses they had faced through their careers. It was my job to assure participants through informed consent and professional protocol that all information would be confidential and shared with them prior to

publication. Risks, rights, and benefits were noted as a part of the informed consent process (Seidman, 2013).

For confidentiality purposes, I assigned pseudonyms to the participants. The collected data were stored on my private laptop, which was password secured and kept with me or in my locked desk. The individual participants and I were the only persons to review the information collected. Individuals were identified using only the agreed-upon pseudonyms.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

It is often difficult for principals to feel at ease to speak with complete freedom. In many regards, even with protected identities, public figures feel uneasy about speaking freely. As public figures, principals may be guarded in their responses to surveys and questionnaires when asked to participate in research. In trying to secure the most in-depth and honest answers from participants, I completed all interviews using an interview protocol to help the participant feel secure and comfortable (Creswell, 2009). To safeguard the trustworthiness and validity of the instruments, I conducted practice interviews with colleagues to gain a better understanding of how the tool worked and to be prepared for issues that might arise in the actual interviews (Merriam, 2009). Data collected from practice interviews were not stored or used for any purpose other than to practice the protocol.

Summary of Chapter

The decision to use a basic qualitative design for this research was based upon the desire to learn about high school principals and the relationships they develop in a real-world setting. As described by Yin (2011), qualitative research allows the researcher to

study people in real-world settings and to examine how people cope and thrive while discovering the richness of their everyday lives.

The purpose of this study was to capture both female and male voices of high school principals specifically related to how they fostered and built relationships with five distinct affiliations (colleagues, family, superintendent, confidant or significant other, and self). Information was collected using a two-tiered interview process with open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship interview protocol. I interviewed five female and five male high school principals in each of the second and third largest school divisions in Virginia. All research protocols were followed to ensure the anonymity of all participants and the confidentiality of all information.

Chapter 4 provides a review of the data and the procedural practices that were employed during the data collection and interview process. Information regarding participants and the interview protocol are detailed. Themes that became apparent through the coding process are described and explained so that the reader can gain an understanding of the findings. Following completion of the data analysis, Chapter 5 offers an overview and interpretation of the results regarding the experiences of males and females throughout the process; I expound upon responses to the open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship portion of the interview. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future research regarding how female and male high school principals build relationships and how the process might impact the lack of female leadership at this level and eliminate the gender gap at the top level of leadership in the American K-12 public education system.

Chapter 4: Results

Overview of Results

“A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22). For this study, principals shared their realities of the daily successes and challenges they each faced and how they believed gender was or was not a factor on a regular basis for them. They also shared with me how those realities impacted the social worlds of their daily work as viewed through the lens of gender.

Chapter 4 provides introductory information about the participants selected, a review of the data analysis procedures that I used, emergent themes, and, finally, a review of how the data related to the guiding research questions and the theoretical framework. Chapter 4 then provides demographic information for the participants and an overview of the initial analysis regarding how gender has impacted the overall day-to-day work of each principal. I also provide a step-by-step analysis of the qualitative data conducted through the completion of inductive coding, recognizing frequency of repetitions and responses to identify common links. Overall, in this chapter I report the findings obtained through the open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship exercise.

Data Analysis Procedures

Through the analysis process I discovered how truly cyclical the process was for me as a researcher. I found myself often questioning the purpose of the review of the bullseye and transcripts I had just finished and then determining a more effective way to

reread for the purpose of ensuring that I truly captured the essence of what the participants said in the interviews. Maxwell wrote,

I want to emphasize that reading and thinking about your interview transcripts and observations notes, writing memos, developing coding categories and applying these to your data, and analyzing narrative structure and contextual relationships are all important types of data analyses. (Maxwell, 2005, p. 96)

After reviewing multiple times all of the bullseye posters created by the principals, I hung them on the wall and reflected on how complex the process was and how much data I had been able to gather from individuals. Once the big picture was created with the bullseye charts and transcripts and journal and field notes were read at least three times, I was ready to begin reading for coding and meaning.

“Data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reason, between description and interpretation” (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). I found myself coding and then determining that the words I selected were not really providing the “big” picture of what I interpreted the interviewee to be saying, so after going through all the transcripts I reread them and changed some of the coding words originally selected.

At the time the number of readings seemed daunting to me, but as I began to write Chapter 4 and tried to determine how the coding connected to the categories, theoretical framework, research questions, and the Self in Relationship protocol, I realized that the exhaustive reviews of the transcripts and memos made the final process of analysis powerful. This statement by Dey truly represents what I experienced during my data analysis work:

This climb, with its circuitous paths, its tangents and apparent reversals, and its fresh vistas, reflects the creative and non-sequential character of the analytic

process. Progress may be slow and laborious, but it can be rewarded with some breath-taking revelations. (Dey, 1993, pp. 53-54)

The process I followed to begin the data analysis represented a marriage of the work of Maxwell (2005) and Merriam (2009). I found their descriptions of the procedure for data analysis to be very similar; the procedure was one that I was able to easily follow and understand. Both began with the initial step of reading transcripts, notes, memos, and any documents collected throughout the fieldwork. During the rereading process, I noted that they both detailed the importance of coding and then seeking to facilitate a way to categorize or group the coding. According to both researchers, upon completion of the categories, the next step was to move to a more conceptual overview of the data.

Following the above described procedures, I first read through the transcripts and journals to identify “bits of data...interesting, potentially relevant, or important to [the] study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 178). Throughout the initial reading, I often found myself rewriting some of the exact words from the transcript to capture participants’ perceptions regarding gender and relationships. During the second and third reviews of the transcripts, I focused on reading for the purpose of gender comments, biases, and traditional gender pathways. The purpose for my fourth reading of the transcripts was to focus on connections with my theoretical framework, the identity control theory. During this reading, I realized that, as the researcher, I had lost the focus of Maxwell’s (2005) and Merriam’s (2009) coding process and needed to stop, reread the analysis chapters, and begin the analysis again. Stopping and revisiting the process ensured my credibility as a researcher to adhere to research-based best practices in analyzing qualitative data.

I then began rereading the transcripts and identifying code words as I read through each transcript. After rereading each transcript and typing all of the coding words in the margins, I developed the larger overarching categories to organize the codes. After rereading the transcripts for the specific purpose of creating code words, I found I knew the transcripts so well that it allowed for a natural flow into developing the substantive categories (Merriam, 2009). After reviewing both the coding and the categories this second time through the process, I found clear evidence connected to the code words and responsive to the purpose of the research.

Once the creation of the categories was complete, I moved to the theoretical level and applied the three primary, researcher-established, a priori codes from the theoretical framework of the identity control theory. Upon completing all levels of the analysis for the open-ended questions, I began to analyze the Self in Relationship data. Once all levels of both the open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship data were analyzed, I was able to connect all of the work back to the two overarching research questions:

1. How do women and men develop relationships in the high school principalship?
 - a. Are there differences?
2. If there are differences, what are the implications?

Maxwell (2005) recognized the importance of needing both the categorization analysis and the connection analysis to ensure that neither the theory nor the contextual ties are lost during the data analysis. I found that I was able to note both theory and connections during the data analysis portion of my research.

Table 1. *Coding Table*

Theme	Definition	Key words	Code
Daily work	The overall ideas that captured how participants managed their school and career on a day to day basis	Instructional, Experience, Future, Success, Mentor	DW
Leadership traits	General leadership traits that supports the overall work	Committed, Supportive	LT
Gender expectations	The role gender played at work and at home	Traditional gender, Defy gender role, Family roles, Pathways	GE
Building relationships	How the participant relates with all entities on a daily basis	Collaborative, Student centered, Staff centered, Encourages / Encouraged, Negative comments	BR

Overview of Participants and Interviews

Merriam placed participants at the center of all research: “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 5). With the participants’ being the most important part of my research, I believed that providing a snapshot of each was important. The snapshot provides a framework of who these individuals were to allow for a clearer understanding of their

responses and views they held individually and collectively as well as how each of them built relationships with various entities.

As outlined in Chapter 3, I began my research with a goal of interviewing five to six female and five to six male high school principals. I limited my selection based upon principals who had earned a master's, EdD, or administrative certification through The George Washington University. I did include the option of snowballing, obtaining three interviews through this method. All of my interviews were conducted in the State of Virginia, and all participants were principals of traditional 9-12 public high schools. I found the principals anxious to support a fellow educator and willing to share both challenges and successes of the position.

Interviews were conducted between April 1, 2015 and August 3, 2015, with each of the interviewees completing both the open-ended and SIR portions in one sitting. All but one interview occurred at the principal's high school, providing me an opportunity to see all but one in an environment where each was very comfortable. Interviews ranged from 34 minutes to 45 minutes long.

Prior to each interview, I double-checked to ensure I had all needed materials, including Post-it notes, bullseye chart, script, and two recording devices. I also researched the principal by reviewing the school's website and becoming familiar with any special goals or programs in which the school was involved at the time of my interview. Participants were e-mailed a brief demographic data sheet identifying information pertaining to marital status, number of children, age, highest educational level, and professional affiliations, which they were asked to complete prior to the interview. On the following pages are introductions to 10 remarkable high school

principals who made this research a meaningful and enlightening experience for me, as a beginning researcher. Table 2 depicts the demographic data for the study participants.

Table 2. *Participant Demographic Data*

Marital Status					Number of Children		
Principals	Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed	0	1	2+
Sunshine (F)		x			x		
Gloria (F)		x				x	
Ben (M)		x				x	
Jack (M)		x					x
Michelle (F)		x					x
Sandy (F)		x					x
John (M)		x					x
Bob (M)		x					x
Matt (M)		x					x
Lucy (F)		x				x	
Age							
Principal	Under 35	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-59	Over 60	
Sunshine (F)					x		
Gloria (F)				x			
Ben (M)					x		
Jack (M)				x			
Michelle (F)					x		
Sandy (F)				x			
John (M)						x	
Bob (M)				x			
Matt (M)					x		
Lucy (F)						x	
Highest Degree Obtained							
Principal	Undergraduate			Master's		PhD / EdD	
Sunshine (F)						x	
Gloria (F)				x			
Ben (M)				x			
Jack (M)						x	
Michelle (F)						x	
Sandy (F)				x			
John (M)				x			
Bob (M)				x			
Matt (M)				x			
Lucy (F)				x			

Current Female Principal #1, Sunshine. Sunshine had been a high school principal for 11 years, all at the same school. Although she had been the assistant

principal at the same school, she took a break, before returning as the principal. She had been a classroom teacher, elementary department head, middle school teacher, and a dean prior to becoming an assistant principal. Sunshine believed that her most difficult challenge was the multiple attempts needed to move from being a dean of students to an assistant principal.

Sunshine originally pursued a master's degree in administration with the urging of her then guidance counselor, principal, and assistant superintendent. Although Sunshine was tapped, she felt she would have pursued administration regardless of the urging of others. She shared that some of her greatest successes were the Standards of Learning scores for her special education students and her ability to unite her staff together around one common goal.

Sunshine absolutely aspired to become a superintendent someday. She offered the following advice to other females desiring to become high school principals: "They need to be ready to start at the bottom and work up. They need to accept constructive criticism and not be offended by it" (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015).

Current Female Principal #2, Gloria. Gloria's career path provided her with less time in a teaching role; she was nearing the completion of her 5th year as a high school principal. Prior to the high school principalship her experience had included a compilation of middle school assignments. At the middle school level she served as a teacher, department chair, instructional specialist, assistant principal, and principal prior to becoming a high school principal. Gloria described some of her greatest challenges as some of her most impressive accomplishments. She spoke of her challenges with state-mandated assessment scores and subgroups at her middle school, as well as how she had

been able to see the results of hard work in overcoming low test scores as one of her most impressive successes.

