

**BEYOND THE BARRIERS: WOMEN-TO-WOMEN MENTORING IN/TO
SECONDARY SCHOOL AND CENTRAL OFFICE LEADERSHIP**

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Dedication

“Women are located in a position to know and understand the system,
and to defy and change it” (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000).

My work on this topic is dedicated to the brave and talented women school leaders who have come before me. Their courage, hard work, resiliency, and dedication to the education of children have not gone unnoticed. I thank them for leaving the footprints for me to follow.

Abstract

Despite the fact that the pool from which most school leaders come is made up of a majority of women, most school leaders are men. Notwithstanding extensive research regarding this issue, the number of women principals in secondary schools and in the office of the superintendent remains low.

The barriers, for those women not hired, identified by the reviewed literature can be classified as issues of job structure, age, and career paths. Because these issues are ones connected to women's family and domestic responsibilities, a simple solution for increasing the number of women school leaders has remained elusive.

However, one barrier, a lack of mentors, has not been as widely explored. The impact a mentor has is undeniable and having a role model serves to make positions of school leadership more achievable. Further, having a woman mentor not only identifies the barriers, but also allows an aspiring women school leader assistance in their navigation.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who were seated secondary school principals, assistant principals, and superintendents, and are or were mentored by other women school leaders. Specific questions included: 1) How do study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring? 2) What are the lived experiences of women who have been mentored by women school leaders? 3) Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who

aspire to school leadership? This qualitative study, used interviews, observations, and documents/artifacts to gather data regarding the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring. A phenomenological approach, including bracketing and reduction, was used to bring forth the prominent themes. Findings emphasized and illustrated original learning in the areas of: 1) mentor theory, 2) the practice of mentoring school leaders, 3) women-to-women mentoring, 4) the specific needs of women school leaders, 5) the gender of the mentor, 6) benefits to mentoring for women, 7) misuses of mentoring, and 8) a seated woman leaders choice to mentor.

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PROLOGUE

Being one of two girls, in a farming family of eight children, sparked both a life-long interest in the exploration of the opportunities afforded to women and an opposition to being told any opportunity was closed to me. Now, after having been a middle school assistant principal for eight years and having recently fought for my current position as building principal, the interests of my youth have meshed with the passions of my professional life and have led to the consistent examination of issues related to women school leaders. As a researcher and practitioner, my interests have always been driven by my need to better understand the issues that surround me. Currently, those interests focus on the journey a woman makes, or does not make, from classroom teacher to school leader.

Like most women school leaders, I did not enter education with the expectation of becoming a principal (Young & McLeod, 2001). Needing one final elective class to complete my master's degree in curriculum and instruction, I came upon leadership quite accidentally when I registered for a school leadership course that set off a series of events that, when looking back, still surprises me. By that time professionally I had a decade of middle school teaching experience and nearly that as a head coach at the local high school. As is the case for most women educators, no one encouraged me into school leadership (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000).

Up to that point in my career, I believed, as many women believe, that I had no real leadership experience and leadership did not seem to be among my responsibilities. To my thinking, the classroom and the ball field did not count; I was working with

children, they had no choice but to follow my lead. Even being a selected participant in district-wide committees or the head of building committees that served as an addendum to my teaching practice did not stand out as steps on a path to school leadership. That first leadership class, the tasks I was asked to complete and the thinking I was asked to do, helped to spark a belief in me that I could lead. That one spark put me on a path to leadership that began immediately with work to attain principal licensure.

Although no one sought me out, nor mentored me into school leadership, I was fortunate to have two professional women mentors and role models. The professor of that first leadership class eventually asked me to be her graduate assistant and a long-term mentoring relationship was created. Her background and professional interests were in higher education; she had never been a principal, but she instilled in me that belief that I could lead and required skills of me that would prove essential along my path. Upon moving further into my administrative licensure program, I was required to interview the assistant principal in my current school in order to complete a class assignment. That interview turned into at least weekly conversations about school leadership and eventually became another mentor/protégé relationship. She became a valuable source of information for me as I progressed through my licensure program and began interviewing for positions. Ironically, when she retired, I was hired as her replacement. Our relationship remains intact to this day.

After serving for four or five years as a middle school assistant principal in a large rural and suburban school district I had set my sights on becoming the building principal when the seated principal retired. While my principal and I had a good relationship, he

did very little to mentor me into the position despite knowing, discussing, and supporting my goal to succeed him. Similarly, no other principal, nor the district superintendent, made an effort to be a role model, to encourage me, or to ease my transition into a principal position. In fact, the superintendent routinely told his cabinet and most of my peers that he would never allow me to run a building in his district. Because I was informally mentored early on in my search for a school leadership position by women and was never mentored by building and district administrators who were men, it created a curiosity about the literature that stated most women school leaders were being mentored by men (e.g. Brunner & Kim, 2010) and further, the unwillingness of seated women leaders to mentor aspiring women (e.g. Funk, 2004; Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Schmuck, 1986; Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008).

While in my role as assistant principal, I actively worked to encourage others who demonstrated leadership capabilities into school administration. In fact, in my final year as assistant principal, I mentored four aspiring school leaders, one man and three women. One of the women was named an assistant principal at our high school, one woman took a position as a dean of students in a local elementary school, one woman was named to a pseudo-administrative role in my building, and the man has remained in his role as a teacher to date. As a school leader, I believe part of my responsibility is to actively seek out those whom I feel demonstrate leadership capabilities and provide opportunities for leadership within the building. Admittedly, because I think the discrepancy in the

number of women and men school leaders is a disservice to public education, I am more attuned to the positive attributes of the women teachers in my building.

Early last year, I had serious conversations about attaining administrative licenses with one woman and one man teacher. The man stated that he had been thinking about attaining his administrative credentials prior to our conversation and used me as a resource to enroll in a licensure program that I recommended. The woman had also shown interest, but regularly made comments such as, “My husband would kill me if I told him I wanted to go back to school,” and “my kids are too young right now.” She talked about being excited at the prospect of taking on a larger role, but also described the pressure of running a household and worrying about the conflicts she knew would arise if she went back to school for her administrative credentials. Interestingly, the man I encouraged also had a young family, but stated no hesitation at pursuing the licensure due to family responsibilities. For me, this is a concrete example of what the literature repeatedly states about the conflict women feel between seeking positions of school leadership and their domestic responsibilities (Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Reed & Patterson, 2007).

Simply stated, my interest lies in increasing the opportunities for potential women school leaders. The literature states that women do not enter into education with leadership in mind. What happens, then, when seated leaders identify women educators with leadership skills and help them realize that potential exists? Additionally, the barriers described by the literature are, at least in part, a result of the conflict women feel

in regard to their family responsibilities (e.g. Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Zemon and Bahr, 2005). Never having had children, I do not know the pressure this may have on a woman's professional life, but I do feel the stress of running a household and having cared for an elderly and sick family member every day. Women school leaders successfully manage all of their personal and professional responsibilities each day, but I wonder how many potential women schools leaders understand this is true. Therefore, I am curious about what happens to a woman's belief about being a school leader when she has a woman mentor and role model who is balancing family and school leadership successfully each day.

CHAPTER 1ⁱ:

INTRODUCTION

The candidate pool from which most school leaders come is made up of 75 percent women (Brunner & Kim, 2010). Since the Civil War, the majority of teachers in the United States have been women, yet a discrepancy in the number and percentage of woman leaders still exists (Fowler, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). In fact, although 72 percent of K-12 teachers are women, only 18 to 25 percent of America's school systems have woman leadership at the level of the superintendency (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Faddis, 2007; Sobehart & Giron, 2002). Further, "[t]he odds of a [man] teacher becoming superintendent are approximately one in 40; for a [woman] teacher, the odds are roughly one in 900" (Skrla, 2007, p. 248). When focusing on secondary (middle and high school) administrators, the National Center for Education Statistics (2009) stated that 71.5 percent of secondary principals were men and only 28.5 percent were women in the 2007-2008 school year. Despite extensive research regarding this issue, the number of women principals in secondary schools and in the office of the superintendent remains low.

The literature focused on women's attainment of school leadership positions identifies various gender-related barriers that block career paths to the secondary principalship and the superintendency. Most of these barriers can be classified as issues of job structure, age, and career paths. Because these issues are ones connected to women's family and domestic responsibilities (e.g. Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Miller,

Washington & Fiene, 2006; Zemon and Bahr, 2005), a simple solution for increasing the number of women school leaders remains elusive.

A final barrier highlighted by the literature is the lack of mentoring for potential women leaders or for women who want to move up the educational-leadership career ladder. If conducted by currently seated women leaders, mentoring may hold the potential to address the issue of personal and professional balance that is reportedly keeping women out of school leadership (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Reed & Patterson, 2007; Zemon & Bahr, 2005) The literature indicates that the knowledge and skills needed to become a successful or advanced woman school leader are best learned from someone with that same experience (Serby & Tripses, 2006; Sobehart & Giron, 2002). In her research exploring leadership development, Stelter-Flett (2007) noted that women leaders described the importance of the positions and roles that other women had in their professional development. The impact a mentor has is undeniable and having a role model serves to make positions in school leadership more achievable. Brunner (2008) found in her studies that, “exposure to nontraditional leaders and/or [woman] role models and mentors had a strong impact on whether women...sought administrative positions” (p. 676). While the literature agrees on the importance of mentoring, there has been little research conducted that examines the effect mentoring has on the numbers or percentages of women in positions of school leadership.

Although the literature demonstrates the need for the mentoring future school leaders (e.g. Darling-Hammond & Meyerson, 2010; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000); Kamler, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989), “women in leadership positions continue to

experience a lack of mentoring opportunities” (Sobehart & Giron, 2002, p. 43). This is especially true for those wishing to be mentored by seated women school leaders.

Women are rarely sought out and encouraged to lead, and they have few models from whom to learn what it means to be a woman in educational leadership. To be sure:

[t]he world of education is competitive, and women start the game with fewer role models, less visible and actual support for their ideas, and possibly for some, less confidence in their own abilities – having been socialized since birth that power and privilege belongs largely to whites, and in particular white [men]. (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p. 107)

Serby and Tripses (2006) argued that, “women must support other women to positions of school leadership. Lacking support from women already in leadership positions, aspiring women leaders likely will not assume positions in any great numbers” (p. 181). Due to the lack of relevant literature, we know almost nothing about whether the effects of woman-to-woman mentoring will increase the numbers of women secondary principals, assistant principals, and superintendents. And while the study discussed in this paper is not specifically aimed at uncovering the cause and effects that mentoring has on the numbers of women in leadership, further exploration of woman-to-woman mentoring may hold potential for removing some of the current barriers that women face as they aspire to secondary and district school leadership and then, in turn, have an indirect effect on the percentages in secondary and central office leadership. In brief, a close examination of the phenomenon of woman-to-woman mentoring may provide valuable information that could help close the gap in the number of men and

woman school leaders and expand the opportunities available to women. To introduce such an examination, this chapter is divided into the following sections: 1) Purpose Statement and Research Questions; 2) Background of the Study; 3) Definition of Terms; and 4) Significance of the Study.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who meet the following criteria: 1) are currently seated secondary school principals, assistant principals, and superintendents; and 2) are or were mentored by other women school leaders. The questions guiding this research include:

1. How do study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring?
2. What are the lived experiences of women who have been mentored by women school leaders?
3. Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who aspire to school leadership?

Background of the Study

Despite the fact that teaching has remained a feminized profession, school leadership continues to be dominated by males at the secondary and central office levels (Glazer, 1991), making this disparity one of education's most challenging issues. The classroom has always been the common steppingstone to administrative roles, because like most other professions, leaders come from within the ranks of the workers. In fact, 99 percent of those who sit at the highest level of leadership in school districts started

their careers as teachers (Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Skrla, 2007; Sobehart & Giron, 2002). Teaching after all, in most states, is a requirement for administrative licensure and/or certification except in rare legislated cases.¹

Even if the focus is placed at the secondary (middle and high school) level, at which there are fewer women teachers than in elementary schools, women still make up 59 percent of the teaching force (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Contrary to actual fact, these statistics lead one to think that women should occupy the majority of school leadership positions.

Illogically, men with less experience in curriculum and instruction in key content areas and with less classroom experience in general are hired over women for administrative positions in an era of unprecedented expectations for student achievement. The knowledge and experience with curriculum and instruction that is currently expected of school leaders most often comes with classroom experience. Women tend to have five to ten years of additional classroom experience over men (Brunner & Kim, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001).

In addition, when examining specific preparation according to subject matter at the secondary level, 75.4 percent of English/Language Arts teachers, 56.8 percent of math teachers, and 53.8 percent of science teachers are women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Whereas men make up the majority of teaching positions in Health/Physical Education at 62.3 percent and in the Social Sciences at 64.1 percent

¹ Nation-wide, 46 states require teaching experience as a prerequisite to principal licensure (Adams & Copeland, 2007).

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). Women's additional experience with curriculum and instruction in key subject areas has the potential to create administrators with stronger teaching and learning skills—skills necessary for increasing academic achievement.

In this age of educational accountability, schools are shifting to a leadership model that, directly or at least indirectly, impacts improvement in instruction and student achievement (Seashore, 2013; Spillane & Hunt, 2010). Due, in part, to educational mandates such as the recent *Race to the Top* and *No Child Left Behind* legislation, school leaders are under extreme pressure to document improvements in student achievement. Therefore, school leaders are no longer plant managers; they must now demonstrate knowledge of and experience with curriculum and instruction. This demand for a greater knowledge of curriculum and instruction has created a focus on instructional leadership that has changed the face of education (Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, & Orr, 2010). Gurkan (2012) insisted that, “instructional leadership has changed the school administrator's conventional understanding of role and management. The basic starting point of instructional leadership is to develop instruction” (p. 626).

If women are to be school leaders, they must be hired for the role. However, hiring at rates in line with the numbers of women in teaching does not happen. In fact, current reform or change efforts in education seem to make women the reasonable choice for school leadership positions. In recent years, the push toward accountability, closing the achievement gap, and increasing achievement of all students has increased attention

on school and district-level leaders (Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, & Orr, 2010).

In concert with the focus on instruction, some scholars note that decision-making regarding curriculum and instruction requires the inclusion of many actors. Thus, some reforms advocate shared decision-making leadership models or “a process of making educational decisions in a collaborative manner at the school level” (Brown & Anfara, 2003, p. 22). Shared decision-making seeks to bring about meaningful change in an organization by including the input of all members of the organization. Leech and Fulton (2008) proposed, “these structures demand a new vision of leadership, in which the decisional ownership and accountability is distributed among all members of the organization” (p. 632). The current push toward shared decision-making models of leadership is a good fit with what has been described as a woman’s collaborative leadership style and should theoretically increase the demand for women leaders (Logan, 1998).

When focused on the hiring of school administrators, research has established that historical “selection criteria and processes reinforce the biased notion that men, because of their typical preparedness for the role, are ideal candidates. ” However, “such beliefs and processes limit the advancement of women to higher administrative positions” (Brunner & Kim, 2010, p. 277). Fortunately, site-management and shared decision-making have brought about changes in hiring practices that may increase leadership opportunities for women. Site-management has shifted the hiring responsibilities away from single building and district administrators, who tended to hire in their own image, to

committees made up of current administrators, school board members, teachers, office professionals, parents, and students. With a wider group of people involved in hiring, the chances for hiring women and people of color could increase. Indeed, conditions may be favorable for women to enter into the administrative job market, yet the incongruity in the hiring of men and women in secondary leadership and the superintendency persists.

Definition of Terms

The definitions that appear below are provided to create an understanding of how terms are used specifically for this study.

School leaders: For this study, the terms “educational leadership” and “school leadership” are intended to indicate positions such as those of assistant principals, principals, and superintendents. These terms are used to describe supervision of K-12 buildings and are exclusive of those central office positions where there is little to no supervision of staff, students, and a physical plant. It is in these specific line positions that the shortage of women is most evident.

Mentoring: Sherman, Munoz & Pankake (2008) stated, “[a] mentor is one who teaches, coaches, advises, trains, directs, protects, sponsors, guides, and leads another individual or individuals” (p. 244). For the purposes of this study, mentoring may include a formal program or an informal agreement between two or more people. One member of the team, the mentor, is generally an experienced school leader, and the mentee or protégé is usually a teacher or administrator aspiring to a secondary principalship, an assistant principalship, or the superintendency.

Secondary Schools: For this study, secondary schools refer to schools considered middle, junior, or high schools; generally grades six through twelve.

Significance of the Study

Despite the barriers that women face when they aspire to school administration at various levels, they continue to make significant contributions to educational organizations. In fact, Eagly (2007) stated, “In the United States, women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership and, in fact, women, more than men, manifest leadership styles associated with effective performance as leaders” (p. 1). Regardless, despite decades of research focused on women and school leadership, women have gained very little ground in closing the gap between the number of men and women secondary (middle and high school) principals and superintendents. Schools are in need of the unique skills that women leaders possess, therefore, research focused on strategies that may increase the number of women in school leadership is important.

While extensive research exists that explores the discrepancy in the numbers of women school administrators compared to their men counterparts, there are only vague references to solutions that will increase the number of women in school leadership. One barrier noted in research is the lack of mentoring for prospective women school leaders—especially mentoring by seated women administrators. Little is known about the effect that women-to-women mentoring has on the number of women seeking school leadership positions. Enhancing and extending the research focused on the experience of same-gender mentoring may increase the understanding of the barriers that women face when aspiring to various levels of school leadership. This study aims to add to the knowledge

base about mentoring and role models for aspiring women school leaders—an area of study that scholars (e.g. Noe, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sobehart & Giron, 2002) agree may support women on their career paths as they seek secondary school principalships and the superintendency.²

² The use of “man/men” and “woman/women” rather than “male” and “female” is purposeful. These terms demonstrate the difference between language addressing sex and gender. The use of “sex” denotes the biological and physiological characteristics that define men and women. Biological sex is not determined in this research. “Gender” refers to socially constructed roles and specifically represents appropriate or normative appearance, behavior, and activities for men and women. According to the Sixth Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (2010), “‘gender’ refers to culture and should be used when referring to men and women as social groups...the term ‘sex’ is biological and should be used when the biological distinction is evident” (p. 71). For the purposes of this paper, the terms “man/men” and “woman/women” will be used to address the gender issues relevant to research regarding women-to-women mentoring.

CHAPTER 2:

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, literature that is relevant to women in school leadership is reviewed. The research is replete with the rationale for the lack of women in school leadership, and those researching this topic have typically agreed about the barriers. Certainly, one barrier appearing frequently in the literature is the lack of mentoring available to potential women school leaders (e.g. Darling-Hammond & Meyerson, 2010; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Kamler, 2006; Noe, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008; Sobehart & Giron, 2002).

While the literature agrees about the importance of mentoring, there has been little research examining the effect mentoring has on the individual career paths and personal lives of women in secondary and district level school leadership. Therefore, the structure of this literature review consists of a systematic discussion of the issues that inform the topic of *mentoring and women in public school leadership* in three major sections: 1) Changes to Organizations and Society, 2) Barriers to Leadership, and 3) Aspects of Mentoring.

Changes to Organizations and Society

Schools have recently undergone social and organizational changes that should increase opportunities for aspiring and advancing women school-leaders. As was discussed earlier, increased demands related to student achievement have encouraged schools to hire leaders with strengths in curriculum and instruction. In addition, site-based management has increased the demand for leaders with strong democratic skills

and, at once, has turned hiring over to committees—both moves that increase opportunities for women aspiring to and advancing in school leadership. In addition, changes in the make-up of school leadership preparations programs (i.e. those wanting to be leaders) and retirements (i.e. those ending their tenure as leaders) should also increase opportunities for women. This section begins with two subsections that identify notable current circumstances that highlight the illogical fact that women are underrepresented in middle and high school leadership and the superintendency: 1) Preparation; and 2) Retirements.

Preparation

Brunner and Grogan (2005) urged constituents to “take a hard look at why there are so few women in the top position when the majority of educators are women, and women comprise at least half of the students in educational leadership programs” (p. 50). More women than men have filled educational administrative preparation programs since the mid 1990’s (deCausal & Mulligan, 2004; Logan, 1998; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001). In addition, women have earned “78.7 percent of bachelors, 77.3 percent of masters, and 67.5 percent of doctoral degrees in education” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 30). In their 2010 research, Brunner and Kim noted that 57.6 percent of woman superintendents held an earned doctorate as compared to 43.4 percent of superintendents who are men. Therefore, the educational backgrounds of most women support their advancement to leadership positions in numbers equal to their counterparts who are men. Even so, the underrepresentation of women in secondary and superintendency administrative roles persists.

Retirements

Although controversial, some scholars (of the 21st century) report that current school administrators are retiring at an ever-increasing rate—a rate that is producing significant shortages in the numbers of qualified school leadership candidates (Hickey-Gramke, 2007). Many state departments of education are reporting shortages of school administrators (Young & McLeod, 2001). To be sure, some describe an impending leadership crisis as the largest group of leaders in history retires; they note, “the war for talent is intensifying as the demographic projections become a reality around the world” (Leimon, Moscovici, & Goodier, 2011, p. 9). In addition, Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) identified a leadership cliff, an event that only those organizations that tap other sources of leadership can overcome. Others argue that fewer and fewer administrators are currently available to fill these positions and schools are having an increasingly difficult time finding qualified candidates to serve as administrators (Young & McLeod, 2001).

In essence, the crisis is a predicted future shortage of educational administrators. This predicted shortfall has left those in charge of our school systems scrambling to come up with strategies and solutions for attracting more educators into administration. Ironically, within the discourse surrounding the crisis, little consideration has been given to gender even though there is a nationwide underutilization of women in educational administration (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 462). If the gender discrimination to which Young and McLeod (2001) referred were eliminated, the pool of administrative candidates would undoubtedly be deeper. Grogan (2005) stated that until school boards

bring more women into the leadership ranks, they send the message that women's leadership is not valued. Openings exist and qualified women are available, yet over more than a century, only a negligible increase in the number of women leaders in secondary schools and in the superintendency has occurred. Thus, the problem of the underrepresentation of women in secondary and superintendency administration remains.

Barriers to Leadership

Increasing the number of women in school leadership necessitates the removal of gendered barriers to these positions. The literature surrounding the issue of women's underrepresentation in educational leadership highlights six main reasons for the discrepancy in the percentages of men and woman leaders. In the last two decades, these issues have been thoroughly researched, albeit almost exclusively by woman scholars. When examining each of the reasons advanced by the literature, two points become clear. First, many of the issues are interconnected because they include the role that women play in family life. In addition to giving birth, women bear the load of other domestic responsibilities such as caring for children once they are born, caring for aged or disabled family members, and the day-to-day management of the household (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Reed & Patterson, 2007). Second, the nature of these barriers makes the underrepresentation of women in school leadership a difficult problem to solve. Because the six reasons for underrepresentation are interconnected, I have collapsed them to form three primary categories. Thus, in this major section there are three subsections focused on the literature-based barriers that women face when seeking administrative roles, including: 1) Structure; 2) Age; and 3) Career Path.

Structure

The first barrier noted in the literature surrounding women and educational leadership is that of job structure, more specifically the necessity of long hours, inconsistent schedules, evening meetings, and additional supervision assignments—all resulting in a long workweek. According to some research, the barrier of job structure exists primarily because of the gendered conflict between long working hours and extra familial responsibilities (Kamler & Rasheed, 2006). Zemon and Bahr (2005) added, “although women have made significant progress in traditionally [men]-dominated occupations...those who have children are unlikely to advance to the top positions in their fields” (p. 394). The domestic responsibilities many women experience become a barrier to leadership because administrative positions require long days and work weeks to complete the job requirements (Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006).

Bredeson (1991) stressed that the gender imbalance in leadership can be explained by a process of self-selection “because 9-month positions are more for working mothers,” due to the “interrupted career patterns for [women] educational professionals because of family responsibilities.” As Stier (1996) noted, positions that are at the “upper end of the occupational distribution (in terms of skill requirements and prestige) tend to place heavier demands on the workers, which interfere with women’s obligations to their family” (p. 63). Human capital theorists agree, “women take into consideration their familial alongside occupational aspirations when planning for the future, since they are expected to devote much (if not most) of their time to family and child-care duties” (Stier, 1996, p. 62). Therefore, while the staff school leadership positions women tend to

hold seem to work well with the demands of their personal lives, in the eyes of those who hire school administrators, these positions do little to prove candidacy for upper-level leadership positions. Newton (2006) described how women who hold staff leadership positions, rather than line positions such as the principalship, are at a hiring disadvantage in what she called “the mechanics of picking the best” (p. 552). Newton (2006) stated, “For example, position announcements, requiring that applicants have administrative experience, overlook the knowledge and skills learned in leadership positions such as curriculum specialists that are often held by women” (p. 552). Further, “such criteria reinforce the notion that [men] are the ideal candidates” (Newton, 2006, p. 552).

Brunner and Grogan (2007) noted that 30 percent of the superintendents they surveyed delayed taking a position as a superintendent until their children were older. Further, “[w]hen women do choose to put family considerations first, they feel as though they are then looked upon as being unable to accept the challenge, that they simply can’t do the job of leadership, and that the family is an excuse to avoid taking on additional responsibilities” (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000, p. 102). In addition, “although research does not support the notion that women’s work suffers from these added responsibilities, it is believed by men in positions of power that family responsibilities adversely affect job performance” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 112). For these reasons, women without children are twice as successful in achieving careers as women with children are (Zemon & Bahr, 2005). Additionally, two-thirds of women, who begin their careers before having children, never have children (Zemon & Bahr, 2005).

In an extensive 2007 study, Brunner and Grogan disputed the claims that child rearing and other domestic responsibilities shape a woman's choice of a staff position rather than a line position. Their findings indicate that women are not giving up the role of mother in place of the role of school leader as "women in top leadership roles were having children at approximately the same rate as women in the broader population" (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p. 41). Brunner and Grogan (2007) found that approximately 75 percent of the central office administrators and superintendents they surveyed had raised or were raising children when they entered leadership. Brunner and Grogan (2007) posited that a career in education, which necessitates close contact with children, may reduce the stigma that accompanies the choice to have a children as well as a career.

Age

A second barrier explored in the literature that is purported to keep women out of the leadership ranks is the age at which they enter the pool of leadership candidates. Women are entering the job pool later than men, making them older than their competition (Hickey-Gramke, 2007). The vast majority of existing research states that later entry is tied to the fact that women bear children. If women desire to have children, the endeavor may take time away from careers due to the physical stressors of birth as well as the importance of caring for infants during the early weeks of life. Therefore, women tend to be older than men while searching for or holding the same position. Other scholars concede, "[e]ven when women establish their careers before starting families, the interruption of maternity results in losses of seniority, fewer training opportunities, and salary lag" (Zemon & Bahr, 2005, p. 395).

However, some scholars (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Young & McLeod, 2001) view the age difference in men and women leaders through an alternate lens, stating that “men’s average age at first superintendency is 42.7 years, women’s average age is 47.3” (Brunner & Kim, 2010, p. 293). Therefore, when considering age, men are entering the superintendency only five years earlier than women. Unlike their peers in educational leadership, Brunner & Kim (2010) think this age difference comes, not as a result of having children, but of spending additional time in the classroom and in other administrative roles. The additional time, they feel, is of substantial benefit to both the leader and the led.

Career Path

A third barrier for women seeking school leadership is their career paths—that is, their credentials, or the positions that they held prior to seeking advanced levels of leadership (Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006). As the following sections explain, women school leaders tend to hold: 1) Elementary positions, or 2) Staff positions.

Elementary positions.

Although two-thirds of the nation’s schools are at the elementary level, the traditional path to the upper echelons of school leadership runs directly through secondary schools to the boardroom (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Most individuals, who reach the office of the superintendent, come from secondary school administration, not from the elementary level (Grogan & Brunner, 2007). Tallerico and Tingley (2001) disagreed with the idea that this trajectory is superior, stating, “no evidence suggests that

a person who served as a high school principal makes a better superintendent than one who has been an elementary principal” (p. 26). However, the most promising career paths for men also include the high school athletic coach, department chair, and assistant secondary principal (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Sixty-three percent of superintendents once served as coaches—a job that gives administrative candidates an “advantage” since it serves as “a very visible entry position” (Brunner & Kim, 2010, p. 291). Coaching opportunities simply do not exist in elementary schools, and there are fewer opportunities for department headships and assistant principalships as well. Therefore, because the largest numbers of women are in elementary teaching positions, their opportunities to serve as coaches, department heads, or assistant principals are most times non-existent. Lack of access to these gateway positions adversely affects their career paths (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Childbearing and the responsibility of raising a family may have an impact here as well. Stier’s (1996) research emphasized that the “employment pattern of women along their life cycle is highly affected by motherhood” (p. 60) and one might assume that educational leadership would be no exception. Perhaps elementary administration more comfortably merges the career and family desires for many women. The long workweeks and required night meetings of secondary principals and superintendents may make leadership positions in elementary schools more appealing for women with children. More dependability in scheduling and fewer students per school, on average, proportionately decrease the demands on the administrator.

In a different vein, Young and McLeod (2001) asserted that because most woman administrators hold elementary positions, this role must be the one to which most women aspire. Along the same lines, Shakeshaft (1989) stated that because they have for so long been denied leadership of secondary schools and of the front office, remaining in the elementary grades might be a “very logical and effective mental health remedy” (p. 91). Perhaps for some women the preferred route may be to hold a position of leadership in an elementary school rather than no leadership position at all.

According to the literature, a final reason for the preponderance of women leaders in the primary grades is that elementary schools make up two-thirds of public schools, meaning more opportunities for leadership exist at this level than at the secondary level (Reed & Patterson, 2007). The combination of more opportunities for leadership and a palatable work schedule may explain why more women become elementary school leaders rather than secondary or district-wide school leaders. Regardless of the reason, there is a connection between a woman’s leadership credentials and the likelihood of attaining a position in the highest level of school leadership (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Staff positions.

The upper-level positions that are held by women tend to be staff positions in the central office rather than line positions (Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001). Staff positions include supervisors and directors of areas such as curriculum and instruction, human resources, special education, and finance. Central office positions, as these are often called, do not carry the responsibilities of a large staff, a physical plant, and direct supervision of students and student activities. Therefore, the schedule is

highly structured and less demanding than that of a secondary school administrator or a superintendent. Supervisory roles such as this tend to be nine-month positions rather than the eleven or twelve month requirement of secondary or district-level administrative positions. Again, researchers (Bredeson, 1991; Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Zemon & Bahr, 2005) identify a link to family and domestic life.

Aspects of Mentoring

A final barrier that repeatedly surfaces in the literature is a lack of mentors for prospective women school leaders (e.g. Darling-Hammond & Meyerson, 2010; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Kamler, 2006; Noe, 1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008; Sobehart & Giron, 2002). Although the literature demonstrates the need for the mentoring of future school leaders, “women in leadership positions continue to experience a lack of mentoring opportunities” (Sobehart & Giron, 2002, p. 43). For those aspiring women leaders who wish to be mentored by seated women school leaders, a lack of opportunity is especially true (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Purposeful woman-to-woman mentoring may well be a way to reduce the gendered barriers facing women who seek positions in school leadership. In this major section, nine subsections focus on the topic of mentoring, including: 1) Theory; 2) Practice; 3) Women; 4) Needs; 5) Gender; 6) Power; 7) Benefits; 8) Misuses; and 9) Choice.

Theory

According to Kram’s (1985) Mentor Role Theory, the goal of mentoring is to support an individual’s development both professionally and personally. Gardiner,

Enomoto and Grogan (2000) affirmed, “typically, mentorship is the special and favored relationship that is cultivated whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both personally and professionally” (p. 5). Mentors have advanced experience and knowledge and have committed themselves to the advancement of their protégés’ careers and professional development. Specifically, “[t]he career functions of mentoring involve sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, and challenge...personal psychosocial functions, on the other hand, address the mentored person’s inner self – his or her sense of how best to behave, workplace values, personal dilemmas, and sense of acceptance by the group” (*Harvard Business Essentials*, 2004, p. 77).

The benefits of mentoring to both mentors and protégés are well-known and include: increased confidence, an opportunity to blend theory and practice, improvement in communication skills, increased job performance, a sense of connection to a professional community, improved job satisfaction, recognition by peers, and career advancement (Daresh & Playko, 1992). In addition, “[a]dults who work with mentors grow in their own sense of intellectual competence, as well as in their sense of purpose, their feelings of autonomy, and their personal integrity” (Bova & Phillips, 2001, p. 16). Mentoring also has value for the organization as it “develops human assets of the organization...helps to transfer important tacit knowledge from one set of employees to another, and it aids in the retention of valued employees” (*Harvard Business Essentials*, 2004, p. 81). Mentor role theory repeatedly demonstrates that mentors are important for aspiring leaders in all areas.

Further, mentoring has a historical foothold in all aspects of education, and has long been considered a traditional route into positions of school leadership (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Simply put, mentoring allows a potential school leader to move from theory to practice; that which was learned in an administrative preparation program can be put to its practical application in a school setting. In their extensive study of successful preparation programs for school administrators, Darling-Hammond and Meyerson (2010) indicated that a formalized mentoring system is one of the necessary elements of an exemplary program. While their study clearly demonstrated the importance of mentoring for school leaders, few formal mentoring programs were reported to exist and none specifically addressed the needs of women (Kamler, 2006). Therefore, little is known about the impact mentoring has on potential or seated woman school leaders. Likewise, while the literature recognizes the importance of formalized mentoring systems, there has been almost no attention to the topic of same-gender mentoring, especially for aspiring woman school leaders.

To add to theory, Matthews (1995) posed a question that may prove important to the study of women-to-women mentoring. She asked, “[w]hat do women administrators think about women administrators” (Matthews, 1995, p. 247)? Matthews (1995) gathered data from superintendents, assistant superintendents, high school principals, and assistant principals regarding their views on their careers, issues they faced, gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, and perceived problems of isolation (p. 247). From her data, she discovered the women school leaders who participated in her study fell into one of four categories: activists, advocates, isolates, or individualists. Women in the first two

categories are willing to help other women working toward leadership roles in order to further the cause of women and to strengthen school leadership. Matthews (1995) thinks this is because women see relationships as webs or networks rather than hierarchies. An important note is that Matthews (1995) did not specifically state that the final two categories, the isolates and the individualists, are unwilling to mentor. However, the women who fall into these categories do not see mentoring as a necessity and may be unwilling to mentor as a result. Applying Matthew's (1995) framework to mentoring may help us understand whether gains can be made for women in educational leadership through mentorship. Knowing the culture of seated women leaders may increase understanding of the "room" for aspiring women, and whether a collective effort to increase opportunities for aspiring women holds any promise.

First, activists are those who care "passionately about issues of gender equity and actively supported efforts to correct the imbalance of women in educational administration" (Matthews, 1995, p. 247). Under the influence of the women's movement, activist women will typically choose to further the career of a woman over a man with equal qualifications in an attempt to correct the imbalance that exists and to right a social wrong. Nearly all of the women in this category are six to ten years older than women in the other categories and they entered school administration by their own initiative (Matthews, 1995, p. 249). Activists spoke of their "struggles to overcome [gender]-role stereotypes and [gender] discrimination" (Matthews, 1995, p. 249). Therefore, activists are "are knowledgeable about [gender]-equity laws and use them to their advantage and to the advantage of others" (Matthews, 1995, p. 249).

Matthew's (1995) second category is the advocate. The theme for women in this group is support; support from, and support for other women. Advocates "joined advocacy organizations, and expressed the view that women bring unique strengths to school administration" (Matthews, 1995, p. 247). Advocates think the strength women bring to administration is due to a culture of socialization or "the sensitivity to where other people are" (Matthews, 1995, p. 254). Matthews (1995) thought the women in the advocate group did not experience the barriers the activist women faced.

The third category defined by Matthews (1995) is the isolates. Isolates may not be as willing as their activist and advocate peers to further the cause of women aspiring to positions of school leadership. Isolates "detached themselves from issues related to equity; most didn't believe that [gender] discrimination really existed, and, in most cases never gave this issue much thought or even saw it as a problem" (Matthews, 1995, p. 248). Isolate women received, as a group, support from district administration as they advanced through their profession (Matthews, 1995). Because they think the same is true for all women, isolates may simply not see the need to act as a role model. Unfortunately, Matthews (1995) also discovered that "some of these women kept other women out of the organization by excessive criticism of possible new-hires or by subtly undercutting a possible woman peer" (p. 258).

Finally, the individualists thought that "the individual, [man] or [woman], took precedence over the group. They did not promote women nor did they believe in any kind of countermeasures to correct the sexual imbalance in school leadership" (Matthews, 1995, p. 248). Individualists are concerned with the attributes of individuals rather than

equity for all (Matthews, 1995). These women were recruited into school administration by men and often express a fear of alienating men. Many state they are proud of being “one of the guys” (Matthews, 1995, p. 260). The women who fall into this category do not consider serving as mentors; in fact they often show a “willingness to take on the role of the permanent protégé” (Matthews, 1995, p. 261). Matthews (1995) four categories of women school leaders and their attitudes regarding gender equity may help to illuminate the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring.