Unlike Sunshine, Gloria had to juggle the roles of principal and mother. Gloria was tapped by an assistant principal and strongly encouraged to pursue her master's in administration. She did mention that even without being tapped she would have pursued a position outside the classroom for financial reasons. She actually obtained her first principalship while pregnant with her second child. She thought she would just go for the interview experience but ended up getting the position. She had not ruled out seeking a superintendent position but currently was not seeking her doctorate due to school and family responsibilities.

Current Female Principal #3, Sandy. Sandy was the least experienced of the female high school principals interviewed for this research project; she had just completed her 2nd year as a high school principal. Previously she held an interim principal position at a middle school in the same district. Similarly to Sunshine, she had been an assistant principal at her current school but with a break before returning as the principal. As did Gloria, she balanced being principal and mom. She found that the ages of her children, high school and middle school, had been a good fit for similar activities in which she was engaged as a high school principal.

Her classroom experience spanned 12 years; she had held positions of para educator, classroom teacher, and department chair prior to becoming an assistant principal. As a teacher, Sandy also was tapped by her first principal to enter the field of administration. She acknowledged that even without being tapped she would have probably pursued a career in administration.

As did the two previous principals, she cited test scores as one of the biggest challenges, noting that other accomplishments or success for children were overlooked in light of attaining or not attaining the set goal in the “numbers.”

Current Female Principal #4, Michelle. When I met with Michelle, she was preparing to begin her 3rd year as a high school principal. Michelle had been in the classroom the longest of all the principals I interviewed, 20 years. In addition to being a classroom teacher, Michelle was the special education department chair, dean for special education students, summer school principal, and a recipient of merit pay for her work in the Department of Defense Schools. Although very soft spoken, Michelle presented herself as confident and secure in her position.

She had three very strong statements that confirmed the confidence I had perceived during the interview. In response to this question—What does it mean to be a female in education or do you think there is any difference from a female to a male?—she stated,

But as a female if you’re timid, if you think the man has the upper hand when you’re going in, you’re gonna lose. And I’m not timid; I’m kind of quiet. People describe me as being quiet, but quiet doesn’t mean that I don’t speak my voice and I don’t have an opinion. (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

Current Female Principal #5, Lucy. Lucy was the oldest of the female principals interviewed and had been at her school almost 20 years. For the first 14 years, she served as the assistant principal and was in her 6th year serving as the principal. She had been at her school since the inaugural year and was the last remaining original administrator. She shared many memories of the years at her building but was visibly saddened when she shared her most challenging memory. The year she was the 12th-grade administrator, her principal was diagnosed with lymphoma. “I think that was my

biggest challenge: trying to keep a school together, trying to be supportive of our kids and have my principal and one of my friends in a situation that we could not help, but still trying to keep everybody together” (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015).

Lucy was the first African American high school principal in her school division. She considered this achievement to be both challenging and successful. She was one of the few in her division who went immediately from being a high school assistant principal to being a high school principal. She explained that in her division the typical pathway involved becoming an elementary or middle school principal and then moving up to the high school level. She quoted her superintendent at the time as saying, “Well Lucy, if not now, when? And if this is for you, it will be for you” (as cited by Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015).

Current Male Principal #1, Ben. Ben was the first male principal I interviewed; he also was the first principal interviewed who was a career switcher. Similarly to two of the female principals, he previously had served as an assistant principal at his school but had a break in service at the school prior to returning as the principal 3 years ago. As did Lucy in her comments, Ben reported that he had served first as an elementary school principal for 6 or 7 years prior to serving as a high school principal.

When Ben decided to go into education, he already had in mind the goal of moving into administration. Unlike any of the females interviewed, Ben had coaching experience prior to going into administration, which is often typical of males in

administrative roles. Ben shared that he had no desire to hold any central office positions as he enjoyed the connection with children far too much.

When asked about balancing work and family, Ben stated that he told his assistant principals, “The best-kept secret in the world is an elementary principal. Why I say that—you can still function as a family” (Ben, personal communication, April 29, 2015).

Current Male Principal #2. Although Jack was nearly 20 years younger than the first male I interviewed, they had some similarities. Jack was also a career switcher as well as a coach. While working as a high school teacher he was tapped by his principal to go into administration, and his response was “Why would I want to do that?” (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015). Despite this initial reaction, he did pursue administration and, as did Lucy, he opened a brand new high school.

Jack’s dedication to whatever he begins was evidenced by the fact that he finished his doctoral work in 3 years and that during his principalship at a previous school 100% of his special education students passed the math Standards of Learning assessment. Jack had an interest in possibly becoming a superintendent of a much smaller district than the district in which he was currently serving as a principal.

Jack had three young sons and hoped to have his oldest child attend his high school so that he could hand his son his diploma. Jack’s belief that some gender biases still remain was evidenced by his statement:

I have an assistant principal who is 10 times smarter than I am, but she’s tall and she’s a blonde and so someone at the central office made a crack about, you know, being a bimbo, and I got a little pissy about it and said, “No, you don’t talk like that about someone who works with me; if you knew her, you wouldn’t say that.” (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

Current Male Principal #3, John. John was the only principal I interviewed that was completing his 1st year as a principal. John had been an assistant principal for 20 years, and after four or five principal interviews, had become a little discouraged, accepting the fact that “I’m gonna be a lifetime assistant principal; and then, lo and behold, then, right here at the end of my career, because I’m only—I think I have only 2 more years—that they decided, John, we need you to do something” (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015).

As was the case with Ben and Jack, John was a career switcher, long before that term was used, he said. He spent 5 years in the classroom and then was a dean of boys, administrator in charge of the alternative programs, and assistant principal prior to getting his principalship during the 2014-2015 school year. John was always drawn to alternative programs and wanted to support boys who needed more support and direction. He was the first male interviewee that spoke specifically about his strength in building relationships: “I think that’s one of my strong points...to be a relationship builder with the teachers, with kids, with parents, and the community” (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015).

Current Male Principal #4, Bob. Bob was the first male principal I interviewed that began his career in education. He served for 7 years as a classroom teacher and then entered administration as a middle school assistant principal. After 3 years at the middle school level he became a high school assistant principal for 5 years and then was promoted to a middle school principal. He became a high school principal 2 years ago. Bob had spent his entire career with the same district. Although he had not been tapped

for the principalship, he had been encouraged by his current superintendent to obtain his doctorate degree; at the time of the interview, he was still pondering this decision.

Bob, as Jack had mentioned, also would like to hand his oldest child her diploma. His daughter currently was attending his school, which had allowed him to blend the roles of dad and principal, as she was involved in multiple sports and chorus. Even though Bob's child attended his school, he still found balancing work and family to be difficult sometimes. Although he tried to involve the family as much as possible, he said, "But, they don't always want to come here to school stuff, you know. But, you know, plays and concerts, they would try to" (Bob, personal communication, August 3, 2015).

Current Male Principal #5, Matt. The final interview was with Matt on August 4, 2015. I prepared the same way for this interview as I had for the others; even though it was the last interview, I wanted to ensure it had the same fidelity as the very first one in April.

Matt, as did three of the other male principals, had a child that attended his high school. He had the most longevity as a high school principal of all the males interviewed. He indicated that one of his greatest challenges was dealing with the frustration he felt when students did not take full advantage of the rich opportunities available to them.

Matt had 8 years of experience teaching health and physical education before becoming dean of students and assistant principal. Altogether, he had 18 years of experience prior to becoming a high school principal.

Living close to his school had been one very effective strategy for Matt in balancing work and home life. By eliminating the commute time, he had been able to spend additional time both at school and with his family. Matt believed that building trust, being honest, and acting with sincerity are some of the most important ideas a principal should build within the adults at his or her school, perhaps more important than knowledge of content and curriculum.

Emergent Categories

As previously noted in this chapter, four themes emerged from the multiple readings of journal notes and transcripts: daily work, leadership traits, gender expectations, and relationship building. The words and experiences the participants communicated so consistently regardless of gender allowed these themes to emerge naturally. In developing the four themes and the findings, I also explored within them gender differences, or the lack thereof, reported by participants during the interviews.

Daily work. The overall ideas that captured how participants managed their schools and careers on a daily basis were the basis of the daily work theme. Review of the interview data revealed that, regardless of the interviewee's gender, the following words were frequently used: *instructional*, *experience*, *future*, *success*, and *mentor*. Participants often spoke about being in classrooms, explaining how the support they provided students, teachers, and families represented some of the best work they did each day.

The first key word that resonated throughout as this theme emerged was *instructional*. Regardless of gender, 80% of the interviewed principals talked about the importance of instructional leadership. This finding was meaningful as the research

referred to females having more expertise as instructional leaders than males, yet four of the five males I interviewed spoke strongly regarding the instructional focus of the principalship. One example of the male focus on instructional leadership was noted in the interview with Jack. When he spoke about hiring teachers, I was able to observe the change in tone and passion regarding the importance of selecting instructional personnel:

So it was one of those things where I sat in on every interview, I talked to every teacher. I wanted to know: What's your policy on retakes? What's your policy on grading? You know, and if you started talking about kids should do their homework, da, da, I was, like, you're out the door. I don't want to...because homework is not the answer. The research says it's not the answer to their success. It's whether or not they master the material and can talk about it actively and can be engaged. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

Jack was not the only male that referred to a focus on the instructional work. When asked about when he felt the most effective as a high school principal, Ben said, "When I can spend the majority of my day in the classroom observing, uh, providing feedback, and having mini celebrations with our teachers and students, with the instruction" (Ben, personal communication, April 29, 2015). It should be noted again that both Jack and Ben were career switchers. As the researcher and a lifelong educator, I find it admirable that these two male principals, even as career switchers, demonstrated such a strong focus on instruction.

Bob, although not a career switcher, stated, "I feel more effective sitting in a room because it is monitoring instruction and you do see a lot of things and the kids see you and teachers see you and I think they feel a little valued when you visit their room" (Bob, personal communication, August 3, 2015). One of the male interviewees that did not use the keyword of *instruction* in his interview cited the most examples of traditional gender expectations.

With regard to the daily work theme specifically, two female participants shared more traditional gender experiences than the others, but not in a negative sense of impacting opportunities. For example, Gloria stated that she enjoyed supporting her male counterparts with the touchy, feely, stuff, whereas she would often call on the males to support her with maintenance types of concerns. Sunshine spoke very little about providing specific instructional supports on a day-to-day basis, which, according to research was a strength for female principals. When speaking about her experience, Gloria spoke of her first assistant principal interview and not expecting to be offered the position because she was pregnant. Gloria was awarded the position. During the interview, she spoke about the importance of an instructional focus; she said she always asked the following question: “What are we going to do for kids?” (Gloria, personal communication, April 16, 2015). She described the type of situation she loved:

We start discussing the kids and which kids and what do they need; it’s kind of like diagnosing, I guess as a doctor. And when you see the success and how they’ve come so far, whether it’s their reading levels, their test scores, their math, their presentation skills; that coupled with watching teachers come along and create that culture of owning it. (Gloria, personal communication, April 16, 2015)

As Gloria asked what they would do for kids, the keyword *mentor* was noted for all of the interviewed principals throughout the data analysis in both transcripts and journaling. All spoke both of being a mentor as well as having been mentored by others in the profession. I decided to include the mentor findings within the daily work theme rather than the relationship-building theme. This was a conscious decision I made while coding, because when the participants talked about their experiences of mentoring and being mentored, they viewed it as part of the daily expectations of leadership. John shared an example that had just arrived in his e-mail prior to the interview:

Mr. John, I just accepted my new position and would like to take the time to thank you for everything you've done for me throughout my career. Your wisdom has been a source of inspiration and guidance throughout my career both P and H. I greatly appreciate everything you've done for me and everyone else you have influenced throughout your career. Once again, thank you for everything and I'll see you around. (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015)

Each principal shared various examples similar to John's e-mail. Matt shared that he had had a large number of assistant principals promoted to principals, and Lucy said that she actually had a former assistant principal stop in and see her to thank her for all she had done for him. As I listened to the principals discuss how they had been mentored in addition to being mentors for others, they all shared their insights into the future. *Future* was a keyword that surfaced in a natural flow regarding the open-ended question about the principals' aspirations to hold the superintendency position.

Sunshine was the only female responding with a definitive yes that she intended to become a superintendent someday. Gloria was undecided and had been encouraged to obtain her superintendent's license, whereas Michelle's response resonated with me as it was the same way I felt about becoming a principal. When asked if she aspired to become a superintendent, Michelle responded,

No. It may happen and I realize that it may happen, because I did not aspire to become a principal; I had no.... Someone actually said, "Be an assistant principal." I did that; I really enjoyed it. And then someone else came to me and said, "You really are ready to be a principal." And I said, "Well, I really like my job now." (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

Regarding superintendent aspirations, Lucy and Sandy quickly had a firm answer of no, and Lucy's response was actually "No way, José" (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015). Three of the male principals also said that the superintendency was not in their career path, whereas the other two, Jack and Bob, had less definitive answers. Jack and Bob were the younger male principals interviewed,

whereas John, Matt, and Ben were nearing retirement options. Bob's response left the option open, stating,

No, and that's a, I mean I've thought about it. I think the doctorate would eliminate me straight off so that's why I think it's kind of unrealistic, although I'm sure there are some in smaller, rural towns and so forth that probably are. And if that ever happened after doing 30 in my district and I went to the mountains to retire and that came open, I may pursue that there, but as a career goal I'm happy to retire as a high school principal. (Bob, personal communication. August 3, 2015)

Jack's response was similar to both Bob's and Michelle's responses:

Yes and no. Yes, it would be nice to be in charge of a division. I do not want to be in charge of one this big. His job is just too political. I would rather be the person in the, you know, one-horse town; one high school, one middle school, three or four elementary schools, that would be great. I just...I don't know that it's something I really want to do. I might be better, like, in charge of student learning or in charge of one of those kind [*sic*] of things. But like I said, I have three boys right now and my two oldest are dying to come here, so I can wait. (Jack, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

As this theme focused on the overall ideas that captured how participants managed their schools and careers on a daily basis, the theme of leadership traits emerged with the keywords of *committed* and *supportive*.

Leadership traits. Leadership is a well-studied field, with countless articles and studies. For the purpose of this research study and the ideas that emerged through the data review, I focused on the traits of leaders' being committed and supportive. As with qualitative research, the themes and specifics regarding the theme emerged from the participants' own words. The words *committed* and *supportive* were prevalent throughout the interviews. Both female principals and male principals referenced the commitment needed to put in the long hours day after day to ensure the operation of a successful school. Principals in this study also focused on how supportive they were to

students, teachers, and communities and how, without support from and for all stakeholders, they would not be able to be successful leaders.

Being a leader who was committed and supportive of the overall work of guiding children, teachers, and the community to the next level resonated with both the male and female high school principals that were interviewed. All the principals shared more than one example of times they were committed and supportive of the overall work in their buildings and communities. The examples were shared when I asked the question: When do you feel the most successful as a principal? When principals were asked to share their successes, all 10 of the principals spoke about having to be committed to improving student achievement through test scores of all subgroups and ensuring accreditation. At the same time, all believed there are multiple measures of success that are unable to be measured in a test score, such as the examples shared in their own words.

Ben expressed it this way: “I think the biggest thing that the staff members that we have here: they know that I believe in them and that I will support them as long as their number one priority is mine, which is the student” (Ben, personal communication, April 29, 2015). When asked about her successes, Michelle shared this memory from her first year at her building:

I have notes from students: thank you for bringing discipline back. I have notes from teachers saying thanks for all the celebrations you do with us and thanks for all the compliments, the morale building; just the little notes, that they like that. And that’s the kind of person I am, so it’s easy. (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

When Sandy was asked about successes, she immediately shared the following:

But other things that we’re successful in that, that things that are important for me on the high school level, is to see students that don’t think that they can

graduate. And they say that, you know, the, and their parents tell, “You know, I didn’t graduate; I stopped.” And you, you try your best to motivate them and then to actually see them walk across the stage is something that’s, that I put in my hat as being a success. (Sandy, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

I found the words *committed* and *supportive* not only through student and staff interactions but also with parents, as revealed in this situation that Jack shared when asked about success. Jack described getting a parent to work collaboratively with him as success. He then shared this experience:

We had an incident earlier this year where an African American father was upset his child was gonna be suspended, and he was being very loud out in the front. I mean I could hear him. And I was in here working on something. So I walked out and I said, “Sir, can I help you?” “Are you the principal?” “Yes.” And...I said, “Come on back, come on.” I closed the door, we sit down and he tells me what’s going on. And he starts to yell at me. And I said, “Sir, I used to coach football; I understand you being loud means that you want me to think it’s important. I hear you. Just tell me what’s wrong. Okay.” Once I said that, he was like off the ledge and I guess that’s his “I get it.” And we figured out the problem and solved it, and he went on this way. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

This example was twofold as it also showed a level of support and commitment to the main office staff by not allowing them to deal with this difficult situation alone, but stepping in to handle the situation. As the themes began to emerge through the data analysis, although they were separate concepts, they often supported each other through the stories and experiences shared by the principals. After reviewing the coded transcripts and looking for the emergent themes, I saw a definite fit with the leadership traits theme and the next theme, building relationships.

Gender expectations. This theme was one that naturally arose from the design and focus of the research. The gender expectations theme connects with the overall research questions as well as the theoretical framework. Concepts of traditional gender, pathways, family roles, and defiance of gender roles emerged to define this category.

Data derived from responses to the open-ended interview questions supported much of what was found in the literature review yet, at times, presented surprising findings in some of the comments from both the male and female principals interviewed for this research study. This section highlights both the experiences that still define traditional gender experiences as well as those that defy the traditional gender norms.

“I worked my way to a high school job; was willing to coach so you can advance in those types of things” (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015). This statement from Jack was consistent with the research literature regarding males and opportunities through coaching that may not always be available to females. Ben shared a similar experience:

A family friend, who gave me the advice to go back and get certified in teaching and knew that I was a former athlete and coach. Well, they say do coaching to help supplement my, uh, then salary and continue in the classroom and within 3 to 5 years you can be an assistant principal. (Ben, personal communication, April, 29, 2015)

During the first review of the documents I perceived that Ben’s statement perhaps was reflective of the time he began in education, as he was one of the older participants.

After hearing a similar comment from Jack, who began his career nearly 20 years later than Ben, however, I thought coaching might still present a traditional gender role.

The following comments from John and Jack may indicate how the traditional gender role is still supported in 2015. John said, “I think sometimes testosterone takes over and you have to be careful and not—it’s just like in the husband and wife relationship—I think sometimes we have to back off” (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015). Jack was originally told, “Well, you have a young child, you might want to think about it; you can double your salary” (Jack, personal communication, June 2,

2015). This suggestion offered by a female who was encouraging him to pursue administration might cause one to think that even some females see the male as the main “provider” or “supporter” for the family unit. The female principals also shared some traditional gender experiences they had had regarding perception of traditional gender expectations.

Lucy shared two such experiences in which parents did not expect her to be the principal. One example she described was an experience she had while standing with her male assistant principals:

For me to be around my, my five male administrators and all of us can be together, and you know and I’m talking and a parent or whoever comes up and they introduce them and we introduce ourselves; they go to one of them, they do not see me. I mean not saying they see. But that’s not the first thing they think, that that’s the principal. (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

The second experience she shared was one that happened after one of the graduations when she was principal:

And so this older lady comes up to me; she said, “It’s you.” I said, “Yes, ma’am.” She said, “It’s you.” I said, “Yes, ma’am.” She said, “I just want you to know that I was shocked that it was you.” And I said, “All right.” She said, “I just, I did not know,” she said, “and I just want you to know that I just thought it was just the nicest thing that they now have Black women in high... [laughter]. I’m like, uh... it took all my strength. [laughter] I’m like, “Oh, yes, ma’am. Ain’t it wonderful?” She said, “Yes ma’am.” (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

These experiences resonated in the literature reviewed for Chapter 2. It was almost unbelievable for me to hear these examples in my own interviews during this research, although, as previously, I too had some of these types of experiences throughout the beginning of my administrative career.

I also found through the open-ended questions that females have some of their own traditional gender thoughts regarding “being female.” Sandy shared the following:

I think at work I'm nurturing to teachers and students and, and other administrative, other administrators. And then at home having to be nurturing as well. And so I, I'm not saying a male can't be nurturing, but I think I bring a different set of, um, a different skill set, um, in my compassion and, um, passion for, you know, the young ladies, and then I can also flip it to the male and what young ladies are looking for in the male. So I think I, um, I think it's a little different. (Sandy, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

Sandy also talked about other times when a more nurturing touch might be needed; for example, she described the following scenario:

Um, and so I think our, our makeup is a little different...because we're nurturing, we, we want to be. Um, even for kids here, you know, if we have a child that needs to go, um, on an ambulance and the parent is gonna meet us there. It's not where I look, my male AP; I look, even if it's a, a male student, I look for, you know, that nurturing female to be able to, to do that. I don't, I don't know what that is. That might be not right, but [laughter] that's just kind of what I do because I feel as though we'll, we'll be more of like, you know, are you okay and, and be that, that voice to be able to help calm the situation. (Sandy, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

While coding and working through the transcripts, the question often crossed my mind: Do we as females unintentionally perpetuate some of the perceptions that continue to be part of the research literature? I began to wonder if traditional gender experiences are at times acceptable to us, as described in Sunshine's story of the 14 interviews she had prior to being selected for the assistant principal position:

And when it was a female, especially when it was a White female, then I really wondered. Then I stepped back and, like, what's going on? But if it was a man, I didn't really think that much about it or it was an African American I didn't really think that much about it because I couldn't, I couldn't be that. (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

Sunshine indicated through that experience that it was almost acceptable in her world to expect that the man might be hired for the position over her and only did she question her own credentials when another woman was hired, instead of her. Other examples were aligned to some found in the literature review, such as the gender challenges Michelle described:

I think my biggest challenges were time, because I have always worked and gone to school at the same time while raising a family, while taking care of my husband and all the housework that goes along with it. So I think the biggest thing for me was figuring out how to juggle everything and how to get everything done. So I spend a lot of nights up, and I would have to wait until the kids were in bed, the husband was asleep, and then I would begin to do my schoolwork or catch up from the day. (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015)

The gender expectation theme revealed that all of the participants had beliefs and experiences that exemplified defiance of the gender role and not allowing it to limit opportunities for success or promotion. Jack, one of the younger male principals interviewed, provided five examples throughout the open-ended interview portion that clearly showed how his own decisions defied traditional gender roles. The one that I found to be the most powerful was when he shared a comment once made about one of his female assistant principals that he actually never even shared with her. He recounted the following incident:

I have an assistant principal who is 10 times smarter than I am, but she's tall and she's a blonde and so someone at the central office made a crack about, you know, being a bimbo, and I got a little pissy about it and said, "No, you don't talk like that about someone who works with me; if you knew her, you wouldn't say that." And I've never told her that. I don't want her to know that. But it's just, come on, man, really? This is not 1965. [short laugh] This is 2015, for God sakes. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

Having males who focus on the quality of work and not the gender of the individual will continue to bridge the gender gaps that still exist in pockets of today's public high schools. Just as some of the female principals were, the males as well were sometimes locked into gender expectations; yet this statement by Jack is an example of how he was defying the gender roles:

And as a male who used to coach, people think that your primary focus is that you just care about sports and you just care about athletics; and it's not true. Sitting through the play earlier this year with my boys was one of the most rewarding things. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

Although the notion of females' still having the main caregiver roles at home was still present in the interviews with females, statements from the male interviewees provided evidence that this was not always the case with some family dynamics. Bob talked about how he was able to blend a little family and school time in the following example:

So last year was better because my daughter came here as a freshman at our STEM academy, so then I got to blend dad and principal a little bit, um, which my administrative staff appreciated because she's a three sport athlete, so, and in chorus. So when there was a chorus concert I had coverage [laughter]; if there was a field hockey game, I had coverage; if there was a track meet, I had coverage. So I really tried to do that and then, you know, my wife and son would come to watch her as well to try to blend that time. (Bob, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

Just as Bob did, Ben, one of the older male principals interviewed, shared the importance of being involved in daily family activities, again showing how the males I interviewed were defying some traditional gender roles.