Practice

As Kamler (2006) stated, “alternative mentoring practices have begun to slowly change the school leadership landscape with the hope of providing a more democratic representation of candidates” (p. 298). However, the current mentoring situation for women is still as Noe (1988) described: informal and exclusionary. Those formal mentoring programs that are in place are piecemeal in nature, and they do not seek out women and people of color from the pool of potential leaders (Kamler, 2006). The literature makes it clear that those women with leadership potential and/or leadership goals need access to mentors:

Traditional administrative groups that have had large [men] memberships have been unreliable for helping women. Although they might help an individual woman here or there...there has not been any systematic support for equity from these groups. (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 137)

In addition, despite the potential that exists, current mentoring programs do little to create change in failing educational systems across the country. Gardiner, Enomoto

and Grogan (2000) affirmed, “we need to be aware that the practice of mentoring, steeped in the masculine tradition of reproduction of self, dominant values and attitudes, is likely to reinforce a discourse of educational leadership no different from the one we have always had” (p. 187). Current mentoring systems do nothing more than extend the status quo to new generations and do not meet the specific needs of women (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000).

The literature briefly explores alternative sorts of mentoring programs, however, the majority of mentoring is informal and seems to occur when an individual shows leadership potential and is taken under the wing of a sitting administrator (Kamler, 2006). An alternative method of mentoring would be more formalized, perhaps offering more than one mentor, group interactions that create relationships around professional communities, and/or same-gender mentoring (Gibson, 2006; Kamler, 2006; Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). Further, as Kamler (2006) explained, “[i]nfluenced by feminine thinking, however, these mentoring configurations challenge the hierarchy and, through interdependence and reciprocal learning, provide expanded opportunities to build a diverse community of learners” (p. 301).

Women

Leadership Theory highlights gendered differences in style and approach to leadership. A woman’s leadership style is generally considered more democratic or participative in nature (Brunner & Kim, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001). More specifically, “communal attributes include qualities that demonstrate concern for the welfare of other people, such as affection, helpfulness, kindness, sympathy, interpersonal

sensitivity, nurturing, and gentle characteristics” (deCausal & Mulligan, 2004, p. 26).

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stated that, “appearing over and over in the literature is that women do not want to lead the way their [men] role models lead” (p. 41). Sensibly, women want and need to be mentored differently than men because “mentoring provides the means by which individuals who wish to lead differently can be successful”

(Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 193).

Although not extensive, the literature surrounding women and educational leadership addresses mentoring and the impact it may have on the quality and quantity of women leaders. Smulyan (2000) stressed, “the presence of predominantly [men] gatekeepers and the lack of mentors tend to reduce women’s chances of becoming principals” (p. 118). Serby and Tripses (2006) maintained that “[r]easons often cited as explanations for discrepancies between numbers of women in the teaching ranks and women in leadership positions are a lack of networking, few positive role models, and inadequate sponsorship and mentoring among women” (p. 179). Each of these issues may be addressed by purposeful and formalized mentoring programs for women and may also significantly increase the pool of women school leaders (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). Peters (2010) expanded upon the idea of the importance of mentoring when she noted, “overwhelmingly, women have had limited access to positions of school leadership, particularly at the middle school, secondary, and district levels. An important reason for this is related to the lack of support and guidance necessary to propel such individuals into such positions” (Peters, 2010, p. 112).

Despite the fact that “same-[gender] mentors and role models are important for anyone who aspires to climb the career ladder” (Brunner & Grogan, 2007, p. 76), the literature rarely addresses the impact that purposeful and formalized mentoring has had for women. Such opportunities simply do not exist for women the way they do for men (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Women need the same access to positions of school leadership that men traditionally have. For example, men often have a strong institutional and cultural support base for their leadership roles (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). They are not questioned when they show an interest in leadership. However, women need to know unquestioningly that school leadership is an option. Men may have less of a need to look for their superiors’ validation of their desires to enter into leadership as it is embedded in institutional norms and expectations. Men are able to see themselves in a leadership role because they reflect the image of those who have always led schools (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000).

Men who believe they show the leadership potential necessary to become school administrators learn early on how to get the attention of seated leaders and are immediately taken into the fold and groomed for the position within a network of men who stand ready to provide assistance (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). However, women often find themselves “waiting to be deemed as worthy to pursue leadership positions and, many times, waited to be tapped for roles rather than being proactive and pursuing the independent nudges from others” (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008, p. 252).

The use of carefully chosen mentors may impact the number of skilled women leaders who are available, as well as the unique talents they bring (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). A direct tie between success and school leadership exists because, “although most women have not had either sponsors or mentors, most who have been successful in acquiring administrative titles have sponsors or mentors. Sponsorship or mentoring appears to be an important process in a woman’s administrative career” (Shakeshaft, 1989, p. 116). When referring to the women who participated in their study, Young and McLeod (2001) observed, “the administrators with whom they worked had profound effects on their ideas of educational leadership and on their decision to enter administration” (p. 476). As was discussed earlier, women have different needs when preparing for leadership because the barriers that they face are specific to their gender. If one considers biology alone, the differences are subtle, but when one considers all of the additional elements facing women leaders, evidence exists to support the need to further explore purposeful woman-to-woman mentoring (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

Needs

Women and men leaders face different obstacles when pursuing educational leadership roles and thereby have unique development needs (Ragins, 1997). With a greater understanding of women’s needs may come a greater potential for the expansion of opportunities for women. In a recent study of women leaders in the corporate world, Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) identified several key areas that women must master in order to gain a foothold in leadership. Although this study was based upon women’s leadership in the business world, applying it to educational leadership is

reasonable. Examination of the Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) study is important for three reasons: first, there are very few studies of women leaders that address the specific development needs of women rather than examining their needs via a model based upon men. The traditional research and accompanying literature, which has been referred to as non-gendered, by default, is gendered “man” (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000).

Second, Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) thought the issues they raise create barriers between women and their desired leadership positions. Therefore, to increase the number of women leaders, constituents must identify roadblocks in order to bypass them (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). Finally, because potential women leaders can learn these skills via modeling, the purposeful mentoring of women may serve as the most efficient method to help women move past these barriers and into leadership positions (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). However, one must be cautious when examining these issues. Researchers need to beware of a victim-blaming ideology that is often used to explain away the issues. In no small measure, “such explanations locate the problem within women and fail to address larger societal and ideological issues” (Young & McLeod, 2001). To discuss this topic in more detail, this subsection includes five parts: 1) Increasing confidence; 2) Balancing lives; 3) Creating presence; 4) Understanding context; and 5) Accessing networks.

Increasing confidence.

The first area of developmental need lies in building the confidence that women require for leadership. As stated earlier, women may lack the confidence to pursue and

find success in leadership positions. First, the topic of confidence and gender may be traced back to several studies, including Sadker and Sadker's research in the early 1990's regarding how boys and girls were treated in classrooms; girls would wait patiently and politely to answer questions while boys would blurt out answers and receive attention as a result (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011).

Second, women themselves may feel inferior to men in terms of leadership ability due to a lifetime of exposure to culture and gender norms. As Shakeshaft (1989) explained:

What has often been seen as a personal failing of women – lack of self-confidence – might be more accurately seen as a consequence of a [gender]-structured society that generates a belief in [women] that they lack ability – a belief reinforced by an organizational system that prevents women from developing confidence in public sphere activities through both lack of opportunity and lack of positive feedback. (p. 85)

Third, men have historically had more opportunities for leadership. For example, in addition to the work world, opportunities have always existed for *white* men in sports, the military, and in the religious world. Finally, the stress women leaders feel to conform to stereotypes of men, further reinforcing them, also complicates the sense of inferiority described (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). According to the literature, purposeful woman-to-woman mentoring may provide a venue for women to gain confidence in themselves and their leadership while under the direct supervision of a seated woman

educational leader (Noe, 1988). Confidence is learned as a result of successful practice; this is one of the foundational aspects of mentoring (Kamler, 2006).

Balancing lives.

According to Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) women must be coached in balancing work and family. They indicated that, “men rarely have to make choices based on altruistic beliefs such as, ‘My child/aging relatives need me’” (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011, p. 127). Because many women have domestic demands that most men do not, the authors advanced that women need guidance in order to be able to meet both their personal and professional demands at a high level. However, researchers such as Miller, Washington and Fiene (2006), Shakeshaft (1989), and Zemon and Bahr (2005) disagreed with this notion, instead believing it to be about setting priorities. The belief that women cannot balance their personal and professional lives is an excellent example of how the assumptions that are made about leadership are gendered “man”. Rather than believing a woman is capable of prioritizing all of the important aspects of her life as a complete package, sometimes on a daily basis, believing that women need to be taught to balance work and family, as competitors with each other, is a concept that creates a failure-based model (Zemon & Bahr, 2005).

Instead of looking at the issue of prioritizing one’s family and professional responsibilities as they arise, this discussion becomes about a lack of balance or the inability of women to fulfill each of their responsibilities. Establishing balance and/or setting priorities are issues that might be successfully addressed by woman-to-woman mentoring (Raskin, Haar & Robicheau, 2010). Women, with families *and* aspirations for

leadership, need real world examples of women who have accomplished both personal and professional success (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). Obviously, women feel the pressure to create a healthy balance between work and family, but one should not assume that women lack the ability to achieve balance in their own lives.

Creating presence.

Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) highlighted several aspects of professional presence or how a leader navigates her work environment. First, a woman needs to develop a presence that will garner the kind of attention that is expected of all leaders (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). How women communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, says volumes about their ability to be leaders (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). Therefore, the way women make their presence felt, or the way in which others view them, must be carefully considered.

Second, women need to be coached in “playing the game with the big boys” (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011, p. 138) or the ability to engage in the ever-present politics and lobbying for attention that takes places within the leadership ranks. Attention gained by politicking is particularly important in education as resources become less available and schools are placed in direct competition with each other through initiatives such as the federal No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislation.

Third, Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) put forth that women must also be coached in building resiliency, or the ability to recover from difficulties. Appearing resilient adds to a leader’s presence because it demonstrates the ability to get past difficult situations in route to a vision. Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) stated

that women must be able to find resources and support systems to recover from the setbacks that are often experienced in a leadership role. Finally, women need to be taught how to delegate rather than micromanaging or doing the bulk of the work herself (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). According to the authors, delegating frees up time to think strategically and to develop a vision for the future of the organization:

Coaches need to help women to develop as strategic leaders an ability to rise above the daily noise of their job to think about the future using a mix of analysis and creativity to constantly challenge their own assumptions about the sources of competitive advantage, who have, above all, an ability to rise above the daily noise of their job to think about the future using a mix of analysis and creativity to constantly challenge their own assumptions about the sources of competitive advantage. (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2001, p. 149)

In other words, readers who get caught up in minutia lose the ability to have vision. A leader's vision creates presence. An examination of the recommendations designed to increase a woman's personal presence as a leader points to mentoring as a teaching method (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2001).

Understanding context.

In their study, Brunner and Grogan (2007) asked woman superintendents and central office administrators which skills might be helpful in the advancement of a career to the level of the superintendency. Eighty-seven percent of women administrators noted the importance of interpersonal skills; 83 percent cited responsiveness to parent and community groups; 82 percent stated the necessity of maintaining organizational

relationships; 61 percent placed emphasis on improving instruction; 59 percent on the knowledge of the instructional process, and 57 percent on the knowledge of curriculum (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). When comparing this information to the Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) findings, discussed above, Brunner and Grogan's (2007) work is specific to women in educational leadership rather than women who hold positions of leadership in the business world. Perhaps what is most noteworthy when comparing these studies is that four of the top six responses from women in positions of educational leadership are about the context in which educational leaders work rather than the personal limitations of the leaders themselves. While Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier's (2011) research highlighted the importance of correcting women's personal deficiencies, Brunner and Grogan (2007) found it essential to learn about and maneuver through the organizational system.

According to the literature, to be successful in educational leadership, women must be adept at navigating the work world and cannot depend only upon building personal skills to flourish. Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) did not specifically address contextual business skills needed by women or the knowledge they needed for creating and/or maintaining a thriving business, but just those things related to the women themselves.

Accessing networks.

Finally, women may need to be taught how to develop powerful networks in order to gain desperately needed personal and professional support. The authors describe this area as "finding the footsteps in the snow," (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011, p.

121) or locating the role models and mentors whom women in leadership can emulate. Networking and mentoring go hand-in-hand, and again, may hold promise for increasing the number of women in leadership. As Hickey-Gramke, (2007) pointed out, the need for a strong mentor may be even more essential for women because a mentor can set up networks and provides role models where often none exist. Through mentoring, protégés are introduced to their mentor's supporters. In her study of women leaders, Stelter-Flett (2007) found that women want and need these networks. The women she described consistently expressed their desire for more contact with other women in leadership roles (Stelter-Flett, 2007). When this contact did not exist, women reported a difficulty in approaching others for advice and support (Stelter-Flett, 2007).

Support networks are vital to effective leadership and to the successful education of students (Daresh, 2004). However, as Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011) pointed out, "it is important to distinguish between typical [men] networking and the type of networking sought by women...this is very much networking for mutual support and understanding the rules of the game" (p. 44) rather than the traditional model of making contact mainly for future advancement. Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) agreed, "one of the critical mentoring needs of women is for extensive support and advocacy" (p. 120).

A need for relational support echoes Carol Gilligan's (1991) seminal research positing that women's learning and development are based upon relationships. Gilligan (1991) indicated a need for women to be a part of a network, especially among those with the same relational approach. Finally, a relational approach to learning and development

could mean that, “mentoring may be more beneficial for women than for men, as women have the capacity to use these relationships to better advantage” (Gibson, 2006, p. 64). As leadership theory has demonstrated, women use relationships as the foundation of their leadership styles (Brunner, 2000; Brunner & Kim, 2010).

Gender

The metaphor of the glass ceiling that impedes women from moving into the upper levels of leadership has, for researchers Leimon, Moscovici and Goodier (2011), been replaced by what they call the labyrinth, or the prejudices that “favor men and penalize women” at every level (p. 135). The labyrinth conjures an image of hidden pathways and unseen obstacles that must be navigated in order to find success (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Unfortunately, this is the lived experience for aspiring and current women leaders who are working to find success in a profession dominated by men.

Mentor Theory advances that one who has mastered a skill is the best teacher of that skill (Kamler, 2006). In other words, a mentor-protégé relationship, in which a woman mentor who has successfully maneuvered past the identified and unidentified barriers to leadership, has enormous potential for helping inexperienced women navigate the labyrinth to school leadership. Conversely, “the absence of positive administrative role models, exposure to transformative leadership styles, and/or endorsements and support appeared to serve as an inhibitor” (Young & McLeod, 2001, p. 489). Mentors not only provide a model for women who aspire to leadership positions, these relationships channel needed tools such as power and credibility to their protégés.

However, is there a difference between same- and cross-gender mentoring? To address this question, this section has two parts: 1) Men-to-women; and 2) Women-to-women.

Men-to-women.

The majority of women who have attained positions at the highest level of educational leadership had mentors and most of those mentors were men (Brunner & Kim, 2010). In fact, “more than 70 percent of women superintendents (contrasted with 56.3% of men)...have mentors” (p. 292). In addition, 77 percent of women superintendents’ mentors were men (Brunner & Kim, 2010, p. 292). Having a mentor who is a man has advantages. Men often inherently know: 1) the system in a conventional, traditional sense (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011), 2) how to be political (Brunner & Kim, 2010), and 3) ways to access professional networks (Raskin, Haar & Robicheau, 2010). In short, seated men administrators can teach skills that women leaders need to know to gain access to administrative roles.

However, as previously stated, women leaders need specific skill sets, skills independent of those that men must demonstrate, to succeed. Yet potential women leaders, if they have a mentor at all, are typically mentored by men who have not demonstrated or used the specific skills that women need (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). In addition, mentors who are men may not possess or understand these skills, much less be able to teach them to aspiring women leaders (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) noted that, “it’s hard to behave in ways for which there are few models, and it is hard to sustain credibility if others don’t understand the model” (pp. 83-84). For example, when men mentor women, a

disconnection can occur between the mentor's message and how the mentee understands the message's meaning. Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) maintained that "if the top management is held primarily by men and a few women who may have been acculturated into white, [man]-administrative norms, women, white and of color, may be at a disadvantage in not only finding a mentor, but in also identifying with and internalizing any mentoring that is given" (p. 6).

Even if potential women leaders could rely upon the support of administrators who are men, problematic issues of gender politics often result in a less than ideal mentor-protégé experience (Clawson & Kram, 1984). Ragins and Cotton (1993) stressed, "it is particularly important for [woman] protégées to have access to [woman] mentors, because these mentors can provide critical role modeling functions and will not elicit the detrimental sexual issues common to [woman] protégé-[man] mentor relationships" (p. 97). Because we assume heterosexuality, and because the mentor-protégé relationship requires significant time and personal attention, when a man mentors a woman, sexual orientation is assumed and there are often rumors of romantic involvement in the workplace (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Rumors such as this have detrimental effects on the mentor-protégé relationship (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). In addition, when a woman beats the odds and attains a leadership position, her success may be clouded by beliefs that she only secured the position because of a sexual relationship (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Therefore the "frustrating and potentially destructive gender politics that too frequently infect cross-gender mentoring relationships" often do not allow the type of growth possible in a same-gender relationship (Olson & Ashton-Jones, 1992, p. 114).

Women-to-women.

Effective mentors may need to know and understand the nature of women's lives, including their hopes, aspirations, and the gender-specific challenges of the work world. Women may need to mentor other women because men and women school leaders often do not face the same issues personally or professionally. In her study of the mentoring of women higher education faculty, Gibson (2006) stated, "[man] mentors were not seen as people with whom [women] faculty could address certain issues" (p. 71). A system in which women mentor women can ease this "conflict between personal and professional lives" and can do much to "help reframe organizational and individual expectations and support systems to be more flexible and compatible for women" (Smulyan, 2000, p. 118). In other words, the issues that keep women out of school leadership may be addressed through mentoring.

Further, the conflict between a woman's personal goals related to family may be more comfortably realized in conjunction with her professional goals when a mentor is available to work through the conflicts and model the successful merging of two major parts of a woman's life (Gupton, 2009). By simply observing seated women in educational leadership, "[women] protégées may vicariously learn strategies for coping with work-family conflict and gender-related barriers to advancement" (Ragins & Cotton, 1993, p. 334). In their 2001 study, Young and McLeod echoed the importance of women mentors and role models when they described the powerful impact mentors have when inspiring women to join the ranks of school leaders.

Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stressed, “[t]he more we know about women in leadership roles, how they obtain their positions, and how they have become successful, the greater the likelihood of increasing their number in the field” (p. 34). After having attained a position of school leadership and gaining an understanding of the difficulties that may occur, current women leaders may be in an optimal position to be mentors and thereby increase the quantity and quality of woman leaders. As Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) urged, “[t]he system will only change if the more established women make it a purposive agenda and way of leading to mentor aspiring women leaders. Women supporting women is a foundation for women to bring about systemic change” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 110).

The solution, then, arises when current woman leaders “become much more deliberate about teaching other women who aspire to leadership positions about ways to effectively engage in mentoring relationships. At the same time, there needs to be an understanding of the implications of failing to actively support inexperienced women school leaders” (Serby & Tripses, 2006, p. 193). Mentors can help women in “resisting dominant forces and seeking change, so that conflicts are a site for new ways of leadership” (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 99). Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan’s (2000) study found that mentoring allowed women to do more than reproduce current social mores and norms by setting new agendas for our schools as, “[w]omen can be transformers; many women are resisters. Women are located in a position to know and understand the system, and to defy and change it. Woman-to-woman mentoring is a mechanism for these changes” (p. 27).

There is no discussion in the literature regarding the success rate in terms of position attainment for women school leaders who have mentors who are men versus those with women mentors. The research indicating the preference of potential women school leaders is also sparse. In one related study, Carbonell and Castro (2008) described how the gender of role models affected women's decisions to become men-like leaders. Interestingly, both the men and women who were randomly assigned, in the study, to a female administrator produced similar scores. However, "the presence of a [man] role model produced significantly lower scores for women than for men" (Carbonell & Castro, 2008, p. 778). Further, Carbonell and Castro (2008) argued that, "the presence of a female role model served to ease the female participants' gender role conflict regarding...a stereotypically masculine ability" (p. 778). Finally, Carbonell and Castro (2008) stated, "if a [woman] role model can attenuate the incongruity perceived between the feminine gender role and the leader role, then women may be more likely to take a leadership role even when faced with a masculine task" (pp. 778-779). Although this research is not specifically about women in school leadership, it certainly supports future research on the topic.

Power

To break into the ranks of educational leadership, one needs the power, resources, and the influence of a seated leader (Ragins, 1997). Women, in particular, need the power derived from her mentor as educational systems rarely welcome her. As stated by Ragins (1997):

By providing challenging assignments and placing protégés in visible positions, mentors can help protégés develop expert power and obtain visibility within and outside organizational boundaries...mentors provide reflected power to their protégés; the mentor's organizational influence augments the protégé's influence, and the mentor's power allows them to provide resources for their protégés and buffer their protégés from adverse organization forces. (pp. 487-488)

For women who struggle to gain a foothold in a world that was not created for them and can actively work to exclude them, the importance of power and visibility is especially true. Ragins and Cotton (1993) affirmed "while the mentoring relationship is important for the career development of both [genders], it is particularly critical for women in organizations" (p. 97).

Rather than the traditional hierarchical, power-over approach as is evident in [men's] leadership, a woman's relational approach encourages her to share her power in decision-making (Brunner, 2000; deCausal & Mulligan, 2004). Women have a tendency to rely upon their interpersonal skills to empower and motivate constituents, whereas the leadership qualities that men typically employ tend to be more controlling, competitive, and independent (deCausal & Mulligan, 2004). Simply stated, women and men in positions of power, such as school leadership, tend to view power differently: "Power defined by [men] intellectuals is dominance, strength, force, authority and violence" (Brunner, 1997, p. 176). Women, however, relate power to servant leadership and helping others achieve goals for the larger purposes of the organization; it is a "collaborative, inclusive consensus-building model of power" (Brunner, 1997, p. 176).

Further, “men may be unwilling to relinquish their traditional claim to leadership. Managers may avoid entering into a mentoring relationship with woman employees because of perceived incompatibility between women and the managerial role” (Noe, 1988, p. 69). This view and use of power may be another testament to the importance of women mentoring women.

Benefits

For women in educational leadership, mentoring can mean the difference between success and failure once a position is attained. To explain, Darling-Hammond, LaPoint, Meyerson, Orr, and Cohen (2007) stated, “practicing principals are frequently ill-prepared and inadequately supported to take on the challenging work of instructional leadership and school improvement” (p. 4). Daresh (2004) explained:

Having a guide and mentor who already speaks the language of school administration as an ally ready to interpret real-world problems allows the novice to begin to understand subtle relationships between what was learned in books with what now must be learned through daily interactions with parents, teachers, staff, and students. (p. 504)

Further, having a mentor can mean the difference between a stagnant career and one that continues to climb the ranks of leadership. As Noe (1988) explained, “The positive relationship between access to the dominant coalition and promotion suggests that women who do not have a mentor may not be visible to organization decision makers, and, therefore, reduce their chances of promotions and job transfers” (p. 67). While the work of all school administrators is difficult, it is important to remember that women

carry additional burdens to success (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). A study of 461 women executives expressed, “success meant consistently exceeding performance expectations, presenting themselves in a way that made [men] coworkers comfortable, and having a mentor” (Ragins, 1997, p. 497).

Noe (1988) described a vicious circle that a lack of mentoring for women creates for the women themselves and for the organization in which they work. He highlighted the lack of effectiveness that results from limited opportunities for improving interpersonal and task-related skills. In addition, because of limited opportunities, “fewer women are likely to be promoted to supervisory position, therefore perpetuating the problem of the lack of role models and [women] mentors” (Noe, 1988, p. 71). In short, women want mentors and realize the importance of having a mentor for their success (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). Mentoring has the power to create inclusivity and change in educational leadership (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). The mentoring of aspiring woman school leaders is potentially the way to equalize the numbers of men and woman in school leadership positions.

Misuses

A few misuses related to mentoring are discussed in the literature. First, in their extensive study, Sherman, Munoz & Pankake (2008) observed that “the lack of women mentors and role models available to women aspiring to leadership advancement in education (particularly for the secondary principalship and superintendency)” (p. 249) was evident. The unavailability of mentors has far reaching effects for aspiring woman leaders. Not providing mentoring opportunities for women who demonstrate leadership

traits is a misuse that effectively replicates the status quo of school leadership by limiting entrance to some. Additionally, without a mentor to identify the leadership potential in women they may not realize a leadership path exists. Young and McLeod (2001), in their study of women's choice to enter into school leadership, found that none of the women whom they interviewed reported, "entering the field of education thinking she would eventually go into administration" (p. 470). Further, Young and McLeod (2001) reported that the decision to enter into leadership was based in part on the women's experiences with administrative roles models and opportunities to garner support for entering into leadership (p. 465).

Second, some theorists and scholars (e.g. Serby & Tripses, 2006) stated that a system for mentoring and networking for men administrators has historically been in place, and has not only served to funnel men into school leadership positions, but also to keep women and people of color out. Traditional mentoring has had the consequence of reinforcing the status quo, or protégés imitating their mentors in appearance, approach, and beliefs (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) reported that "the preponderance of superintendents employed throughout the country were white (94.9%), [men] (86.6%), middle aged, of rural background, held degrees in educational administration and possessed a similar line of thought" (p. 241). The research states that the demographic similarity in past and current school leaders is a byproduct of formal and informal mentoring (Ragins, 1997).

Further, Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) stated, "mentoring practices have been traditionally designed to keep the dominant white [man] in power...mentoring

privileges a few and excludes many” (p. 188). The fact that there are few role models, limited access to mentors and networking opportunities, and a lack of leadership experience all contribute to fewer numbers of women administrators (Brunner, 2000). The majority of administrators are men, and men administrators have a long history of choosing protégés who are similar to them in appearance and philosophy.

Leaving women out of the equation happens because, “in educational administration, mentorship has traditionally been cast as an old boy network” where white men typically prefer protégés who are “junior versions of themselves...who have been expected to maintain their leadership styles, standards, and cultural mores” (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 5). Social Identity Theory states that individuals who are members of similar power groups share a common bond that shapes their self-identity and their identification with others in the group (Hogg, 2006). According to this perspective, individuals who are members of similar power-related groups, such as men superintendents, for example, are more likely to identify with potential superintendents who are men, because of shared experiences and resulting social identities (Ragins, 1997). Serby and Tripses (2006) furthered the idea that, mentoring has been used to keep dominant white men in power by creating “social stratification,” (p. 183) the practice of mentoring and hiring individuals that duplicate the group in power.

Choice

In their study in 2000, Glass, Bjork and Brunner stated that 66.2 percent of women view mentoring as an important factor compared to 40.8 percent of men (p. 674). Because, as pointed out by the literature, women are less exposed to mentoring than are

men, (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990) “women leaders must seek out other women with the potential to become leaders and actively mentor them to take on leadership roles” (Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake, 2008, p. 255). Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) stressed that “those who have succeeded in entering educational administration are urged never to forget the pioneering women on whose shoulders they stand, and to make it a part of their daily work to reach out and mentor the next generation of women” (p. 186).

However, the literature highlights a disagreement among scholars regarding what may be viewed as reluctance or refusal of some seated woman administrators to mentor future woman leaders. As Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) stated, “Women sometimes complain that women are not mentoring women. They say it is the powerful, established men [who] are doing the mentoring. Is this the case? If so, why? Are women, white and of color, truly supportive of one another?” (p. 16). Other literature states that women may be more than willing to mentor, but they do not feel they are on solid ground, professionally, and are uneasy about the added risk of taking on a protégé (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Thus, women fall into two categories, willing to mentor and unwilling to mentor. In order to discuss this issue further, this section is divided into two parts: 1) Willing; and, 2) Unwilling.

Willing.

Most researches tend to fall on one side or the other in the debate regarding the willingness of seated women leaders to mentor. Some scholars (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) thought that seated women leaders are willing to mentor. Two major pertinent

strands on the topic exist in the literature focused on educational leadership and women. Both strands appear to have a connection to the issue of women-to-women mentoring.

The first strand focuses on social justice issues and how women leaders work to change the status quo and speak for the disenfranchised. Indeed, “because a reform-response mission is built into many women’s lives, the opportunities to make a difference are important motivators and serve as an inducement to moving women into administration” (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011, p. 91). In a similar vein, Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) told of “women who gladly and freely share power, knowledge, and their lives with each other” (p. 17). Additionally, Young and McLeod (2001) stated “many of the practicing [woman] administrators involved in this study placed so much importance on the endorsements and support they received from their administrator that they, in turn, felt an obligation to mentor and endorse other women” (p. 486).

The second strand in educational leadership, mentoring and women, is focused on the relational approach of the work. As Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) pointed out, “women spend more time talking with staff members and developing relationships through work” (p. 95). Because women, in general, place such a significant value on relationships, they may anticipate greater benefits from mentoring relationships, as both mentors and protégés, than men do (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Relationships were evident when “executive [women] mentors in one study reported identifying with junior women and purposefully selected [women] protégés in order to share hard-earned career strategies and insights” (Ragins, 1997, p. 498). The relational approach of women calls

for “a sensitivity to the needs of others” and a need to “attend to voices other than their own” (Matthews, 1995, p. 255).

Third, Mathews (1995) described two of her four types of women administrators, the advocates and activists, who support efforts to further women as a group. Advocates and activists believe in the greater good for women and see no reason not to provide women with increased resources in order to level the playing field with men. Women in these categories would seemingly support the identification and mentoring of aspiring women leaders knowing the importance mentoring plays in creating school leaders. Watching for women, specifically, who exhibit leadership potential and then creating mentoring relationships and therefore grooming these women into school leaders would seem appropriate to women activists and advocates.

Unwilling.

The other side of the debate depicted in the literature surrounding women-to-women mentoring states that women, for numerous reasons, are unwilling to mentor potential women leaders (Funk, 2004; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Gupton, 2009; Ragins & Cotton, 1993; Schmuck, 1986; Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). As Gupton (2009) offered, “it seems ironic that the gender known as the ‘nurturer’ of others, seems less capable or unwilling to reach out to each other and network, mentor, and seek mentors as naturally and eagerly as their [men] constituents” (p. 12). The literature highlights possible reasons that may be attributed to a woman’s unwillingness to mentor.

First, the literature tells us that women lack access to mentoring (e.g. Darling-Hammond & Meyerson, 2010; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Kamler, 2006; Noe,

1988; Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008; Sobehart & Giron, 2002).

If a woman was not mentored herself, she might be reluctant to mentor another as there is a “strong relationship between willingness to mentor and the individual’s prior experience in a mentoring relationship” (Ragins & Cotton, 1993, p. 108). Not only is there difficulty in expecting a woman who was never mentored to mentor, but also the quality of the mentoring may be suspect.

Second, the additional barriers a woman school leader must work through to be deemed as successful as men have serious implications for mentoring. As Ragins & Cotton (1993) summarized, “compared to men, women face greater barriers to advancement and may consequentially need to spend their time advancing their own careers rather than helping others” (p. 99). Ragins (1997) noted that “one study of matched [men] and [women] middle managers revealed that women were more likely than men to report that they lacked the time to be a mentor, that they had enough trouble taking care of their own jobs without having to worry about others” (p. 498). Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) added that:

Women who are mentors may themselves be struggling for survival in a context where it is simply more difficult for them than for white [men] to achieve respect, position, and other support. The world of education is competitive, and women start the game with fewer role models, less visible and actual support for their ideas, and possible for some less confidence in their own abilities. (p. 107)

The barriers described by scholars (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1997) take time away from potential mentoring opportunities.

Third, research shows that women administrators do not enjoy the level of confidence men administrators do, and that “one outcome of lower self-confidence may be that women may feel less qualified than men in assuming a mentoring role” (Ragins & Cotton, 1993, p. 99). According to Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) this lack of confidence exists because women “must in some way disguise themselves, acting as dominant white [men] in leadership roles...these misrepresentation and mistaken identities can erode their sense of self and cause doubt in their abilities and competencies” (p. 169).

Fourth, there is a concern from some women about the way it looks when a seated woman leader is actively and visibly seeking and mentoring potential women leaders. As described by Ragins and Cotton (1993):

While the [woman] mentor-[woman] protégé relationship avoids the complications associated with cross-gender relationships, it is the most visible of all gender combinations, and therefore entails the greatest risk...the [woman] mentor-[woman] protégé relationship may be met with negative reactions if it is viewed as constituting a [woman] power coalition. (p. 98)

An interesting parallel is drawn to the existence of what has always been referred to as the Old Boys' Club to these so-called women power coalitions. Kamler (2006) explained:

By 1930, 28% of county superintendencies and 11% of all American superintendencies were held by women. During this period, women united in great numbers, engaged in politics and, by wielding significant power,

successfully lobbied for economic and social gains. Through a web of connections that included [women] superintendents, teachers, women's associations, and suffrage activists, which can be likened to the "old boys' network", women accessed leadership positions and became a force for women's rights. (p. 300)

However, in the current educational climate "the capacity to enter into caring relationships with various others and to maintain them over time has not been traditionally valued in educational leadership... administrators are often encouraged to keep their distance from others and to avoid the caring, connected relationship" (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 195).

A fifth element is the fear women have about making and keeping their place in a traditionally patriarchal leadership role. Two different issues may be at work here; first is the feeling a seated woman administrator may have after fighting for and maintaining a position in a world that is not welcoming to her, creating serious levels of competition. Sherman, Munoz and Pankake (2008) contended, "[w]omen talked about competitiveness between themselves and described it as due to the knowledge that few positions were available to women" (p. 248). Funk (2004) explained what Benton coined in 1980 as the Queen Bee Syndrome, "according to Benton, a queen bee is a woman in a position of power and authority who works at keeping other women out of leadership in order to protect her queenly status" (Funk, 2004). Leimon, Moscovici, and Goodier (2011) described her as "the woman who, despite her powerful position, needs to be the centre of

attention at all times and regards other women as threats to her ability to enjoy exclusive attention and respect” (p. 27).

In 1970, Freire stated that people who were trying to “free themselves from oppression of the hidden danger that they could become ‘sub-oppressors’ and identify strongly with those holding the power because the ‘oppressed find in their oppressors their ‘model of humanhood’” (Funk, 2004, “Horizontal Violence,” para. 2). Freire (1970) described the characteristics of those who oppress in an attempt to withhold power for themselves: “they (a) are reluctant or unwilling to resist the oppressors, (b) have low self-esteem, (c) are self-deprecating, and (d) fear autonomy and responsibilities because of the possibility of retaliation or sanctions from their oppressors” (Funk, 2004, “Horizontal Violence,” para. 2). The literature also refers to this as, “horizontal violence... a type of psychological displacement” in which women lash out at other women in an attempt to “vent their internal anger toward the men who in effect have been their oppressors” (Funk, 2004, “Horizontal Violence,” para.1).

Next, Schmuck (1986) had another view when she described what appeared to be, “a thread of anti-feminism that ran through the stories of the women in her study and concluded that some of the women in her research appeared to deny their femaleness, caring solely about themselves and their own careers” (Funk, 2004, “Horizontal Violence in Educational Administration,” para. 1). Schmuck’s (1986) research regarding mentoring tells of women who place no priority in helping other women into the profession. In 1989, Shakeshaft noted that “women inside school systems can often do much more than they do to make a difference in the hiring practices of the district” (p. 140) and yet, much

of the current research does not indicate a positive change in this arena (Gupton, 2009; Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011).

Finally, and perhaps overlapping many of the above issues, an element that may be standing in the way of a woman school leader mentoring in membership in Matthews' (1995) second and third categories of women school leaders; the individualists and the isolates. These women do not feel it is their responsibility to lend a hand to the women coming after them. After all, the individualists and the isolates made it to a position of school leadership without help from anyone, and in their opinion, so can another woman. Individualists and isolates do not intend to give up the valuable ground they have acquired. Denying help to an aspiring woman leader may be the result of one of these beliefs, or any combination of the above issues. Regardless, mentoring is essential for school leaders and women deserve equal access to this resource.

Literature-Based Conceptual Framework

Due to the limited amount of research that explores women-to-women mentoring, a framework with which to apply new knowledge is not readily available. Therefore, it is necessary to compare and contrast what is discovered about the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring in this study to what is known about mentoring and women school leaders as a whole. The conceptual framework for this study (see Figure 1, p. 67) is based upon nine components that surfaced in the literature review.

The first component is Mentor Theory, which identifies the need for the mentoring of school leaders (Kram, 1985). Mentor Theory tells of the benefits of mentoring, both personally and professionally, for the protégé, the mentor, and the

organization. This theory provides the definition of mentoring and is therefore an essential element to the conceptual framework for this study. In addition, Mathews (1995) identified a continuum of four categories that women school leaders fell into regarding their feelings toward other women administrators. These categories: 1) advocates; 2) activists; 3) individualists; and 4) isolates (Mathews, 1995) are useful for providing a frame of reference during the analysis of this study's findings regarding women-to-women mentoring.