As an elementary principal, I was able to attend every basketball game, every honor assembly or any type of recognition back-to-school night that related to him; student conferences and all that, in the 4 years that he was in high school. And I reflect back on that, once he graduated, then I came back to the high school. And I have looked back on it and I said, it's a good thing that this opportunity came to me after, uh, he had graduated because I...you know like I say play on Tuesday, my school would've played on Tuesday and Friday night. Then I had to make the choice; you know, see my son or at the school. (Ben, personal communication, April 29, 2015)

As the gender expectation theme emerged I was able to see connections to the previously reviewed literature as well as some unexpected comments from both the male and female perspectives. The last two themes, leadership traits and building relationships, reflected no major differences based upon gender. All of the interviewees related their work to both of the keywords in this theme, *committed* and *supportive*, as documented through the following interview experiences.

Building relationships. “I think the most successful part of my career is I have built a lot of good relationships with people. I have a very good reputation. I’m not bragging, just facts” (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015). Michelle and others in the study discussed the importance of building relationships with all stakeholders. Each of them spoke with a strong, confident purpose when describing specific examples of lasting relationships with students and staff. I found these last two themes to be tightly interconnected. It is difficult to build relationships with all stakeholders without being committed to your position and supportive of everyone who impacts your position on a daily basis. The way John described a very similar example of the importance of building and sustaining relationships during difficult times demonstrates the connection to commitment:

I would say most effective is just kind of, like, what I talked about, the relationships. I think that’s one of my strong points...to be a relationship builder with the teachers, with kids, with parents, the community. Uh, I think that those types of things felt during the difficult times, during the times when you think you might be least effective, when things don’t seem to be going the way you want them to go, and you say hey, you know what I’ve been trying to do; you know I’ve been trying to help, it may not come out the way you want it to be, but you know I’m doing this for the big picture. (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015)

It is evident that relationships have been built and sustained when a principal is assigned to a new building and has an experience such as the one described by Jack:

And when I announced I was coming here, like 18 people came to my office and said, “I want to go, I want to come with you.” “How do I come with you? What do I have to do?” And I think I have 10 or 11 of them here; I didn’t take everybody. But they literally uprooted their stuff and moved up this way. So that told me at least we were doing something right. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

Matt shared his thoughts regarding culture and the importance of developing a positive culture within the school. He described relationships as the foundation for building that positive culture:

Yeah, I feel we have a good culture here amongst the adults and the kids, and I think that's very important. I think our teachers enjoy coming to work. I mean it's a typical place. You're, they're gonna have their good days and they're gonna have their bad days, but I think when you build relationships that are solid, you can make it through the bad days. And I just look at, I really kind of focus on the kids more than I focus on the teachers, and I really enjoy the relationships that I have with them. And to think that over the 13 years that I've been here, you know, I've probably met 26,000 kids and had an impact somehow on 'em; that's pretty rewarding. (Matt, personal communication, August 4, 2015)

Lucy shared that regardless of the gender, the relationships she built were what allowed her to continue to build upon success year after year. She explained how teachers viewed her as a leader with and for whom they had a connection and respect:

I love the fact that it could be male or female who would come; and, "Ms. Lucy, you got a minute? I need to close the door and talk to you." "What, gotta close the door? Oh my God." "I just want to talk to you." And I love that, and I think because it doesn't matter to me and I think with that relationship only because I've been, I think, well, because I've been here the longest and I know them, and it's not just because I know your scores. I know them. I know your mom. I've met your dad. I know your cat. I know your family members, and they feel comfortable that they can cover and talk to me. (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

Overall, principals agreed that the importance of building relationships with both children and adults is a critical factor in determining success and feeling effective. The results related to this theme also show connections when the Self in Relationship results are presented in the following section.

Connections to the Theoretical Framework

Qualitative research involves many levels of data analysis, seeking to connect and relate the data to a larger body of research. Upon completion of the analysis of all the

transcripts, journal entries, and Self in Relationship data, I then moved forward with making connections to the theoretical framework for the deeper analysis mentioned by Merriam:

Nevertheless, data often seem to beg for continued analysis past the formation of categories. A key here is when the researcher knows that the category scheme does not tell the whole story—that there is more to be understood about the phenomenon. (Merriam, 2009, p. 189)

For this study I selected the identity control theory as the larger framework to anchor the findings. The identity control theory connects the perceived meanings of the self through situations to the meaning held in the identity standard and remains in a cycle until the discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards is eliminated (Burke, 2004).

During the planning of this research and development of the research questions, the notion of self and perceptions closely aligned to the Self in Relationship protocol. I selected a theoretical framework that would effectively capture the essence of relationships, perceptions, and breaking the traditional standard of identity for female high school principals.

Upon completion of the open-coding analysis in which the methods of Merriam (2009) and Maxwell (2005) were used, I analyzed the data through the lens of the theoretical framework selected for this study. After seeking connections to the theoretical framework from the open coding, I used the three previously established a priori codes to look for connections to any of the codes: (a) social expectations (role identity), (b) social structures, and (c) perceptions.

The identity control theory was selected because it effectively linked, along with the Self in Relationship protocol, the study of how the relationships that female and male

principals build, both professionally and personally, might impact their advancement. Two researchers prominent in the field of identity study are Peter Burke and Sheldon Stryker. I selected the work of these two theorists to frame this work with the Self in Relationship interview protocol for both female and male high school principals because females must negotiate and navigate the still prevalent “good ole’ boy system,” or “identity standard.”

Currently, females are up against the “norm” or the “well established culture” when seeking the high school principalship. The pattern of the old paradigms’ being culturally acceptable must be challenged to allow for the oppressed population to create new paradigms and establish a new culture. My research has revealed that in the small population of Virginia high school principals that I interviewed the old paradigms may have been broken down, as a new culture appeared to be developing between male and female high school principals.

According to the literature, the identity control theory bonds well with struggles females have shared and how they often believe they need to act in a certain way to “fit in.” The females in this study did not present any data to show they “struggled” to fit into an established culture. When asked the open-ended question—What does it mean to be a female in education?—Gloria responded, “I’ve never had a problem with it and really see no difference” (Gloria, personal communication, April 16, 2015). Sunshine shared the following response to the same question: “I don’t, I don’t often think about it. I really don’t see what the research says” (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015). Sandy believed strongly that one just had to be who one was regardless of gender;

she stated, “I’m, I’m gonna say what I want to say and I’m gonna be me. So, um, I think that has been a kind of evolution thing” (Sandy, personal communication, July 21, 2015).

Not one of the five females mentioned the “good ole’ boy system” or referred to an “identity standard.” Three of the examples shared under the gender expectation theme related to navigating the male system, but they referred to outside stakeholders, such as parents and their perceptions regarding gender and, at times, some members of the central office.

In analyzing the open coding, developing themes, and listening to each principal tell his or her story, I noted that the self-perceptions of both males and females participating in this study did not indicate that gender had impacted their advancement or career choices to any degree. For example, Sunshine declared during her interview,

Today I don’t, I don’t, I mean I know what you’re doing and I heard you tell me all about your research, but I don’t see that much. I really don’t. I know that in my high school principal meetings across the state, they’re heavy men; I’m not going to lie. But I don’t think about it that way. So, it’s, I’m sure it’s there, it’s pretty obvious you’ve found it there, but I don’t, I don’t think being a female today in my job hinders me; I really don’t. (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015)

Although both the male principals and the female principals in this study shared specific examples with regard to the gender expectations theme that highlighted both traditional gender experiences and experiences that defied the traditional gender expectations, they did not relate them to hindrance on the job but more to the personality each had developed.

When Gloria was asked the question, “What does it mean to be a female in education?” she stated the following: “Nothing different than a male, I don’t think. No, I think some people see a difference; I haven’t. I’ve never had a problem with it, but I

think some of my friends have” (Gloria, personal communication, April 16, 2015). When Michelle was asked the same question, she responded, “Well, I think I’m doing just as ...I think I’m doing a great job like a male would do a great job” (Gloria, personal communication, July 9, 2015).

As a researcher, I believe the decision to use the constructivist approach to frame this research was validated by the fact that the struggle to “fit in” did not seem to be a problem for the females in this study, as a constructivist seeks understanding and believes there are multiple realities or ways to interpret single events (Merriam, 2009). I believe the comments of the women in this study provide other interpretations of the realities. The identity control theory provides the theoretical structure for organizing issues females face when navigating male norms. Females have reported having to act in certain ways to identify with existing group norms; by identifying with the group norms, women have avoided being stereotyped based upon female behaviors (Eckman, 2004). It does not appear that the women in this study had to change who they were to identify with the group norms. When Sandy was asked if she had had to shift or change any of her personality or personal identity, she stated,

I can be emotional at times; you know what I’m saying? And I, I think that’s okay. Now, um, I, I think a leader has to be strong, but I think a leader has to be human as well. So, I, I, don’t ever want to be someone that I’m not based upon the folks that I’m around. I’m just, I just need to be me. I’m at the point that I don’t care. I’m gonna say what I want to say and I’m gonna be me. (Sandy, personal communication, July 21, 2015)

This statement supports the notion that Sandy was not willing to change who she was to “fit in” to a predetermined group norm. Sunshine also declared that, as a female, she had not really had to change her personality to perform her professional duties. When asked about having to shift or change any of her personality or personal identity,

she stated, “I really don’t think so. I think that even other principals and my staff would say I am who I am. I really don’t believe my gender has impacted how I behave in any situation” (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015).

The identity control theory connects the perceived meanings of the self through situations to the meaning held in the identity standard and remains in a cycle until the discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards is eliminated (Burke, 2004). Analysis of both the open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship bullseye posters revealed that the data do not show a discrepancy between the women’s identity and the standard.

These limited findings suggest that women in the role of high school principal in this particular study have not been required to fit into the male-established standard. This small study may begin to suggest that these women are breaking the standard and hence beginning to eliminate the differences in the identity standard.

This research study did not appear to show a discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards. The sample size was small, but some of the statements by the participants sent a message that fitting in was not an obstacle for the females in the study.

In the Self in Relationship activity described in the next section I analyzed the words females and males used to describe their relationships with five distinct groups. This analysis then enabled me to make connections to Holland and Stryker’s work (as cited in Holland, 1975; as cited in Burke, 2004). Holland and Stryker sought to determine “where identity standards originate and why self-perceptions are relevant to those standards and how identities come to be activated” (as cited in Burke, 2004, p. 575). When analyzing the Self in Relationship data I also looked for a connection, if

any, with how the open-ended questions and the a priori codes related to the work of Burke and Stryker with regard to fitting in with established cultural norms.