A second component of this conceptual framework explains current mentoring practices. Kamler (2006) stated that formal mentoring opportunities, when they exist, do not seek out women. In fact, mentoring in general works to extend the status quo to new generations (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Current practice is important to include in this framework because it provides an increased understanding of what seated women leaders, including the participants in this study, may have experienced with mentoring.

Third, it is essential to include as part of the framework a component that addresses the unique aspects of women in leadership. The literature repeatedly states that women do not want to lead the way men lead (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). As a result, women want to be mentored differently than do men (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Including this component also provides a structure with which to increase understanding of what aspiring women need in terms of mentoring. As Sherman, Munoz and Pankake (2008) stated, formalized mentoring programs for women may increase the number of women leaders.

The literature states that women have specific needs in developing their leadership ability (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). The fourth component of this framework addresses obstacles that are unique to women leaders as well as the needed skill sets to overcome these obstacles. The literature describes the need for aspiring women leaders to: 1) increase confidence levels; 2) effectively balance their personal and professional lives; 3) create a professional presence, and 4) access networks (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). Brunner and Grogan (2007) added the need for women to increase skills that are specific to an educational context such as effectively communicating with parent and community groups.

Fifth, including a component that addresses gender in this framework is useful to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of women-to women mentoring. While having a mentor who is a man can be useful (Ragins & McFarland, 1990), women face unique barriers to leadership that men do not. Further, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stressed that women supporting women is the foundation for creating systematic change in educational organizations. The participants in this study will have been mentored by a woman and may currently be mentoring aspiring women; therefore the literature surrounding gender is essential in analyzing the data gathered in this study.

The sixth component of this conceptual framework is the examination of power. Aspiring leaders need the benefit of power and resources that are derived from a mentor, and this especially true as women school leaders are often working in a system that rarely welcomes her (Ragins, 1997). In addition, this component aids in analysis as women

and men view and use power differently (Brunner, 1997). Women share power by using it to empower and motivate, to help others attain their goals (Brunner, 1997).

The benefits that are derived from mentoring are the seventh component of this conceptual framework. We know, based upon the literature, that mentoring has extensive benefits for all school leaders, but this is especially true for women leaders (Noe, 1988). Daresh (2004) explained that having a mentor allows aspiring leaders to practice, in real world situations, the theory that was learned in preparation programs. For women especially, mentoring means visibility and opportunities for promotion (Noe, 1988). In turn, this may mean increased opportunities for women to mentor (Noe, 1988). Data will be gathered from the women in this study specifically about this cycle, therefore, this literature will prove useful during analysis.

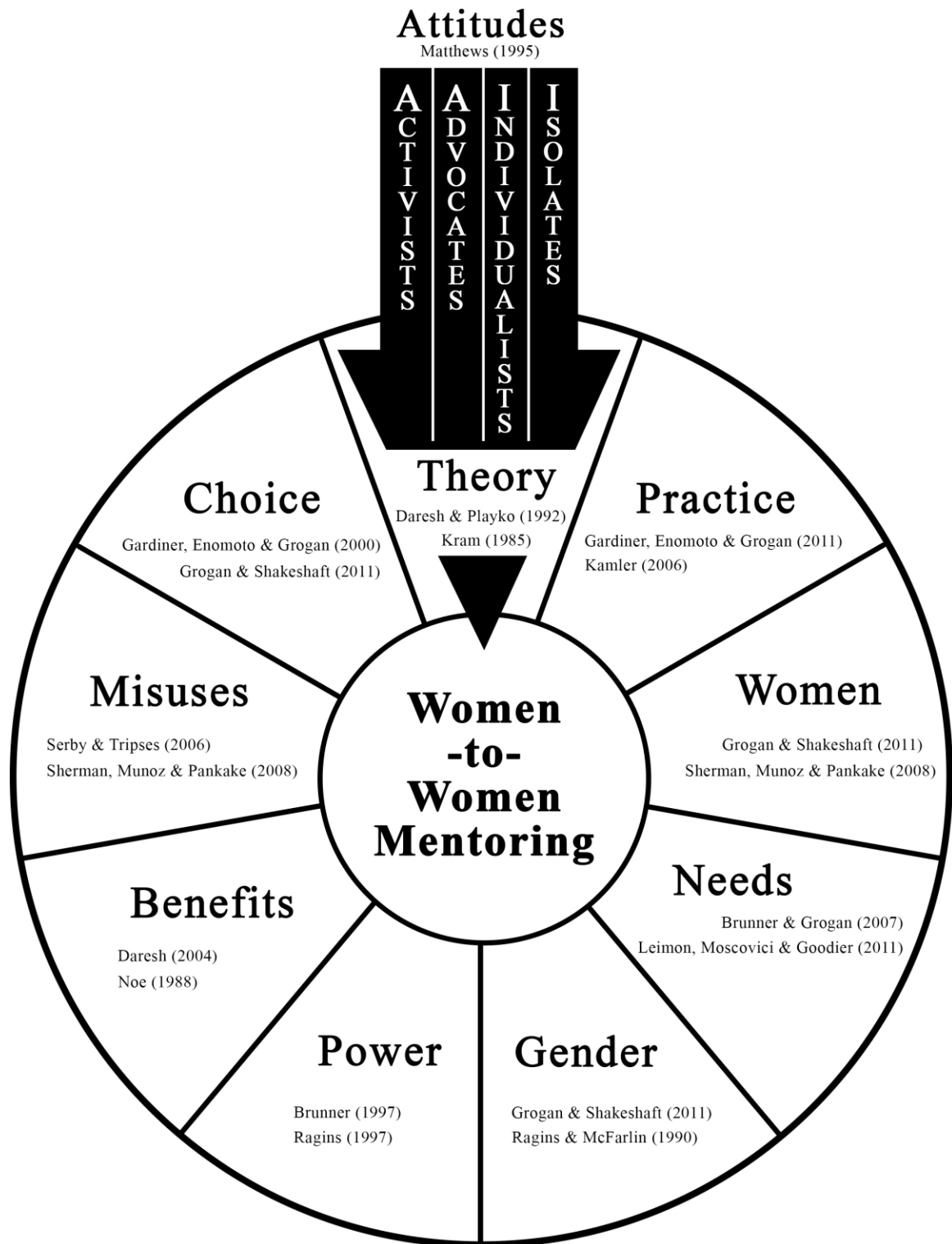
Unfortunately, mentoring has also been misused in a number of ways. The eighth component will be used to increase understanding of the participant's experience with mentoring. The first issue is the overall lack of opportunities aspiring women school leaders have to be mentored (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, (2008). Young and McLeod (2001) stated that this directly impacted women's entrance into school leadership. Second, mentoring has been actively used to keep women and people of color out of school leadership (Serby & Tripses, 2006). Serby and Tripses (2006) called this social stratification, the practice of hiring individuals that are representational of the group in power. Including a component that addresses the misuses of mentoring is essential as these misuses have obvious implications for women-to-women mentoring.

Finally, the literature is divided regarding the choice of women leaders to mentor. Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) posit that seated women school leaders are more than willing to mentor because they understand the need to work to change the status quo and to speak for the disenfranchised. In addition, the importance of relationships in women's leadership styles is demonstrated by the willingness to mentor (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The alternate view states numerous reasons why seated women leaders are not mentoring. The fact that women have limited access to mentoring (Ragins & Cotton, 1993), have additional burdens to success, (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000), a lack of confidence (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000), a fear of power coalitions (Ragins & Cotton, 1993), and a fear of keeping her place in the organization (Sherman, Munoz and Pankake, 2008) creates in women an unwillingness to mentor. The issues on both sides of the debate help to shape this study and analyze the data that is gathered. Further, the choice component increases understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring and will serve to guide analysis of the data.

Mentoring can create a situation in which potential woman leaders can access experience, credibility, and power. In short, mentoring may be an effective way to include women's leadership in an educational system that, as the literature above demonstrates, has imposed significant limitations since its inception. In Lum and Miller's (2002) study, one woman expressed, "mentors influenced us in life-changing ways. They gave us an indelible image of what the position should be like and the motivation to try for it" (p. 10). A relationship with an experienced woman leader allowed women "to identify and solidify their growing leadership identities" (Stelter-

Flett, 2007). Mentoring is an effective method with which to provide a model for women who may aspire. In an era of unprecedented school change and, according to some, a never before seen crisis in school leadership, currently seated women leaders who support aspirant women leaders through the use of mentoring is an avenue in need of further exploration.

Figure 1: Literature-based Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER THREE:

METHODS AND DESIGN

Many researchers (e.g. Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Newton, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001) have explored why there has always been an illogical difference in the percentages of men and women secondary (middle and high) school principals and superintendents, and their findings are, more often than not, quite similar.

The literature repeatedly points to the same barriers: job structure, age, career path, and limited access to mentoring as the reasons for the discrepancy in these percentages. Quantitatively, researchers report that the reasons for the discrepancies are the: 1) number of women choosing elementary leadership over secondary schools and school district leadership (e.g. Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006), 2) age of women entering school leadership (e.g. Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001), 3) career paths of women school leaders (e.g. Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001), and 4) amount of mentoring by seated women school leaders (e.g. Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Sobehart & Giron, 2002). However, regardless of the amount of research dedicated to this issue, the numbers and percentages of women in school leadership, in particular at the secondary (middle and high school) levels and in the superintendency, have changed little (Fowler, 2000; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011).

In-depth studies of mentoring experiences of the women who have overcome the barriers and have attained positions of school leadership at the secondary and superintendency levels are in short supply. As was stated in chapter one, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who meet the following criteria: 1) are currently seated secondary school assistant principals and principals and superintendents; and 2) are or were mentored by other women school leaders. The questions guiding this research include:

1. How do study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring?
2. What are the lived experiences of women who have been mentored by women school leader?
3. Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who aspire to school leadership?

This chapter iterates the research methods and design used to gain a greater understanding of women-to-women mentoring and includes four sections: 1) Study Methods; 2) Study Design; 3) Study Limitations; and 4) Study Summary.

Study Methods

The methods for this study are appropriate because they support the gathering of in-depth knowledge related to a little known phenomenon. As Patton (2002) explained, “[t]he strategy of inductive designs is to allow the important analysis dimensions to emerge from patterns found in cases under study without presupposing in advance what the important dimensions will be” (p. 56). The setting in which these patterns occur is

also important. Qualitative methods take researchers into natural settings to explore the “social interactions expressed in daily life and the meanings that the participants themselves attribute to these interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). This section includes three subsections: 1) Qualitative Inquiry; 2) Methodological Integrity; and 3) Phenomenological Approach.

Qualitative Inquiry

The origins of qualitative research methods rest in anthropologists’ and sociologists’ early research that aimed at understanding non-European cultures (Marrow, 2007; Tedlock, 2000). In the fifteenth and sixteenth century, the “primitive” people of the “New World” gained the attention of colonialists who were intent on the civilization of these people (Marrow, 2007, p. 220). In fact, in 1874, a circular entitled *Notes and Queries on Anthropology* was created to aid travelers, merchants, missionaries, and government officials by supplying information about the inhabitants of what was then the Dominion of Canada (Tedlock, 2000, p. 455).

However, it was not until the turn of the 20th century when researchers began to spend significant amounts of time in the field gathering data from the “native’s point of view” (Marrow, 2007, p. 221). Since then, qualitative inquiry has moved to methods used to describe and clarify the lived experience, especially for “variables that are not easily identifiable or that have not yet been identified, as well as investigating topics for which there is little or no previous research and addressing contradictions in the literature” (Marrow, 2007, p. 212). Because we know very little about the effect of women-to-women mentoring on the numbers or percentages of women secondary

(middle and high school) principals and superintendents, qualitative methods are a natural choice.

Qualitative research is grounded in a number of core assumptions that the various approaches maintain (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). First, individuals are studied in their natural world, allowing researchers to investigate both the social interaction in context (Marrow, 2007) and the socially constructed nature of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In qualitative inquiry, the social location of the researcher in relation to the research project is important (Marrow, 2007). Understanding the position of the researcher is “essential to providing sufficient information on which to base a full understanding of the context of the study, thus enabling the reader to make decisions about how transferable the information may be” (Marrow, 2007, p. 216).

Second, “as opposed to the deductive, hypothesis-testing approach of quantitative research, qualitative inquiry begins with research questions instead of hypothesis” (Marrow, 2007, p. 216). These questions then determine both strategies for data gathering as well as later analysis, which is inductive in nature (Pope & Mays, 1995). In qualitative studies when themes and categories begin to emerge, “they are tested deductively by comparing and contrasting them with existing and new data. This alternating cycle of induction and deduction is termed...recursive” (Marrow, 2007, p. 216). This allows for the flexible nature of qualitative design.

Third, sample size in qualitative research is approached differently than traditional survey investigations. Indeed, Patton (2002) argued, that the numbers of participants in qualitative research “depends on what you want to know” (p. 244). While

sample size tends to be smaller in qualitative research, the sample is most often purposefully, rather than randomly sampled (Patton, 2002). Marrow (2007) explains, “[a]s the goal in qualitative research is to gather data that are rich and descriptive and illustrate the phenomenon of interest intensely, qualitative researchers think carefully about the best strategies to accomplish this purpose” (p. 217). Simply, “sufficiency of data, not numbers, drives the selection process” (Marrow, 2007, p. 218). Quite often qualitative researchers search for redundancy, which occurs when no new findings of note are generated.

Another aspect that is unique in qualitative data gathering is the relationship of the researcher to the participants. In qualitative research, relationships with participants are central to effective data gathering (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marrow, 2007). Due to the often sensitive and emotional nature of qualitative data, trust is integral to the researcher/participant relationship (Marrow, 2007). These relationships are important, as well, to the later analysis of the data, and are guided by practices that create methodological integrity.

Methodological Integrity

Qualitative research is an attempt to “secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). However, because “objective reality can never be captured, we know a thing only through its representations” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5). This foundational understanding makes the consideration of issues of methodological integrity essential. This section regarding methodological

integrity is comprised of three sub-sections including: 1) Trustworthiness; 2) Reflexivity; and 3) Positionality.

Trustworthiness.

In qualitative research, when the term validity is used, it is uniquely defined as, “how accurately the account represents participants’ realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, pp. 124-125). However, in 1985, Lincoln and Guba moved further from quantitative foundations and argued that the concepts of validity and reliability that stem from a quantitative perspective are *not* compatible to the central ideas of qualitative research (Kline, 2008). Instead, Lincoln and Guba (1985) developed the concept of trustworthiness and the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as “a more appropriate framework for evaluating qualitative research” (Kline, 2008, p. 211).

Guba and Lincoln (1985) also added that, “[i]f researchers are to generate compelling findings, they need to provide sufficient information about participants and settings to allow readers to make judgments about the applicability of findings to their own settings” (Kline, 2008, p. 211). Thus, an important aspect for all qualitative studies is that the reader, not the researcher, determines whether a study’s findings are transferable to his or her unique context.

Yin (2009) stated, “[t]he first objective for building trustworthiness and credibility is that qualitative research be done in a publically accessible manner” (p. 19). The term *transparency* is currently used by qualitative researchers who work to establish trustworthiness (Yin 2009). The description and documentation of all data and

procedures achieves the necessary level of transparency. Overall, qualitative studies require researchers to “demonstrate the consistency of data and findings using techniques such as audits, triangulation procedures, and reflexive journaling” (Kline, 2008, p. 211).

Typical measures of trustworthiness in qualitative research consist of, “multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p.126). Triangulation, or “gathering data from multiple sources, through multiple methods, and using multiple theoretical lenses” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 40) is an essential step in the creation of a trustworthy study. Qualitative researchers often also use disconfirming evidence, or the “process where investigators first establish the preliminary themes or categories in a study and then search through the data for evidence that is consistent with or disconfirms these themes” to create trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127).

Member checking, which “consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants of the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127) is another method used in qualitative inquiry to insure trustworthiness. Qualitative researchers use member checks “to assure that researcher subjectivity does not dominate and that participants’ perspectives are fairly represented” (Marrow, 2007, p. 217). These techniques, especially when used in conjunction, demonstrate the trustworthiness of a study as well as its ability to be transferred to other contexts.

Reflexivity.

Qualitative researchers must make it evident to readers that the data and interpretations are accurate from a particular point of view (Yin, 2009). Dahlberg, Drew, and Nystrom (2001) explained that “[t]he individual is always encased by a tradition” and that “we always carry within us our historical and traditional point of view” (p. 25). Even the “choice of a phenomenon for study stems from one’s own pre-dispositions, values, and the researchers’ personal investment in solving a problem” (Dahlberg, Drew & Nystrom, 2001, p. 33).

Researcher reflexivity, when researchers “self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases...that may shape their inquiry” is the way in which subjectivity is incorporated into the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). It is essential that the researcher “engage in reflexivity to recognize how their own positionality interacts with the voice of their participants...to engage in reflection on how their direct experience and awareness of theories derived from literature interact and inform each other” (Haverkamp & Young, 2007, p. 287). As Marrow (2007) instructed:

As investigators make public their own stances, motivations, assumptions, and biases, the research gains a level of honesty that contributes to the trustworthiness (rigor) of the study. In addition, the self-reflective process involved in making the researcher’s stance public helps to address the issue of subjectivity in qualitative research. (p. 215)

When a researcher’s subjectivity is transparent to the reader it enables the reader to transfer the findings to his or her personal context if and when appropriate.

As Marshall and Rossman (2011) pointed out, “research designs should include reflection on one’s identity and one’s sense of voice and perspectives, assumptions, and sensitivities” (p. 96). It allows the reader to have a firm understanding of the positionality of the researcher. As Marrow (2007) explained:

Identifying the researcher’s social positioning in relation to the participant in the study provides the reader with an understanding of the relative privilege and power held by the investigator and participants, as well as shedding light on the worldview of the researcher or the lens through which she or he views the participants and the phenomenon of interest. (p. 215)

Further, “[u]nderstanding the social location of the researcher in relation to the research project is essential to providing sufficient information on which to base a full understanding of the context of the study” (Marrow, 2007, p. 215). Again, with this foundation, the reader is able to determine the study’s transferability, or the capacity of the study to apply to the reader’s own context.

Positionality.

Qualitative researchers are transparent regarding their prior assumptions about the topic, the rationale for the approach, and the presentation of sampling methods and data collection methods (Kline, 2008). Qualitative researchers acknowledge that “true objectivity is not possible...qualitative researchers recognize both the promise and limitations of subjectivity” (Marrow, 2007, p. 216). Qualitative inquiry requires its researchers to describe how their bias “influences data analysis and how their

relationships with participants affected their interpretation of the data and findings” (Kline, 2008, p. 211).

For example, as a researcher, I must acknowledge that my position as a middle school assistant principal³, at the time of the study, created in me significant interests and investments in the topic of women-to-women mentoring. Further, my professional work helped me gain trust from the participants. However, my administrative work in schools also created bias (positive and negative) in my research at every level. As stated earlier, qualitative research design requires acknowledgement of such bias. Thus, the prologue to this dissertation includes a detailed description of my personal story and its relationship to this study.

Phenomenological Approach

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), defined phenomenology as a “descriptive enterprise from the first-person perspective; a standpoint that is radically mine and to which nobody else has access” (Luft, 2011, p. 22). As was stated in chapter one, very little is known about the effect woman-to-woman mentoring has on increasing the number of women secondary (middle and high school) principals and superintendents. The desire to understand this phenomenon, rather than to manipulate it, calls for the naturalistic inquiry found in a qualitative, and more specifically, a phenomenological design. The gap in the literature, about same-gender mentoring at the secondary and superintendency levels, requires researchers to attempt to

³ In the summer of 2014 I became the building principal in the school where I was formerly the assistant principal.

“understand and document the day-to-day reality of participants” (Patton, 2002, p. 42) rather than to create a controlled experiment with a predetermined outcome. In the case of phenomenological methods, “the research takes place in real world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 39).

As Vandavelde and Hermberg, (2011) explained, “it is the virtue of phenomenology to try as much as possible to refrain from imposing constraints on the topic under analysis” (p. x). Instead, the goal is to build up “new and fresh knowledge untainted by prior conceptions and evaluations” (Rehorick, & Bentz, 2008, p. 6). When little is known about a topic, it “makes it impossible and inappropriate to specify operational variables, state testable hypotheses, or finalize either instrumentation or sampling schemes” (Patton, 2002, p. 44). Rather, qualitative research allows for design flexibility that can unfold in the field as data is gathered and the study develops.

Specifically, the aim of phenomenology is to “bring about awareness and understanding of direct experience. Unlike traditional methods of research, phenomenology... challenges one to let phenomena reveal themselves, rather than predetermining what phenomena are” (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, p. 3). As Patton (2002) explained, “the phenomenon of interest unfolds naturally in that it has no predetermined course established by and for the researcher such as would occur in a laboratory or other controlled setting” (p. 39).

When a study’s purpose is to describe central themes that emerge from the lived experiences of the people who share a phenomenon, one would use phenomenological

assumptions, cite and use analytic procedures from phenomenological research literature, describe the analytic process in terms consistent with procedures presented, and express findings as a phenomenology (Kline, 2008, p. 212). Using phenomenology as an approach to research requires collection of participant viewpoints as they experience a phenomenon (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2011) agreed, stating, “[p]henomenological approaches seek to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning individual lived experience” (p. 19). The slogan of phenomenological philosophy is to “go to the things themselves” or “to do full justice to the everyday experience, to the lived experience” (Dahlberg, Drew & Nystrom, 2001, p. 33). Patton (2002) added that it is about “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (p. 104). Gathering this type of data allows researches to view commonalities of experiences in an attempt to gain greater understanding of the phenomenon in question.

Perhaps the most critical phase in data analysis and reporting is how the data is applied to the research questions (Hycner, 1985, p. 284). In other words, “the researcher addresses the research questions to the units of general meaning to determine whether what the participant has said responds to and illuminates the research question” (Hycner, 1985, p. 284). The reporting, then, includes only those statements that increase an understanding of the interview question but does not waste the reader’s time with redundancies. In this study, the researcher considered not only what was said, but also the way in which a statement is made, and how often it was made as well. To accomplish this, the reader uses not only the words that were said, but depends upon the field notes

and artifacts to create a more complete understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring.

Study Design

Hycner (1999) commented, “[t]here is an appropriate reluctance on the part of phenomenologists to focus too much on specific steps” (p. 143). He goes on to say that one cannot impose method on a phenomenon “since that would do a great injustice to the integrity of that phenomenon” (p. 144). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) added, “[n]or does qualitative research have a distinct set of methods or practices that are entirely its own” (p.7). Instead, qualitative inquiry borrows approaches, methods, and techniques from many other disciplines. This allows qualitative and more specifically, phenomenological studies, to be flexible and fluid in nature allowing for the data to emerge in a manner that is true to the phenomenon under investigation. The following section contains information on the design of the study. In this section, discussion of the design includes: 1) setting and participant selection; 2) data collection; 3) data analysis; and 4) data reporting.

Setting and Participant Selection

Setting and participant selection is tremendously important in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). As Marshall and Rossman (2011) argued, “human actions are significantly influenced by the setting in which they occur and that one should therefore study that behavior in those real-life situations” (p. 91). For the purposes of this study, the setting was closely tied to the selection of the participants as the school or the district in which participants lead determined the sites that were

included. The researcher's knowledge of each setting was limited to the demographic information included on the state department of education's website, as well as to the contextual stories of each participant. Consideration was given to include women school leaders from a rich variety of contexts, including participants who led schools of various sizes, student diversity, and poverty levels (see Table 1, pg. 82).

The women led in districts of various sizes in a variety of settings. The biggest district represented in this research served more than 8100 students in a large suburb of a major metropolitan area. The smallest served just over 1000 students from a science magnet school in the inner city. This magnet school belonged to a cooperative district that worked with ethnically diverse students from high poverty areas. Also included were a number of women who served smaller districts in rural areas. In general, these rural schools had a smaller percentage of diverse students as well as lower levels of poverty. Again, the intent was to sample purposely from a wide variety of women school leaders working in different types of settings, as is typical of the purposeful selection procedures used by qualitative researchers (Kline, 2011; Patton, 2002).

In addition, because the goal of the researcher was to examine women leaders' beliefs regarding woman-to-woman mentoring, every attempt was made to include women leaders from a wide variety of positions within these settings. The participants of this study served schools in a variety of roles including a teacher in search of an administrative degree, assistant principals, principals, and superintendents. The variety of participants created a fuller picture of women in school leadership and the role mentoring has played or is currently playing in their professional lives.

Table 1: Demographic Data of Participant's School Districts

Position	Location	Setting	District Enrollment	Diversity %	Poverty Level %
Assistant Principal	High School	Rural/Suburban	5067	8.8	29.6
Director	Charter School (6-12)	Metro	1075	9.7	11.9
Superintendent	District-wide	Rural	3207	5.3	30.75
Assistant Principal	High School (9-10)	Suburban	8147	18.7	29.9
Principal	Area Learning Center	Rural/Suburban	6550	5.5	42.8
Assistant Principal	High School (11-12)	Suburban	8147	18.7	29.9
Assistant Principal	High School	Rural	2023	8.1	24.6
Associate Principal	Magnet School (7-12)	Metro	1060	54.7	40.6
Superintendent	District Wide	Rural	3604	6.2	12.3
Administrative Student	Middle School	Rural/Suburban	5067	8.8	29.6

Phenomenology demands a focus on the individual as it “enhances understanding of what humans actually experience in their situations and lives” (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, p. xv). Further, as Patton (2002) explained, “purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (p. 230). In this case, the goal of purposeful participant selection was to gain access to the in-depth understanding these particular women had regarding the phenomenon of mentoring. Information gathered from a demographic-data gathering questionnaire (see Appendix A, p. 272) allowed for a purposeful selection of women school leaders who were mentored by women, and who had or had not mentored women.

The questionnaire was sent to women members of two professional education organizations for school leaders in the upper Midwest. Permission and assistance (see Appendix D, p. 277) was gained from each organization for the distribution of the questionnaire to current women school leaders. Before the link to the demographic data-gathering questionnaire was sent out, it was piloted by three women school leaders who made suggestions that would increase the clarity of two of the eleven questions. These changes were made prior to distributing the questionnaire to all current women leaders in both professional organizations.

The purpose of the demographic data-gathering questionnaire was not only to gather information regarding the scope of woman-to-woman mentoring within the ranks of school leaders, but also to create a pool of participants for this study. The questionnaire was created using a Google survey tool, the electronic link to which was sent out to members of the two professional educational organizations via email. In the two weeks the electronic link was active, 89 current women school leaders responded. Sixty-eight of the respondents were secondary (grades 6-12) principals and assistant principals and 21 were superintendents. Of these 89 respondents, 40 were mentored by women and thus eligible to participate in this study. From the pool of the 40 women school leaders who responded that a woman had mentored them, 16 women indicated that they would agree to participate in this study. From this pool of 16 current women school leaders, participants were chosen to represent a diverse sample of schools in terms of size, setting, student ethnicity, and poverty levels. In addition, the sample represents women who served as secondary assistant principals, principals, directors, and

superintendents. Women school leaders from the list were interviewed to redundancy. When the information gathered from the interviews was consistently similar, the researcher stopped inviting new participants to take part in the study. Eight women school leaders were interviewed as a part of this group. Further, one woman superintendent who was mentored by men was interviewed as a means to compare interview data. Three women who were working to attain their administrative licenses and who were being mentored by women school leaders were also invited to participate in the study, one of these women accepted and was interviewed.

This study included participants who had wide varieties of experiences with women-to-women mentoring. Interviewing these women provided valuable information regarding the impact mentoring had on the decision to enter into school leadership. Only the researcher knows identifying information for the participants of this study. Participant's names, school locations, and contact information were protected using Microsoft encoding features and kept in password protected electronic storage. Participants were given a number, which was assigned based upon the order of her interview in relation to the other participants. Pseudonyms were also assigned in an effort to increase the clarity of reporting. All documents (e.g. field notes, transcripts) use only the participant's number as an identifier.

The plan for this study was to use the initial demographic tool to identify two groups of women who had been mentored by women school leaders, one group who was actively mentoring potential leaders and one group who were not. The hope was that the researcher would be able to identify some themes regarding the choice whether or not to

mentor potential school leaders. However, with the exception of one woman, all of the prospective participants who responded to data gathering tool who were mentored by women were also actively mentoring potential school leaders before or during the time of the study. Therefore having two groups of participants to compare was not possible. In addition to these eight women were two additional women, one woman who was a superintendent and was mentored only by men, and one prospective woman leader who was being mentored by a woman assistant principal. In addition to completing the initial demographic tool, participants were interviewed and asked to provide any pertinent documents or artifacts offering insight into the phenomenon of mentoring. Necessarily, all participants signed consent forms.

Data Collection

Interview questions focused on the women-to-women mentoring call for a level of depth and detail that cannot be addressed by quantitative data. As Patton (2002) reported, “[q]ualitative data describe. They take us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there. They capture and communicate someone else’s experiences of the world in his or her own words” (p. 47). Qualitative methods such as open-ended interviews and direct observation, while decidedly more difficult to analyze, “capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (Patton, 2002, p. 21). The goal of this study is simply to understand the lived experience of women who have been mentored by women and have or have not mentored other women, rather than to place judgments upon what is occurring. Thus, qualitative data

collection is an appropriate choice. To further explain, this subsection is made up of three parts, including: 1) Interviews; 2) Observations/triangulation; and 3) Documents/artifacts.

Interviews.

Qualitative researchers rely heavily on in-depth interviewing (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Specifically, phenomenological interviewing has requirements grounded in the tradition of phenomenology (Lester, 1999; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Of utmost importance in phenomenological interviewing is the “establishment of a good level of rapport and empathy” as it is “critical to gaining depth of information, particularly where investigating issues where the participant has a strong personal stake” (Lester, 1999). The school leaders interviewed were made aware of the researcher’s professional position in the introductory email received via her professional organization. The fact that the researcher held a position as a school leader was also discussed at each interview, creating a connection of understanding and empathy. The researcher’s title also communicates an understanding of confidentiality due to the importance of confidentiality in the profession. Finally, being a member in the same profession established a rapport that may have otherwise been missing.

Interviews were conducted at various times and places. To allow for confidentiality and anonymity no interview was held during the workday at the school building(s). For many of the participants, a quiet corner of a local coffee shop served as the meeting location after work hours or during a scheduled break in their work year. For some, interviews were held in the participant’s office before the arrival of students and

staff members for the day. Most follow-up meetings occurred during quiet times at professional conferences in a private space. Meeting locations for the interview were chosen by the participant and approved by the researcher.

Interviews first focused on past experiences with the phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For example, questions regarding the way in which mentoring may have helped ease the conflict between personal and professional lives, the tension that might have existed with cross-gender mentoring, and the importance same-gender mentoring may have played in attaining a leadership position (see Appendix B, p. 105). Second, the focus moved to participants' current experiences of, in this case, women-to-women mentoring (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These questions focused primarily on the importance, or lack of importance women school leaders placed upon mentoring potential women leaders. Finally, the interviews joined the first two narratives "to describe the individual's essential experience with the phenomenon" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148). The goal was to gain an overriding understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring.

The interviews were recorded using a digital recording device. These recordings were transcribed, in their entirety, by the researcher using voice recognition software. The researcher listened to the recordings and repeated all of the dialogue, which the software transcribed. This not only provided a review of the interview data, it also greatly increased an awareness of the participant's use of tone of voice, pauses, and mood during the interview. After the recordings were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy, as well as to be sure the entire interview was intact.

Transcriptions were then sent to each participant for review, or member-checking. Each participant responded to the researcher to indicate the accuracy of the transcription and to provide any additional or clarifying information. All hard copies of the transcriptions were kept in a locked container when not in use. Digital copies of the transcriptions were encrypted and stored in an electronic file that was password protected. Digital copies of the original recordings from the interviews were also stored electronically in password-protected files.

Observations/triangulation.

The field notes created from observations not only provided important data, they reinforced the themes that emerged through the use of other methods, and were an effective means to achieve triangulation. The expectation was that the observation of a women school leader, while interacting with her protégé, would increase what is currently a limited understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring (Lester, 1999). Unfortunately, none of the women school leaders interviewed were actively mentoring women at the time. Therefore, observations were included from three different settings. First, these women were observed during their interactions with other women in their buildings, for behaviors that may encourage or discourage these women in general. Second, during the months this researcher spent interviewing current women school leaders, two different conferences for women in leadership occurred. Current and potential women school leaders heavily attended these conferences and mentoring was a topic of discussion at both conferences. This created a unique opportunity to observe women around the act of mentoring as well as to gather more data on the topic itself.

Third, many of the women school leaders interviewed for this research behaved as if they were playing a mentoring role for the researcher. The women superintendents and principals who participated in this study held positions that were superior to my position of assistant principal and that was evident during the interviews. For example, there were many occasions in which these women provided useful, but unsolicited career advice and two of these women also hold earned doctorates and were very forthcoming with assistance regarding my academic work. These observations, and this study as a whole, evolved naturally, as is expected during a qualitative inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Documents/artifacts.

Documents or artifacts are often used in qualitative studies as a way to gather in-depth data for a study or to supplement other methods of data gathering (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Documents or artifacts are ‘potentially quite rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting’ (Marshall & Rossman, 2001, p. 160). The documents or artifacts hoped for this study included written messages such as personal or professional e-mails, cards, or letters offering support of some sort, documents from schools or districts, which created formal mentoring relationships or documents from universities establishing internship experiences. Even letters of recommendation written by a mentor for a protégé to assist in a job search would have offered not only data for the study, but a chance for triangulation of other data. Patton (2002) explained that these kinds of documents:

Provide the evaluator with information with many things that cannot be observed...reveal things that have taken place before the evaluation begins...may include private interchanges to which the evaluator would not otherwise be privy...reveal goals or decisions that might be otherwise unknown. (p. 293)

Permission to access these documents was sought in consent forms signed by the participants before the study began. However, because the mentoring relationships that the participants in this study describe were ad hoc and informal in nature, little to no artifacts exist. Each of the participants were asked to provide emails, personal cards, or other communications which might highlight the nature of the relationship, but each responded that those items were considered ongoing, informal, and personal and were not kept. In general, participants described phone calls, text messages, and emails in which support was given, but ongoing records of those communications, for the most part, did not exist. Some personal text messages and emails between the interning administrator who participated in the study and her mentor were procured and were valuable artifacts. Instead, historical documents and artifacts from the founder and organizer of one of the longstanding women's leadership conferences were attained. In addition, the accompanying documents from a newly created regional conference for women in school leadership were also used. These records provide valuable insight into the importance of women-to-women mentoring in the lives of women school leaders.

Data Analysis

While analysis of quantitative data is more clear cut due to the statistical expectations that can be met, the advantage of qualitative analysis is that "greater

attention can be given to nuance, setting, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context” (Patton, 2002, p. 60). While the traditions and practices of phenomenology are varied, analysis for phenomenological research usually includes two key elements: bracketing and phenomenological reduction, both of which were ideas coined by Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. A table briefly describing each stage of analysis can be seen on page 273.

The purpose of phenomenology is to “reduce the experienced persons with a phenomenon...to a composite description of the essence of the experience for [many] individuals” (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 252). In this manner, researchers gain a foundational understanding of the experience being investigated rather than focusing on explanations or development of theory. In using Moustakas’ hermeneutic phenomenological approach:

The researcher analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements...combines the statements into themes, and writes a textual description of the experiences of the persons, a structural description of their experiences...and a combined statement of the textural and structural description to convey the essence of the experience. (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 254)

An essential part of this approach is for the investigator to “set aside as much as possible his or her experiences to take a fresh perspective of the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, & Morales, 2007, p. 254). Husserl, the founding father

of phenomenology, called this procedure bracketing. As Rehorick & Bentz, (2008) explained:

Phenomenological description takes place in a partially cleared space. Levels of bracketing create the clearing. A first level of bracketing is to suspend what we have learned about a phenomenon from scientific studies, accepted theories, and other legitimated sources of knowledge. (p. 12)

Husserl stated that by “setting aside, or bracketing aspects of a phenomenon until one could come to its essential form, one would be able to describe it in such a way that others who worked similarly could also discover the same essential structure” (Rehorick & Bentz, 2008, p. 13). “In the end,” as Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morales (2007) pointed out, “our phenomenology presents a description of the experiences of the individuals studied and their common experiences with the phenomenon” (p. 256).

There are two levels of bracketing; the first requires the researcher to push his or her personal biases aside. This is referred to as Epoch (Patton, 2002). This requires not allowing the researcher’s meanings and interpretations or theoretical concepts to enter the unique world of the informant/participant (Groenewald, 2004). As Giorgi (2012) detailed, “the researcher still considers what is given to her but she treats it as something that is present to her consciousness...., [i]n addition, she refrains from bringing in non-given past knowledge to help account for whatever she is present to” (p 4). In short, bracketing is about the researcher’s work to “resist from positing as existing whatever object or state of affairs is present” to him or her and no position is taken either for or against (Giorgi, 2012, p 4).

In order to push aside the researcher's preconceived notions regarding woman-to-woman mentoring, those notions must first be identified. The prologue of this paper (see PROLOGUE, p. 1) was an attempt at "suspending (bracketing) as much as possible the researcher's meanings and interpretations and entering into the world of the unique individual" (Hycner, 1985, p. 281). While qualitative researchers do not ground their work in the concept of pure objectivity (Hycner, 1985), they do hold that the reflection on one's presuppositions can assist one in moving to the sidelines and in allowing for a more complete focus on the world-view of the participant.

The second form of bracketing is about isolating extraneous elements away from the phenomenon. Gallagher and Zahavi (2008) explained "[p]henomenology pushes these kinds of questions aside, brackets them, sets them out of play, and asks us instead to pay attention to the phenomenon under study" (p. 6). This means that issues that may obstruct the path to understanding are simply set aside, neither accepted nor rejected (Moran, 2000). Phenomenologists think this is an essential early step to "laying bare the essence of the act" (Moran, 2000, p. 149). This stage is called structural synthesis and "involves the imaginative exploration of all possible meanings and divergent perspectives and culminates in a description of the essence of the phenomenon and its deep structure" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148).

In order to accomplish this second level of bracketing, transcripts were assigned a number rather than being identified by participant name. This allowed the researcher to view each interview without attaching the preconceived ideas that phenomenology tries to eliminate. The transcripts generated by the participant interviews were reviewed

individually first in an attempt to more closely study the individual participant and her context before attempting to identify themes. Notes were made regarding concepts that emerged from each individual interview and were added to the field notes from the interview itself. This allowed for an understanding of the phenomenon for the individual being interviewed. Each woman who participated experienced the phenomenon of being mentored in her own context, and this step was important in clearly drawing out that understanding.

Phenomenological reduction requires repeated and careful rereading of all descriptions. This enables the researcher to get a sense of the data as a whole (Giorgi, 2012). From there, the data was broken down into units of meaning and specific utterances were understood for the “psychological value of what the subject said” (Giorgi, 2012, p. 5). Cerbone (2006) called this a “distillation, removing any of the arbitrary or contingent features of the experience so as to isolate the necessary form or structure of experience” (p. 35). Reduction “identifies the essence of the phenomenon” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148) by clustering the data around themes.

After reviewing each interview in its entirety, all of the interviews were read again to gain an understanding of the phenomenon of mentoring across the group of participants. After each individual transcription was reviewed, an Excel document that charted key ideas compared the important points from all interviews was created. This allowed the researcher to begin to see what commonalities the participant’s experiences shared as well as those experiences that were not a part of the phenomenon for the group. It also allowed for the gathering of some demographic data from the group of participants

such as career path, age of first leadership experience, and information regarding their personal and family lives.

Analysis of data gathered in a phenomenological study begins much like qualitative analysis in general. As Rehorick and Bentz, (2008) clarified, “[a]t one level, the interpreter seeks to find universal characteristics, generalities, or abstractions. This level is similar to general qualitative research wherein the researcher finds themes in a text and groups these themes into categories” (p. 21). Data is sorted to identify key themes and issues to begin to summarize the work (Lester, 1999). However, Hycner (1999) reminded us that “analysis” has dangerous connotations for phenomenology; the “term usually means a breaking into parts and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon” (p. 161). Instead, he recommends an “investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (Hycner, 1999, p. 161). With this in mind, the issue of women-to-women mentoring for school leaders called for analysis that was inductive in nature, again making qualitative design an appropriate choice for this study as “[q]ualitative inquiry is particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (Patton, 2002, p. 55).

After listening to the audio recordings multiple times and repeatedly reviewing the transcripts, themes in the data became apparent. The process to extract these themes from the interviews, observations, and artifacts began through the use of the spreadsheet described earlier. When each participant’s feelings and beliefs about mentoring echoed that of her colleagues, it was noted on the document. Likewise, when a participant’s

view was dramatically different, this was noted as well. In working through this process with ten interviews, the beginnings of some themes emerged.

The next step was to again process each interview with these beginning themes in mind. The recursive nature of this work became evident as this researcher worked in and out of each interview to compare and contrast the data collected. When these themes were identified, they were color coded within the Word document. Each interview was then printed and colored sections were removed by cutting them out of each hard copy. The colored sections were then manually sorted to group similar themes across all of the interviews.

Table 2: Stages of Data Analysis

Step	Purpose	Stage
Bracketing	Researcher attempts to identify and set aside her experiences to gain a fresh understanding of the phenomenon	1. Prologue created
Structural Synthesis	Isolating extraneous elements away from the phenomenon	2. Participant data identified only by number during analysis 3. Field notes created to examine all possible meanings and divergent perspectives
Reduction	Enables the researcher to get a sense of the data as a whole in order to understand the essence of the phenomenon	4. Transcripts of interviews created and reviewed as individual experiences within a context 5. Notes detail experiences for individual 6. Chart created to track individual experiences 7. Commonalities and differences of individual experiences noted 8. Demographic information noted 9. Beginnings of themes noted 10. Individual recordings replayed, transcripts reviewed to further extract themes and distill elements of women-to-women mentoring 11. Observation and document notes reviewed repeatedly 12. Emerging themes color-coded in all notes and transcripts 13. Copies of data made, cut into sections, and sorted 14. Themes continually sorted to create or eliminate themes highlighting the essence of the phenomenon

Data Reporting

In general, qualitative researchers “seldom report their findings in terms of the kinds of complex statistical measure or methods to which quantitative researchers are drawn” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 11). Instead, qualitative research demands thick, rich description of the phenomenon at hand to capture an individual’s point of view. As Creswell and Miller (2000) pointed out, “the purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study” (p. 129). Additionally, data that has been gathered using qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and participant observation demands that the participants’ perspectives be presented and that “their worldviews structure the report” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 265).

The analysis of phenomenological data should be done transparently as to allow the reader to work through the findings to see how the researcher has arrived on his or her interpretations (Lester, 1999). Therefore, as Marshall and Rossman (2011) explained, “[c]onsiderations of one’s positionality, ethics, and political stance affect report writing” (p. 266) and this must be made obvious to readers. Piantanida and Garman (1999) listed several criteria that should be considered when reporting data: the first is integrity, or “a well-reasoned connection between how the inquiry was conducted and the knowledge generated from it” (p. 147). Another is rigor, which is a “carefulness, precision and elegance of the researcher’s thinking” (p. 149). Utility, defined as a report that is “presented in ways that are useful to the intended audience,” (p. 152) is also an essential

element. Finally, vitality creates “a vicarious sense of the phenomenon and the context of the study” (p. 152) for the readers.

Perhaps the most critical phase in data analysis and reporting is how the data is applied to the research questions (Hycner, 1985, p. 284). “In other words, the researcher addresses the research questions to the units of general meaning to determine whether way the participant has said responds to and illuminates the research question” (Hycner, 1985, p. 284). The reporting, then, includes only those statements that increase understanding of the interview question but does not waste the reader’s time with redundancies. In this study, the researcher considered not only what was said, but also the way in which a statement was made, and how often it was made as well. To accomplish this, the researcher uses not only the words that were said, but depends upon the field notes and artifacts to create a complete understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring. The major and minor themes that arose from the data appear in Table 3, pg. 100.

Table 3: Major, minor, and supporting themes.

Major Themes	Minor Themes	Supporting Themes
Benefits to Women in Leadership	Gender balance	
	Women's skills	
	"Mother" image	
Women's Barriers	Personal	Personal life
		Children
		Equal Partner
	Professional	Acquiring position
		Maintaining position
		Proving women's leadership
	Reconceptualizing balance	Assumed failure
	Self-care	
Women and Mentoring	Participants' Definitions	
	Mentoring's Value	Aspiring Leaders
		Established Leaders
		Active Mentors
	Mentors	Potential/aspiring women leaders
		Willing to mentor
	Mentees	Chosen or not?
		Few women leaders/mentors
		Women mentor's value
		Mentor's barriers-lessons
		Social aspects
		Men mentoring women

Study Limitations

All research concerns itself with bias. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) explained, "objective reality can never be captured" (p. 5). In this case, researcher bias, both personal and professional, exists due to experience with mentoring and both being

mentored and not being mentored in a position of school leadership and has potential to limit the study from beginning to end. Bracketing one's personal experiences and "recognizing where the personal insight is separated from the researcher's collection of data – it is important because it allows the researcher to perceive the phenomenon freshly, as if for the first time" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 97).

Another limitation to the study was that little is known about women-to-women mentoring. As stated earlier, the lack of research for this topic leaves little support or guidance for the researcher, as currently there is no structure or framework for which to support and/or compare the data.

A third limitation was the limited access to artifacts and documents that could have further triangulated the data for this study. Because the mentoring relationships were informal and friendly in nature, artifacts simply were not kept. What was available was personal in nature and while it was informative, is not generalizable across larger populations.

Fourth, it could be considered limiting that the researcher was not able to locate seated women school leaders who were not mentoring potential women leaders. While it is important to understand the implication that all of the participants were experienced mentors, the lack of non-mentoring participants could limit the overall level of understanding the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring.

Fifth, as is often the case in phenomenological qualitative studies, this study is limited because of the small number of participants. While redundancy was the measure

of whether more participants were needed, a larger sample may have provided more nuanced narrative data.

CHAPTER 4:

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS, AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the proposed qualitative study is to explore the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who meet the following criteria: 1) are currently seated secondary school principals, assistant principals, and superintendents; and 2) are or were mentored by other women school leaders. The questions guiding this research include:

1. How do study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring?
2. What are the lived experiences of women who have been mentored by women (or women) school leader(s)?
3. Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who aspire to school leadership?

Finally, in order to clearly report the findings from data collection (demographic questionnaire, individual interviews, observations, and documents), this chapter is divided into two large sections: 1) Demographics: Findings and Discussion, and 2) Full Interviews, Observations, and Documents: Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion:

Demographics: Findings and Discussion

In order for readers to better understand and make some use of the study data in their own settings, knowledge of participants' demographics is important. In this study, demographics were gathered from two sources: 1) Selection/ pre-interview Questionnaire and 2) Individual Interviews.

Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

The process of data collection began with a Selection/pre-interview questionnaire, the electronic link to which was distributed by two professional organizations for school leaders in the Midwest (see Appendix D, p. 277). According to the demographic data gathered, 68 of the questionnaire respondents (76.4%) were mentored on their path to school leadership and 22 (24.7%) were not. Of the 68 women who reported being mentored, 40 of the respondents (58.8%) noted that one or more women had mentored them. Of those 40 who were mentored by women, 18 (45.0%) were mentored by women only, and 23 (57.5%) were mentored by both men and women. From the total number of respondents who were mentored on her path to school leadership, 26 (38.2%) were mentored by men only. Of the women *superintendents* who responded to the questionnaire, 18 of 21 (85.7%) reported that they were mentored during their move into leadership. In addition, 33 (66.0%) of the survey respondents, who were *principals or assistant principals*, were mentored by women. (See Table 4 below).

Table 4: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

WHO MENTORED YOU?	Total Respondents	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
	All = 89	68	21
Mentored	68 (76.4%)	50 (73.5%)	18 (85.7%)
Not-Mentored	22 (24.4%)	18 (26.5%)	4 (19.0%)
Only by Men	26 (37.7%)	16 (32.0%)	10 (47.6%)
Only by Women	18 (26.1%)	17 (34.0%)	1 (4.8%)
By women and men	23 (33.3%)	17 (34.0%)	6 (28.6%)
Total # By at least one woman	40 (58.0%)	33 (66.0%)	7 (38.9%)

When study participants were asked if they mentored other aspiring women leaders, 65 (73.0%) of the women who were in leadership, at the time of the study, responded that they had mentored others. Of the women who mentored, more superintendents (76.2%) mentored than did school principals (72.1%). Twenty-three (25.8%) respondents stated that they had not or were not mentoring aspiring women leaders. This number was split almost equally between the principals (26.5%) and the superintendents (23.8%). (See Table 5 below).

Table 5: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

HAVE YOU MENTORED WOMEN?	Total Respondents	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
YES	65 (73.0%)	49 (72.1%)	16 (76.2%)
NO	23 (25.8%)	18 (26.5%)	5 (23.8%)

The 68 mentored respondents reported having a wide variety of mentors and role models. In most cases, these women had more than one mentor. However, at some point in their careers, a direct supervisor mentored the majority of the respondents; 39 (57.4%) women were mentored by their principals, and 27 (39.7%) by their superintendents. Other mentors included assistant principals, college professors, assistant superintendents, directors, and teachers. (See Table 6 below).

Table 6: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

Positions of the Respondents' Mentors	Total Respondents	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
Director	3	2	1
Principal	39	33	6
Assistant Principal	7	7	0
Superintendent	27	14	13
Assistant Superintendent	4	4	0
College Professor	7	4	3
Teacher	2	0	2

When determining participants' willingness to mentor, various profiles emerged. One group of women school leaders (n = 23), at the time of the study, *who had not or were not mentoring*: 1) nine (39.1%) were not mentored themselves, 2) nine (39.1%) were mentored by men only, and 3) two (8.7%) were mentored by women only. In a second group of participants *who were actively mentoring*, 11 women, 9 principals and two superintendents (n = 22) were never mentored during their path to school leadership. In the last group, there were nine respondents who were not mentored and were not mentoring aspiring women leaders at the time of the study. (See Table 7 below).

Table 7: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF MENTORING	Total Respondents	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
Not mentored women; Not mentored herself	9 (39.1%)	8 (44.4%)	1 (20%)
Not mentored women; Mentored by men	9 (39.1%)	7 (38.9%)	2 (40%)
Not mentored women; Mentored by women	2 (8.7%)	1 (5.5%)	1 (20%)
Not mentored; Currently mentoring	11 (50.0%)	9 (50.0%)	2 (50.0%)
Not mentored; Not currently mentoring	9 (40.9%)	8 (44.4%)	1 (25.0%)
No Response	2	1	1

The respondents (n = 68) held a variety of positions while being mentored. In fact, 34 reported that they were mentored while they were principals, 23 while assistant principals, 12 while superintendents, and four while assistant superintendents. Only four respondents were mentored as assistant superintendents, three were directors, three were counselors, and one woman was in each of the categories: counselor, dean, teacher, and librarian. (See Table 8 below).

Table 8: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

Respondents' Position While Mentored:	Total Respondents	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
	All =68	50	18
Assistant Principal	23	22	1
Principal	34	29	5
Superintendent	12	0	12
Assistant Superintendent	4	0	4
Director	3	0	3
Counselor	3	3	0
Dean	1	1	0
Librarian	1	1	0
Teacher	1	0	1

Individual Interviews

As was discovered during individual interviews, the participants were in various stages of their careers—some were in their first year of formal leadership, and some were contemplating retirement after a full career. Many of the women took a traditional route to their leadership positions by first becoming teachers, and then taking positions such as dean of students or as assistant principals before moving up the ranks.

However, some participants ($n = 3$), rather than first serving as assistant principals and principals, took a path through the district office in cabinet positions such as directors or chiefs of staff. Some women ($n = 7$) entered college, immediately out of high school, to become teachers, but others ($n = 3$) delayed education to care for families or made education a second career after choosing a different profession initially. Two participants entered teaching via the traditional route and left education to pursue other interests before returning to become school leaders. The youngest participant accepted a formal

school leadership position at the age of 24, and the oldest was a woman who, at the time of the interview, was just finishing her first year as a high school assistant principal at age 56. Using purposeful sampling aimed at including this wide variety of participants allowed for a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-woman mentoring. (See Table 9 below).

Table 9: Demographics from Selection/pre-interview Questionnaire

PARTICIPANTS' PRIOR POSITION	Total Participants	Principal/Assistant Principal	Superintendent
	All = 10	7*	2
Coach	3	3	0
Teacher	10	8	2
Department/Peer Leader	3	3	0
Counselor	1	1	0
Dean of Students	3	3	0
Assistant Principal	1	1	
Principal	0	0	0
Director	2	0	2
Participants' Entry into Education: Traditional	7	7	0
Non-traditional	3	1	2

*One participant was a principal intern

Full Interviews, Observations, and Documents:

Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussion

Beyond the demographic data, the full individual interviews, observations, and documents/artifacts produced the rich, thick descriptive-narrative data that iterates the complex phenomenon of *women-to-women mentoring*, a strategy for career development

in leadership. Not surprisingly, study participants readily discussed the previously researched and published barriers to and benefits of placing women in school leadership positions (e.g. see Chapter 2, p. 19). However, much less is known from previous research regarding the role that mentoring, specifically women-to-women mentoring, plays in moving women through these barriers and into entry and advanced positions in school leadership. To clearly present the thematic interview findings related to these issues, this lengthy section is divided into three subsections: 1) Benefits of Women in Leadership; 2) Barriers to Leadership for Women; and 3) Mentoring for Women toward Leadership.

Benefits of Women in Leadership

In narrative data, participants were clear regarding the benefits that women bring to school leadership, and at the same time, their responses were replete with the difficulties women face when entering, or trying to enter various leadership roles. The discussion of mentoring as a way to increase the number of women school leaders *can for some* become a moot point unless there is value-added when hiring women leaders. The themes related to the benefits of increasing the number of women in school leadership, as advanced by the participants, are reported in three subcategories: 1) Gender balance, 2) Women's skills, and 3) "Mother" image.

Gender balance.

When asked if and why school systems needed more women in leadership roles, the participants responded that women who lead school systems are beneficial to education in general. From field notes, it was clear that many of the participants knew

the importance of their roles in their schools or districts. These leaders were cognizant of each aspect of their appearance; how they dressed, spoke, moved, and the thoughtful way they responded to each interview question. Participants' attention to detail communicated loudly the worth of women leaders in general (Field Notes, 09). These women behaved as if their very existence in the room conveyed the importance they placed on their position, their work, and their students. For each participant, their presence communicated that each breath they took might increase the chances or decrease the chances for other women in search of leadership (Field Notes, 03). As Fran explained:

I think it's great for kids, and I was going to say girls, to see what I do, but I'm going to say both, because I think it's good for boys to know that I am what I am, and that I am in leadership. I think it is good for them to see strong women leaders. I think it's good for all kids to see that... I'm so passionate about that. (Interview 06, p. 13)

Gina agreed with the need to have both men and women in administrative positions for the sake of establishing balanced school leadership. She stated, "I think we do need that balance. I think there are some really great strengths that men and women bring" (Interview 07, p. 14). The perceived need to balance the number of men and women school leaders comes not only as a means to present equality to students, but also to provide schools with the specific skills women leaders bring.

The need to create a more balanced selection of leaders was obvious during three professional events, for women leaders, where observations were conducted. Attendance

at these events allowed the researcher to conduct both document and observational data analysis. The first event, as described by the initial planning documents, was a half-day meeting and luncheon designed by a group of women educational leaders to create “an opportunity for women administrators to gather for networking, learning, and idea sharing.” This gathering was named after the first state level women commissioner of education, who made it a priority to increase the number of women school leaders. Since its inception in 2006, each attendee was asked to bring a guest, an aspiring women school leader, to the meeting. As was noted on the registration form in 2011, “Each practicing education leader is encouraged to bring a guest who is a woman considering a career in education leadership. Guests attend without cost, and we are again offering a reduced student rate.” The purpose, as was determined by the planning group, was clearly communicated on the registration form, “Let’s build our community of women who are excellent education leaders.”

The second event observation was a conference created in 2011 to provide women school leaders with a professional development opportunity. This conference was created by the same group of women who created the half-day meeting, discussed in the preceding paragraph, to fulfill a need in women’s professional development that they believed did not exist (Artifacts, p. 6). This three-day conference allowed a woman leader, who paid her own admission fee, to include her mentee for no additional cost.

Finally, the third event observation was a “Symposium of Women Educational Leaders” created in 2013 by a member of a state university’s department of educational leadership in conjunction with the state’s secondary principals’ association. As stated by

the electronic registration form, the purpose of this conference was to create professional development sessions for “Women education leaders around the state including but not limited to Superintendents, Administrators, Directors, Special Education Directors and Coordinators, Community Education Directors, and those entering the profession.”

Mentees of admission-paying leaders were invited at a reduced rate, but the registration materials did not indicate a purpose for inviting one’s protégé.

Women’s skills.

In addition to the overall value of a balanced number of men and women leaders, the participants noted beneficial skill sets that they believed were specific to women. As the advertisement from one women’s leadership conference encouraged:

In the summer, spend some time with colleagues examining the research, sharing the stories, and reflecting on the qualities of the excellent practice of women educational leaders. Learn from an expert researcher as well as from one another about how the qualities that characterize women’s approaches to leadership differ from traditional approaches and how those qualities can fulfill a promise of a new tradition of leadership. (Artifacts, p. 4)

At this conference, a nationally known speaker helped attendees “understand how the qualities that characterize women’s approaches to leadership differ from traditional approaches and how those qualities can fulfill a promise of a new tradition of leadership” (Artifacts, p. 5). According to the participants, these skills and approaches included: 1) openness to change, 2) strong detail-orientation, 3) problem-solving techniques, 4)

noteworthy visibility, and 5), relational practices. Each of these five skills and practices are described and supported below by direct quotes from the study participants.

First, when speaking about a woman's ability to change, Helen explained:

It has been my experience that women are more innovative and less resistant to change, less resistant to trying and taking a risk on something new as long as they believe it's going to be beneficial, less concerned with keeping everything the status quo...and at the same time understanding that if something doesn't work they are not afraid to take that decision back and change it. (Interview 08, p. 17)

To be sure, because public education is controlled by outside sources, including state and federal departments of education, change is a frequent and often mandated phenomenon. The inability to accept and implement change could create a substantial disadvantage for a school leader.

Second, Carol believed that women leaders, "pay much more close attention to a lot of details...we can juggle a lot of things at one time and remember them...it's a rare male [who] can have lots of things going on all the time and be able to stay on top of all of them" (Interview 03, p. 11). Helen called this ability an *executive functioning skill* and added, "I think it's critical that administrators have the organizational piece, all of those executive functions kinds of tasks, and I believe that we as women often possess those at a much stronger level than I think that men do" (Interview 08, pgs. 18-19). At other times in the interview, Helen also referred to these executive functioning skills as,

“juggling plates in the air—the ability to keep all of the information straight, dotting the ‘I’s and crossing the T’s” (Interview 08, p. 16).

Third, Irene believed schools need women leaders due to their ability to verbally solve problems. As she stated:

Research upon research will show you that women do verbal problem-solving much better than men. So if we think of...an opportunity to problem-solve verbally as opposed to proving who is right and who is wrong, who was out and who was safe, that is why women have more success...I think that is one area where women are exceptionally strong. (Interview 09, pp. 7-8)

Fourth, Irene stated that women are at an advantage because they are more visible. She gave this example:

I know that I get into every single classroom. I just walk in and sit down...I feel that I’m a better superintendent because I get into classrooms. And when there is conflict, when something is bubbling, I am more visible. I think that is a female trait...my first month in the district, I remember the high school assistant principal said to me, ‘I gotta [sic] tell you, I am sure I am not responding well to you when you come into the building, but you have been in this building more in one month than the predecessor was in five years’. (Interview 09, p. 6)

Irene, a long-time superintendent saw the ability to be visible in the various educational settings of a school district as a vital skill that not only worked to proactively diffuse tension, but in staying aware of the progress of the district.

Fifth, participants repeatedly spoke about the relational approach to their work; this was also seen as a benefit for school systems. As Fran explained:

I think we have the ability to relate to people, and I think that people feel comfortable coming up to us versus coming to the men...I have teachers in this building who don't even really know me but feel more comfortable coming to me about certain things than they do about [male principal]. And I think that's because of what I have given off in terms of how I build relationships with them. I feel like it's important for them to know that I'm human so, in that way I've kind of been given an advantage a little bit. (Interview 06, p. 14)

Gina agreed that women leaders have a relational approach that allows them to gather information to which men lack access. She clarified:

We are people oriented...we watch people, we watch faces, we watch expressions, we watch body language, we absorb information in all kinds of ways. I don't think men are capable of doing that.... I think we have insights...because we watch people like we do. (Interview 07, p. 16)

Finally, Helen explained the relational approach in terms of her current supervisor, "right now, our actual superintendent is on administrative leave, and he is male. We have a female interim, and it has been a total breath of fresh air. You can actually talk to this person, and the meetings are collegial" (Interview 08, p. 4).

This relational approach was evident in each observation as well. Entering the participant's schools felt, to the researcher, like entering the home of a well-practiced hostess, a woman who knows how to entertain, to make people feel welcome. Each of

the participants was welcoming and generously gave of their time regardless of constrained schedules. Interviews quickly became relaxed conversations that focused as much on family and friends as on professional matters. Evidenced by the many questions they asked, the participants were interested in the work of the researcher and the path that led to the interviews (Field Notes 03, 04, 06, 07, 09, 10). Perhaps the best example of the relational approach of these school leaders was the fact that four of the participants requested invitations to the researcher's final defense of this study (Field Notes, 03, 04, 05, 10).

The artifacts and documents highlighted this relational approach as well. Clearly, in the email exchanges and text messages between Jackie and her mentor, a relationship was encouraged that equalized two-way communication. Jackie's supervisor and mentor demonstrated a relational approach in which she allowed and encouraged the mentoring association to grow into a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, one email exchange was shared in which Jackie critiqued her mentor's presentation to a group of students. The email demonstrated a lack of a hierarchical structure in the relationship (Artifacts, p. 7).

In another example, the planning document for a professional development opportunity for women leaders explained the overarching organizational principle for the meeting:

The World Café – conversations that are an intentional way to create a living network of conversation around questions that matter...a creative process for leading collaborative dialogue, sharing knowledge and creating possibilities for

action...table of four, paper table cloths, candles, quiet music and refreshments...series of conversational rounds about one or more questions which are personally meaningful...at the end of each round, one person remains at each table while the other three travel to different tables...conversations build and deepen. (Artifacts, p. 2)

Another example of this relational approach occurred at one of the three conferences created for women school leaders. One of the speakers was presenting on “Relational Leadership” and the session was partially described as, “Relational leadership suggests that leadership is about being in a relationship with others in a horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense” (Artifacts, p. 5). In attending this conference, the relational approach was evident. It was a supportive environment in which women were encouraged to “come, sit here” (Artifacts, p. 1). In fact, one of the planning documents reminded event organizers that “committee member act as greeters – make sure everyone is welcomed and has a buddy” (Artifacts, p. 6).

“Mother” image.

While participants openly discussed the societal stereotypes of women that become barriers to leadership, they also believed that maternal-image stereotypes can be a benefit to women’s leadership and used to women’s advantage. Denise stated, “I think that if we play [maternal stereotypes] well, that we can use it to our advantage. The assumption that people make about women, we should be able to use that to our advantage as well” (Interview 04, p. 16). More specifically, Denise specified:

A young female also has feminine wiles, you know, you can smile and wink, you can be sweet and get men's cooperation that way, and I think as we age...older females are regarded in some ways, I feel it's a good thing because you do get the maternal, the wise older woman thing. (Interview 04, p. 16)

Brenda explained the benefit of the maternal image to maintaining student discipline, "Moms tend to be the strong disciplinarians a lot of the time, and is seen in a lot of families as the one who does that, you know, the buck is going to stop here kind of person" (Interview 02, p. 4). The participants described a line to be walked between being in control of the building, but also the need to demonstrate an ethic of care for the students. Brenda described:

I do think it's easier, while my kids certainly know I mean business...I do think they probably see me a little bit more as being able to be the person that is picking up and mittens and putting them in the lost and found and that kind of stuff. And I think they are comfortable with that, even though that they know, if I need to, I will be on you, like now. (Interview 02, p. 10)

Gina described this ability as being related to parenting skills and believes that women, "have a tendency to have them more just because they are more nurturing, more compassionate by nature," and are "quicker to tackle them, to recognize them" (Interview 07, p. 9). These parenting-type skills were also evident in the observations. Upon becoming familiar with the life-story of the researcher, several of the participants shared unsolicited career and personal advice. Within an hour-long interview, a relationship had been created and the participants expressed their wish for the researcher's personal and

professional success (Field Notes 01, 03, 05, 07, 09). Finally, Amanda added a different view of the mother image:

I think I can bring in the vulnerability part that the men maybe wouldn't see. Not always, but I think a lot of times a woman sees things a little bit different from a man in the way that we handle things...maybe it's a mom thing, maybe it's a female thing, but I just strongly believe that women have a different angle on stuff. (Interview 01, p. 2)

Women's Barriers

An emerging theme in the data centered upon the topic of barriers that block the path to all levels of school leadership. The professional barriers that women who aspire to school leadership positions face are well documented in the literature (Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Brunner & Kim, 2010; Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Young & McLeod, 2001; Zemon and Bahr, 2005). There was a bit of reluctance for some of the participants to admit to feeling the barriers, either personal or professional (Interview 04, p. 5). Like the other participants, Brenda and Helen carried themselves with a presence that said no obstacle would stand in their way of a goal. What was different for these participants was an affiliation with the men who dominated the profession (Field Notes, 08). Brenda and Helen did not seem to have a strong affinity with other women leaders or an attitude of going above and beyond for other women leaders (Interview 02, 08). Instead, they concentrated on fighting through their personal barriers, if they saw barriers. As Brenda stated, "I don't think I gave people an opportunity to stand in my way, because I'm pretty used to getting what I

want” (Interview 02, p. 5). Helen did not see barriers; she stated, “I don’t think I have any of that. And it could have been that it was just intrinsic to me, I don’t see any barriers to me personally” (Interview 08, p. 6). Amanda credited a different reason for not seeing barriers, “I was too stupid to know that, you know, just so naïve about life in general because in my world that didn’t exist” (Interview 01, p. 1).

While two of these participants stated they did not see and or feel barriers because they were driven and did not allow things to get in their way (Interview 02, Interview 04), all of the participants identified barriers that were present in the personal and/or professional arenas of their lives. These participants wore the success of overcoming barriers like badges of honor. Indeed, barriers became fodder for survival stories, laughter, and commiseration with peers and the researcher. Perhaps because of the barriers, participants exuded confidence, courage, and an air of certainty regarding their abilities to surmount any challenges found in their paths (Field Notes 03, p. 2). The topic of the barriers women face was also given some importance in one gathering for women school leaders. The conference offered the presentation “Unique Challenges that Women Leaders Face” in both 2013 and 2014 (Artifacts, p. 1, p. 5). This section describes such barriers and is divided into four subsections: 1) Personal barriers; 2) Professional barriers; and 3) Balancing personal and professional.

Personal barriers.

When determining whether a career in school leadership was the best career path, all of the participants gave significant thought to the various levels of their personal lives. The data that emerged to create this theme highlighted the planning that was needed and

the sacrifices that were made en route to leadership. Subtopics in this category include:

1) Personal life; 2) Children; and 3) Equal partner.

Personal life.

As was pointed out by the participants, school leaders are also leaders of their communities. While visibility is essential for effective leadership, it can have its downfalls in the community. Therefore, careful thought was always given to reputation, “You were very visible, so people knew who you were. The huge disadvantage is that everywhere you went, people knew who you were! And...you didn’t always recognize them, but they always knew who you were, so that fishbowl existence” (Interview 02, p. 11). Fran agreed:

My social life changed. I was very cognizant of what I did in town, when you’re in a smaller town...people are always watching you...not that I’m a big bar goer or anything like that, but I didn’t do that...if a group of friends was going to, whatever the bar is, I would say, ‘Yeah, no, I’m sorry. I’m not going to go.’ I can’t. Can’t have Facebook. I can’t have certain things, I am just really cognizant of that, of what I did, of how it was perceived” (Interview 06, p. 6).

Friendships were also problematic for the participants. Brenda discussed the complications that friendships made prior to leadership created:

You have to be able to draw the line with your old friendships, and things like that can no longer be the same. And we all get burnt on that, I don’t know anybody that hasn’t broken that rule and not ended up regretting it...you’d definitely have

to be okay with being pretty much an island...you can't care about not being in the group. (Interview 02, pp. 11-12)

Romantic relationships also suffered:

It's tough on relationships. I got divorced back early in this whole thing...but dating or finding people that can embrace what you do for a living and can accept your schedule and the responsibilities that you have hasn't been easy...you know, it's like, I don't want to be sitting at school on a Friday night for the basketball game. And when you live in a small town, dating the principal is a spectator sport! It's like, 'Oh my God! Who is with her! Did you see? There was a car at her house!' So, all those things can definitely have been more challenging than in a less visible position. (Interview 02, p. 6)

Finally, Irene described the difficulty with the expectations placed upon women school leaders by those whose professional lives did not impose similar kinds of time constraints as her work as a superintendent did. In her example, it was by her neighbors:

My neighborhood always did the Christmas cookie exchange. I don't give a rat's ass about baking Christmas cookies. I don't like to cook, I don't like to bake and those kinds of things...And I said no, I'll come and have cookies with you or whatever, have a glass of wine, but I'm not bring cookies and I don't expect to bring any home. But those kinds of things...they can get to you, just that little dig in there. (Interview 09, p. 10)

As the participants explained, issues of community visibility, friendships, romantic relationships, and stereotypical expectations can serve as barriers to being or becoming a school leader, especially for these women.

Children.

Working a professional career around children was another significant theme that arose from the data. Only one of the ten participants did not have children, and three had *young* children at the time of the interviews. In addition, one participant, Helen, was looking forward to soon being able to care for her granddaughter for several months (Interview 08). Each of the participants who had children, regardless of the children's age, talked specifically about them. Diane's son, a sophomore, was not turning his schoolwork in on time (Interview 04). Fran's newborn daughter was thriving (Interview 06). Gina's daughter was soon to be married (Interview 07), and Irene was beaming with pride at her daughter's teaching success (Interview 09). The participants were clearly dedicated to their children, and when conversation centered upon them as a barrier, the participants were clear that the barrier was not about their children, it was a result of societal expectations. When asked if being a woman principal conflicted with her personal responsibilities, Amanda responded:

Yeah, I think so, because I think it's still the belief that the woman comes home and takes care of the kids, for the most part. And a man goes off and does his job, and I didn't mean that disrespectfully of men in any way, I just still think that is the belief. (Interview 01, p. 7)

When asked if having a family in any way got in the way of wanting to become a school principal, Amanda responded, “You know, yeah, because it changes your priorities. Men don’t have to change their priorities” (Interview 01, p. 7). For the women school leaders in this study, most often that shift in priorities became about managing time. As Carol explained, “I certainly didn’t spend the time with them that I would have had I been staying homes. Time becomes a factor” (Interview 03, p. 12). Amanda added:

You know, it’s tough to be at a middle school and high school, it’s tough to be in a leadership role because you are gone from your kids, you have lots of evenings, you have lots of stuff that you have to do with school and so you are gone from your kids a lot. And there’s just that whole conflict of that. (Interview 01, p. 7)

These women were clear about their priorities, as Carol described, “Always putting them first...a phone call in the middle of the day that comes in from your child, you answer that. Even if it is to say that I can’t talk to you right now...there is still always the priority, that always for me, that never left” (Interview 03, pp. 11-12). Jackie had three school age children and was constantly manipulating her schedule to meet the needs of her children as well as finish assignments for her graduate work. In a text message, Jackie vented to her mentor about people thinking that “admin must work longer than anyone else” and that she was worried about her home time being “robbed” (Artifacts, p. 17).

Quite a bit of the conversation around personal barriers centered upon the topic of if and when to have children and how that affected the participants’ leadership role. Some participants attained a leadership status before beginning a family, “I thought, I do

want to get my masters, and I would kind of like to get this done before I start having a family, so I got everything done before I started having babies and stuff, which I am thankful for” (Interview 05, p. 2). Fran had the same approach and had just returned from maternity leave for her first child in what was her first year in a leadership role in a new school:

Well, it was hard because I had just gotten going. So I wanted to come in and establish myself. I don’t want to have to be questioned, you know, you just get going and you just kind of start to develop who you are in the school, with this staff, because like I said, you cannot come in and tell them what you do, you just have to show them” (Interview 06, p. 10).

The time it took to reestablish herself was difficult for Fran. As she explained:

It has just taken me longer, and I didn’t want to have to take that long to get going, and I am not used to having to slow down and prove myself again. It’s totally frustrating, and really hard...I will say this, it’s been a challenge to come in and leave for maternity leave and come back. (Interview 06, p. 10)

While Fran chose to begin a family during her leadership career, other participants chose to wait until their children were grown. Amanda explained her viewpoint:

I was married, and my husband at that time traveled all the time. And then, we had a son so it was important that I be around. And so, I didn’t work in real jobs for awhile, I kind of did a few things around here and there when my son was young so I could be mostly home...so I suppose those were some personal

barriers that maybe got in the way a little bit, that slowed me down a little bit.