Self in Relationship Findings

After analyzing the open-ended data through open coding, leading to theme development, and through the lens of the identity control theory using the a priori codes, I began to analyze how the individual principals built relationships with other principals, family, the superintendent, a confidant, and themselves.

Each of the principals was asked to provide five adjectives describing himself or herself in relationship to each of these categories. Figure 1 depicts the colored Post-it notes participants used to identify their categorical classifications.

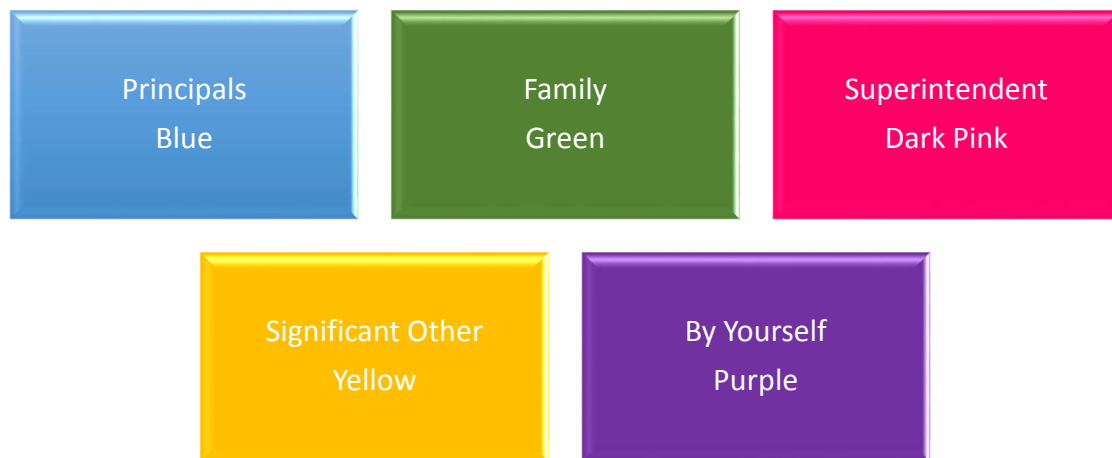


Figure 1. Relationship classifications.

After the principals decided upon five words for each category, each principal was then asked to place a plus sign or a negative sign on each word based upon the principal's perception of it as a negative or positive trait. If the principal believed the word could be both positive and negative, they placed both a plus and a negative sign on the Post-it note

with that identifier. Table 3 provides an overview of each principal's responses, their perceived importance, and whether the trait was perceived to be positive, negative, or both.

Table 3. *Principals' Descriptions of Relationships*

C = Most Important; M = Less Important; L = Least Important

	PRINCIPAL	IMP	VALUE	FAMILY	IMP	VALUE	SUPERINTENDENT	IMP	VALUE	CONFIDANT	IMP	VALUE	YOURSELF	IMP	VALUE
Sunshine	Knowledgeable	M	+	Kind	C	+	Task oriented	M	+	Loud	L	-	Constantly thinking	M	-
	Calm	C	+	Bossy	L	+/-	Confidant	C	+	Talkative	M	+	Anxious	L	-
	Positive	C	+	Loud	L	-	Helpful	C	+	Loving	M	+	Tired	L	-
	On task	M	+	Loving	M	+	Inquisitive	M	+	Fun	M	+	Eager	M	+
Gloria	Reserved	L	+	Distracted	L	-	Quiet	L	+	Caring	C	+	Inquisitive	M	+
	Sharing	M	+	Giving orders	L	-	Funny	C	+/-	Planning	M	+	Quiet	L	+/-
	Enjoy discussion	M	+	Loving	M	+	Collaborative	C	+	Funny	C	+/-	Relaxed	L	+/-
	Questioning	C	+	Listening	M	+	Strategic	M	+	Listening	M	+	Reading	M	+
	Funny	C	+/-	Demanding	C	+/-	Diplomatic	M	+/-	Loving	C	+	Constantly move	C	+/-
	Collaborating	C	+	Funny	C	+/-	Guarded	L	+/-	Problem Solver	C	+	NA	NA	NA
	Honest	C	+	Honest	C	+	Approachable	C	+	Supportive	M	+	Self-reflective	C	+
	Collaborative	M	+	Caring	C	+	Honest	C	+	Honest	C	+/-	NA	NA	NA
Jack	Inquisitive	M	+/-	Supportive	C	+	Supportive	M	+	Listener	C	+	NA	NA	NA
	Affirmation	C	+	Compliant	L	+/-	Caring	M	+	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Professional	C	+	Humorous	C	+	Questioning	C	+/-	Talking	C	+/-	Thinking	M	+
	Realistic	C	+	Deliberate	C	+/-	Listening	C	+	Loving	C	+	Analyzing	M	-
	Stoic	M	-	Joking	M	+	Guarded	M	-	Relaxing	M	+	Music	M	+
	Humorous	M	+/-	Busy	M	+	Stoic	M	-	Monitoring	M	+/-	Reflecting	M	+/-
Ben	Engaged	M	+	Projects	M	+	Analyzing	M	+/-	Working	M	+/-	Working	M	+/-
	Sincere	C	+	Loving	C	+	Loyal	C	+	Talkative	M	+/-	Prayerful	C	+
	Lucy	Dedicated	C	+	No nonsense	C	+	Talkative	C	+	Sincere	M	+	At peace	C
Complimentary		C	+	Caring	C	+	Friendly	M	+	Fun	M	+	Happy	M	+
Serious		C	+	Fun	C	+	Serious	M	+	Loving	M	+	Sentimental	M	+

Michelle	Fun	M	+	Sincere	M	+	Fun	M	+	Complainin g	L	-	Emotional	M	+/-
	Knowledgeable	M	+	Caring	C	+	Supportive	M	+/-	Helpful	C	+/-	Thinker	M	+/-
	Creative	M	+	Happy	C	+	Excited	M	+	Happy	C	+	Decisive	C	+
	Excited	M	+	Loving	C	+	Collaborative	M	+	Wild	L	+	Peaceful	M	+
	Problem solver	M	+	Excited	M	+	Listener	M	+	Free	L	+	Inquisitive	M	+/-
	Listener	M	+	Generous	L	+/-	Talkative	L	+/-	Lovable	L	+	Reader	L	+
Bob	Collegial	C	+	Caring	C	+	Professional	C	+	Caring	C	+	Task Oriented	C	+/-
	Professional	C	+	Myself	C	+	Honest	C	+/-	Honest	C	+	Relaxed	M	+
	Understanding	C	+	Authoritative	M	+/-	Open	C	+/-	Open	C	+	Planner	M	+
	Courteous	C	+	Planner	M	+	Inquisitive	C	+/-	Respectful	C	+	Inquisitive	M	+/-
	Inquisitive	M	+	Silly	M	+/-	Accommodating	M	+	Silly	M	+/-	Multi- tasking	M	+/-

Upon completing each set of Post-it notes, the principals were then asked to place each Post-it note on a bullseye, making sure that the words best describing and being most important to the principal's perception of himself or herself were placed in the center of the bullseye. The words that least described who the principal perceived himself or herself to be were to be placed in the outermost circle. All others were to be placed between the bullseye and the outermost ring. Figure 2 provides an example of the bullseye completed by each participant.

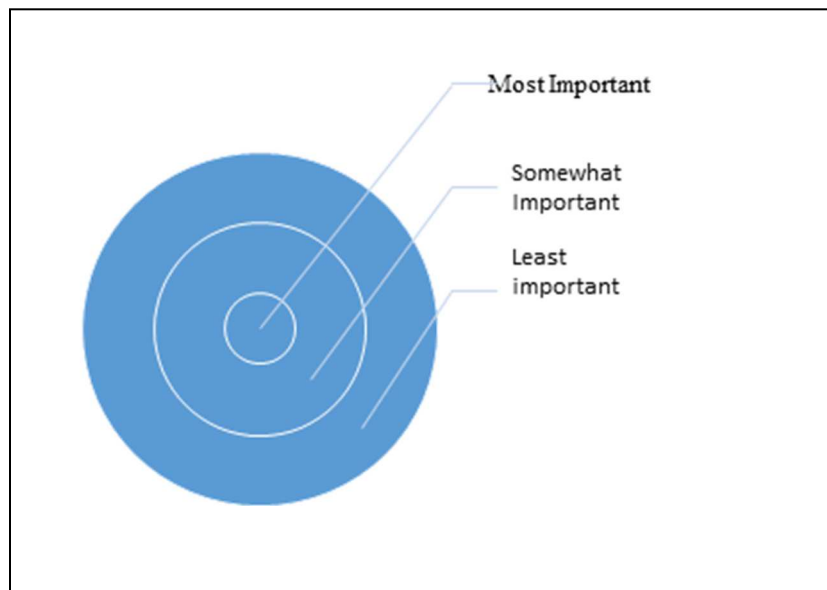


Figure 2. Sample bullseye.

The final portion of the Self in Relationship asked each principal the following questions about the bullseye:

- Do you think this represents your life?
- What does this picture mean to you?
- What role do you think being a female or male plays in this?

As a first-time researcher, I found it powerful to watch each principal ponder in personally what the bullseye and the exercise meant to himself or herself. Some took a longer period of quiet think time before responding, whereas others were able to quickly make statements regarding the picture that was just created.

When Sunshine responded to the question of whether the bullseye represented her life, she stated, “Sort of scary because the people that I care the most about, I obviously am not very real with, according to this” (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015). Upon further clarification and review of the bullseye, she believed that the categories of family and confidant that were in the center were truly ones that she considered most important.

Sunshine also commented on the fact that all of the words she selected for principals and superintendent were positive, whereas the words for family, confidant, and self had some negatives, with the most being when she was by herself. Throughout the interview Sunshine consistently made comments about not seeing gender differences. Her response to this last question was the only time she indicated that she believed the bullseye pictures for men would be very different. She said, “I mean, it’s, and I think the men will be all one kind of way with the superintendent versus all opposite way with family, I think, whereas I wasn’t” (Sunshine, personal communication, April 1, 2015).

Gloria’s response was a simple yes, when asked if the picture represented her life. She indicated that her only negative description under family was more for an organizational purpose of needing to keep the family orderly and organized. When asked what the picture meant to her, she laughed and said, “You probably think all I do is have fun” (Gloria, personal communication, April 16, 2015).

Gloria indicated that she really had no strong feelings about the role being female played in how her bullseye looked. She thought it had more to do with overall personality traits. She believed that for a female completing the exercise, one would tend to see more nurturing traits in the center circle due to the nurturing of children and loved ones.

Michelle believed that her completed bullseye strongly represented who she was as all of her most important words in the center were from the three categories pertaining to herself and her family. Throughout her interview she made reference to the importance of family, as did others, but with Michelle I could readily observe how her demeanor changed when the opportunity to talk about her family arose.

When Michelle was asked what the picture meant to her, she stated, “I never really thought I could see a complete picture of myself all in one place. It pretty much describes who I am” (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015). She believed that being a female played no significant role in the exercise or the picture it created. She said, “I’m not timid; I’m kind of quiet but I’m tough and the other high school principal is tough so it is a fair balance” (Michelle, personal communication, July 9, 2015).