(Interview 01, p. 1)

Carol also waited for her children to grow before embarking on a leadership career:

I was fortunate...because I got into administration when my oldest had just graduated from high school and my youngest was a sophomore, and I was the assistant principal where he went to school, so I could see him during the day. So I think my situation is a little bit more unusual because I came later in my life, and it wasn't so hard to balance because they were going off to college. (Interview 03, p. 12)

Finally, one of the participants decided not to have children. Brenda explained her outlook on family life:

I always say that I don't have any peeps, no pets, no plants. So I am pretty low maintenance...and have always lived close to school because it just makes it easier, but I don't know how some of the people have done it...trying to juggle kids responsibilities and parenting things. (Interview 02, p. 9)

It was obvious that some of the participants felt the strain of creating family and being a school leader. As one said, "If you try to be a woman leader when you are already in a field you are not supposed to be in, quote unquote, you are supposed to be raising your toddlers" (Interview 08, p. 18).

One participant, Irene, was working to create a workable solution in the school district she ran:

I think it's as important for us to change the paradigm of who the women leaders are, as [it is] for [us to change the paradigm of] who the men leaders are. Both of my assistant principals who are male have taken a paternity leave when they had a new baby, and that would've been unheard of. Well, when people are saying, 'Well, women have babies,' so do men! And I'm excited about an AP who says, 'I'm sorry, I've got to go, I have day care duty this week. And so, it's like, yeah, go ahead. (Interview 09, p. 9)

Overwhelmingly, the participants had an "it is what it is" attitude toward managing their work and their children. While some were content to delay one part of their lives for another, the participants would not agree to lose entirely one part for another. Jackie sent her mentor a text message that highlights the day-to-day decision-making that often occurs when balancing career and family. "My course is wrapping up this week and next. I did homework all weekend except for Sunday (ball tournament) and four hours off yesterday for [son] to see the [doctor]...balls games earlier and now swimming lessons..." (Artifacts, p. 18).

Equal partner.

For many of the participants, the way they make everything work was through effective teamwork with their spouses or partners. Helen explained,

I do think societally...women are supposed to be doing all of the mom things...you either have to have an extremely supportive, equal partner, and if you don't...I do really believe that can still have an effect on how you are able to do your job (Interview 08, p. 18).

Carol also agreed, “I am like other women in my profession that have good husbands...he really picked things up at home...he did the wash, he did the cooking, he did the shopping. So, it was a partnership that I was really lucky to have” (Interview 03, p. 4). Diane explained the importance of her supportive spouse:

You know, my husband has always been very supportive. When we had our second child we didn't want to send our kids to daycare so we had to make a decision about who was going to stay home...and so he became the stay-at-home dad, so that worked really well for us because he could absorb all the extra. If he and I were both working full-time at intense jobs I think it would have been a lot harder on our family. I would have felt a lot more pressure, but I feel like I didn't have to go through a lot of the mommy guilt because I knew my kids were home with daddy. (Interview 04, p. 6)

Helen summarized that being a mother and a school leader means that, “you are doing double duty unless you have an equal partner” (Interview 08, p. 18).

However, that does not mean being a leader and a mom are without its struggles. Even when the participants knew their children were in good hands, being away from them was still difficult. Diane went on to explain:

You want to be there. You don't want to miss any part of your kids growing up and sometimes when things come up, in the back of my mind there's, would this have been this way had I been there? Because clearly a dad is going to run the house a little bit differently than a mom. I don't know, there definitely are pieces

that have to be let go of, we have kind of established our roles...I guess I'm really lucky to have the family set up I do. (Interview 04, p. 6)

Even though the participants' families responded well to their roles as school leaders, there were still some struggles with "letting go." Irene described her feelings when her children were home for the summer with their father, "You know kids, whenever there is something going wrong, they go, 'Mom!' At the end of the summer, the kids would holler, 'Dad!' and it was kind of like, wait a minute, what about me" (Interview 09, p. 10)? While there were times of regret, overall, the participants expressed feelings of satisfaction with the way in which their lives played out.

Gina highlighted what can happen when a school leader does not quite the support one needs, "Sometimes my husband gets a tad in the way. He doesn't understand the amount of time...when I'm home, and I get an email or have to take a call, I am not sure that he doesn't know that he sometimes gets in my way. I don't think he does" (Interview 07, p. 4). When a woman finds herself in that situation, Irene advised:

We have to own that. I will tell you that I have a number of friends [who say], 'Oh God, [husband] won't do the laundry, he doesn't do any of the whatever.'

Well, whose fault is that? You know what? If he got up in the morning and there was no clean underwear, he would learn how to do it...so I think women do a little bit of that themselves. (Interview 09, p. 16)

Despite there being very little conflict between the participants' children and their professional lives, it was an issue that was given a substantial amount of consideration. As evidence of this fact, the second annual gathering of one of the women in leadership

conferences in 2014 included the topic: “Movement in Career; Challenges of Two-Career Families” (Artifacts, p. 6). As Irene admitted, “I was the first person who said that if [husband] ever wanted to go to a twelve month job, that I would go back to teaching because I felt strongly that I wanted the kids to have a summer at home” (Interview 09, p. 10). While the participants were ready to make the difficult decisions required to merge work and family, having an equal partner allowed for an effective solution.

Professional barriers.

During the course of the interviews, many professional barriers became evident for Amanda, Brenda, and Helen. The themes regarding professional barriers are explained in the following subsections: 1) Acquiring position; 2) Maintaining position; and 3) Proving women’s leadership.

Acquiring position.

The participants had much to say about the professional barriers they experienced— both on the road to becoming school leaders as well as after they had attained positions. The unspoken rules that were evident to the participants repeatedly surfaced in the interviews and observations. There were no formalized, printed rules regarding the hiring of a school or district leader, however, all of the participants knew the rules and could clearly articulate what they would face in job searches (Field Notes, 10). To assist women school leaders with this barrier, one conference offered the same presentation, “Confidence and Selling Yourself: Negotiating Salaries and Comparable Worth”, for two consecutive years (Artifacts, p. 1 & p. 5). One aspect of this search, and

a theme that repeatedly surfaced, was society's lack of readiness for women school leaders at the top. As Carol explained:

If you look at all the pools out there...the superintendents, who are getting the jobs? It's all men...the gender difference has just come about in people's expectations about what the leader should look like, what the leader should sound like, how the leader should dress, it's all about that...I think we that we probably all speak the similar language when we are in interviews, and there are probably very fine lines separating all of us, but it seems to me that gender is one that separates during those interviews. (Interview 03, pp. 6-7)

As an example, Carol shared an experience that occurred earlier in her leadership career when she had applied for a principal position:

I wanted to be the principal, and the principalship opened up, and I applied, and I had an interview scheduled.... It was supposed to be on Monday, and by Monday I didn't have a time, I didn't have anything...the assistant superintendent called and said, 'I want to take you out for coffee.' So I went out for coffee with her, and she told me that they had closed down the process, that they hadn't found a candidate that they wanted, so they went with an interim. So the next year it opened again...I went and met with the superintendent again...and she told me that appointing a female principal at [the] high school would be like pushing a rock up a hill. (Interview 03, p. 2)

In her second year of interviewing for the position, the superintendent told Carol that the community was not ready to see a woman in position of high school principal (Interview

03). Carol used the phrase *pushing a rock uphill* multiple times during her interview to indicate the difficult path women face on many levels of leadership (Field Notes, 03).

Carol further explained:

I think societal and cultural expectations that men are generally going to be the ones that surface as leaders. You can look at an elementary school that is filled with females, and the principal is male. There is something about our culture that anticipates, or expects, that the male is going to be the leader. (Interview 03, p. 3)

According to the participants, society's belief about the gender of a school leader has a direct impact on the structures that are in place to fill leadership positions. Indeed, most district selection processes follow the same format and procedures for locating school leaders to fill available positions. These structures are not typically helpful to women. Carol described the superintendents in her area as, "white men, in their 50s and up, in gray and black suits" (Interview 03, p. 7), but she stated that despite their homogenous make-up, "they know that women need to be elevated" (Interview 03, p. 7). However, even though these superintendents are aware of the need for more women school leaders, Carol added:

It goes beyond our group too, it goes beyond to the people that are doing the interviewing, the people that are filling the pools. There are about three consulting firms right now that are really filling all of the superintendent jobs, and so it goes on to them too. And they do try to find women to fill their pools, but you just don't know if you are a legitimate candidate or if you are a token to fill their pools. (Interview 03, p. 7)

Irene had a similar experience:

A year ago, I was recruited to apply at [an affluent suburban school district]...and I said, that district will not hire a female...I put my name in and took it out, and the search consultants called three time and said, we really want you in there. And I said, look, if this is a token interview so that you can say that you got a woman in there, I am not doing it...I went through the interview, and when I came home I told them to take my name off. I just felt that 'this is just not gonna happen'. And there is a risk in [putting your name into a job search] because I had a couple of my own board members say to me that it's kind of being disloyal and I am not sure they would've said that to a man. (Interview 09, pp. 3-4)

The superintendents, who participated in the study, faced a tough decision each time they were interested in an open position. Should they apply and risk being the token women in the pool and alienating their current school boards, or do they stop seeking growth and maintain the positions they have?

Highly similar selection structures are also in place below the level of the superintendency. Evelyn described how these hiring structures often work at the levels below the superintendency:

I remember when I moved here, there were two positions open at the high school. My husband has been here his whole life—he was born and raised here and now he's a teacher here. And I applied for one of the dean positions, and he had one of his principals come to him and tell him to apply...and I'm like, are you kidding me? So he gets an interview, and I don't. I have all the qualifications, I have a

master's degree in educational leadership, but he was a man, and they knew who he was. I mean, all they knew about me is what was on paper. It just made me so mad.... It's the good old boys' club. (Interview 05, p. 3)

Gina explained how unspoken, covert hiring structures created a barrier for her:

I've always been very opinionated and a very outspoken individual. Not rude or disrespectful, but just, you know, this is what I think, and this is what I feel. And I've always been in a building with all men.... I believe that they were very threatened by my being outspoken and self-confident. And so I upset their little man world. And so, I don't know that I always got opportunities; they went to others who happened to say, 'Yes, yes, yes,' but who weren't there as long, and who had a penis. So, personally I felt like the only option that I had to actually become a leader was to leave my district. (Interview 07, pp. 3-4)

Fran had similar barriers when interviewing:

In my former district, I applied to be a principal. There were a couple of openings; I applied a couple of times. The first time...I didn't get the position, and that was really, really hard on me, and the bottom line was that I was not going to get the position because a male principal had applied for it, and he was pretty much earmarked by the board members to get that position. But if I didn't apply, what would that say? So I knew when I went into it that it was a long shot. I knew I could do it, and many others knew I could do it, but it did not happen. And that was really hard. (Interview 06, p. 9)

Despite being qualified for leadership positions, the participants did not feel they had equal opportunities like their peers who were men. Even so, the barriers for women seeking school leadership positions did not prevent the participants from breaking into administration—a profession typically reserved for men.

While more women are leading elementary schools, the move into secondary school leadership and the superintendency did not come as easily. Evelyn expressed this belief when she described the hardest part of leaving teaching for school leadership, “I would say the jump between the two, [is like] someone giving you a shot” (Interview 05, p. 3). As Amanda explained, “I think it’s harder to get a position as a woman leading a school. I think that right now, the belief is that women lead elementary [schools], maybe they lead middle schools, but high schools not so much—it’s still a little tougher” (Interview 01, p. 6). Helen agreed:

I do think that people think women can be principals, but at the elementary level. Not at the secondary level. I still think that they think of it as the good old boy’s male network, he is the principal of the school, he is at the basketball games, even at the superintendency, obviously we are not making much headway there anymore. (Interview 08, p. 12)

Gina also felt this barrier when seeking a leadership position:

My student teacher who worked in the district for four years and then applied, too, for a dean of students position got the job over me. And the principal said to me, ‘Well, it’s because he was Native American.’ Really? Really? That is what you

are going to go with? Yeah, you really need to sell the race thing. (Interview 07, p. 11)

Understandably, as a Latino woman, Gina was frustrated by the rationale for the principal's choice. One conference for women in school leadership also recognized the need to assist women facing the selection and promotion processes as is evidenced by a development presentation entitled, "Advancing Women through Leadership Positions, Promotions, Support and Mentorship" (Artifacts, p. 5).

Maintaining position.

The participants also shared how these cultural and societal expectations are also prevalent once a leadership position has been attained. For the participants, this became evident in the daily responsibility of working with people. The participants reported getting no or diminished respect in their leadership roles because they are women:

I think that some people, students, adults, whatever, who have this idea that men are stronger than women, and carry that [view] into what they do. And it makes it tough for us. I mean, I have been in situations where I've had parents who will say, 'Well, I want to see the principal.' I wouldn't say that I'm sensitive to it, but I'm definitely seeing it. And sometimes, I just get the feeling, that's because I'm a female. From some of my, some parents, some male parents, because they question my authority. (Interview 06, p. 13)

Amanda echoed these thoughts:

A lot of times our parents...have a little bit more conservative-role attitudes, and I think sometimes that even goes into the students. And so there are times that men

will be very, very aggressive with me because they feel as though they can, because after all, I'm just a woman.... There are some, very frequently some sexist remarks, and...it tends to diminish my role as a leader in the school. And so it also diminishes the other female leaders in our school to something other than a leader" (Interview 01, p. 5).

When observing each of the study participants, such struggles were evident. As with all of the struggles these women faced, these battles became survival stories and lessons to be shared. After all, these women were teachers at heart, and for teachers, everything becomes a lesson (Field Notes, 09).

One school leader, involved in the study, had an experience that was particularly difficult. Her working conditions were so difficult that she filed a lawsuit and won a judgment against her former school district (Interview 08, p. 11). As Helen stated, it was due to political issues within the district:

It went all the way from my personal treatment; it went to the treatment of moving me from one building to another, not performance related. Bringing in young male principals who all kind of looked like the cookie-cutter, which is still happening...so anyway, I have significant issues with that and have seen it firsthand. I think there is a lot of that, and I think that that is one of the things that continues to prevent us from, and I'm saying us from the educational field, and from schools in particular, from making headway. (Interview 08, p. 11)

Irene reported a similar situation, in which there were three separate events when she wanted to leave a previous school district due to the disrespectful way she was treated

by the school board. The first event occurred during her work of building a school for the district. She reported that board meetings were extremely formal, for most of the school board and cabinet:

They would say, Mr. [Director of Finance], Mr. [Superintendent], Mr. Whatever, and they would call me [nickname – shortened version of her first name], they would call me [nickname]...and I was the one who conducted all the work with...legislative hearings, we did all the stuff to get the school built. We didn't have a construction manager. And I remember that the board members, I would give an update, and they would literally...say, is that true Mr. [Finance Director]? Is that right? (Interview 09, p. 8)

Despite her work of getting the building approved and built, the school board would not look to her as a leader. The second event was during an interaction with the chair of the school board at the time when she was the Director of Special Services for the district:

He came up to me, and we had a board meeting going on, and he was the coach of a youth team. And he brought a big bag that he sat next to me. You know, the directors, we sat up at...the board table there, and he said, 'I gotta get my jerseys passed out to my team, so I told them just to come here, and they can just flag you down, and you can go out and give them their jerseys. (Interview 09, p. 18)

Again, she was not seen as an important part of the educational cabinet and was dispensable enough that she could leave the meeting to hand out jerseys.

The third event occurred when another board member was attempting to gather data:

We were talking about gathering community perceptions...and he turns to me and says, 'Will housewives want that?' And I started to laugh and said, 'I don't know, I've never been married to my house, so I don't know. I'm not a housewife!' But that is when I said to [husband], I can't work here, I just can't work here.

(Interview 09, p. 18)

The treatment she received from members of the school board eventually became the reason she left and sought a leadership role in another school district. The treatment women leaders receive from members of the public often prove difficult, even more difficult when one considers the fact that many of these events do not happen to men and become an additional layer of work that is added to the difficult job of school administration.

Proving women's leadership.

According to the participants, societal expectations created a situation in which women, once attaining school leadership positions, feel that they must work harder than their counterparts who are men. As Evelyn said, "I think you have to work twice as hard and fight twice as much to the gain the respect" (Interview 05, p. 14). Brenda expounded:

We all had to be 13s [on a scale of one to 10] on any given day. Because at that point, there were still lots of comments about it from teachers, from parents, whatever that women shouldn't be my boss...so I certainly had to be on my toes and had to learn to suck it up. (Interview 02, p. 4)

The observations of the participants highlighted their acceptance of the need to be better performers than men. Again, overcoming difficulty became almost a badge worn with pride. The participants believed they were stronger, higher quality leaders than most of the men who were their peers, because as women they had to be superior to survive. Each participant had put in a significant amount of effort to attain a position, and it appeared as if each felt the need to show others that the position was deserved. All behaved as if they thought themselves better at the work, than most men in leadership, because they would not have survived in leadership positions if they had been on-par with or weaker leaders than most men (Field Notes, 07).

Women leaders are often criticized for lacking confidence, however, the participants exuded substantial confidence and appeared to be poised to accept a challenge. They were not simply ready for a challenge; they welcomed the challenge and seemed to gain energy from the experience. Numerous examples of this arose from observations of the participants. Carol, a long-time superintendent, was facing another year of deep budget cuts. She spoke of the experience the way someone would speak of climbing a mountain. Despite having been in this position numerous times in the past several years, she was not weary of the problem. Instead, she lifted her head, pushed back her shoulders, and spoke of her vision of overcoming the obstacle in front of her (Field Notes, 03). Fran was interviewed on one of the worst weather days of the year. A storm had made her late that morning, as it would make most of her large staff and many of the students late. To make matters worse, those who have weathered a storm during a school day would attest to what it does to the behavior of children. Knowing well the

kind of day that was ahead of her, Fran laughed it off and seemed to welcome the excitement (Field Notes, 06). Gina was also late to her interview. Gina's challenge that afternoon came from fighting the achievement gap for her English Language Learners. She was late that day because she was driving several students home after one of the tutoring sessions she arranged for them several times per week. She was not about to let a lack of afterschool transportation stand in the way of her students achieving. Though obviously exhausted after a long workday, Gina flew through the door of the coffee shop full of excitement and determination (Field Notes, 07).

The need for women school leaders to appear above reproach was obvious in one participant's statement, "I feel like everything I do is looked at more. I feel like everything I do is scrutinized at a different level, which is tough. It's an adjustment" (Interview 07, p. 7). Brenda added, "We just have to be constantly judged at a higher level" (Interview 02, p. 10). Diane summed it up: "I feel like women administrators have to do both: you have to behave the way people expect a female to behave, but you also have to show that you can do the hard stuff" (Interview 04, p. 6). She added, "but you cannot dwell on it or you will destroy yourself. But at the same time, you are a fool to ignore it. I couldn't ignore it, I mean it's part of how we get into our jobs, it affects how we navigate" (Interview 04, p. 17).

Certainly, the need to work double-time not only to do the job of a school leader, but to constantly consider the display of appropriate gender roles was an issue for many of the participants. The women leaders in this study repeatedly discussed the need to

constantly be on guard, and they monitored the how they appeared to others. Diane explained:

I feel, and I'm always worried that I am paranoid, but I feel like I have to battle the initial first impression that I am not competent. Then there is the balance, the balance between needing to behave the way women are expected to stereotypically behave. I mean the caring, nurturing; we have to play that role. And to also be able to do the work of a pretty male-defined role, to make hard decisions, to stand up and lead. We have to do both, which I think is tricky. I feel like I'm walking on a tightrope. (Interview 04, p. 9)

This "tightrope" extended to managing others' perceptions of their personality traits. Carol shared, "It's that old thing where a male will sound assertive and confident and a woman [in the same circumstances] sounds aggressive and bitchy. And so you are always trying to balance how confidently you come across, how aggressively you come across, or can you act without people labeling you" (Interview 03, p. 3). The idea of walking a tightrope between being viewed as assertive versus being seen as a "bitch" surfaced numerous times in the interviews and observations. Brenda expounded, "a female...can say this, this, this, and this, and we are the biggest bitch ever. Where a man would be just being assertive" (Interview 02, p. 9). Helen said the same, "I think we are viewed differently in disciplinary situations, you become a bitch, and this, that, and the other thing" (Interview 08, p. 7). Carol further stated:

You have to conform to the situation, I think, more so than men do. I think that you have to be so cautious when you're around groups, your tone of voice, the

rate at which you speak, all of those things that I think some men never have to worry about, that they can just be whoever they are, wherever they are. But I don't think that women are afforded that luxury on a generalized scale. (Interview 03, p. 3)

Diane also believed that women have to be constantly performing, "and you've got to integrate it so that it's believable. You can't be phony about it. You've got to be, you've got to be perfect. That is really hard" (Interview 04, p. 16). The idea of having to perform, of having to consistently be reflective about how you appear to others was a reality for all of the participants. For these women, every piece of the package that was *woman school leader* was carefully considered. Hair, make-up, clothing choices, handshakes, eye contact, movement, and tone of voice were all monitored in an attempt to walk the tightrope successfully (Field Notes, 07). The need for women leaders to display constant excellence was also a topic of discussion at the gatherings for women in school leadership positions. One gathering for professional development in 2012 included the keynote "The Courage to Lead" (Artifacts, p. 3) and "Resiliency" (Artifacts, p. 4), both of which included discussions about the added effort women make to be regarded superior in various ways to men peers.

Re-conceptualizing balance.

The literature regarding women and school leadership explains the long held belief that women experience difficulty in balancing the personal with the professional. In fact, even one of the conferences designed by and for women believe this to be a topic in need of discussion as is evidenced by its inclusion in the program:

A Proactive Approach to a Work and Life Balance—Women leaders strive for balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Like men, women experience the all-consuming activities of leadership, but unlike many men, many women go home to another “day’s work” caring for a family and home. In this session, our facilitators will present the research and guide discussion. (Artifacts, p. 5).

However, the participants did not give many details about the problem of balancing work and family life. Instead, their answers centered upon two themes that did not surface in the literature: the belief they were failing at balance, and the need to take care of themselves. Therefore, this section contains two subsections: 1) Assumed failure; and 2) Self-care.

Assumed failure.

Upon first being asked how successful the participants felt they were at this balance, most the women immediately responded that they were failing, mostly due to, “being pulled in a million directions” (Interview 06, p. 18). As Amanda said, “I don’t know how you do it because I don’t think I ever figured it out. I’m still working on that.... I don’t know if you ever achieve the balance. You just keep striving toward it, and how to figure it all out. I am not sure how you do it” (Interview 01, p. 7). Carol struggled as well, “I don’t think I’m doing a really good job of balancing...because I’m finding a hard time seeing my grandkids.... I’m not at a very good place with doing the balancing thing” (Interview 03, p. 13). Finally, Brenda added, “I am my own worst enemy, because my work ethic sometimes gets me to the point where I will work until I

will drop” (Interview 02, p. 5). Across all of the interviews, but one, the immediate, and seemingly automatic, reaction to the balance question was to claim failure. Even at one professional conference, a speaker repeatedly referred to “Inside Our Yuck” (Artifacts, p. 2), an open acknowledgement of the negative emotions women leaders experience regarding these issues. Jackie, a graduate student, stated this frustration to her mentor when she imagined how her life would be different if she were, “single and without kids” (Artifacts, p. 16).

While participants, when interviewed, expressed assumed failure in balancing their personal and professional lives, but when pressed with further questions requesting evidence, failure in *any* arena was not evident, including personal and professional balance. The participants told of healthy, happy, and successful careers and families; there were no stories of failure (Field Notes, 03, 07).

When each of the participants was pressed to provide evidence of their failure at balancing the personal and professional, their outlook changed. Fran asked the question, “Why do women feel like they don’t.... I think everyone’s gut reaction is to say that they are not” (Interview 06, p. 15). Fran continued, “And I would say that, that is my gut reaction, to say of course I’m not, but really I am. I know I am” (Interview 06, p. 18). Gina pointed out, “I feel it’s self-judgment on my part. I feel like I need to achieve more” (Interview, 07, p. 12). When asked why, Gina responded:

Because we set the bar so high, too high, I think sometimes. Men fall way short of that, and it doesn’t bug them. I don’t think it does, I mean, the perception is that it doesn’t bug them.... I can tell you that the principal that I work under has

health issues, he's overweight, he doesn't eat right.... He doesn't have to do the housework at his house. (Interview 07, p. 12)

Diane also realized she felt success with balancing her work and personal obligations, "It's not a problem for me. I am a person who likes to be busy. And I like to feel challenges, so I don't mind having a 'to do list' all of the time. I don't mind having to constantly prioritize" (Interview 04, p. 13). Finally, Fran explained her approach to achieving balance, "It was about changing our mindset and saying, okay, it's 5:30, time to go, whatever we are not done with will be here tomorrow.... I am very, very effective at what I do during the day, I am not slacking at all" (Interview 06, p. 14). She continued, "I know I can do it, because I have done it before, you just have to be really structured with your time. And then you're done and you are like, where in the hell did that time come from, but it comes, it happens" (Interview 06, p. 18). Perhaps because of the messages women in leadership receive about our struggle with balance, most of the participants immediate response was that they did a poor job with balance as well. However, after reflecting, all of the participants stated being satisfied with how they were balancing each of their responsibilities. The conflicting messages regarding balance were also represented in the general feeling during the women in school leadership conferences where it was a constant effort to remind attendees about the "Success Stories of Women" (Artifacts, p. 5).

Self-care.

Typically the literature depicts the idea of balance as consisting of two parts, work and family. The dual conflict of work and family was also how the three women and

leadership conferences depicted. Sessions such as “Life Balance” (Artifacts, p. 3) and the session mentioned above, “A Proactive Approach to a Work and Life Balance” (Artifacts, p. 5) attempted to guide women school leaders toward a better level of balance. However, the participants repeatedly discussed three elements of balance: family, work, and self. As previously stated, the work and family aspects are well known, however, there was little to no mention of importance of the time these women set aside for themselves, for their personal needs. As Brenda expounded, it is “constantly trying to give yourself permission to say, ‘I need to take care of me too.’ And I’ve gotten much better at it than I was” (Interview 01, p. 12). These women have determined that making time for themselves helped them to be better leaders and family members. Gina shared:

You absolutely have to be conscientious to say, I’ve done my work, it’s six o’clock, or 7 o’clock, or whatever and...here’s the thing...if I don’t get my workout in, I am freakin’ nuts. So on my treadmill, I’m thinking, I did this job, I did this job. It’s my sanity...so it’s a conscious physical choice on my part to say, this point, and then no more. And then there isn’t any more. (Interview 07, p. 12)

The same was true for Fran:

I was a crazy worker person for the first seven years in [former district], and I don’t want to be that person anymore. I need to have balance because I need to be better at things. So I was very cognizant of putting myself into positions of playing volleyball, or working out, making that time for myself. (Interview 06, p. 14)

Carol also used physical fitness as a way to provide herself with personal time. “I practice yoga...a ninety minute session of yoga...so that’s how I balance my personal, taking care of my own fitness” (Interview 03, p. 13). The topic of exercise surfaced repeatedly, and each of the participants appeared to be physically fit. Diane expounded on this theme:

I need to work out. I need to run on the treadmill, or do the elliptical almost every day. That is part of keeping the balance, because I have to have a way to work through, my job is emotional. There is a lot of hard stuff there. And so I need to be able to churn through the emotions and level myself...and sleep is important too. I know that when I don’t get enough sleep, everything is so much harder. (Interview 04, p. 13)

Only Irene, who was mentored by men, felt as though she were she was succeeding at personal and professional balance and it was due to her focus on self-care:

I will say that is one thing that I will give myself credit on. I put a lot of time into this job, but I would not say that my life is unbalanced. I go home...at the end of the day you say, that is as much as I can do today...and it was a long day, and there are night meetings and stuff, there is always something to do. You have to force yourself to say, if I don’t read this article, or I don’t do whatever, will we not be able to have school tomorrow? I am not willing to work every night...so I tell myself, you know what, take the time, go and tutor, or something else. Hair appointments. I am going to schedule those things. (Interview 09, p. 20)

While Irene knows there was important work to be done, she also knew the value of caring for herself and her family.

In addition to exercise, the participants treasure small amounts of private time. Evelyn uses this time to renew herself, “Occasionally I will do a Friday afternoon. I do something. If it’s just go home and take a nap, or something...I have a massage...those are things that I hoard, for like a special occasion” (Interview 05, p. 7). Finally, one participant, Helen, who was an assistant principal, explained that her approach to balance was about making career choices:

I’ve been asked the question a lot of times, why aren’t you a principal? And for me, I am not sure I want to be a principal. Because I do know that there is another level of responsibility. And I am in a position in my career right now where I like having...to be able to go exercise and be able to do things that I want to do for me...to read a book when I want to, to do those kinds of things, so that I can balance...my path in that direction is probably different than some people, where I am okay where I am right now. (Interview 08, p. 18)

All of the barriers, whether they were personal, professional, or were about the act of balancing between the two, were not new struggles designed for or created by these participants. They were more or less the same struggles that have always been faced by women who have entered into positions of school leadership.

Women and Mentoring

Mentoring is a topic that is on the forefront of women’s school leadership. Each of the three women’s leadership conferences presented sessions about the importance of

mentoring, and all three offered discounted admission rates for protégés. As one conference registration stated, “Registrants are invited to bring one guest whom they believe has shown potential for future educational leadership” (Artifacts, p. 6). The participants of this study provided vast insights regarding their lived experiences with mentoring. To increase understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring, this lengthy section is divided into four subsections: 1) Participants’ definitions; 2) Mentoring’s value; 3) Mentors; and 4) Mentees.

Participants’ definitions.

As evidence of the belief in the importance of mentoring, the participants agreed to participate in a research study focused on the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring. Each participant was eager to share the story of the relationship shared between her mentor and herself (Field Notes, 07). Each of the participants who had been mentored by a woman school leader felt the relationship was integral in achieving her role as a successful school leader. In general, the participants defined a mentor as someone who was supportive and encouraging, a safe “go to” person with whom one can have important conversations and ask tough questions in a non-evaluative setting. The participants repeatedly spoke of the supportive nature of these relationships. Gina summarized when she said:

I think mentoring is defined as nurturing, guiding, leading, listening, believing. All of those qualities help you work with someone who is, for whatever reason, whether they are going into leadership, or they are thinking about what career they want to go into, or thinking about kids at school. It is all about just guiding.

You found something that resonated with them for you, and you tap into that or you want to work with that. (Interview 07, p. 9)

Many of the participants echoed the idea of a mentor being someone who was drawn to her protégé due to a specific skill set, similar educational philosophies, and/or similar personalities.

Mentoring, for the participants, was also about knowledge and skill development. As Jackie stated, “Mentoring, for me, is the ability for honest conversation and reflection. Mentoring allows another to see, close to first hand, the challenges and successes of the mentor in an effort to train and increase skills” (Interview 10, p. 2). Helen added, “I think that mentoring is guidance and counsel...not only trying to provide you with information...mentoring is not telling you what to do, it is providing those suggestions in a...more supportive role, as opposed to a directive role” (Interview 08, p. 4). Diane agreed with the idea that mentoring is not about telling someone what to do:

It was just kind of the hidden hand. It wasn't like, okay, I'm just teaching you everything I know...it was much more subtle. In my case...it was conversational. And she's a good coach...she is good at asking the right questions to kind of help you walk down the right path. She is not a teller. (Interview 04, p. 7)

Fran described mentoring as:

Someone who takes a vested interest in a person, and is willing to have those encouraging conversations, but also real conversations. Someone who is not going to sugarcoat things.... They say it, but they are also helping you define opportunities. They are checking back with you on a regular basis to see how

things are going. A mentor is someone who really, who is really invested in what you are doing. (Interview 06, p. 6)

Participants often reflected on the element of honesty in their mentoring relationships. Often, conversations were about difficult things, but such issues became experiences for reflection and learning.

The idea of encouragement was often listed as an important element in the mentoring relationships of our participants. As Diane explained, “It was a funny coincidence that I had a review that year, and that I had a conversation with the principal and she, she gave me the feedback that I needed to hear. You are capable; you are going to be good. I am confident that you could” (Interview 04, p. 4). This encouragement can go beyond the attainment of a leadership position. Fran described the importance of encouragement during her first run at school leadership:

She was awesome in saying, you can do this...I know you can do it...but when I got my first position...and didn't even know what I was supposed to do, and she was like, you just do what you do. You know what to do, so just show them.

And she was so confident in me so that was really helpful. (Interview 06, pp. 4-5)

Fran believed this kind of encouragement led her to her current position, “So, she is the reason I'm doing this, because I would never have thought that this is what I wanted to do” (Interview 06, p. 3).

According to the participants, mentoring relationships are seen as being informally created, but with some formal aspects once the mentoring relationship is in place. Carol explained:

I think it's a formalized structure, the more I think about it...there is more of a rhythm...a rhythm to discussion, a rhythm of accountability, a rhythm of planning. There is just a rhythm that is set up, rather than calling you as needed...it was real regular and systemized and highly valuable. (Interview 03, p. 5)

None of the participants experienced mentoring relationships that were formalized, rather they were created by the mentor and agreed upon by the protégé. When asked if her mentoring relationship was supported by her school district, Jackie shared that there was, "no support by the organization. This mentoring relationship is of our own doing. While there are formal mentoring opportunities in our building, they are of a teacher-mentoring style" (Interview 10, p. 2). Many of the school districts that served as settings for this study had mentoring programs for teachers. They were formal, and the mentoring-pairs were chosen by the district according to job-type.

Irene, a superintendent who was mentored by men, had a definition of mentoring that was a bit different from the participants who were mentored by women. She said:

I would say mentoring is teaching from years of experience, you know, kind of showing you the way. And maybe that's an old model, in my head, a mentor is somebody that you go to for your source of information...when we have teacher mentors, go to somebody in the building who can help you say, okay, here's how we map the curriculum for the year, here's where your pencils are, and all those kinds of things. But I think it's more about the, you can do this, yes, you got a jerk that you're working with, I think that it's about listening. (Interview 09, p. 15)

The focus of Irene's model was not the same as it was for the other participants, highlighting a difference in the purpose of being mentored by a woman versus being mentored by a man. For Irene, it was about finding a source for information in order to answer specific questions about specific practical matters such as passing a referendum or what to do if a bus returns to a building still full of students. For the participants who were mentored by women, their experience was more about the encouragement they received from their mentor to help them find their own way in leadership.

Mentoring's value.

Feedback, from a professional conference session on the value of mentoring, stated, "Women need to lean on each other to rise as leaders" (Artifacts, p. 3). The study participants agreed and were eager to share their mentoring experiences. Most worked hard to convey the importance the mentor/mentee relationship had on both their personal and professional lives. Those who were mentored by women spoke fondly of the lessons learned from their mentors, and they clearly articulated how those lessons had been applied to their own leadership. It was clear the participants held their mentors in high esteem and placed considerable value on their mentoring experiences. In addition, the participants also fondly recounted relationships created with their protégés, and the pleasure gained by creating value in the lives of prospective women leaders. Each of the participants discussed the value of mentoring at various stages of their professional lives. This subsection is divided into three sections focused on the ways that three different study-participant groups valued mentoring: 1) Aspiring leaders; 2) Established leaders; and 3) Active mentors.

Aspiring leaders.

One theme that became evident was the need for mentoring for those just beginning their leadership paths. Brenda believed mentoring is essential for those with leadership qualities:

I think it makes it easier for people just starting out...like, I know [her protégé] will be a great principal someday, so I spend more time with her because I already recognize that she has everything that it will take to be a good principal.

(Interview 02, p. 9)

Helen agreed, “I think you have to have somebody who’s encouraging you on the path and...providing some of the guidance with good decisions and poor decisions” (Interview 08, p. 18). The participants reported that having a mentor allowed them to see themselves in the role of a leader because their mentors provided opportunities to practice leadership:

I had a principal...and she is now the superintendent, who really just kind of fostered my growth and just gave me opportunities to kind of dabble in it...she just saw something in me, obviously, so she was just constantly giving me opportunities to lead. And I really developed this taste in my mouth, like I could do this. I like doing it. It fits my personality; it fits my style. (Interview 06, p. 2)

As was reported in the literature, the participants did not enter into education to become leaders of schools, they entered as leaders of children and discovered a “taste” for leading on a larger scale.

When asked if she would credit the mentoring she had as being helpful to becoming a school leader, Amanda stated that she thought mentoring would help anybody to a leadership position, not just women specifically (Interview 01, p. 5). When asked the same question, Diane stated, “Yes, absolutely, 100%” (Interview 06, p. 7). Diane credited the success she had in becoming a school leader to her experience being mentored, “was really reinforcing, it gave me the confidence I felt that I needed” (Interview 04, p. 4). She added, “I think that you are much more likely to be successful if you have a mentor watching you, teaching you the rules” (Interview 04, p. 11). Fran explained how mentoring has made her a more effective leader:

I think anyone who is mentored has an advantage...I think to be an effective leader, you have to have someone who is willing to have real conversations with you. And help you see things that maybe you wouldn't see. Just to have those real conversations and be able to bounce things off of people. So, for me, I am better because of what I have. I feel very strongly about surrounding yourself with people that don't necessarily think like you and are willing to engage you in conversation. So otherwise it's just like I'm talking to myself, and I don't need that, I know what I think. I need to know what other people think...I would rather have conversations about my career with [my mentor] than I would with my husband. (Interview 06, p. 12)

Participants also saw value, for aspiring leaders, in the attainment of skills and in the reflection required to apply these skills. Text messages between Jackie and her mentor demonstrate this value. For example, Jackie was given the duty of creating a

testing schedule for the school. After creating a draft and meeting with her mentor, Jackie stated, “I would have really liked more time with the testing calendar. I actually ‘needed’ more information. I would have gotten there” (Artifacts, p. 17). Her mentor responded, “You were there, you got it...time is an important lesson for administrators. You will NEVER have enough time in administration” (Artifacts, p. 17).

The participants found that being mentored helped them establish a style of leadership that was their own. These women spoke of their mentors and their mentor’s style with the comfortable familiarity that comes with years of examination. The participants had consciously studied the styles of their mentors, and rather than adopting any style wholeheartedly, took only those elements they believed would serve them well. Evelyn explained:

There are different decisions that she makes sometimes that I don’t always agree with...but I don’t have that leadership style. I just respect her as a female professional so much that I just, I’m figuring out, that wouldn’t work for me...I think she, I don’t know if she feels like she has to...but I think she likes to have her hands in all of the pots...I think I pick and choose different things from her style that work and things that don’t work. I mean, she taught me everything I needed to know...I don’t agree with the hands in every pot. I don’t want my hands in every pot. (Interview 05, p. 9)

The same was true for Jackie. She added:

There has been a connection between my style of leadership and that of my mentor, but this style was a close match before the mentoring situation began.

Now I question my mentor about her decisions because I am evaluating her decisions. This has allowed me to develop my own style. (Interview 10, p. 1)

The participants were forthright with both positive and negative aspects of their mentor's style. Diane described an element of her mentor's style that was problematic for her:

She wasn't as tough as she talked. And that was really hard for me...because I tend to be very literal. And when someone, especially someone that I respect...what they say, I take it at face value...they said that we would do this, so I would do that. And so that is how I learned that there is a difference between what people say and what people do and I had to learn to navigate that myself...and it's just because I am very literal. (Interview 08, p. 8)

Though problematic, Diane was still able to take what was a negative experience and shape it in such a way that allowed her to learn more about leadership. Brenda believed this act of give and take was important in developing a personal style. "I think you cannot be an exact carbon copy of somebody else, you have to embrace your own personality and what your own style is or it comes off looking phony" (Interview 02, p. 8). Finally, Fran explained:

Anything you can glean out of any type of relationship...how you want to be and what you are going to take away and use when what you are going to take away and not use. So for me, for the most part, I loved everything she does. But there are a few components that I think, that I have learned from, that she has experiences that if given an opportunity to be in that kind of position, I wouldn't

do it. I would say that we are a lot alike, but there are some things that, it's just not how I'm going to be. (Interview 06, p. 9)

Development of a personal style of leadership is a necessary part of becoming a school leader. Obviously the participants' mentors held a valuable role in determining what that style would be.

Established leaders.

According to the participants, there was also value from new skills and the sharpening of existing talents and attributes that mentoring provided once a leadership position was attained. During her work as a school leader, Carol stated that her mentor made her:

Really drill down and find out what my core values were, and assuring that my core values permeated everything that I did. And if they weren't present, or visible, to her as an outsider, where are they? They are missing here, are you really going in the direction you want to go? (Interview 03, p. 6)

Carol's mentor served as a regular reminder to consider her leadership philosophy and her vision as a school leader. For Gina, having a mentor while leading was more about a sense of confidence and a push toward continual improvement:

It all adds to the toolbox you have as an administrator...I think they enhanced what I was already naturally good at, and so, just made what I did, keeping track of it, that much more efficient, it made me feel more organized, it made me feel like I had information at my hand that I might not have...so I think that mentors help you tap into where your strengths are, and then help you work on where your

weaknesses are. Because, in a lot of ways they are a mirror to you, they can reflect back to you what is working well, and what is not, or we can tweak a little bit. (Interview 07, p. 10)

Even when her mentor was no longer available, Helen continually reflected about her leadership through the lens her mentor would use:

Being able to look at my practice, and like I said, even now I still think of conversations that I had with [her mentor]. It's about reflecting and reframing your practice and going, I wonder how she would have handled that? Or, you know what, I'm thinking back how that conversation went with her, and I didn't handle that very well today, or, if I just would have done it like we talked about, I probably would have been more successful. (Interview 08, p. 11)

Mentoring, for the participants, not only held value for the attainment of a leadership position and for service as a school leader, mentoring also had worth when the participants' roles changed, and they began to mentor others.

Active mentors.

Finally, the study participants moved full-circle to describe the benefits they discovered when *paying it forward* and coming to actively mentor women who were aspiring to leadership the way they once had. Carol illuminated the rewards that come from the active role of mentoring—for the mentors themselves:

As you are mentoring someone you're always reflecting on the advice that you're giving them and you should be checking...doing a self-check at the time. Am I

doing what I say should be done, consistently and regularly? And so, I think it's just a really healthy experience for both individuals. (Interview 03, pp. 12-13)

Carol further stated, "I'm happy to learn from them as well, it's usually a two-way communication, so, it's been a great benefit to me. When they have need of assistance you get personal gratification from that too" (Interview 03, p. 1). Mentoring, then, was a worthwhile endeavor for the participants in every stage of their leadership journey. The participants knew the value of mentoring, knew its importance in their development as a professional, and therefore, knew how mentoring would impact the lives of other women aspiring to school leadership.

Mentors.

Participants repeatedly emphasized the importance of serving as a mentor and made it a priority to identify those educators who displayed leadership qualities. All of the participants believed they owed it to education to mentor, most of the participants believed they owed it to women educators in search of leadership. This section has been divided into two subsections: 1) Potential/aspiring women leaders; and 2) Willing to mentor.

Potential/aspiring women leaders.

The study participants made a habit of mentoring aspiring women leaders. However, the participants choose their mentees carefully because mentoring requires a generous amount of time and energy. Therefore, the participants were clear about what leadership characteristics and skills that they were looking in their future mentees—characteristics that assured the success of women who would face many challenges.

When answering the participants what characteristics they looked for in a potential leader, they did not hesitate and answered this question more quickly than other interview questions. In fact, study participants described leadership traits that they themselves exuded, traits they were proud of and spoke about as personal accomplishments during their interviews (Field Notes, 09). Amanda, a decisive and capable administrator, described what she looked for in future leaders:

I think that you have to be able to make decisions, yes, to be strong. You have to be willing to step forward to take on responsibilities. And I think you have to have a broad perspective. And I think you have to be fair. (Interview 01, p. 6)

Brenda was a principal/director of a charter school. She was operating in a new school building and was working to build enrollment. She described what she looked for in potential women leaders, “Just her personality, her work ethic, just her thought process, the way she handles people (Interview 02, p. 10). The ability to juggle and multitask were also important to Brenda, “to keep all the balls juggling...you have to be able to be one step ahead of everybody” (Interview 02, p. 5). Brenda, who had stated during the interview that she got along with the men leaders she has worked with (Interview 02), believed the candidate must know who she is so that she does not get her feelings hurt. She added that if you are “really wound up in how everybody else sees you, you are not going to be very successful at this, because you have to be able to be tough enough to do what needs to be done when it needs to” (Interview 02, p. 4). Finally, Brenda stressed to her protégé, “Your job is to watch out for the good of the whole, not necessarily be worried about what one individual person has. And it is not fun to let

people go, and it's not fun to tell parents this, this, and this. But that's your job"

(Interview 02, p. 10).

As a superintendent, Carol faced significant changes in her district that were difficult to sell to the community. She repeatedly demonstrated her ability to conquer adversity. Carol was very specific about what she looked for in potential school leaders:

People that can hold themselves accountable, because it's one thing to say that you are a visionary, it's one thing to put a strategic plan in place, it's another to make sure that it's not on the shelf.... Somebody is going to have to follow up, continually do that monitoring, do a lot of reflecting, and if things don't work out, be able to go a different direction. So it's somebody who's hard working, has great human relations skills, really has emotional intelligence. You have to be resilient. You have to be savvy and be able to read people's emotions to see if you are setting people off or if people are with you. You have to be ready for, it's the 911, you never know what's going to happen, it's just 911 all the time. And so you have to be able to be steady because that is what people need to have during a time of crisis. And the last thing I would say is somebody that has courage. (Interview 03, p.10)

Carol was also adamant about having courage, "it takes courage to make decisions that are in the best interest of kids, that maybe your community might not be supportive of.... When I look at leaders, I look to see who is courageous and who is treading water, and a lot of them tread water" (Interview, 03, p. 11). The idea of courage was also presented at one of the leadership conferences. One session was entitled

“Courage – Stepping Out of Your Comfort Zone” (Artifacts, p. 2). The theme for the conference that year was, “Risky Business: Women in Leadership – why would you take the leadership chance? How hard is it to take a risk in leadership?” (Artifacts, p. 3).

When asked what she looks for in potential school leaders, Diane explained, “They have to be so mentally healthy...or if you can hold it together mentally and emotionally” (Interview, 04, p. 16). She also feels that women school leaders need some important structural pieces in place. Using herself as an example, Diane explained, “I have that support at home, and because I take care of myself. And I have female friends to connect to. I know the ones I can call and just say, I’ve got to vent. I’m so angry right now. You know, you have to have those people” (Interview 04, p. 16).

Evelyn has similar ideas about what is needed to become a woman school leader. In describing her current protégé, she shared, “I will ask her great questions and she is just an advocate for herself. She is a phenomenal teacher, but she also takes on leadership roles within the building. I just see her leading groups of people” (Interview 05, p. 13). Evelyn went on to say, “I think you have to have a backbone...and tough skin,... because you are going to make unpopular decisions.... That’s the way it is” (Interview 05, pp. 12-13).

Fran radiated success. She was younger than most in school leadership and already had a strong following in what was a second, school leadership position. Her success as a teacher was evident, and she carried the love of teaching into her role as a leader. Fran had actively mentored aspiring women school leaders, and she believed that potential leaders:

need to be strong, and confident. I think to be able to be articulate, I think you have to be able to be smart.... You don't have to be a genius, but you have to be willing to work so that you what it is. (Interview 06, pp. 13-14)

Fran noted other qualities as well:

They have to have confidence, they have classroom management, they know how to work with people, they know how to talk with parents, they know how to build relationships with kids. They have a bigger picture view than just their classroom. They are curious about new initiatives and new things. (Interview 06, p. 6)

Fran's list of skills and characteristics for aspiring school leaders is lengthy. It was apparent, however, that she expected nothing less from herself.

Gina was immediately gregarious and affectionate. It appeared that her strength as a leader came directly from her relationship building skills. When looking for potential leadership candidates, Gina talked about an aspiring woman leader with whom she worked:

She was great at diffusing.... She was great at letting somebody say what they needed to say. She didn't always agree with them, and it didn't always end up with what they wanted, but she validated what the concerns were. She was a great listener. She wasn't always able to accommodate, but she made them feel like they at least had the opportunity to say what they needed to say, and then she was always great at explaining why something couldn't be the way a parent wanted or how they felt it should happen. And so, they didn't always like what

she had to say, but they always respected that she took the time to work them through the process of how to solve the situation. (Interview 07, p. 8)

In sum, Gina believed such skills were difficult to learn and most often were, qualities that some people were born with (Interview 07, p. 8).

Willing to mentor.

The study participants overwhelmingly confirmed the value of same-gender mentoring. By extension, they also noted the importance of mentoring future generations of leaders. “If you are a good superintendent, or a good principal, or a good teacher, you want to make sure that what you are doing has some lasting effect, and that whoever is coming behind you, hopefully, will continue some of what you are doing” (Interview 03, p. 10). Some of the participants specifically sought women mentees who had the potential to lead, and others looked for women and men mentees. One theme from the literature *and* the interviews was the “queen bee syndrome”—a phrase that describes women leaders who actively work to keep other women out of the leadership ranks. This section addresses these topics and is divided into three smaller subsections: 1) Seeking women mentees; 2) Seeking men and women mentees; and 3) Queen bee syndrome.

Seeking women mentees.

As discussed earlier, the participants found value in having women lead schools. Additionally, participants stated that the inequality in the number of women in leadership is a disservice to schools. To ensure that women have these opportunities, many of the participants sought women whom they believe exhibited leadership skills. As Carol explained:

I know that our profession needs people to succeed, people like me, and the only way we're going to do that is to grow our own.... If it's not with me, then who? And, I just feel I've had a unique set of circumstances in my career that maybe will benefit others, from my sharing with them. (Interview 03, p. 1)

Carol believed she had a responsibility to identify solid leaders and to help equalize the number of men and women school leaders :

I want to see lasting leaders behind me no matter if they are male or female, but it just so happens because of the shortage of female leaders in the superintendency, I just feel that I need to encourage leaders to follow that pathway...because there is, like I said, so limited a number, that I believe I definitely need to reach out to make sure that, we have gender balance. (Interview 03, p. 10)

At first, Gina did not believe she considered gender when looking for potential school leaders, however she stated, "I think maybe, subconsciously, I must, because I have a tendency to find or to look at women more like leaders, and I don't know...but somewhere underneath my thought process, because I will think to myself, I will notice that about women" (Interview 07, p. 9). Amanda also identified and encouraged women who exhibited leadership qualities:

I don't go out of my way to say, 'Let me find some women, let me find some women,' however, I think I'm always on the lookout for women.... If I see a woman who I think is strong, I am going to go out of my way to encourage that woman to be an administrator (Interview 01, p. 6)

Amanda added, “I just think about this as something you should do, help people coming up, that’s important to do” (Interview 01, p. 3). Fran explained the role her leadership experience played in the natural connections that occurred with two women she was mentoring, “I think it’s natural, given the relationship that you have. And I think that especially with these two, they trust me in terms of, oh, she’s been there, she’s doing it” (Interview 06, p. 7).

After considering whether she purposely looked for women who exhibited leadership traits Helen admitted, “Do I actually look for women? The answer is yes. I would say that I am also more picky when encouraging male teachers to choose those roles” (Interview 08, p. 15). Irene believed finding women leaders was a necessity:

I think that we have to support each other better. We are not men, and we should celebrate that. I think that many of the skills that we bring are better. We are more intuitive. We are more relational. And the people we are supervising are women! You know? So I think that we need to affirm that you do belong here! (Interview 09, p. 9)

Irene stated that it was the duty of seated administrators to extend a hand to potential women school leaders. “I think that we have to work with women today. You have an obligation to support the women coming up behind you” (Interview 09, p. 18). In agreement, Evelyn summarized, “We need to grow our own. We need to continue to support our profession” (Interview 05, p. 16).

Finally, the women at school leadership conferences demonstrated the belief that seated women leaders needed to be actively mentoring. The registration materials for one

of these conferences proclaimed, “We look forward to convening past, present, and aspiring women leaders for this important conversation!” (Artifacts, p. 2). As the feedback from one attendee noted, I must encourage other women to move toward leadership positions” (Artifacts, p. 2).

Finding men and women mentees.

Two participants purposely sought both men and women mentees. As Brenda explained:

I look for either, because I think we need just good leaders period.... I do think that I worry about the fact there have been so many people who have gotten tired, or who have retired that were really good, just because you get burnt out, and I’m not quite sure who the replacement people are coming in. (Interview 02, p. 11)

Brenda worried, in general not about the discrepancy in the number of women school leaders, but about the fact that schools needed qualified leadership candidates to choose from.

Diane felt similarly; she stated:

I’m kind of stuck in the middle. I don’t know...that I need to bring all the females along. I don’t think I am as extreme as my mentor was. And I feel like I’m actually probably learning toward the other side.... Come on, there’s enough jobs for all of us. We can all help each other out, you know. (Interview 04, p. 12)

For Diane and Brenda, the lack of women school leaders did not warrant increased attention on aspiring women leaders for the sake of correcting the discrepancy.

Queen bee syndrome.

A final theme that arose from participant interviews concerned those women who did not place a premium on helping other women to achieve positions of leadership.

Several of the participants had examples of women who a) fit in better with the men who lead, b) felt the need to protect their turf, or c) seemed to change once attaining a leadership position. Gina gave this example:

I got the dean of students position...because the gal that was the assistant principal was somebody that was in my cohort when I was in my admin classes, and we got along really well. When I got there...after a while when I would go to talk to her, she did that, 'I'm the assistant principal, and you need to make sure that I'm available before you just come walking in.' I went, really? Wait a minute Ms. Smarty-pants, we graduated together. You got this job six months before I got mine. (Interview 07, p. 6)

Irene explained why she thought some women leaders behaved in this manner, "I think there might be a little competition. It is kind of like, you know, in your mind the world will not accept more than 20 percent of women in leadership. So, do we want to have one more that may end up bumping me out?" (Interview 09, p. 14)? In a similar vein, Diane described a networking opportunity for women school leaders in her district:

There are for sure in-groups and out-groups among the women...we have a small group of females who get together for coffee occasionally...I always think it's interesting to see who's included, and who is never invited. (Interview 04, p. 10)

While the cliques that from amongst the women leaders in Diane's school district were a mystery to her, she did not seem concerned about the reason for the separation nor did she report actively working to eliminate them. Diane also spoke about an upcoming conference for women in school leadership, and she wondered how a large group of women in leadership would behave, "Are we going to be networking and supportive of each other? Or is it going to be about one-upmanship" (Interview 04, p.12)?

When Helen was new to her professional organization she saw this pushback from other established women leaders first hand:

Some of the older women, who would be preceding me, and 10, 15, 20 years older than me. When I got into the organization, I would try to talk about the differences in men and women. Or, let's do a woman's group. And I would be told, 'No! Do you know how hard we have worked to be considered equal?' And I'm like, but we're not! We're just not. We're not the same as the guys...there is a difference in leadership styles between men and women. (Interview 08, p. 8)

One participant, Brenda, understood the view some women have about singling women out on a personal level:

I'm not typical for women, I think I've always thought more like a guy, and I've always had more male friends. I've never had a difficult time fitting in with the old boys club, and I think that can be essential for this job.... I don't think I've had some of the same kinds of filters that I find some other women having, they just want to be friends.... So I don't know that I'm typical of the personality (Interview 02, p. 12)

According to the participants, there were several reasons why some women leaders chose to be exclusionary or to purposely align themselves with the men. Helen wondered if their stance was about survival:

They worked. They did their jobs from the male perspective, because I think it was the only way they thought they could survive. And so, that perspective did not allow them to grow in a lot of different areas, and it is in complete contrast with this younger group of women, yourself, myself, and some others that do see this differently. (Interview 08, p. 8)

Therefore, in order to survive, to maintain a position attained only by surmounting barriers few others could, these women leaders adopted the persona of the dominant members of the group. Gina disagreed. She believed it was about mentoring, or a lack thereof:

Here's why, I had mentors...and I think that I learned things from them, and it taught me an appreciation of the people that work with me and spend time with me. When you get there on your own, I think that you are a little bit more defiant about, I got here by myself, and so I'm defending my turf because nobody helped me, and I want to take care of business because I've always had to do that. So, I think you have a little bit different perspective about how you help people if you are helped or if you weren't helped. (Interview 07, p. 10)

For Fran, it was something altogether different, it was more about forgetting what it was like to have to fight for a position:

I think there are some women who are just so caught up in themselves, and that it is like they forget what it was like to not be this woman in leadership, or one who thinks if I help her, she will take my spot. It is like they have totally forgotten.

Or they don't want to let on that it was hard. (Interview 06, p. 13)

Gina had yet another idea about why some women were not mentoring potential women leaders:

I think probably just one more thing added to a plate that's already containing a lot...especially when you get to the position that we're at, we are overachievers, we're hard workers, but I think there's only so much that you can do, so you have to prioritize. So when you triage, the ability to mentor someone else falls somewhere kind of along the low end of the triage scale. (Interview 07, p. 6)

Many leaders, women or men, struggle to meet the demands of school leadership. When considering the added elements of work that the participant leaders discussed throughout the interviews, it is no wonder that mentoring falls toward the bottom of the priority list. Jackie, an administrative graduate student, was reflective about whether she would mentor in the future despite her current mentoring, "I am challenged to wonder if I will one day provide the same for another. I am not sure it is possible. The timing, people, place, etc. has to be just right. There are so many factors that play a role in developing a positive, worthwhile mentoring situation" (Interview 10, p. 3). Finally, Diane had a different view, she thought it was an administrative problem, a competition of sorts, "I think it's typical of administrators. I don't think it's gender-related. I think it's a game a lot of people play. I don't like it, it feels disingenuous to

me, but a lot of people do it” (Interview 04, p. 10). Regardless of the reason, purposely choosing not to assist potential woman leaders or worse, purposely excluding women from school leadership does nothing to change the status quo of secondary school leadership and the superintendency.

Mentees.

Participants provided a substantial amount of information regarding the experience of being mentored. To increase the clarity of this longer section, it has been broken into smaller subsections including: 1) Chosen or not; 2) Few Women leaders/mentors; 3) Mentors’ barriers-lessons; 4) Social aspects; and 5) Men mentoring women.

Chosen or not?

Although their paths varied, each of the participants became school leaders. There were two women, participants in the study, who were sought out and encouraged to become leaders. However, rather than receiving the illusive tap on the shoulder from an established leader, most of the participants became school leaders as the result of their own drive and need for change or to be challenged. Therefore, this section is divided into two subsections that answer the question, Chosen or not? 1) No; and 2) Yes.

No.

For Helen, it was a life change that spurred her in the direction of leadership, “my youngest graduated, and you get fired as a mom because they are all gone. I decided to go back to school” (Interview 07, p. 1). She further explained:

So I went to this informational meeting, and it just happened to be an administrative informational meeting. And I actually really liked a lot of the things that they said. For me, at that time, it was a new way to look at what I was doing in the classroom...to breathe new life in to my classroom, into my teaching, to look at things from a different perspective. So, I actually went with that intention. (Interview 07, p. 2)

Brenda and Helen credited their own initiative for moving themselves up the ladder. As Brenda described, "I think I was pretty much always self-driven. I don't know that there was anybody that basically said, you know, you are basically ready for that next step...it's been pretty much sink or swim" (Interview 02, pp.6-7). Similarly, Helen reported, "For me, I think it was always kind of in my path, even when I was teaching" (Interview 08, p. 2). She continued, "I didn't have anyone, especially women, tell me before I started on the path. That was me saying, this is what I am going to do" (Interview 08, p. 6).

For Diane, the process of becoming a school administrator started when she became aware of a program at a local university, "I remember seeing a brochure for the licensure program. I was thinking, well, that's interesting, and I was seeing other people going through it, getting their licenses and thinking, well, if they can do it, I can do it... in fact, I was kind of mad that nobody had, that I hadn't been identified" (Interview 04, pp. 3-4). Across several of the interviews, there was a definite feeling of frustration at not being chosen for leadership. These participants believed they were as talented, if not more talented, than their colleagues who were men, yet the men were chosen to be

leaders and these participants were not (Field Notes, 03, 06, 07, 10). This frustration came off as an attitude to prove themselves, to be better than the men, and to be noticed for their achievements.

For many of the participants, a desire for change is what moved them to take the first steps toward school leadership. Many of these women expressed a significant sense of boredom with their current positions. When asked if she experienced boredom while teaching, Helen exclaimed, “Totally! Completely, totally, bored! I’m like, this is so boring; I could never do this for more than another year. I can’t do the same thing every day...that was probably it more than anything. I could never do this for the next 30 years” (Interview 08, p. 3).

Brenda echoed this need for change:

I get bored very quickly with things; the variety has been huge. People talk about what’s the difference between being in the classroom, and it’s that I never know what is going to happen today. Even though you might have a calendar that says this, you know that one suspension is all it takes, and your day has changed. If you have some big brouhaha going on, and you have to put all the fires out, and that part of it, I think the adrenaline rush of that, some people find exhilarating and change is exhilarating, and that works for my personality. (Interview 02, p. 4)

In secondary schools, the goal for many teachers is the reduction of preps, or the types of courses to be taught within the day. Teachers speak of knowing that they have achieved something noteworthy when they are assigned only one course to teach. For our participants, this was not considered a positive. Helen explained,

I think also that I knew probably after my second year, that teaching wasn't my passion. I like teaching, like the kids, like the coaching, I like all of that, but I didn't have any interest. But by my second year, I got the coveted fives sections of the same thing. You remember that, it was like, great job! I hated it.

(Interview 08, p. 2)

Two of the eight participants actually left education for the business world.

Amanda was one of them. She described her need to leave teaching, "I taught for a few years, but then decided I needed to try something different, and I left and went to a completely different field in business...I didn't want to teach music anymore...I just thought...I'm just going to try something else" (Interview 01, p. 1).

Related to the need for change, was a growing desire to be challenged. The participants repeatedly spoke of wanting to do new things and the desire to solve new problems. During the observations, the participants almost had a restlessness about them, as if they were never quite comfortable in their seats. When speaking of current challenges at their schools or districts, they came alive with excitement and were eager to discuss the issues (Field Notes, 05). Denise shared:

I like challenges, and I feel like I just kind of have this knack for leadership.

Whether I resist it or not, I end up as the leader. It seemed like a natural. I never planned to be a principal, but once I started taking the classes, I recognized that it was comfortable for me. (Interview 04, p. 5)

It was a similar situation for Amanda:

I have kind of like this seven or eight year thing. I will do something for seven or eight years and then kind of like, okay, I'm ready for something different...something different and a little more challenging now. I've kind of figured this one out now, what else can I do? (Interview 01, p. 1)

Similarly, Brenda explained, "My personality is one that I'm always looking for a challenge or a change...I think it's one of the reoccurring themes I've had as an administrator, is that if I've had a task, I need to do something when I came in, which has been part of the intrigue as to why I took the job" (Interview 02, p. 6).

Fran, the one of the participants who did enter teaching with a plan for leadership said:

I went into teaching because I knew I wanted to teach for a while, and I really liked it, but maybe someday I want to be an athletic director like my dad. So I only kind of aspired to doing something different, I knew that I didn't want to teach forever...I had always known that I wouldn't teach forever, I just didn't know what I was going to do. (Interview 06, p. 3)

Jackie, an administrative graduate student, also felt this need for challenge, "I have a conquer mentality, if there is such a thing. I feel that I have mastered the art of teaching in the classroom...I have a desire to do something different, yet I feel that different role needs to be in leadership" (Interview 10, p. 2).

For three of the participants, the move toward administration was based upon other struggles. Brenda's inspiration to move on was due to her growing frustration with teaching:

I went through a stage at that point of time where I was kind of mad at education because all of my classes were full, and at that time it was the same old tenure issues where last one hired, first one out the door...and I knew doing muffins with seventh graders wasn't going to be enough for a lifetime. I wasn't sure I wanted to do [administration]; I thought about it for a little while and then switched over. (Interview 02, pp. 2-3)

For Helen, it was financial, "I moved immediately into administration, and I did that because I recognized it as a place where I knew I could make more money as a single parent" (Interview 08, p. 2). Finally, for Gina it was divine inspiration, "I will wait for God to kick me in the ass to tell me it's time to move on because that is kind of how it's been. I've never sought my change intentionally. I've never said, now I want to go into administration. It was like, what do I do? Oh, kick in the ass, I guess I am supposed to go back to school now" (Interview 07, p. 7).

The topic of women becoming school leaders was deemed important enough to be included in one of the conferences. For the conference that took place in the summer of 2013, one topic was entitled, "Will You Lead?" and was partially described as, "what are the factors that influence women in choosing careers in educational leadership" (Artifacts, p. 2)? Throughout this conference, much discussion centered upon "being called to lead" and "following passion" in route to leadership (Artifacts, p. 2). Spending time with these women during the interviews, as well as during some of the conferences for women leaders, made their love for their leadership positions obvious. While some participants were angered by the fact that their leadership skills went unnoticed by their

superiors, most of the participants credited themselves for achieving the next step in their journeys.

Yes.

Getting that tap on the shoulder and being chosen by a seated leader as a qualified candidate for school leadership is a life-changing event. As Carol explained, “I think when others start looking at you as having leadership potential, you start looking inwardly, you starting doing your own reflection. You start to listen, to...watch yourself, that out of body experience, you kind of observe yourself” (Interview 03, p. 3).

One woman, Amanda, received that illusive tap on the shoulder when her assistant principal urged her to consider administration. She recalled:

I think that I was fortunate...when I was young, this principal said, ‘Gee, you should be a principal,’ and there weren’t any female principals that I had known, so I thought, oh, that sounds like fun, maybe I’ll try that... And that's kind of how I got going.... That was really the seed that got me thinking. (Interview 01, p. 1)

Amanda reported never having considered the principalship until her supervisor recommended it to her (Interview 01, p. 1). Jackie was also encouraged to consider school leadership. She described her mentor providing, “slight nudges and extending comments [that] led me to believe...I could make critical decisions” (Interview 10, p. 1). She added:

I would say that without my mentoring experience, I would not have worked towards an administration license. In fact, I am not sure that I would have remained in education for too many more years. I was spending time browsing

job postings to see how I might use my master of education degree in another realm...after several years of pondering...leadership. I felt there would be an area that would fit my desires. (Interview 10, p. 1)

Jackie credited her mentor for pointing her toward leadership “after seeing things in [her] that connect to strong leadership” (Interview 10, p. 2). The tap on shoulder, that some participants received, enabled them to see themselves in leadership positions as a place to be challenged, rather than just constantly looking broadly for challenges as in the cases of other participants.

Few women leaders/mentors.

One of the primary difficulties of women-to-women mentoring lies in the fact that the participants had difficulty identifying women mentors and role models due to the low numbers of women in school leadership. As Brenda, a superintendent, described, “I walked into my first winter workshop and was like, oh my God, look at this room full of men. And I knew that already from my classes because [another aspiring woman leader], and I were the only two females...the rest were all men” (Interview 02, p. 4). She went on to say:

There was a very small circle of us, so at these meetings, we all got together to get to know each other really, really well. And the thing that was unique about my going to these meetings, at that point in time, is that everybody knew who we were...because if you went to meetings with so few women, you really stood out really well. (Interview 02, p. 4)

Helen echoed Brenda's experience, "There weren't any women in my very earliest positions...I was this young upstart, ready to go. I just thought things were fantastic, and I got just pulverized by the men. And I wish that I would have had more women" (Interview 08, p. 4). Carol described the lack of women leaders as problematic on her path to leadership, "There are very few female superintendents...a couple in the urban area still, but in the outlying areas there is just not many of us" (Interview 03, p. 9). New to her district, Fran had the same experience, "I don't know a strong woman mentor in this district, if there is one" (Interview 06, p. 7). With so few women leaders to choose from, finding a mentor with whom they could identify was problematic. Even Jackie, who was a graduate student in an administrative licensure program in a major metropolitan area and a teacher at a large school, stated that the only woman available to mentor her was her current assistant principal (Interview 10, p. 1). In recognition of this problem, one woman in a leadership conference created a panel discussion entitled "Mentoring and Supporting Emerging Women Leaders" (Artifacts, p. 3).

While the participants described the difficulty in having limited or no women mentors or role models, they knew the situation was even more difficult in past years for women. Gina credits women in past years as the trailblazers who created the opportunities for current women, "I think the reason they get that opportunity is because there were so many people before them that had to fight all the battles and that made it easier for that mindset to occur" (Interview 07, p. 5). Carol described her mentor, whom she knew made a difference, "when I did my internship hours for my licensure, I worked with an administrator, a female that was a really good role model for me. She did a great

job but she got mislabeled, I think, too and really struggled and was in a situation where she came in as the only female” (Interview 03, p. 4).

Most of the participants demonstrated a sincere appreciation for the women who blazed a trail. Participants know school leadership is a profession historically occupied by men, and they know as difficult as their path was, it was more difficult for the women who went before them. One professional conference for women recognized, each of three years, a women educational leader who made significant contributions to women in school leadership (Artifacts, p. 4). As one woman attendee commented, “More than anything, as a new female leader it gave me understanding and pride in what has happened before me” (Artifacts, p. 4).

Woman mentor’s value.

All of the participants stated that there was value in having a woman mentor as they moved into school leadership positions. As Diane aptly stated, having a woman mentor helped her to understand the added difficulties for women in school leadership:

Recognizing that I’m not crazy. Because I think there are things that I only see because I am a female, things that are unique to a female perspective, to be able to hear somebody else say, yeah, it just makes you feel a little better. (Interview 04, p. 10)

Although Irene was mentored by men, she understood the value of a woman mentor, “I think there is something powerful about, okay, she went through that. She survived that, you, you don’t feel so alone...and I think there is something about saying, we are walking the same journey” (Interview 09, p. 21). Irene went on to say:

I think there are things that are said, there are subtleties that women continue to run into. And I think a woman mentor could say, let it go, it's not a battle worth taking on. Just do your job...early in my career [man mentor] pulled us aside and said, 'You need to understand, this is a man's world. And if you are going to make it, don't be bringing pictures of your kids to work...you are just going to have to sacrifice some things.' And I remember it broke my heart to hear that. That isn't the case now, I think the opposite is true, and I think having a woman mentor say, it is okay to be tired at work because your kid was up with an ear infection. And it's okay to have a husband that stays at home...you don't have to make Christmas cookies. (Interview 09, p. 9)

Lessons such as the one articulated above were described as being personal in nature and were shared in an informal conversational manner as issues arose (Interview 02, p. 9).

Diane explained, "I think that women understand that other women need to talk" (Interview 04, p. 8) and "my mentor did that. She asked me those kinds of questions...I don't bring it up, I mean, they come up" (Interview 04, p. 14).

Unlike their counterparts who were men, women mentors did not pontificate pearls of wisdom as mentees came to them. Rather, when issues arose during the course of the mentoring relationship, they were discussed, through conversations. Carol described the process, "Our conversations, they would touch on certain things that happened at the time, and then we wouldn't pick it up again" (Interview 03, p. 6). Helen stated, "I would say [her woman mentor] was very relational, because she would be very

honest with you and tell you how it is” (Interview 08, p. 7). During these mentoring sessions, relationship was always in the forefront and honesty was expected.

As the participants clearly articulated, women school leaders have different experiences than do their colleagues who are men. Amanda stated that with a woman mentor the protégé learns what women face, “As I help this other person, I get new perspectives and I try to give her my perspective on, here’s what I went through, and here’s what it might look like for you” (Interview 01, p. 7). It is sometimes difficult for women to fully conceptualize this until they experience this for themselves first hand.

Diane explained her experience:

I think a female was so valuable because she recognized some of the same challenges...she knew what females are up against, there are some challenges that men never have to consider. And I didn’t even recognize that until I started doing the job and started experiencing those things. (Interview 04, p. 9)

In a similar fashion, the aspiring women school leaders who were mentored had difficulty understanding the nature of barriers that they had not yet experienced. Diane explained:

I don’t think [interns] realize that women have a whole different game to play until they are in the job. I have had a lot of interns myself, and I try to start the conversation about it. I talk about it because it’s part of my reality. But they don’t always get it, they kind of look at me like I’m nuts” (Interview 04, p. 9).

One difficulty that seated women school leaders can help aspiring women navigate is how to prioritize personal and professional responsibilities. Fran explained how she learned about the possibility of success from her mentor:

She balances, she was a mom, being a principal, getting her doctorate, all of these things. I look at her, and said if she can do this, I can do this. It's just about time. And I talk to her about time...I just had a baby, and I want to get my doctorate and she will talk me through some of that, and how you do that...but yes, I look at her and I think, hey, if she did this, I can do this. Absolutely" (Interview 06, p. 18).

Fran's words highlight a belief that many of the participants held. It was not until the participants' mentors showed them what success looked like that they truly believed success was within their grasp.

The impact on aspiring woman school leaders who witness the success of an established school leader was also evident in the feedback from women's leadership conference participants. One attendee reported that the most important thing she got from the conferences was, "The opportunity to listen to seasoned women. I appreciated the support and the feeling I left with knowing there are others like me out there and we are out there together working for a common goal" (Artifacts, p. 2).

Mentor's barriers-lessons.

The participants reported that they had learned lessons from the barriers that their women mentors faced. Fran gave this example from her mentor's experiences:

I think that being a woman and being a strong assertive woman was tough for her...there are a few board members who were very old school...it was just totally inappropriate, but we called it The Swinging Dick Club...and they really struggled with her.... They were really awful to her.... Therefore, now we have a nice male superintendent who participates in The Good Old Boys' Club... So we went from one end of the spectrum...moving forward as a district and really doing some fabulous things, to this lump on a log. (Interview 06, p. 9)

When Amanda was asked if she believed her mentors faced the same sort of challenges she did, she responded, "I know they did.... There were people on the school board who didn't like her, simply because she was a woman. And she hired a female activities director, and they were out to get the activities director because she was a woman" (Interview 01, p. 5). Helen's mentor also struggled in the male dominated profession of school leadership. Her mentor's advice often echoed the pain of this experience, "Her council was more like, do it the way the men want you to do it kind of thing. And she was very, very smart...but...that was her world" (Interview 08, p. 5). Helen further explained, "I would think that she had a horrible experience. I do know that with her, she never wore pants. Ever. Always had on a skirt, because that was one of the only ways she could define herself as a woman" (Interview 08, p. 10). The participants clearly understood the struggles faced by their mentors, and it was obvious they had learned from those experiences.