As each principal completed the placement of the Post-it notes, I anxiously waited to ask these final questions. In my journal notes I always had the opportunity to reflect upon this part of the interview and predict how the participant was going to feel about the picture that was just created by each of them. The fourth female principal, Lucy, stepped back and looked at her completed bullseye to answer the final set of questions; she said,

It means that I’m a beautiful person. (laughter) It means that I don’t know. It means that I do take, that I do believe that there’s a higher power. I believe that it’s okay to be at peace with the things that you can’t change, you be at peace. I

am a caring person; I'm a loving person. I'm also a no-nonsense person. But I'm dedicated and I'm all in. (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

Lucy believed that the bullseye diagram represented her life in a very true sense and that being a female, from her perspective, really played no particular role in the overall outcome of the picture. She revisited the notion that it seemed to be more of an issue for the community based upon the examples she previously shared regarding the expectation that the high school principal would be a male.

The final female principal, Sandy, created a unique bullseye. She asked if it was acceptable to use the same words for each category; I told her that this was her picture, and if those were the words that described her with each group, that was her choice. All of her words were viewed as positive regardless of the group, with the exception of the adjective *focused*, which she saw as both a + and a – except for herself; then it was only a positive.

When asked if she thought the picture represented her life, she stated, “Uh huh, I do” (Sandy, personal communication, July 21, 2015). When asked what it meant, Sandy thought it meant she was real, regardless of the situation or the people and that being real was what counted. Regarding her thoughts on what role she believed being a female played in this picture, she said she had no thoughts.

Ben was the first male interviewee and at times struggled in completing the SIR as it was difficult for him to pinpoint the words he wanted to use. After relaxing a bit and my sharing with him that I was looking for no specifics, he seemed to be able to relax and let his words flow. He noted a variety of words for each entity and when asked if this represented his life, he responded: “I think that's, that's pretty much the core of me when, uh, because I'm approachable and honest. I try to be supportive and caring and a good

listener” (Ben, personal communication, April 29, 2015). When asked what the picture meant to him, he said that it represented the man he wanted everyone to feel comfortable with, regardless. He was unsure if being a male would make a specific difference in how the exercise would play out, believing it was more about individual personalities.

Jack had some difficulty coming up with all five words for each of the five entities. I found this to be unexpected as the open-ended portion of his interview was very interactive, and he had did not struggle to find the right words or experiences he wanted to use to answer each of the open-ended questions. He was very personable; it was easy to see how he was a people person just through the short interactions I witnessed while waiting for the interview to begin.

Jack was able to write only one word for when he was by himself: *self-reflective*. When asked if the picture represented his life, he responded,

Yeah, I mean my wife would tell you I’m a very deliberate person and everything has to be in a specific order. Although I don’t always clean and put stuff away where it’s supposed to be, I do want to have things kind of lined up, and there’s a sequential logic to what I want to do. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

He also stated, as Lucy and Sandy did, that he just wanted to be himself. When asked about the part being a male played in it all, he, as he had previously in the interview, indicated that for him this was not an issue but that, unfortunately, he had seen other males make gender a sticking point.

When completing the SIR with John, he struggled, as Jack did, with finding five words to describe who he was when he was with himself. He selected *content*, *quiet*, and *me*. He described all as positive and less important. When asked if the picture represented his life, he stated, “Yes, because family is the most important thing and that

is reflected in the bullseye” (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015). He also placed three of the family-related words in the center of the bullseye, showing that the most important words centered on family.

The picture meant to John that he had an overall positive outlook and attitude and that he was not much different from group to group as many of his words related to being caring and supportive. When asked if he believed gender played a role in this characteristic, he stated, “I think the words you select would not be based upon gender but experiences” (John, personal communication, July 28, 2015). John placed only two words on the outermost circle, and he did not label any words with only a negative connotation, with all but five being designated as positive only.

Bob, the next-to-the-last male interviewed, did not place any words on the outermost ring of the bullseye. It was an effortless process for him to select his words, and he appeared to be very comfortable in completing the activity. All but one of his words in the principal, superintendent, and confidant categories were marked as most important and placed in the center ring. All of his adjectives relating to other principals were deemed positive, and all but one were positive in the confidant category.

When looking at the completed bullseye and being asked if it represented his life, Bob stated, “I’m kind of saying the same stuff over and over; that’s the same thing, except reflective, yep, that’s me” (Bob, personal communication, August 3, 2015). The picture, he believed, meant that he was an honest and approachable guy, which he perceived he was; he was pleased that characteristic emerged from the representation. He did not feel that being a male had any particular bearing on his education choices or what the bullseye represented about him.

The final interview was with Matt. Matt's picture of himself was represented by a unique bullseye, as all but six of the words were in the center. After placing many of the words onto the chart, he stopped for a moment and asked, "And it's fine if multiple ones are in the center?" (Matt, personal communication, August 4, 2015). I reassured him that this was his creation and he could place them where he felt most appropriate.

When asked if this picture represented who he was, Matt replied,

Yeah, I think so. Most of them are related to being relaxed, laid back. So yeah, I think so. And I put these up here because I'm not, these are not me all the time, and being antsy and bored, and that all happens when I'm by myself. (Matt, personal communication, August 4, 2015)

All of Matt's words were positive except for two that were used in describing who he was when he was by himself. Matt's bullseye was unique in that the words he used to describe who he was with the superintendent were in sharp contrast to all of his other words. His was the only bullseye that presented such a sharp contrast to all of the other words used to describe himself. Matt did note this himself as well and did not elaborate on the reasons this might be the case. Matt did not see significance in the differences of male or female regarding the SIR or how gender would play a specific role.

After completing the analysis of the individual charts created by the males and the females, I displayed all 10 charts on the wall to begin to look for similarities and differences in how the male and females completed the exercise and whether or not there were any visible differences between the genders.

The SIR data revealed that all of the principals, regardless of gender, had traits considered positive when interacting with their principal peers. This category also had the second highest percentage, 52%, of the words being placed in the center of the bullseye as most important to who the principal was, regardless of gender. In trying to

create a reality from these data, as a constructivist does, this factor did not fall into line with the identity control theory in the sense of females' having reported needing to act in certain ways to identify with existing group norms; by identifying with the group norms, women have avoided being stereotyped based upon female behaviors (Eckman, 2004).

Overall Researcher Observations of the SIR

All but one of the participants found this portion of the interview to be engaging and enlightening as to who they were on a daily basis. Often, principals do not take the time to self-reflect and look at how they interact with so many different people each day, with so many expectations placed upon them.

All of the participants, even the one who had difficulty with the selection of words, thought the self-representation really did look like who they were at home and at work. The most difficult words to select for all participants, regardless of gender, age, or race, were the words they were asked to select to represent when they were alone. Not only did all struggle with selecting these words, it was also the entity that had the least number of words with the most importance attached to them. Only 12 of the 50 or 24% of the words from this category were considered most important to the principals. The number would have been even lower except for the fact that two principals, one male and one female, both from the same district, actually accounted for 6 of the 12 words. Additional analysis of the SIR is provided during discussion of the results in Chapter 5.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of the results and a review of the data analysis procedures, including the coding table. Introductory information was then provided about each of the 10 high school principals that participated in the study.

Emergent themes were then outlined with specifics regarding coding and insight into how the final codes emerged and were connected to the larger theoretical framework. After making the connections to the overarching theoretical framework, I presented an overview of the Self in Relationship protocol, an overview of the data collected from this portion of the interviews, and then specifics about each participant's bullseye and how they perceived the self-representations depicting who they were in relationship to each of the five entities. Finally, I shared observations about common themes that were found throughout the self-representations.

Chapter 5: Results

Overview of the Interpretations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how female and male high school principals develop relationships and whether or not they develop differently. In this study, a narrow gap in the literature has been examined and a small finding of new evidence is now available. I examined whether or not relationships are developed differently and whether or not the findings have implications for advancement. I approached this study from a constructivist viewpoint and sought to gain a greater understanding of the everyday experiences of the principals.

As a constructivist, I understand and seek multiple realities or ways to interpret single events (Merriam, 2009). I consider learning to be an active process that uses input from which to construct meaning. Constructivists see the importance of interaction with others and seek to make connections through history and cultural norms. Merriam wrote the following about qualitative research: “The focus is on understanding the meaning of experience, the researcher is the primary instrument in data collection and analysis, and the process is inductive, and the rich description characterizes the end product” (Merriam, 2009, p.15). Focusing on the meaning of the experience and the rich description was critical during the interpretation phase of the data analysis.

In conjunction with the constructivist approach, I framed the work through the identity control theory (Burke, 2004). This theory provided the physical structure for organizing issues that females face when navigating the “male norms.” Females have reported having to act in certain ways to identify with male group norms. By identifying with these norms women avoid being stereotyped due to female behaviors.

According to the literature, the identity control theory connects well with struggles females have shared and how they often perceive the need to act in a certain way to “fit in.” The theory connects the perceived meanings of the self in situations to the meaning held in the identity standard and remains in a cycle until the discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards is eliminated (Burke, 2004). Previous research has supported the notion that a discrepancy exists between what is expected for men and women within the same roles, thereby impacting the identity of the females (Loder, 2005).

Through data analysis, additional themes of daily work, leadership traits, gender expectations, and building relationships emerged, thereby providing connections between the theoretical framework, the research questions, and the Self in Relationship exercise. In reviewing this study, I have reflected many times on my own multiple realities, and I believe have a deeper understanding of my constructivist viewpoints and my approach to the world that I seek to understand on a daily basis.

Reflecting on the Study

Following the technique of a qualitative researcher, in Chapter 1, I provided an overview of my own beliefs and feelings regarding my journey into the research. Then, I identified the problem and the need to address the gap regarding the limited available research that included both male and female voices of high school principals within the same study. A gap also existed regarding how to embed strong practices and connections to allow the gap between males and females in the high school principalship and the superintendency to close. This research then, sought to focus on hearing both male and female high school principals within the same study, seeking knowledge on how they

build relationships. The study involved the use of open-ended questions to seek similarities or differences in how gender impacts principals' day-to-day work.

In Chapter 3, I detailed the process I used in this qualitative research study, marrying the work of Maxwell (2005) and Merriam (2009). I shared the design specifics of both open-ended questions and the Self in Relationship (SIR) protocol (Harter & Monsour, 1992). I explained that I would be focusing on five male and five female high school principals, each of whom had graduated from The George Washington University with a master's degree or a doctoral degree. All principals were to be currently in a high school principal role, assigned to a traditional American 9-12 high school. Chapter 4 described the opportunity to collect and analyze a large amount of data both through the open-ended questions and the SIR protocol. These sources of data allowed me to begin to build an understanding regarding an overarching research question—"Is it more difficult for a female high school principal to advance to the superintendency?"—by answering the following guiding research questions:

1. How do women and men develop relationships in the high school principalship?
 - a. Are there differences?
2. If there are differences, what are the implications?

Upon completion of the interviews, the data analysis focused on emergent themes, categories, researcher-established a priori codes derived in connection with the identity control theory, and data from the SIR. Four themes emerged as part of the open-coding process that I conducted with the first portion of the interview protocol. The themes of daily work, leadership traits, gender expectations, and building relationships arose from

multiple readings of the transcripts and field journal entries. These four themes also connected directly to the three primary, researcher-established, a priori codes according to the identity control theory, the theoretical framework for the study: (a) social expectations (role identity), (b) social structures, and (c) perceptions.

All of the data, along with journal notes and the multiple experiences shared by the principals, allowed me to gain deeper understanding regarding the role of gender in the high school principalship.

Overview of the Results

In this study of both female and male high school principals, varying and unique perceptions of reality were shared differently during each interview. The data obtained through the open-ended questions aligned with the three a priori codes selected directly from the identity control theory, the theoretical framework for the study:

- Social expectations (role identity)
 - Leadership traits
 - Building relationships
- Social structures
 - Gender expectations
- Perceptions
 - Daily work

Examples of each of the themes and the a priori codes can be found in experiences shared during the open-ended portion of the interviews. These examples begin to illustrate the findings from the open-ended portion of the interview and their connection to the selected theoretical framework as well as the decision to approach the research from the constructivist viewpoint.

During the Self in Relationship (SIR) portion of the data collection process, principals produced, classified, and evaluated specific words that helped to define how they related on a daily basis to other principals, family, the superintendent, confidant, and selves.

The SIR data revealed that all of the principals, regardless of gender, reflected traits considered positive when interacting with their principal peers. This category also included the second highest percentage, 52%, of the words placed in the center of the bullseye denoting importance to the principals, regardless of gender. In trying to create a reality from these data, as a constructivist does, this factor did not fall into line with the identity control theory in the sense of females' having reported needing to act in certain ways to identify with existing group norms; by identifying with the group norms, women have avoided being stereotyped based upon female behaviors (Eckman, 2004).

According to the literature, the identity control theory bonds well with struggles that females have shared and how they often perceive the need to act in a certain way to "fit in." The theory connects the perceived meanings of the self through situations to the meaning held in the identity standard and remains in a cycle until the discrepancy between the perceptions and the standards is eliminated (Burke, 2004). Previous research has supported the notion that a discrepancy exists between what is expected for men and women within the same roles, thereby impacting the identity of the females (Loder, 2005). Nevertheless, the SIR data I collected did not appear to support this finding from the literature review.

Both male and female principals had the most difficult time choosing the words to describe themselves when they were alone. I was able to observe during the interviews a

level of uneasiness or discomfort when working on this portion. This category also had the most words, 14%, classified with a negative connotation. Even though 14% is not a high number, I found it interesting that this category reflected the highest level of negativity. Principals are always involved in solving problems for their stakeholders, managing academic concerns, and attending to the needs of all the stakeholders they support. As a principal, I think being alone, quiet, and reflective is often difficult as the job is so people oriented. Whenever a principal is alone, it often seems unnatural or uncomfortable.

I also found it noteworthy that only 24% of the words in this category were placed in the center of the bullseye. Not being comfortable when alone relates to the critical nature of the relationships that principals build.

A study by Ylimaki et al. (2014) noted how relationships drive what happens with students, teachers, parents, and other community stakeholders. Building relationships and exhibiting interpersonal skills are critical components in school accountability reform. The study by Ylimaki et al. documented the importance of these skills with regard to school turnaround. Research has indicated that leadership styles and relationships that principals build impact schools' ability to meet all accountability measures.

To reach the levels of proficiency with which all schools and subgroups are tasked in the 21st century, principals need to work more collaboratively and build stronger relationships. Research supports the idea that schools and school leaders are unable to meet these needs alone: "Rather, strong relationships between parents, communities, and

educators are vital to improving student achievement and reforming education” (Ishimaru, 2013, p. 4).

This idea reinforces the notion that principals are not always comfortable being alone because so much of their work is collaborative in nature; being alone with themselves may not be the most comfortable or positive place for principals. Building relationships and exhibiting interpersonal skills are critical components in school accountability reform (Ylimaki et al., 2014).

Words from the family category were placed in the center of the bullseye most often (56%), and less than 6% of the words were viewed in a negative connotation. One male participant placed all five words in the family category and marked them as the most important.

In the current literature and research reviewed for this study, women continued to report role confusion and conflicting demands associated with having family responsibilities. The “norms” for a high school principal require a number of evening events and a long workweek (Munoz et al., 2014).

These norms were originally created around the demands of males rather than females; they have not taken into account updated family assumptions about the roles women and men play in the modern family and society (Marshall & Kasten, 1994). The fact that the family category words were placed in the bullseye most often, regardless of gender, speak to the changing role that the males are often playing in the family dynamics.

Interpretations of Results and Conclusions

From a broad perspective, the findings of this study reflect how female and male high school principals built relationships with five distinctive groups. Specifically, the principals shared their experiences related to relationships and how gender may or may not have impacted their experiences. “A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22). As the researcher, I not only collected the data and looked for themes but I also wanted to determine how the principals made sense of relationships in real-world settings, as described by Yin: “You just might want to study a real-world setting, discover how people cope, and thrive in that setting—and capture the contextual richness of people’s everyday lives” (Yin, 2011, pp. 3-4).

This study did not focus on the ability to generalize experiences but on seeking the overall experiences of similarities or differences among the female and male high school principals. The following sections elaborate on each identified theme and the conclusions that may be drawn from the research data.

Participants’ Own Experiences: The Open-Interview Portion

This portion of the interviews provided an opportunity for the principals to share their lived experiences. Participants were able to share challenges and triumphs they experienced on their paths to and while serving in the role of high school principal. As noted in Chapter 4, the following themes emerged: daily work, gender expectations, leadership traits, and building relationships. These themes were then connected to the three a priori codes derived directly from the identity control theory, the theoretical framework for this study.

Social expectations. First, when listening to each participant describe his or her leadership traits and how relationships were critical to the work, I saw the connections to the first a priori code established for this study. Participants shared experiences that allowed the themes of leadership traits and building relationships to emerge.

In qualitative research, the themes and specifics regarding the themes emerge from the participants' own words. The words *committed* and *supportive* were prevalent throughout the interviews. Both female and male principals referenced the commitment needed to put in long hours day after day to ensure the operation of a successful school. Principals in this study also focused on how supportive they were to students, teachers, and communities and how they would not be able to be successful leaders without support from and for all stakeholders.

Based upon my overall interpretation of all the data collected and analyzed in this study, the women and men I interviewed all developed relationships as an integral part of their day-to-day work as high school principals. Data analysis did not reveal any differences in the way relationships were developed with stakeholders. All the principals noted the importance of building relationships with all stakeholders and reported minimal awareness of gender-based issues.

Social structures. Not only are there social expectations but there are also social structures in place that may or may not influence the work of principals. The theme of gender expectations was a natural connection to the second a priori code. The fact that the family category words were placed in the bullseye most often, regardless of gender, speaks to the changing role that males are often playing in family dynamics.

The data analysis did not reveal any differences in the way relationships were developed with stakeholders. All the principals noted the importance of building relationships with all stakeholders and reported minimal gender-based issues. Not one of the five females mentioned the “good ole’ boy system” or referred to an “identity standard.”

When working through the open-ended questions, I noted multiple examples from both the female and male principals that led me to conclude that gender was not impacting the opportunities for these 10 principals to advance to the next level of leadership within their districts. Although two females spoke of not wanting to advance at the time because they had younger children, two of the males made the same comment; therefore, I did not view this as a female-specific decision. Jack’s statement confirmed that within this small study, circumstances were not aligned to the current research regarding gender expectations. His statement referred to his choice not to pursue the superintendency at that time due to the fact that he had three boys and was looking forward to being their high school principal:

Yes and no. Yes, it would be nice to be in charge of a division. I do not want to be in charge of one this big. His job is just too political. I would rather be the person in the, you know, one-horse town: one high school, one middle school, three or four elementary schools, that would be great. I just...I don’t know that it’s something I really want to do. I might be better, like, in charge of student learning or in charge of one of those kind [*sic*] of things. But like I said, I have three boys right now and my two oldest are dying to come here, so I can wait. (Jack, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

The women did not believe their gender posed a hindrance to them at that point in their career. Both males and females reported wanting to wait until their children were older before taking on a higher level of leadership outside the schoolhouse.

I observed that the female and male high school principals interviewed for this study all viewed each other as equal on the playing field of the high school principalship. I also found them to be protective of each other and their focus to be on what needed to happen for all their students as opposed to dealing with gender-based issues. One factor that I believe may be changing how males view females involves the family history of how the men are being raised or the role models of women they see growing up.

I believe if men saw strong women leading their own families or their own parents sharing responsibilities to diminish the stereotypical roles of males and females, there would be greater acceptance of their female peers. This notion is elaborated upon in the section exploring future research topics.

Perceptions. In addition to social expectations and social structures, the a priori code perceptions connected to the daily work done by principals. My constructivist viewpoint allowed me to interpret the lived experiences of each individual participant. In doing so, I observed that the differences shared were derived primarily from how the principals were viewed by the outside world rather than by their peers of either gender. For example Lucy described the following experience that occurred after a graduation ceremony when she was principal:

And so this older lady comes up to me; she said, "It's you." I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "It's you." I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "I just want you to know that I was shocked that it was you." And I said, "All right." She said, "I just, I did not know," she said, "and I just want you to know that I just thought it was just the nicest thing that they now have Black women in high... [laughter] I'm like, uh... it took all my strength. [laughter] I'm like, "Oh, yes, ma'am. Ain't it wonderful?" She said, "Yes ma'am." (Lucy, personal communication, August 3, 2015)

This gender perception came from an outside stakeholder rather than her own male peers.

Jack had a similar experience; he recounted the following incident:

I have an assistant principal who is 10 times smarter than I am, but she's tall and she's a blonde and so someone at the central office made a crack about, you know, being a bimbo, and I got a little pissy about it and said, "No, you don't talk like that about someone who works with me; if you knew her, you wouldn't say that." And I've never told her that. I don't want her to know that. But it's just, come on, man, really? This is not 1965. [short laugh] This is 2015, for God sakes. (Jack, personal communication, June 2, 2015)

I believe, based upon my study, that as the accountability system has changed for all educators, the gender barriers that existed previously are not as prevalent and I believe the change is due, in part, to the changing demands of accountability. Building relationships and exhibiting interpersonal skills are critical components in school accountability reform. A recent study, published in April 2014, documented the importance of these skills with regard to school turnaround (Ylimaki et al., 2014). Research has indicated that leadership styles and relationships that principals build impact schools' ability to meet all accountability measures.

Although there were very few comments from the females interviewed in this study that validated gender-based concerns regarding their ability to advance to the superintendency or indicated that the females built relationships any differently from the way the males did, the data sheets did reveal some telling underlying information.

Participants' Own Words: The Self in Relationship (SIR) Protocol

The constructivist viewpoint, as described by Merriam (2009), considers learning to be an active process that uses input from which it must construct meaning. When interpreting the results of this study and drawing conclusions, I continued to learn and truly found myself very active in the process of constructing meaning from all of the data I had received through the interview process.

What the SIR revealed. In reviewing the principals' adjectives, classifications, and designations of importance regarding the picture they each created on the SIR bullseye, I noted common threads that impacted my data analysis when reviewing the open-ended coding and themes.

As previously noted, most of the principals considered their chosen adjectives to be positive (+) or mixed (+/-). These words generally were placed in the most important or less important rings of the bullseye but rarely placed in the least important ring. Only 5% of the time was a positive or mixed word placed in the least important ring. On the rare occasions when that was the case, the words were *relaxed*, *quiet*, *humble*, *compliant*, *bossy*, and *reserved*. *Humble* and *reserved* were words selected by males.

Words that were labeled as negative (-) attributes were present at the highest level when principals were selecting words that described how they felt when they were alone. Words such as *bored*, *antsy*, *anxious*, *relaxed*, and *tired* were all viewed as negative and placed in the least important ring.

The fact that the family category words were placed most often in the center, or most important, ring of the bullseye, regardless of gender, speaks to the changing role that males are often playing in family dynamics. The second entity that generated the next most positive and most important words was the colleague. In this area, as well, there was no specific distinction between males and females. Males selected words such as *collaborative*, *team player*, and *understanding* as positive, placed at the center or most important ring of the bullseye.