Social aspects.

Mentoring, by its nature, is a social phenomenon. An important aspect of mentoring is related to networking. It is desirable for school leaders to participate in networking opportunities as a means of creating professional relationships that may provide resources or other opportunities for a school or district. As the opening remarks from a 2011 women's leadership conference explained:

We are glad to have you here; your participation is important to building and enhancing a strong network of women leaders. We know that one element of supporting a successful school leadership practice is the development of strong professional networks. It's through networks that experienced administrators impart wisdom to their junior colleagues, peers support one another through challenging times, and information and advice are shared in safety. Yet women leaders have a harder time accessing existing networks and developing new ones. For women leaders, networking challenges are associated with absence of access, issues of gender bias, and challenges with life balance. (Artifacts, p. 4)

An attendee from the conference noted in her feedback, "We are more alike than different and get incredible strength from each other... there are many women around me who would make a wonderful source of support" (Artifacts, p. 2). Networking may also be useful in moving one's career forward by offering access to information regarding open positions or an increased chance of being interviewed. Additionally, what started as a mentoring arrangement can often lead to long-term personal relationships and/or

friendships, especially for women. Thus, this section is divided into two subsections: 1) Professional networking; and 2) Personal relationships.

Professional networking.

Networking is an important aspect of school leadership, because, as Evelyn described, “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know, too” (Interview 05, p. 3).

According to the participants, there is substantial value in the creation of professional relationships. When asked if she felt networking was important, Amanda stated:

As you see more people around, then you start to hear more things. And...if you are applying and people know you. And so it really does make a big difference, just by who you know. And also by the fact that, by networking, you learn so much more about what other schools and districts are doing and how they work through things, and so, I think that broadens your perspective and your learning curve, all of those things are very positive. (Interview 01, p. 6)

Fran agreed about the importance of networking for the attainment of future positions, “I’d like to keep my options open, and so I think that having a network and starting to build some relationships gives me more opportunity in the future than it does to bury my head” (Interview 06, p. 11). Fran credited her mentor for these relationships, “she really kind of fostered some relationships with key people in the building to really help guide and focus how I could grow my mindset.... She put me in touch with some really good people, people that I could really learn from” (Interview 06, p. 3). Due to their prolonged friendship over the years, Fran has continued the relationship with her mentors and all the benefits they offer (Interview 06, p. 11). For some of the participants, networking simply

means maintaining the contacts they have built over the years. Although she recently changed school districts, Gina worked to keep the connections to her previous district, “I’m in contact with many of those people, and I taught with those people for 19 years. So I still stay in contact, go back and visit” (Interview 07, p. 11).

Many of the participants turned to their local professional organization for networking. As Carol described:

I really believe in being active in our professional organization, and some people slam their professional organizations, you know, they’re not up-to-date, or they’re not responsive...but I have found that when I needed help and reached out, it’s been there. (Interview 03, p. 7)

Helen added, “[the local principals’ organization] was my main network for a long time... that is probably where I met most of my female colleagues and friends. And then continuing to keep in touch with some of those people” (Interview 08, p. 12).

Some of the participants felt it was more difficult for women to network than it was for men. Part of the issue is that school leadership has historically been a profession for men, and simply, there are fewer women. Irene described the networking for her local group of superintendents:

Those superintendents, they are all guys, all guys. They have lunch at this place every Friday...and it’s a dump. And it’s a bar. And they all order bacon cheeseburgers. Seriously, I can’t even say the word without gagging, you know? And they made a special point to invite me, saying [her predecessor] always used to come. And they are so negative...I just don’t fit in. (Interview 09, p. 11)

Another issue is the way or how men tend to network. What Irene does not appreciate, is the popular method of networking many administrators subscribe to:

In the summertime, there are a zillion golf tournaments that all of your vendors will take you to and whatnot. And golf is fine, I can golf, but I'm not good at it, and I really don't care. I don't even keep score; it's just dumb. So I send my director of finance, who is a guy. You know, how dumb is that? (Interview 09, p. 12)

Amanda had a strong tie to her local principal association because her husband was a key player, and this has allowed her to create numerous relationships (Interview 01, p. 5). She realized the advantage this gave her, as she explained:

The two men in our school have so many connections. They can just walk up to people, and they are talking about coaching, they're talking about all the different stuff that guys can often talk about, and so it is just an easier thing. It's harder for me to go up to a group of guys and start a conversation.... It's a little bit harder to get in and be one of the guys because you are not one of the guys. And there are still many more men in our field than there are women. (Interview 01, p. 5)

Irene also relied upon her state's superintendent's association:

The professional associations are probably the way that I do that the most. And I really make a priority of going...and I will say that a lot of times the content of those is not that good, but, that networking in the hallway is a big, big deal. I would say right now, of the metro superintendents, I know 80% of them well enough that if they came right now along the street, they would pull up a chair

and chat. Remarkably, a couple that I do not know well are women...It's just that we just haven't crossed. (Interview 09, p. 13)

Each of the professional conferences for women in school leadership provided sessions regarding networking and time built into the schedule for networking. Session titles included: "Professional Support, Collaboration and Building Relationships" (Artifacts, p. 1) and "Build a network that will best serve your personal needs" (Artifacts, p. 2). One conference introduced technology to attendees to increase networking for both leaders and schools. Registration materials for the conferences announced, "small, intimate group sessions lead by a large variety of women" (Artifacts, p. 1) and "The symposium will conclude with a panel discussion, reflection, and informal networking opportunities" (Artifacts, p. 1). All conferences provided a list of all attendees, including title/position, location, e-mail address, and telephone number to enable attendees to continue networking after the conferences concluded. Finally, to demonstrate the importance networking has for women, the feedback from one conference attendee reported, "What a fabulous opportunity to meet other women in leadership roles and to begin new friendships: (Artifacts, p. 2).

Networking is important for school leaders. Any time a professional creates contacts that may further her career, or allows her to learn about more effective ways to lead her building, is time well spent. In fact, one of the unintended consequences of this study is invaluable networking that occurred for the researcher while conducting the interviews for this study.

Personal relationships.

A repeated theme in the data for this study is the *personal* relationships that existed beyond the professional relationships, because of mentoring. Mentoring relationships for these women came together as the result of an experienced leader taking a vested interest in a subordinate, and the relationship was built from there:

My mentor was invested in seeing me succeed.... I think she would have taken it personally had I failed. I think she saw a lot of herself in me. And I am finding that I do the same thing. When I see someone who I see a little bit of myself, I'm like, you would be a great administrator. I think she saw a lot of herself in me, she saw something that I didn't know was there. (Interview 06, p. 6)

On the surface, mentoring is what Amanda described as, "she helped me understand what to do as a principal" (Interview 01, p. 3). However, while explaining what mentors do, the women school leaders in this study painted a picture of a significant relationship that existed en route to a leadership position. The participants spoke of their mentors as trusted friends and confidants. First and foremost, Evelyn points to trust and safety in her mentoring relationship as being a key element of its success, "the trust, the safe is definitely there" (Interview 05, p. 11). As Jackie explained:

The relationship works because we understand one another and have allowed sharing based on mutual trust.... We had to allow one another in our lives to develop trust.... I think the mentoring relationship is stronger because of the resulting trust. (Interview 10, pp. 1-2)

She added, “When my mentor trusts me enough to share details of events and situations, I am privileged to learn from those situations” (Interview 10, p. 3). Jackie also shared an e-mail message that demonstrated the level of personal connection in these relationships. Jackie was struggling with what she called her “current stage in life” (Artifacts, p. 15). She was struggling with some substantial health issues and described them, in detail to her mentor. Her mentor responded, “Thanks for the update. Sorry for your pain...rest” (Artifacts, p. 5). None of the participants commented in a negative way about the personal relationships, or the friendships that resulted from the mentoring. There were no stories of friendships gone wrong, or hurt feelings on one side or the other. Surely blurring the line between the personal and professional is tricky at best. Carol agreed, “Yes, you are vulnerable, but you are in a trusting relationship” (Interview 03, p. 5). The participants spoke repeatedly about trust, and how it carried all the elements of the relationship forward.

The participants often referred to the personal and trusting relationships that were created during mentoring as a friendship, a friendship that lasted well past the protégés’ attainment of school leadership positions. As Evelyn explained, “I think that the mentor relationship starts possibly with a friendship, and so that trust and safety is there. Otherwise, it wouldn’t become a mentorship. I wouldn’t want Joe Middle School Principal to mentor me if we were forced together” (Interview 05, pp. 14-15). Fran described her situation, “I am still sort of mentoring a staff member that is back in [my original district] and doing some leadership things. We’ve become friends. And I am still encouraging her, and talking with her” (Interview 06, p. 6). Diane added, “The way I

navigate is through relationships. I have to build a relationship or friendship with them, and then we feel more like we are working together.... It's a female friendship thing, then a feeling they [the mentors] are helping out their friend" (Interview 04, pp. 16-17).

Helen believes this connection is due to women leaders' relational-style approach:

I probably reach out to find out how people are more than work-related. How are you doing? I also know I can shoot them a question ...about how they are handling something, as well. But I think it's much more relational. I also think that when we meet as women at like [principals' association meetings], I am not as interested about what is going on in their school. I am much more interested in finding out about them. I am much more interested to see how they are doing, how are the kids...the grandbaby is how old.... Did your daughter finish school? Yes, much more interested in that than I am interested in their schools. I make the assumption that their schools are fine" (Interview 08, p. 3).

Helen felt it was different with men leaders, that the mentoring relationship ends when a position is acquired, "they'll say, yeah, this *used* to be my mentee" (Interview 08, p, 9). As important as the work was, the relationship between the protégé and mentor took precedence and it grew into a lasting friendship. As Jackie summarized, "we somehow moved past the teacher/principal role" (Interview 10, p. 2).

For the participants, these self-described friendships lasted well beyond the original time of mentoring. Fran shared one example:

I still keep in touch with [woman mentor].... I just got an email.... There is a middle school position that will be opening...and my first reaction was, I've got

to call [woman mentor], and see what her thoughts are.... So that was my first goal to call her and say, okay, what do I do? She was a great resource for me” (Interview 06, pp. 7-8).

When asked how long the relationship with her mentor lasted, Helen responded, “even after [woman mentor] retired, I was meeting with her up until she died” (Interview 08, p. 7). A similar situation occurred with Diane’s mentor, “It’s still ongoing.... She retired a couple of years ago, and now she is just consulting, but she is still in the area so we still stay connected” (Interview 04, p. 7). Evelyn ended up being a professional colleague of her mentor, who often tells her, “I really miss you. I am so happy that we are working as colleagues together, but I really miss you” (Interview 05, p. 5). Carol, who was a superintendent and who has enjoyed a lengthy career in education, still calls on her mentor during difficult times, “She came and met with me. She really helped mentor me through the good times and the bad times on a regular basis, and I’m still in contact with her today” (Interview 03, p. 5). The relationship did not end simply because the protégé found a leadership position or found success in her leadership position. Because it became a friendship, it endured as a friendship.

Men Mentoring Women.

Men mentored many of the study participants who completed the initial selection/pre-interview questionnaire, but according to those who were interviewed, having a man mentor is not without its problems. Three main issues that surfaced are explained in the following subsections: 1) Rumors of romantic involvement; 2) Lack of understanding; and 3) Difference in approach.

Rumors of romantic involvement.

Most of the participants had the same reaction, sighing and shaking their heads, to a question asking what issues may arise from a man mentoring a woman. Most, rather than blatantly saying that coworkers assume a sexual relationship is occurring, talked around the issue. For example, Carol stated that one of the primary issues with men mentoring women is “accusations of impropriety” (Interview 03, p. 10). Similarly, Brenda explained the difficulty was:

To keep that professionalism, because when you work closely with someone, I think there’s always...whether it’s perceived or real...I think that other people watching a close relationship, working relationship...have a hard time dealing with it. People are sometimes looking for something that might not be...you are out walking the halls and stuff together and you are hanging out all day long because that is your job, people have to be very comfortable with that, that it’s work only. (Interview 02, p. 12).

In a similar manner, Gina explained, “sometimes people have gotten themselves into trouble when they haven’t always remembered the things that they needed to do, there is the potential for it not being a good situation” (Interview 07, p. 8). She added, “I think some men and women don’t know how to work together...can’t work together in a professional way, and they make it become personal and then all kinds of icky stuff pops up where it doesn’t need to” (Interview 07, p. 8). Amanda more clearly responded by stating that the issue was, “the sexual aspect of it. You sit in a man’s office with the door closed long enough, a lot, it’s not good” (Interview 01, p. 6). Carol reminded us about

the issue from the man's point of view, "I think sometimes men might feel a little bit awkward in that one-on-one environment, unless they know you well enough. It's kind of a thing at work, some men will never be behind a closed door with a woman because they are afraid to death the something might come up" (Interview 03, p. 9). Finally, as Evelyn joked, "It's probably like a male massage therapist, you just don't want to do it" (Interview 05, p. 15). Whether sexual involvement between a mentor who is a man and a woman protégé is a real or perceived danger, the participants worried about placing themselves in such situations.

Lack of understanding.

Even without the issues that arise from the difficulties of sexual innuendos and rumors of impropriety, for our women leaders, being mentored by a man held some disadvantages. First, the participants believed the main difficulty was in the fact that men do not understand the issues that women school leaders face. As Diane explained, "The fact that they can't see what they've never experienced" (Interview 04, p. 12) and "there are some challenges that men never have to consider" (Interview 04, p. 9). Fran agreed that men do not understand the barriers women face. However, she did not believe that men made an attempt to empathize with women's struggles:

They don't get it. I just don't think they understand what it's like to be a woman in leadership. It's not like it's hard, but I think there are things that they just don't get. And I don't feel like most...take the time, I perceive they just don't feel it to be valuable, or they don't really care. I still feel that they wouldn't feel it's worth their time. (Interview 06, p. 12)

Gina experienced the same lack of understanding, but did not believe it was intentional, “They don’t know how to deal with it. I don’t think that they even know that they are doing it. I am not sure they are aware of that...perhaps it’s not personal, it’s just a lack of awareness” (Interview 07, p. 7). For Carol, when she was feeling that her gender was making a difference with a specific issue (Interview 03, p. 6), what worried her was the way she was perceived by the men she with whom she worked, “I always wondered really, more or less, what was he thinking. Was he thinking I was one of those really aggressive Gloria Steinem kinds of people? Whereas with [woman mentor] I could really trust that I bet somewhere in her life she’s experienced similar” (Interview 03, p. 6). Diane summed it up when she talked about how she worried about, “a bunch of men telling women how they should be” (Interview 04, p. 12). Whether it was intentional or simply a lack of awareness of the issues for women leaders, men’s lack of understanding was problematic for the participants.

A similar situation occurred at one of the leadership conferences. A conference, sponsored by a local university for women leaders, was created by a man professor who used input from a panel of women school leaders. The professor was the first to speak at the conference during a welcome to the woman leaders. In his welcome, he stated, “This event is about women connecting with other women to develop themselves both personally and professionally” (Artifacts, p. 1). The second to speak was the president of the local association for secondary school principals, also a man. Many of the women school leaders in attendance commented on the irony of having two men running a conference for women school leaders (Artifacts, p. 1). There were also many comments

about the fact that the conference occurred on a Saturday. As one woman attendee stated, “If this was a conference solely for men, it would have met Wednesday through Friday, but Friday would have been a half-day starting and ending with a golf tournament” (Artifacts, p. 1).

Difference in approach.

The study participants viewed men as different than women—having different experiences, skills, and needs. Therefore, participants felt there was a limit to what they could learn from men mentors. Some of the participants felt that men were effective for teaching concrete lessons like scheduling (Interview 01, p. 3) and “tricks of the trade...when a bus calls and says that they are coming back, and it’s 3:10 on a Friday afternoon, and you have forty kids that you know that you’re going to have to deal with...those kinds of things” (Interview 02, p. 6).

Helen held similar beliefs, “it has been my experience that men are much more like, here’s the idea and now you, you, and you go do it, and I will go do over here. Yes, and it sounds very stereotypical, but maybe it isn’t actually stereotypical for us who are in the field” (Interview 08, p. 16). Irene agreed that men teach the technicalities of what to do rather than working with their protégés to foster critical thinking, “he just sat and gave me his pearls of wisdom for about...two hours, and he said, we’ll do this again in a couple months. And for two years he would call me and just kind of, he didn’t really let me ask questions, he just pontificated” (Interview 09, p. 13). Irene added what this experience looked like with women:

When we get together as mentors or colleagues, sometimes we just want to dump our bucket. We don't want to solve all the problems, whereas [man colleague]...I'd say, you know, we have a referendum coming up, and he would say, 'Here is what you've got to do.' [Woman colleague] would say, 'Oh, it's the worst time of your life! Invest in a lot of hair appointments!' [She] would talk about the toll that it's going to take on you, how to take care of yourself. With [man colleague] he would talk about how you are going to win this (Interview 09, p. 15)

For the man who mentored Irene, the issue was winning and the technical steps that she needed to follow to succeed. For the women she counted as colleagues, the issue was more about self-care through the process, because success was a given.

Carol believed that men, in general, do not have the level of courage that a woman needs, "A lot of my male counterparts do not have courage. They could never go through what I've gone through" (Interview 03, p. 10). Diane pointed out that most men do not need to be as courageous:

I guess I never thought that men had obstacles. Because I feel that there are so many things that I do that a man would never be criticized for, but that I can't do. Like, lose your temper in a meeting. That would never work for me; people would think that I was crazy. But if a man does that, well, he is strong, he's taking charge. (Interview 04, p. 16)

This skills-based approach was in contradiction to the participants' need for a relational approach to mentoring and leadership, an approach that most men did not offer.

While the participants all stated their mentoring relationships were ongoing, regardless of their current professional positions, they did not believe that was the case with men. The felt the mentoring men did was a means to an end. When asked how men mentor, Helen stated:

It's more like, if you see each other at the [state principals' convention] and you have a beer, and they say, 'Yeah, Joe here was my mentor.' But whether you and Joe stay in contact with each other beyond that, I don't think so. But I do think women do that [stay in touch]. (Interview 08, p. 7)

Helen continued to explain how men use the relationships they have:

I think there is a big difference between the relational piece of it and the value of relationships, but not the value of relationships that can be used in a nonproductive way. Because I believe a lot of male leaders have relationships.... They are going to make decisions based on the relationship with the person, not the effect on the organization. It's the backroom deals. (Interview, 08, p. 16)

Helen's point was that many school leaders who are men value relationships, but the value lies in what these men can do for each other, what resources they can get out of the relationship. For women, it is about creating a stronger organization. Gina explained the difference:

I am all about how people feel, and how I'm being perceived, and how I'm being received and making my work environment a place of support and cohesiveness. And the two guys I work with, they don't give a shit. Back-to-school story, in preparing for my first ever opening day workshop...the principal is saying,

‘Okay, put the PowerPoint up, we’ll talk about testing, this is where the kids are’...and I’m all like...when will you do the welcome back, hello, who got engaged over the summer, who got married? And he goes, ‘I don’t give a fuck.’ And I go, ‘What?’ And he goes, ‘No, no, no, don’t get me wrong. I give a fuck, but I don’t give a fuck. I don’t care...I want them to know, this is what we are going to do this year.’ He goes, ‘That is why you were hired, because I don’t care’” (Interview 7, p. 13).

Diane believes this happens because, “I hate to generalize, but they tend to not have the patience to talk through things, to let women process out loud” (Interview 04, p. 12) and, “I have worked with a lot of men who get impatient. There’s a lot of words and they kind of get distracted” (Interview 04, p. 9). Many of the participants believe this is an essential element in the difficulty with men mentoring women.

When Irene, who was mentored by men, was asked about men’s willingness to mentor women, she stated, “Oh, I think men like to mentor to women” (Interview 09, p. 21). When asked why, she responded:

It gives them power...I don’t sense any of the men that I’ve worked with could have mentored me. I think any one of them would have been thrilled to mentor me, but they would have done it in a way of, ‘I’ll tell you my pearls of wisdom.’

Whereas, women would have been conversational” (Interview 09, pp. 20-21).

This difference in approach has significant ramifications for mentoring. Simply put, the participants believed that men have a different view of and purpose for mentoring:

I think that men are likely to do it on a much more casual basis maybe, not necessarily sitting down having long conversations, unless it's over a meal. I can't see [men] doing what [woman mentor] did for me, coming on a weekly basis or as often as I need her. I think they might do it over golf. I see them doing it over activities—and real infrequently comparatively speaking...not necessarily the one-on-one meetings. (Interview 03, p. 9)

In addition, Helen believed in the potential of mentoring causing men to be threatened, “In terms of authority, but I would also see it in terms of job status...Because if I mentor you and you are really smart, you might take my job. Or you might take Tommy's job, because he is supposed to get that job and you're taking it” (Interview 08, p. 17).

Regardless of whether it is the risk around sexual relationships, the differences in experiences, the approach to mentoring, or the threat to the status quo, the participants stated that being mentored into school leadership by a man was as valuable an experience as being mentored by a woman school leader.

One of the three conferences created for women school leaders echoed this difference in approach for men and women. One conference in 2011 presented a session regarding “Leadership for Learning – Research indicates that women administrators are likely to introduce and support strong staff development programs, encourage instructional innovation, and stress the importance of teachers' instructional competence” (Artifacts, p. 3). Another session from the same conference presented a national speaker who described “how studies suggest that women conceptualize power differently from men, expanding everyone's power” (Artifacts, p. 3). These differences in leadership

approaches were important both to the study participants and the creators of the leadership conferences

CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND MODEL

(Note: All conclusions, implications, and the Model are based on a study of women in secondary schools or the superintendency and should be viewed through that lens. While possibly useful to women in all levels of public education, the study is *not* generalizable.)

The continued underrepresentation in the number of women school leaders at the secondary level (grades 6-12) and in the office of the superintendent, calls for a careful examination of barriers, as well as potential solutions that may address those barriers, for aspiring women leaders. Women-to-women mentoring is one phenomenon that has the potential to increase opportunities for women. All but one of the participants in this study were mentored by seated women leaders and all participants were actively mentoring aspiring women leaders as well. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the concept and practice of women-to-women mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who met the following criteria: 1) were currently seated secondary school principals, secondary assistant principals, secondary school principal interns, and superintendents; and 2) were mentored by other women school leaders. The questions guiding this research included:

1. How did study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring?
2. What are the lived experiences of women who have been mentored by women (or women) school leader(s)?
3. Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who aspire to school leadership?

The participants of this study unequivocally stated the important part their women mentors had in moving them past the barriers and into school leadership roles. Additionally, participants expressed the substantial benefits of their mentoring relationships once attaining a leadership position in a school or school district. To clearly explain the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the data, this chapter is divided into five large sections including: 1) Research Questions Answered; 2) Conclusions; 3) Model; and 4) Implications.

Research Questions Answered

The answers to each of the three research questions posed in this study overlap at times. To explain the conclusions drawn from the research questions, this first section is divided into three sections: 1) Research Question One; 2) Research Question Two; and 3) Research Question Three.

1. *Research Question #1: How did study participants perceive the concept and practice of mentoring?* The first research question garnered data that increased understanding of the phenomenon within this study's context. First, participants believed that mentoring must occur for aspiring women leaders. Each of the ten study participants expressed that her mentoring experience played a substantial role in her success as a school leader, and that, by extension, mentoring was a necessary element for every woman's school leadership journey. The path into or through school and/or district leadership is difficult under the best circumstances. However, secondary school leadership and the superintendency are still positions that are overwhelmingly dominated by men, thus, making the path for most women exponentially more difficult.

Additionally, women are responsible for more domestic responsibilities than are men, in general, creating an additional tension between the personal and the professional (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Reed & Patterson, 2007; Zemon & Bahr, 2005). Domestic/family obligations not only create added complications for women school leaders, they are unique to women who wish to be in secondary leadership and/or the superintendency. Certainly, then, women mentors who have overcome barriers created in the personal sphere can be exceptionally valuable.

Second, while the participants reported that mentoring is a necessity for aspiring women and women in various school leadership roles, their perception was that there exists a great need for seated school leaders to identify women with leadership potential and to communicate to them that school leadership is an option. In other words, mentoring needs to start early, even before women show an interest in administration. Participants believed that seated leaders needed to identify women educators who demonstrate solid leadership attributes and guide them to a leadership path. By providing aspiring women with that “tap on the shoulder” the participants reported that the practice of mentoring had potential to increase the number of women in school leadership positions and, thus, eventually gender- balance leadership for schools and children.

As the two participants who received that tap on the shoulder described, it caused them to see themselves differently, to be able to see beyond their current situation and allowed them to reflect and see themselves as leaders, thoughts previously inaccessible to them. Eight of the ten participants did not receive this tap on the shoulder, rather, it was not until they were frustrated with teaching and had decided for themselves to explore

available options of moving their careers forward, that they discovered the option of the principalship and/or the superintendency.

Wherever it occurred along their professional path, garnering the attention of a seated school leader changed how all of the participants viewed themselves. Each participant described how her belief in herself and her leadership abilities changed after her mentor provided a view to a path that was previously unknown to them. In sum, the participants believed that mentoring was a necessary experience for aspiring women school leaders and that mentoring relationships needed to be purposefully created and used to identify women early on who displayed leadership skills in their teaching careers.

Third, many participant's perceptions of the concept and practice of mentoring focused on assisting potential woman leaders with professional barriers to career progress. More specifically, participants' perceived that mentoring was an effective way to inform aspirants about barriers as well as to navigate the barriers. Indeed, many gendered barriers can remain hidden until they become challenging. While personal barriers such as caring for family and running a household are often considered in advance of moving toward school leadership, professional barriers often are not felt or identified until they create problematic internal and external conflict. For example, women need to be continually conscious of the way they are perceived or "what the leader should look like, what the leader should sound like, how the leader should dress" (Interview 03, p. 6). This is a lesson learned through experience, experience a woman mentor already has. The concept and practice of mentoring, as described by the

participants, stressed that being mentored by a woman gives aspiring women school leaders access to this knowledge and therefore an advantage over barriers.

Fourth, the participants believed that mentoring provided them with personal assistance. For each of the participants, the mentoring relationship developed into a lasting friendship that outlived professional careers. While the participants and their mentors continued to serve as a professional support when needed, over time, the relationship became less about the professional skills of teaching and modeling and more about the resulting personal support. The relationship that developed between mentor and protégé allowed the varied personal issues to be addressed. In brief, mentors provided assistance with problematic conflicts that arose between the personal and professional. Perhaps more importantly, mentors modeled the successful way in which they juggled personal and professional demands, showing aspiring women that they, too, can manage a rewarding personal life and professional career in school leadership. The participants identified that constant reminders for self-care came from both women in the mentoring partnership. For one participant, the reminder to make regular hair appointments became a metaphor for self-care during difficult personal or professional trials.

2. Research Question #2: *What are the lived experiences of a woman who has been mentored by women (or a woman) school leader(s)?* The lived experiences of the study participants in regard to the phenomenon of mentoring can be described by highlighting four different aspects. The first aspect of the lived experience of women mentees occurred because the participants recognized the value in having a woman

mentor, they mentored other women in turn; doing the same thing for aspiring women school leaders that was done for them. Part of the lived experience, then, was in the participants identifying leadership traits in women staff members and putting the idea of school leadership on their radar. Participants knew firsthand the value a seated woman leader can have in the life of a woman educator who may be searching for the next career step. Participants not only tapped other women on the shoulder, they served as a resource for women taking part in preparation programs for school leaders, gave their time and energy into helping another woman develop her skills, found opportunities for practice, and in the end, to find leadership.

Second, as was stated in Research Question #1, in most cases the participants did not receive the “tap on the shoulder” to become a leader. Rather than a trusted leader identifying a participant’s leadership qualities and skills, participants found their own ways toward leadership and were mentored from that point forward. Whether the idea of school leadership came about through the: 1) discovery of a licensure program brochure, 2) boredom with teaching, 3) need for a change, and/or 4) desire to be challenged, eight of ten participants discovered school leadership by chance. These eight participants expressed frustration at not being identified for leadership. As Diane stated, “I was kind of mad...that I hadn’t been identified” (Interview p. 4). A portion of the participants’ frustration came from their belief that men did not have to find their own way to leadership, but rather were groomed from early in their educational careers. Not only do more men enter into education to become leaders, men are often handpicked for

leadership early in their careers by seated school leaders, most of whom are also men (Young & McLeod, 2001).

Third, as was found in Research Question #1, the woman-to-woman mentoring relationship allowed participants to see, understand, and navigate the gendered barriers on the path to school leadership. The participants described the personal and professional barriers they faced and the difficulty that came from not knowing about these barriers until they begin to impede progress. Having a mentor who knows these barriers, has experienced these barriers, and who was able to model a successful way to navigate these barriers, was an essential aspect of the participant's success in leadership. After being mentored, participants recognized they were experiencing the same challenges their mentors had been up against. While informal and impromptu conversations regarding these barriers were helpful, it was the acts of witnessing her mentor circumnavigate these barriers that was a substantial element of the lived experience of being mentored by women. Seeing firsthand how each barrier, whether it was in navigating a profession dominated by men, prioritizing domestic responsibilities, or the added effort needed to consistently measure the perceptions of her leadership, barriers were faced head on and overcome. It was an ongoing and valuable lesson for the participants. As Irene stated, "I think there is something powerful about, okay, she went through that. She survived, that...and I think there is something about saying we are walking the same journey" (Interview 09, p. 21).

A final element of the lived experience of the participants, also answered by Research Question #1, exists in the lifelong relationship that was formed as a result of the

mentoring. For eight of ten of the participants, the mentoring relationship started when a seated woman leader took notice of her interest and intent in leadership, determined that she had the necessary skills and abilities, and had the desire to become a part of the process. As Fran reported, “My mentor was invested in seeing me succeed...I think she would have taken it personally had I failed. I think she saw a lot of herself in me...she saw something that I didn’t know was there” (Interview 06, p. 6). The participants reported how their relationship moved forward from work-related tasks to one in which they referred to their mentors as trusted friends and confidants. The participants spoke repeatedly about the trust and safety in the relationship that not only created an optimal learning environment, but also set the stage for the development of a lifelong friendship. While this surely created a level of vulnerability for both the mentor and the protégé, the participants reported that it was worth the investment.

3. Research Question #3: *Why and how are or are not study participants supporting, through mentoring, other women who aspire to school leadership?* The answers to the question of *why* the participants were supporting aspiring women leaders were clear. First, the participants all believed there needed to be more women school leaders as well as more room for women’s leadership in school systems. The reasons for a needed increase in the number of women school leaders were varied. Some study participants felt strongly about the way leadership in general is presented to the children in our schools. It was clearly and repeatedly stated that participants believed students needed to see both men and women in leadership roles. It is essential for girls to see women leading schools, but participants also felt that it was equally important to boys to

interact with women who lead. Another reason to support aspiring women leaders was that the participants felt the distinct skill sets that women leaders bring to school systems are necessary to build quality schools and by mentoring aspiring women, participants can do their part to ensure that those skills exist. Participants felt there was a need to create an overall balance in the leadership styles of men and women school leaders due to strengths both possess.

Second, as has been discussed with the previous two research questions, potentially the most important aspect of the mentoring relationship begins with the initial identification of a woman's leadership ability. We know from the reviewed literature that for reasons including lack of societal value for women's leadership, women typically do not enter into education aspiring to be leaders (Young & McLeod, 2001). Until the time that women's leadership is valued and school systems and search committees do a better job of attracting women who demonstrate leadership skills into education, if women are to be secondary school leaders and/or superintendents, then, they must be identified while still in the ranks of teaching. The participants repeatedly stated that mentoring is a key element in moving women into leadership. As Fran reported of her mentor, "She is the reason I am doing this, because I would have never thought this is what I wanted to do" (Interview 06, p. 3). Each of the participants articulated the importance of having another knowledgeable person openly identify that the participant had the skill set needed to become a school leader. The participants clearly held their mentors in high esteem and placed considerable value on their mentoring experiences, so it is not surprising that participants want to mentor another aspiring woman educator.

Third, the participants offered their support because they knew firsthand the value of the mentoring experience. Repeatedly, participants stated that anyone (female or male) who was mentored was at an advantage when seeking leadership positions, and that this advantage was especially true for women due to the additional gendered barriers that they face. As was found in both of the previous research questions, according to the participants, aspiring women school leaders do not fully understand the barriers that exist, much less how to navigate these barriers. For the participants, mentoring was key in the process of identifying barriers and modeling their successful navigation. The participants were thankful for the guidance of their mentors and for their assistance in overcoming the obstacles on their path to school leadership. Understanding its value, the participants were interested in doing what was done for them and serving in that role for aspiring women school leaders.

Finally, while the influence mentoring has on a potential woman leader's professional life is clear, what is often overlooked is the effect mentoring has on one's personal life. As was discussed in Research Question #1 and #2, the participants maintained a close relationship with their mentors long after they had acquired a leadership position and had demonstrated success. The participants counted their mentors as friends. The lasting friendships that were created via the mentoring for the participants and their mentors were replicated in the relationship the participants had with their own protégés. Therefore, another reason that participants supported, via mentoring, aspiring women school leaders was because they genuinely liked these women and were interested in helping them meet their personal and professional goals.

How the participants supported women aspiring to school leadership was also clearly communicated. Participants explained that when they discovered an aspiring leader whose skill set, educational philosophy, and/or personality resonated with them for whatever reason, they wanted to work with her to develop the same knowledge and leadership skills. Therefore, the way participants supported aspiring women school leaders was to identify their skills and serve as their mentors. These mentoring relationships were not formal in their creation, but they attained a formalized structure due to the consistency of the mentors' work with the protégés. Mentoring occurred via regular contact, on an ongoing basis, that participants called regular and systemized. Participants created the expectation of consistent and dependable support and advice in their protégés via a mentoring relationship.

To further describe how the study participants supported, through mentoring, other women who aspired to school leadership, participants repeatedly used the words “guiding” and “coaching” (Interviews 04, 07, 10). As Helen explained, “Mentoring is not telling you what to do, it is providing those suggestions in a...more supportive role” (Interview 08, p. 4). Other descriptors that were repeatedly used were “honest” and “real.” Honest conversation and supported reflection regarding the decision, issue, or topic at hand were the methods of choice for the participant's interactions with their protégés. Participants also repeatedly described the encouraging nature of their mentoring relationships, repeatedly reinforcing the quality of the protégé's skills and abilities and continually building confidence. The encouragement given to their protégés was delivered via the same method that was modeled by the participant's mentors.

Sorted Conclusions

The conclusions generated by the data collected in this study assist the reader in developing an understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring of secondary school leaders and superintendents in the context of this study. Further, the findings both support the reviewed literature addressing women in school leadership as well as extending and adding new knowledge to the field. This large section is broken into three subsections including: 1) Literature Supported and Enhanced; 2) Literature Extended; and 3) Original Learning.

Literature Supported and Enhanced

Many of the findings of this study of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring echoed what the reviewed literature identified as important elements when considering women in school leadership and women aspiring to school leadership.

1. *Schools benefit from women leaders and the leadership skills they possess.*

The participants echoed what the reviewed literature had to say about the valuable skills women bring to schools. The difference in leadership styles of men and women leaders were expressed both by the participants of this study and the artifacts collected from the organizers of professional development workshops for women school leaders that stated, “women’s approaches to leadership are different from traditional approaches” (Artifacts, p. 4). Specifically, “communal attributes” such as those that “demonstrate concern for the welfare of other people, such as affection, helpfulness, kindness, sympathy, interpersonal sensitivity, nurturing, and gentle characteristics” (deCausal & Mulligan, 2004, p. 26) are identifiable in women’s leadership. As a means to strengthen

our schools, participants called for these skills to be present in schools via women's attainment of leadership positions.

A large part of the difference between men and women's leadership is what was described by study participants and presented in the reviewed literature as the relational skills of women school leaders (Brunner, 2000; deCausal & Mulligan, 2004; Gilligan, 1991). Participants' believed a relational style makes women approachable due to the connections that are created with staff members and the level of comfort people have with their leader. Participants felt this trait allows women leaders to gather information to which men had limited access. Because of people-orientations, women leaders are able to collect data from facial expressions and body language both of which provide them additional insight (Interview 07, p. 16).

Observations and analysis of artifacts also highlighted what the reviewed literature called a relational approach to leadership (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). The data collected for this study was replete with examples of the importance of relationships for women school leaders. It was evident in meetings with each participant that they had an interest in creating a relationship with the researcher (Field Notes, 03, 04, 06, 07, 09, 10) as conversations quickly turned to personal matters such as family, friends, interests, future plans. The relational approach was also evident in the e-mail and text messages shared by one participant (Artifacts, p. 7).