With regard to the adjectives selected by principals in relation to their confidants, the males placed more words in the most important, center ring, none of which had a

negative connotation. Females reflected two instances of words that were considered negative (*loud, complaining*) in their selection of words for this entity; also, they placed fewer words in the center, most important ring. The men, based upon their descriptive words, appeared to be more at ease and relaxed when choosing the words for the confidant category.

Both females and males had difficulty choosing the words needed to describe themselves when alone. This area as well generated the most words that were labeled with only a negative connotation.

What was not said: A review of the data sheet. The constructivist viewpoint, as described by Merriam (2009), considers learning to be an active process that uses input from which it must construct meaning. When interpreting the results of this study and drawing conclusions, I continued to learn and truly found myself very active in the process of how to construct meaning from all the data I had received through the interview process.

The most surprising piece of data that initially stood out to me from the data sheets was the fact that all of the principals were married. This is not typically what the research has found. “When I was teaching and had different principal mentors and so forth, they were all divorced women!” (as cited in Wrushen & Whitney, 2008, p. 11).

All five of the male high school principals had two or more children, whereas only one of the female principals reported having two or more children. One female had no children, and the remaining three had one child each.

Although the specific and direct comments from the female principals did not speak to gender biases and challenges, the fact that all five males had at least two

children whereas that was not the case for the females begs the question of whether an underlying concern for having additional children was prevalent. Only one of the males held a doctoral degree whereas two of the females held doctoral degrees.

There was no real information that appeared to be gender specific regarding the current ages of the principals. Both one male and one female were over the age of 60, whereas the ages of the remaining participants ranged between 45-49 and 50-59.

Limitations

This study was confined to a small population of 10 high school principals, each of whom had graduated with either a master's degree or a doctorate degree from The George Washington University. Other participants with a connection to someone who had graduated from The George Washington University were found through the snowball method. In addition to the limitation of participants according to the university from which their degrees were obtained, the study was limited geographically, for the purpose of travel considerations. Participation was also limited by the principal's needing to currently be in the role of the principalship in a traditional 9-12 high school. No specific data were collected regarding the number of years in the position, age, race, or ethnicity.

Generalizability is also a limitation to this study. "The question of generalizability has plagued qualitative investigators for some time" (Merriam, 2009, p. 223). Nevertheless, although it is seen in this case as a limitation to the study, in qualitative research, a small sample size is used purposefully to gain a deeper understanding of a few versus finding what is generally true of a large number (Merriam, 2009).

Due to the limitations of this study, as a researcher, I recommend the following studies as future opportunities to explore the questions I developed during the data analysis. The following suggested research could begin to examine ideas that emerged through the data analysis process of this study.

Implications for Practice

Through the lens of this qualitative study the following implications were present in the transcripts; these implications directly impact daily practice of principals as well as decisions made at the central office level regarding hiring practices.

- Gender is not a determining factor of success in the high school principalship.
- Both the males and the females in this study built positive relationships with their students.
- All the principals interviewed for this study spoke of the importance of building relationships with both students and staff.
- Regardless of gender, all the principals spoke to the importance of being an instructional leader in the building.

Recommendations for Future Research

The purpose of this qualitative study was to interview both male and female high school principals with the purpose of addressing a gap found in the literature. The literature reviewed for this study identified barriers, role conflicts, and career paths but included very little research in the area of male and female voices regarding relationships in the high school principalship. Little research was available on how to actually begin to embed strong practices and connections to allow the eventual closing of the gap between males and females in the high school principalship and the superintendency.

In addition, limited research was found that included both the male and female voices of high school principals within the same study. My goal was to add findings that would influence policy and inform practice. The more opportunities educators have to hear all voices the more effectively the system can address shortages and close the leadership gap within the high school principalship.

Based upon the findings of this study, I recommend the following for future research:

1. This study should be replicated and focused specifically on age groups, for example, interviewing male and female principals between the ages of 35 and 45 only. This type of study would allow a researcher to determine if gender biases are being impacted by females who have worked while raising children.
2. In replicating the study and controlling the age group, one could also interview the parents of the participants with open-ended questions. It would be interesting to determine if males with a different view were raised by single, working mothers or by both parents in the home.
3. The exact study could be replicated but expanding the geographical range as well as the sample size.
4. Conducting this study at both the elementary and middle school levels and then analyzing the data through a qualitative coding and quantitative cluster analysis lens would allow the researcher to determine whether or not gender has an impact at the elementary or middle school level.

5. I would also be interested in conducting a study interviewing central office staff with previous high school principalship experience, who are still aspiring to become superintendents.
6. Just as the identity control theory addresses women having to break the traditional gender norms, I would like to see follow-up research, based upon some of the shared experiences from the male principals to determine if they too are extinguishing group norms for the traditional male expectations.

Conclusion

In this study, a narrow gap in the literature has been examined, and a small finding of new evidence is now available. The findings of this research study add to the available data regarding the lack of female superintendents in relation to the high school principalship's being the stepping stone to the superintendency.

Although both the male and female principals in this study provided specific examples related to the gender expectations theme, which highlighted both traditional gender experiences and gender experiences that defied the traditional gender expectations, they did not relate them to hindrances on the job but more to the personality each had developed over his or her career.

Personal Reflections

Prior to reflecting upon how this study impacted me personally, I took time to reflect upon how the study affected or in the future may affect the participants, other principals, school programs, and policies. The participants in this study were personally affected by having the opportunity to reflect upon their own experiences, practices, and purpose for selecting the position of high school principal. While sharing their answers

to the last question regarding whether or not the SIR bullseye reflected who they were, it was obvious that each was thinking about who he or she was as a principal and as a person.

Other principals will be impacted through the possibility to participate in the recommended future research, through conversations with the participants sharing their own experiences with this study, or possibly through reading this study during their own continued education. With regard to the impact of this research on school programs and policies, I hope that this small study will help schools and school boards to see that women can be successful in the role of the high school principal and equally effective as the superintendent of schools.

When I look back upon where I was both personally and professionally when I began this journey to a doctoral degree, it is amazing to me as researcher, educator, mom, daughter, and woman how much I have grown in each of these roles. I have also noticed a stronger sense of self-confidence that I did not feel was present when beginning this journey. My own experiences have given me the opportunity to actually experience gender discrimination, so, although I found through my research some of what had been confirmed in the literature, it was also very enlightening to see some of the findings indicating that leaks in the glass ceiling are beginning to be evident.

This journey has allowed me to truly find a self-confidence that had been lacking in me since early adolescence. As I began this journey as a single mom with a young son who was barely 10, as well as a network of support from my parents and friends, I am ending the journey with a responsible, and mature 15-year-old who has observed firsthand what determination looks like through the struggles of this doctoral journey. I

am completing this journey without the support system of my parents as I experienced both of their deaths during the journey. I related to so many of the findings in the literature such as having to be the “sandwich” generation in taking care of not only my own child but my parents as well as holding down a full-time job.

It is truly amazing to me that the process I have gone through to earn this degree has allowed me to find out so many things about myself and my beliefs. The opportunity has enriched both my personal and professional life in ways I was unable to imagine at the beginning of this journey. I also find it somewhat ironic that as I complete this journey, my own home district has hired its first female superintendent in the history of the school system. Although we have had acting female superintendents, we have never had a woman at the helm as the permanent superintendent.

This research already has allowed me to see the current reality differently from the literature presented in Chapter 2. Small qualitative research, such as this study, allows school leadership to progress forward by highlighting the individual stories of challenging the norms. It was enriching for me to hear the stories of both the males and females interviewed and to see that neither felt the heavy burden of gender as an impediment to their future success. Even more powerful and meaningful for me as a female was hearing the male voice affirm the idea that it is all about the right person for the job, not the person’s gender. Continuing to tell the small success stories of how gender does not have to be a hindrance will continue to move both females and the educational leadership to new levels of knowledge and new opportunities.

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Appendix A – Information Sheet

The purpose of this dissertation research study is to examine the role of female and male high school principals. The research study will assist the researcher in understanding the relationships of female and male high school principals.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to

1. Take part in the interview process by agreeing to be interviewed for one hour to one and one half hours.
2. Have the interview audio taped. Prior to the tapes' being transcribed, all identifying information will be removed from the text of the tape.
3. Provide the interviewer with a follow-up interview, if necessary, via telephone.
4. Complete the Principal Data Sheet.

Additional information

1. Principals will be assigned pseudonyms and will remain anonymous.
2. Data will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office.
3. Data will be deleted and/or destroyed upon the completion of the study.
4. Findings of the study will support those who are aspiring to the principalship and will provide additional information to the literature available on the high school principalship and relationships built in the position.

Confidentiality

All information provided will be held confidentially and reviewed only by the researcher. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will be provided the opportunity to review transcripts of the interviews.

Contact Information

Please contact Dr. Linda Lemasters, Program Coordinator, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at The George Washington University at lindal@gwu.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

To ensure anonymity, your signature is not required in this document unless you prefer to sign it. Your willingness to participate in this research study is implied if you proceed with completing the interview.

*Please keep a copy of this document in case you want to read it again.

Appendix B – Female and Male High School Principal Interview Protocol

Part A: Open-ended Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a high school principal?
 - a. Have you always been at the same school?
 - b. Did you serve as an assistant principal at the same school?
 - c. How many years were you in the classroom?
2. Tell me the story of your challenges and successes in regards to your career.
3. Briefly explain your career path.
 - a. How long did it take you to obtain a principalship?
 - b. What positions did you hold in addition to classroom teacher?
 - c. Were you tapped to go into administration?
 - i. If so, by whom?
 - ii. Would you have pursued administration without being tapped?
 - iii. Do you tap teachers on your staff to pursue administrative positions?
 - iv. Do you continue to be tapped for the next level of leadership?
4. In what ways have you been successful in your role as a high school principal?
5. Do you aspire to become a superintendent?
6. Describe the duties you are doing when you feel most effective as a high school principal and when you feel the least effective.
7. What does it mean to be a female / male in education?
8. Describe your relationships with your female / male teaching staff.
9. How have you balanced family and career?
10. What challenges do you face as a female / male high school principal?

11. As a female / male, have you had to shift or change your personality, personal identity, or traits as you perform your professional duties? If so, how have you changed?
12. What advice would you give other females / males who desire to become high school principals?
13. Would you like to add any remarks before we go to an exercise that will provide insight into you as a private and public person?

Part B: Self in Relationship Interview (SIR) Questions

- I. You are both a public and a private person. Now, I would like to explore with you words you would use to describe yourself.
 1. What are five words you would use to describe who you are when you are with other principals?
 2. What are five words you would use to describe who you are when you are with your family?
 3. What are five words you would use to describe who you are when you are with your superintendent?
 4. What are five words you would use to describe who you are when you are with your confidant and/or significant other?
 5. What are five words you would use to describe who you are when you are by yourself?
- II. Take a moment to review your responses. Are these words positive, negative, or mixed?
- III. Bullseye: Take these Post-it notes (use five different colors) and place them on the target. The words that best describe you and are most important to who you are will be placed in the center ring. The words that least describe you and are least

important to who you are will go in the outer ring. Those that are a moderate influence will be placed in the middle ring.

- IV. (After the interviewee finishes) Do you think this represents your life? What does this picture mean to you?
- V. What role do you think being a female / male plays in this?

Appendix C – High School Principal Data Sheet

Demographic Information

Please review/provide the following information:

Marital Status		Age	
Single		Under 35 years of age	
Married		35-39 years of age	
Divorced / Separated		40-44 years of age	
Widowed		45-49 years of age	
		50-54 years of age	
Number of Children		55-59 years of age	
		Over 60 years of age	

1. What is the highest degree you hold? _____

2. Please provide your professional and educational background and affiliations with professional and community organizations (not included in your attached résumé).