Finally, professional development opportunities included speakers discussing "Relational Leadership" and the working with others in a "horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense" (Artifacts, p. 1). Participants and researchers agree that the relational

approach that is used by women leaders is a benefit to school systems and serves as a strong argument for increasing the number of women school leaders.

2. *Some believe that women have additional skills that men do not,—thus, making the playing field level—and that these skills strongly eradicate the gendered barriers for women. Some question whether barriers exist at all.*

One enhancement from the study to the reviewed literature can be found in the additional skills that participants identified as being important to schools. Indeed, what participants identified as “women’s additional skills”, were important enough that participants believed that these skills “leveled the playing field”—virtually rendering any barriers impotent—and giving women as good a chance, in selection processes, as any man aspirant. These additional skills were part of the narrative data.

First, Irene, a superintendent and a long-time educator, believed that women were more innovative and less resistant to change (Interview 08, p. 17). The women school leaders she knew took more risks and were not afraid to alter their decisions or to change their minds when necessary (Interview 08, p. 17).

Second, other participants thought that women were better able to focus on multiple details and used the metaphor of juggling to explain the ability to effectively manage the multiple issues that are occurring at once. One participant referred to this ability as *executive functioning skills*, or the organizational ability needed to manage the multiple tasks that must be completed simultaneously (Interview 08, p. 16).

Third, participants highlighted women school leaders’ strong verbal skills. A women’s ability to solve problems verbally was seen as a transparent method of moving a

group forward, rather than focusing a group discussion about who was right and who was wrong about a particular matter (Interview 09, pp. 7-8).

Fourth, one long-time educator (participant) shared that, in her experience, women school leaders were more visible than their male colleagues. Being visible in buildings and in classrooms is not only a way to be aware of the progress of a district and/or school, but it also allows a leader to be proactive in working through any conflicts that may arise (Interview 09, p. 6).

3. *Women face additional **personal** barriers to positions of school leadership that their colleagues who are men do not.*

The reviewed literature maintains that women still carry the lion's share of domestic responsibilities (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Reed & Patterson, 2007). In addition, the leading of schools or school districts requires a substantial amount of time, a fact that directly competes with domestic responsibilities. As the relevant research described, the participants were purposeful when merging their personal and professional lives (Kamler & Rasheed, 2006; Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Zemon and Bahr, 2005).

For example, some of the participants never had children or waited to attain a leadership position until their children were older. Some participants cemented their leadership status before beginning a family. One participant, Fran, became a high school assistant principal shortly before giving birth to her first child. She discussed the difficulty she faced when taking maternity leave and absent from school, "It's totally

frustrating and really hard...I will say this, it's been a challenge to come in and leave for maternity leave and come back" (Interview 06, p. 10).

Like the reviewed literature, the participants described partners and spouses who struggled to understand the demands of school leadership, specifically regarding time. However, even when these school leaders had the support of a partner to carry some of the domestic responsibilities, participants still reported feeling the guilt brought on by long hours and the demands of leadership. Despite the fact that Diane's husband gave up his career to stay at home full-time with their children, Diane still felt badly about being away from her family. However, despite these times of regret, the participants expressed feelings of gratification in both their personal and professional lives.

While the barriers that aspiring women face when seeking school leadership are well documented in the reviewed literature, the data collected in this study brought forth some enhancing information not specifically included in the reviewed literature. In fact, the study included two participants who stated that the typical barriers did *not* exist for them, personally or professionally.

When discussing barriers in general, Helen stated that she "did not have any of that" (Interview 08, p. 6) and Brenda explained that she did not give anyone a chance to stand in her way (Interview 02, p. 5). Both of these principals described strong affiliations with their colleagues who were men and no real affinity with other women leaders.

Important to note, however, is that later in their interviews the two women described both personal and professional barriers that they encountered on their path to

leadership. Interestingly, while Helen and Brenda felt the struggle of barriers, they framed this struggle as a continual list of ever-changing priorities rather than as a dichotomy of competing forces or barriers.

4. *Women face additional **professional** barriers to positions of school leadership while their colleagues who are men do not.*

The reviewed literature is saturated with data that reveals the professional barriers for women when en route to school leadership positions (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1997). One of the first barriers confronted by woman aspiring to school leadership is the attainment of a position (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). The participants explained that the majority of leadership positions are still given to men especially in secondary schools and the superintendency.

The participants' expressed that the gender differences in leadership are a part of people's expectations, and the literature agrees (Shakeshaft, 1989). What a leader should look like, sound like, and how a leader should dress, for example, are still associated with masculinity rather than femininity. One participant, Carol, was told, when pursuing a high school principalship, that hiring a woman for the position would be like pushing a rock uphill (Interview 03, p. 2). This imagery is appropriate for the experience of many women aspiring to school leadership.

The study supported the reviewed literature, when the findings revealed that women school leaders are seen as more acceptable in elementary schools, but less so at the middle and high school levels, and even less so in the office of the superintendent (Young & McLeod, 2001). Evelyn recalled that, when applying in a local high school,

she had a master's degree in school leadership and was a licensed principal. She did not get an interview. However, her husband who taught in the building was approached by his principal, was told to apply, and was given an interview despite having no administrative license, no administrative background, and showing no interest in the position (Interview 05). All participants had similar stories to share, stories in which the women did not believe they had an equal opportunity for a leadership position because the men who applied were privileged.

The reviewed literature also held examples of the barriers that seated women leaders face when working to stay in their school leadership positions. Study participants shared the same examples (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Again, societal expectations about what a leader looks like creates continual conflict for women that must be dealt with over and above the daily tasks of a school leader. One of the ways this requirement manifested is what Amanda called "conservative role attitudes" (Interview 01, p. 5) when she gave detailed examples of aggressive behaviors that challenged her authority as a leader because she was a woman. Another participant successfully sued her school district due to what she reported as being passed over for advancement for "young male principals who all kind of looked like the cookie-cutter" example of what a principal should be (Interview 08, p. 11).

Agreeing with the literature (e.g. Ragins, 1997), study participants repeatedly discussed feeling the need to work harder than their peers who are men. Having to work "twice as hard and fight twice as much to gain the respect" (Interview 05, p. 14) was also evident from a review of the reviewed literature. Whether the need for women leaders to

“be better” is a necessity stemming from the women themselves (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000) or whether it comes from society’s view that leaders are men, does not matter in that either way it results in added effort that leaders who are men do not have to generate. The study participants also discussed the need to carefully display their gender roles. In sum, women school leaders have to prove that they can do the difficult job of leading, while at once displaying appropriate gender characteristics. As Diane summed up, “there is the balance, the balance between needing to behave the way women are expected to stereotypically behave...the caring, the nurturing...and to also be able to do the work of a pretty male-defined role...to stand up and lead” (Interview 04, p. 9). The reviewed literature and the participants discussed the requirement that women continually prove their leadership. Further, this requirement was the topic of professional development sessions for women school leaders .

5. *Women appear to struggle with balancing the personal and professional.*

The reviewed literature described a propensity for women leaders to struggle with the balance of domestic responsibilities and professional success (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). Some literature presented this as a lose-lose situation in which neither role is successfully maintained. Because many women have domestic demands that most men do not, Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier (2011) advanced that women need guidance in order to be able to meet both their personal and professional demands at a high level. However, other researchers (e.g. Miller, Washington & Fiene, 2006; Shakeshaft, 1989; Zemon & Bahr, 2005) advance the notion that balance is an issue of setting and continually refining priorities. While the participants did indeed feel the conflict between

their two lives, and experienced some feelings of guilt as a result, they concurred that the list of priorities was continually shifting, with the exception of their children, who stayed at the top of the lists regardless. Participants believed their prioritizing needed to change as the needs of their jobs and their families changed.

6. *Women leaders hold a traditional definition of mentoring.*

When asked to define mentoring, study participants' views closely matched the reviewed literature. Enomoto and Grogan (2000) defined mentoring as "the special and favored relationship that is cultivated whereby the mentor counsels, guides, and helps the protégé to develop both personally and professionally" (p. 5). In general, "mentor" was described by the participants as supportive, encouraging, safe people with whom the participants could take risks and talk about tough issues when necessary. Mentoring, for the participants, as well as highlighted in the reviewed literature, resulted in knowledge and skill acquisition. However, participants considered an increase in knowledge and skill level as secondary, to the importance of the caring and encouraging elements of the relationship. In one exception, Irene, the one participant mentored by men, spoke primarily about knowledge and skill development when defining mentoring. For Irene, mentoring was about solving practical problems, which was also a benefit identified in the literature (Daresh & Playko, 1992).

Like the reviewed literature, participants believed that mentoring relationships were informally created (Kamler, 2006). None of the participants stated that their schools or districts had formal mentoring opportunities for or by school leaders. As Jackie summarized, the mentoring relationship was "of our own doing, there was "no

support from the organization” (Interview 10, p. 2). Although Darling-Hammond and Meyerson (2010) indicated that a formalized mentoring system is one of the necessary elements of an exemplary program for administrators, it is not a common occurrence in the literature, and did not happen at all for the participants.

7. *Mentoring is a valuable experience for educational leaders.*

Mentoring has the power to create inclusivity and change in educational leadership (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000). Without the opportunity to be mentored, “fewer women are likely to be promoted to supervisory positions, therefore perpetuating the problem of the lack of role models and [women] mentors” (Noe, 1988, p. 71). The value of mentoring was also clearly indicated by the study participants, observations, and artifacts. Participants believed that anyone who had a mentor was at a distinct advantage. The “real conversations” held between mentor and protégé, in which thinking can be extended and ideas can be exchanged work to create a more effective leader (Interview 06, p. 12). In addition, the participants and the reviewed literature agree that those who are mentored have increased confidence.

Finally, being mentored allowed prospective and new leaders an opportunity to develop an effective leadership style. The participants reported a clear understanding of their mentor’s approach to leadership and recalled clear reflection regarding which elements they would adopt as their own and which they would not. As Jackie explained, “I question my mentor about her decisions because I am evaluating her decisions. This has allowed me to develop my own style” (Interview 10, p. 1).

Participants actively demonstrated the value they placed on mentoring by mentoring others in turn. The value participants found in mentoring others was also representative of the reviewed literature (Daresh & Playko, 1992). Working with a new or aspiring leader allowed the women mentors to reaffirm and bring forward their core values during decision-making. Mentoring caused the participants to reflect upon the advice they were giving and continually allowed them to perform self-checks to be sure she was following her own advice consistently. The participants also reflected the reviewed literature in that they reported learning from the women they were mentoring. For the participants, it was an effective way to learn about new techniques and approaches to leadership. Finally, participants reported self-satisfaction in being able to help others along the stages of their leadership journey.

8. *Difficulties may arise when men mentor women.*

The participants agreed with the reviewed literature regarding men mentoring women. First, Carol echoed the research of Ragins and McFarlin (1990) when she described her concern that there may be “accusations of impropriety” or coworkers commenting on, or believing in the possibility of a sexual relationship between the mentor and protégé due to the frequency and privacy of the communication needed in such a relationship (Interview 03, p. 10). Participants talking about sexual relationships between a mentor and his women protégé using terminology such as accusations of impropriety give the impression of a taboo subject. Gina explained that there is an added burden to the mentor and protégé to remain above reproach in this situation. (Interview 07, p. 8).

Participants noted that the reason that men and women do not always work well together is because men do not often understand the issues that women face. Like the reviewed literature (e.g. Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000), participants explained this as a lack of awareness and inability to understand something that has never been experienced. Additionally, participants expressed that for some of men they have worked with, the barriers that women face were not important or valuable enough to consider. Another issue surfaced when some participants were concerned that men would view them differently specifically because they were women, calling into question their ideologies around such notions as feminisms, for example.

Additionally, the issue of a difference of leadership styles for men and women received attention in the reviewed literature and in this study (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000, p. 5). Because of noted style differences, participants believed there was a limit to what they could learn from men. Participants felt men would do a good job of teaching concrete, practical lessons about what to do in various situations that a school leader might face. While the technicalities of leadership were helpful, what was more beneficial was the encouragement to think critically that they received from their mentors who were women. Participants felt that for mentors who were men, it was about how to win in given situations, for women mentors, winning seemed to be a given, what they were concerned about was providing support throughout the process.

As was also evident in the reviewed literature, it is no surprise that participants in this study felt a lack of opportunity to be mentored by women (Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). The lack of opportunity is created by the fact that there are fewer women leaders

in secondary and superintendency positions. Many participants, especially those with years of experience in school leadership, lamented the lack of women in their professional circles—a fact that resulted in no one with whom to identify, and in short, a lack of potential relationships. There was also recognition that if it was difficult for the participants, it must have been even more difficult for their women mentors. The participants realized they owed a piece of their success to the women before them who fought even greater battles. The battles the participants witnessed their mentors fighting became lessons for their own lives.

9. *There is value in a woman having a woman mentor.*

The participants recognized the value of having a woman mentor. From the reviewed literature, it is clear that women tend to have a different approach to leadership than do their colleagues who are men (Brunner & Kim, 2007; Young & McLeod, 2001). It has also been agreed upon that women have different barriers on the path to leadership than do men (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1997). Participants repeatedly reported that being able to discuss issues that are unique to a woman's leadership experience had value beyond measure. To have an experienced woman school leader share that understanding as well as techniques to circumvent barriers is a distinct advantage to prospective women leaders. What is difficult for aspiring women leaders is that often the barriers that impede their progress to leadership are not recognized until they stop that progress. For example, how does an aspiring woman leader know about gendered hiring practices before she experiences them? Therefore, it is difficult for an aspiring woman leader to conceptualize barriers in

advance. Participants expressed that a woman mentor is also of benefit here simply because they have experienced these challenges. As Amanda said of her protégé, “I try to give her my perspective on, here’s what I went through, and here’s what it might look like for you” (Interview 01, p. 7). According to the participants, having no mentor or a mentor who is a man will be of little to no help in this arena. Having no mentor means that aspiring leaders must navigate barriers they may not know exist, and having a man mentor who has never experienced those barriers and may have never considered the barriers women leaders face is no better. Each of the struggles these women faced, each of these battles, became survival stories and lessons to be shared with their protégés. After all, these women were teachers, and for teachers, creating lessons for others is not only standard protocol, it is what they do. A woman mentor can address all of the barriers, all of the challenges. The participants repeatedly stated the importance of being mentored by a woman because women know each other on a level that men do not.

Additionally, seated women leaders are a reminder to women aspiring to the profession that goals can be accomplished, that a woman can attain high levels of leadership. As Irene shared, “I think there is something powerful about, okay, she went through that, she survived that.... And I think there is something about saying, we are walking the same journey” (Interview 09, p. 21).

10. Women sometimes refuse to mentor aspiring women leaders.

Researchers call the practice of excluding women from leadership the Queen Bee Syndrome (Funk, 2004). Those women who are considered Queen Bees do not help other women to enter into leadership. Queen Bees believe they alone deserve credit for

their success and believe that other women should have to make their own way as well. In addition, Queen Bees fear other women taking their place in the organization because there is only so much room for women in educational leadership and they need to protect their turf (Sherman, Munoz & Pankake, 2008). Participants added that the women who exhibited Queen Bee-like behavior were very competitive and perhaps they had forgotten what it was like to have to fight for a leadership position. Queen Bees often feel they fit in well with their colleagues who are men, in fact, it is a source of pride for them. This was the case for Brenda. Brenda stated she had no obstacles and that she would not allow any one or anything to stand in her way to attaining leadership. Brenda has, by choice, no domestic responsibilities and no friendships or relationships that may interfere with her leadership. To a lesser degree, Diane made her own way to leadership and felt other women could do the same. As Diane described, she was “stuck in the middle” because she understood the advantage men had and the added barriers women face but she did not feel it was her responsibility to “bring other women along” because there were “enough jobs for all of us” (Interview 04, p. 12).

While most of the participants of this study did not fall into this category, many of them knew women who did. Participants told of in-groups and out-groups among women leaders, and leaders who worked very hard to fit in with their colleagues who were men. Other participants wondered if Queen Bees were being mislabeled simply because they were facing serious time constraints and could not give to aspiring women, because they could not give to anyone or anything outside of work and family. Finally, some participants wondered if the behavior of Queen Bees was simply about survival in a

man's world and adopting the dominant persona in an attempt to make some headway in an inhospitable environment.

11. Mentoring allows for important networking opportunities.

Networking is a well-known benefit derived from mentoring (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000; Hickey-Gramke, 2007; Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011). As the agenda from one professional conference for women leaders stated, "one element of supporting a successful school leadership practice is the development of strong professional networks" (Artifacts, p. 4). Professional conferences created for women leaders dedicated substantial time and attention to networking. Participants agreed with the reviewed literature's assertion that networking is essential in moving careers forward. Meeting people, giving people a chance to know you, and learning about open positions all increase a candidate's chances of attaining a leadership position. Participants' mentors, using the mentor's professional connections, fostered many of these relationships and these relationships lasted beyond the original mentoring. In addition, networking allows a leader or potential leader to learn about what is happening in other schools and districts and broadens a leader's perspective. Some of this networking takes place as the result of professional organizations for school leaders. Participants commented on the importance of being visible at events organized by professional organizations, although they believe events are not created with women school leaders in mind and often make it more difficult for these women to network. Irene, who was mentored by men, spoke about the importance of being seen in the hallway during these

events. In fact, she stated it was more important than actually attending the professional development sessions.

Literature Extended

The participants of this study provided data that builds upon and *extends* existing literature regarding women in leadership. Conclusion 11 extends the list of skills that women are known to bring to school or school systems and Conclusion 12 adds to the knowledge that we have regarding how women in leadership view the act of balancing the personal and the professional.

12. *Women possess additional leadership skills that are beneficial to schools.*

While the literature's discussion of the skills that women leaders bring to schools is extensive, the participants brought forth additional skills not specifically named by the literature reviewed for this study. One benefit is what participants called "the mom thing" (Interview 01, p. 1). The advantages of the perception of being maternal, according to the participants, makes a woman leader more approachable (Interview 04, p. 16), of being a strong disciplinarian (Interview 02, p. 4), of openly caring for people (Interview 02, p. 10), and/or of being more nurturing and compassionate (Interview 07, p. 9). Participants believed the "mom thing" gave women an advantage. It is interesting to note that the "mom thing" brings about the connotation of both a nurturer and a strong disciplinarian.

13. *Women leaders, while unaware of it themselves, actually live balanced lives.*

Elements of personal and professional balance that did not appear in the reviewed literature repeatedly surfaced in participant interviews. First, when asked how successful the participants believed they were balancing, most of the women immediately expressed

they felt they were failing. The participants did not seem uncomfortable about admitting failure, it was just an immediate, almost as if it were a given that a woman school leader would be failing at balancing work and family. Participants wondered if this automatic response was conditioned by society, by the belief that women simply cannot have it all. Similarly, professional development opportunities regarding personal and professional balance (Artifacts, p. 2) were plentiful, providing time for discussion and helpful tips for women school leaders who felt they were failing. As presented in the reviewed literature, participants felt they were being pulled in various directions and were continually behind and having to make up lost ground (Kamler & Rasheed, 2006). However, what is not discussed in the reviewed literature is that when asked for evidence of this claimed failure, the participants could not articulate examples of how their personal lives were suffering as a result of their professional lives or vice versa.

The discussion then turned to the reasons why women school leaders automatically felt as though they were failing when their children were healthy, their families happy. Is this automatic response conditioned by society, by beliefs that women simply cannot have it all? When asked if she felt she was successfully balancing work and family, Fran stated, “that is my gut reaction, to say of course I’m not, but really I am. I know I am” (Interview 06, p. 18). Other participants talked about the self-judgment that occurs, always feeling like they were not good enough, that they needed to achieve more. As Gina described “we set the bar so high, too high I think sometimes” (Interview 07, p. 12). The participants reflected that societal expectations may be to blame for the needless guilt and pressure they placed on themselves with the belief that they were not

balancing work and personal life appropriately. The reviewed literature did not discuss why the default response to personal and professional balance was set to this, but certainly it is an important aspect in the lives of women school leaders and one that could be addressed through women-to-women mentoring.

While the reviewed literature depicted two parts of balance, family and work, the data in this study revealed three parts. A third element of balance that emerged was the idea of self-balance. Much is known of the conflicts that occur with work and family, but little is discussed about the balance of the woman leaders themselves. Even the professional development designed by women, for women the focus is on work and family balance. While both work and family were important to each of the participants, they also knew to be a good leader, a good partner and mother that they had to care for themselves as well. Participants gave themselves permission to say, “I need to take care of me too” (Interview 02, p. 12). A common element was in the time the participants allowed for themselves for exercise each week. As Fran stated, “I need to have balance because I need to be better at things. So I was very cognizant of putting myself into positions of playing volleyball, or working out, making that time for myself” (Interview 06, p. 14). In addition to exercise, the participants treasured small amounts of time alone. Whether participants used the time to nap, get a message, or get their hair done, this time was viewed as necessary to renew themselves and in assisting in their balance overall.

Original Learning

Data from this study resulted in eleven new conclusions of original learning, each of which is necessary to greater understand the mentoring of women school leaders.

14. *Seated women leaders look for specific abilities in potential women leaders.*

There was no discussion in the reviewed literature regarding what seated women school leaders look for in aspiring women leaders. The seated women leaders who participated in this study were hypersensitive to specific abilities in the women they supervised. This hypersensitivity relates specifically to the skills women bring that are unlike and perhaps over and above the skills of men who are their colleagues.

Participants of this study looked for women who were strong, courageous, and able to handle adversity. The women they deemed ready for leadership also needed to be resilient and able to conquer. Additionally, several participants described the emotional intelligence needed by a school leader. Part of this skill is mental health—described as the ability to regulate the self and develop a “tough skin” (Interview 05, p. 12). Another part of emotional intelligence is the ability to read others’ emotions and diffuse a difficult situation. Seated women participants, in this study, also expected to find a broad perspective that included the “good of the whole” in women who should become leaders (Interview 02, p. 10). Finally, while the ability to work with people effectively and to build relationships are necessary traits for all leaders, it was a strength the participants believed women possessed more so than their colleagues who were men.

15. *Women educational leaders reject the notion that their family lives are barriers.*

When the participants were asked about personal barriers, they reacted in a way that was not represented in the reviewed literature. An interesting occurrence, as highlighted from the field notes of most of the interviews, was the discomfort with the word “barriers” used in the question, “Will you talk about any personal barriers you faced

on your path to attaining a position in school leadership?” The participants did not want their partners, children, families, households, and/or purposeful choices associated with the negative connotations of the term “barrier” (Field Notes, 01, 09). It was not until further questions were asked regarding this topic that the participants discussed the nature of the extra planning needed and the sacrifices that were made in these areas to become a leader.

16. *Women identify “barriers” in other parts of their **personal** lives as a result of holding school leadership positions.*

One barrier mentioned by the participants, but not by the reviewed literature, was the impact school leadership had on other areas (beyond family) of personal life. Women on the path to leadership quickly discovered that their *visibility* suddenly had a problematic side. Because school leaders are also leaders of their communities, one’s reputation was always a consideration. One participant called this barrier a “fishbowl existence” (Interview 02, p. 11).

Participants also discussed how they needed to make changes regarding how they spent their free time. For example, friends went to a local bar, the participants made the decision not to go along for fear of how it may appear to community members (Interview 06, p. 6). In addition, social elements such as Facebook were no longer a safe tool. Further, participants described the complications involved in having friendships that were made prior to leadership, especially when they had worked as a teacher in the same building. One participant spoke about having to be an island and okay with no longer belonging to a social group (Interview 02, pp. 11-12).

Romantic relationships also suffered. The reviewed literature discussed the common outcome of divorce and/or failed marriages for women leaders, but did not specifically address the difficulty in initially trying to form relationships. Participants found that their “dates” had to be agreeable to long hours, stressful work-days, phone calls at inopportune times, and having date night occur at the football and basketball games on Friday nights.

17. *Current mentoring practices must include the fact that aspirants are required to navigate gendered hiring/selection practices.*

One element seen as problematic, by the study participants, was the formal processes currently in place to fill leadership positions. The reviewed literature did not reflect the fear the participants had about never knowing if they were legitimate candidates or the token woman used to give the appearance of equity. Further difficulty erupted from these instances, perhaps because women as nurturers should not abandon their schools or districts.

For school leaders there are unspoken rules about who should apply, when they should apply, and how to work with current supervisors without burning bridges. Quite often, these hiring processes serve to replicate the leadership status quo of “white men, in their 50s and up, in gray and black suits” (Interview 03, p. 7). Often times, especially at the higher levels of leadership, search firms are used to bring a pool of candidates to fill an open position in a school or district. These search firms almost always represent the traditional image of a school leader.

18. *When discussing balance between life and work, women leaders describe a list of priorities rather than a “conflict” between the two.*

While the reviewed literature fully discussed the conflicts women school leaders who have children face between the personal and professional (Gardiner, Enomoto, & Grogan, 2000; Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989; Reed & Patterson, 2007; Zemon & Bahr, 2005), the participants were clear that the barriers were not about their children, but about the societal expectations placed upon them. For example, as Amanda explained, it is not that a woman school leader cannot manage both her work and her family successfully. It is about a societal belief that a woman’s primary responsibility is to care for the children while a man can be freer to focus on work (Interview 01, p. 7).

Thus, what the reviewed literature depicts as a conflict between work and family life for women leaders (Leimon, Moscovici & Goodier, 2011), was instead described by the participants as a list of priorities, with their families always first priority. While the participants felt that men were not expected to change their priorities when they start a family, these women leaders described how having children required them to manage time differently because of the added responsibilities children bring. Participants who had the ability to create change in this arena made purposeful moves to change the paradigm for women school leaders. As a superintendent, Irene modeled the idea of changing the expectations for all of the leaders in her district in regard to family responsibilities. She spoke of her men principals taking paternity leaves and needing to

miss meetings in order to pick up children from daycare. Irene stated, “People are saying, ‘Well, women have babies,’ so do men!” (Interview 09, p. 9).

19. *Women leaders need “equal partners” in their private lives should they choose partnership.*

In the struggle of work versus family, the participants highlighted their solution—having an equal partner. The reviewed literature surrounding women in leadership tells the story of failed relationships and marriages and the some of the participants of this study lived that reality. However, the effective teamwork that was described by the rest of the participants enabled them to experience both their work and personal lives to the fullest potential. Even though this was the case, the participants still occasionally struggled with socially ingrained beliefs that if they were not home with their families, their families were somehow losing. As Diane shared, “sometimes when things come up, in the back of my mind there’s, would this have been this way had I been there?” (Interview 04, p. 6). Participants, although they felt this way, also recognized the fact that they put a substantial amount of this pressure on themselves.

20. *Potential women school leaders must have access to early mentoring opportunities.*

While most echoed current reviewed literature, study participants also brought some new ideas to the conversation. For example, one important addition to the reviewed literature was essential importance placed upon providing mentoring opportunities for women aspiring to leadership positions. When women potential school leaders are identified early and guided into leadership, access to levels of the organization previously

invisible to women educators become visible. When mentoring occurs, participants believed it allows women to see opportunities to practice leadership. As Fran said, “I really developed this taste in my mouth, like I could do this” (Interview 06, p. 2

21. *Women leaders are willing to mentor.*

Contrary to the queen bee syndrom, this study found that women are willing to mentor potential leaders. Most of the participants of this study actively sought out women teachers in their buildings or districts who demonstrated leadership skills. For the participants, part of the willingness to mentor was the desire to create some type of lasting effect on education. The participants believed that their good work would continue through her protégés. Two participants, who had strong affiliations with their men, did not narrow their search for protégés to only women. These participants felt that we need strong leaders in education in general and did not believe women should be at any advantage in that process.

The other participants, however, felt they had a specific responsibility to bring women into school leadership. Participants felt schools and districts needed the skills that women leaders possess in general. Participants also thought they had a role in working to equalize the number of men and women in school leadership. This effort to equalize, for some, was simply a matter of providing a healthy gender balance in leadership ranks.

The participants referred to the process of working to bring women educators to leadership was “growing our own” (Interview 03, p. 1). When referring to the effort to bring women into school leadership, Carol stated, “If it’s not me, then who” (Interview

03, p. 1)? Because they knew firsthand about the struggle, women leaders felt they should be available to provide support to women aspiring to leadership as well as to affirm that they belonged.

Finally, the participants explained the simple expectation that they do what was done for them. Because a woman went out of her way to mentor the participants, the participants believe repayment came in the form of doing the same for another woman.

22. *Women mentors build life-long relationships with their women mentees.*

A repeated theme from the interviews, observations, and artifacts was that the participants felt that those who were willing to mentor aspiring woman also had a vested interest in the aspirant. Participants believed this connection was forged through common priorities or philosophies. These friendships lasted well beyond the mentoring relationship, past retirement, and even to the death of one participant's mentor. The participants expressed that these friendships allowed for sharing and learning at a much deeper level. While this created a level of vulnerability, it was matched by a feeling of safety and extended learning.

23. *Women leaders see substantial differences between men and women mentors.*

While participants believed men have relationships in their mentoring, they also expressed that men often had mentoring relationships that were mutually beneficial a) in terms of what they could do for each other, b) because of resources that could be attained, or c) because of the power that could be gained when mentoring the right individual. For men, mentoring may mean attaining selected positions for particular people in order to have connections across organizations. Additionally, it may be a way to keep others out

of the profession. As one participant explained, “If I mentor you...you might take my job. Or you might take Tommy’s job, because he is supposed to get that job” (Interview 08, p. 9).

Participants also stated the benefit of being mentored by a man lay in the area of attaining solutions to practical problems rather than the area of critical thinking—creating vision, building relationships, or other non-structured work. Because she was mentored by men and received more practical lessons rather than the relational support that is typical of women mentors, Irene demonstrated a sense of urgency for the need for women to be mentored by women.

24. *Aspiring women discover leadership as an option after becoming dissatisfied with their current roles.*

Although important, it seems women are rarely identified by their superiors as potential school leaders. Instead women tend to find a route to leadership themselves. This issue was not discussed in the reviewed literature. Most of the eight participants who did not receive the tap on the shoulder for leadership, began down the path once they became bored or disillusioned with teaching. This boredom, or lack of challenge, either pushed them to leadership or out of education. The participants described the need for more challenges in their professional lives and the resulting move toward leadership rather than being identified as a leader.

Two conferences for women school leaders that occurred during this study addressed the desire and passion to lead. In these sessions, factors that determined a woman’s willingness to lead a school or district were identified and discussed. The idea

of being handpicked for leadership was not considered in these sessions, instead “being called to lead,” or “following a passion” to leadership were the items of discussion.

The participants in this study were often angered by the fact they were not chosen for leadership and credit only themselves for achieving the next steps on their leadership path. Because women do not generally enter education to lead institutions (Young and McLeod, 2001), they are either pointed in that direction or—if they do not leave education—reason it out over time for themselves.

By extension, the social expectations that prevent women from entering education to be leaders *do not* increase the number of women school leaders, nor does waiting for women educators to reason it out. However, identification of women who hold key leadership skills and then mentoring them for a leadership path *does* have the potential to increase the numbers of women in secondary school and superintendency leadership. As Jackie said, without the “slight nudges and extending comments” from her administrator she would not have pursued a path in leadership (Interview 10, p 1). In fact, Jackie credited her mentor for keeping her in education by pointing her toward leadership.

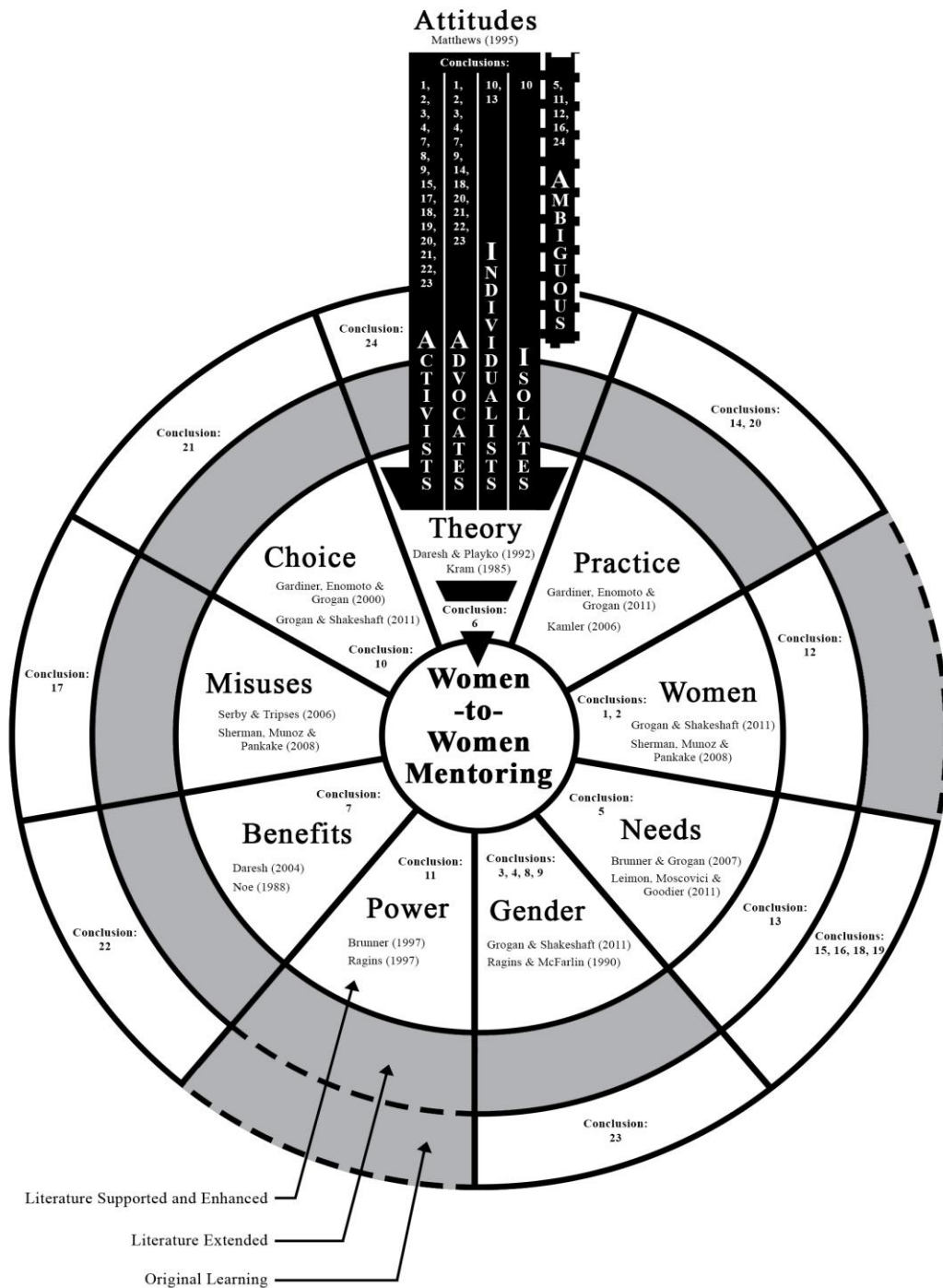
Developing the Model: A Meta-analysis

While the reviewed literature is replete with data regarding the barriers for women on the path to school leadership, there was little mention of what can be done to correct the imbalance in the number of men and women school leaders. The reviewed literature repeatedly stated the importance of mentoring for all leaders, but specifically for aspiring women leaders. Mentoring, in general, moves many to school leadership. For women, however, mentoring allows the possibility of seeing the self as leader, giving one access

to leadership opportunities that build confidence and a sense of future work. A model of in-depth comprehensive understanding of women-mentoring-women emerged from the conclusions of the study. The model titled *Beyond the Barriers: A Model of Women-Mentoring-Women in/to School Leadership* can be found on page 246.

Figure 2: Beyond the Barriers: A Model of Women-Mentoring-Women in/to School

Leadership



Steps of Model Development

Creation of the model occurred in four *Steps*: 1) Moving from conceptual framework to conclusions; 2) Sorting significance of conclusions; and 3) Placing conclusions in topical categories.

Step 1: Moving from conceptual framework to conclusions.

The first part of the creation of the theoretical model for this study involved the development of a literature-based conceptual framework (Chapter II) for the purpose of thinking about the study as it progressed through fieldwork and analysis of the data. The creation of the conceptual framework involved reviewing the literature and grouping it into categories based upon their content about mentoring. As can be seen in Chapter II and in the Model above, content from the literature fell into nine topical categories. With an eye on the conceptual framework, the next step of building the model involved forming a draft set of conclusions (through a meta-analysis of the data) from the topical findings.

Step 2: Sorting significance of conclusions.

Step 2 was a meta-analysis of each of the conclusions. Conclusions were compared to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter II in order to determine whether each fell into one of three categories: 1) Literature supported/enhanced; 2) Literature extended; and 3) Original learning. This sort was completed to determine the significance of the study as it relates to future implications. The conclusions are presented above in these three categories.

Step 3: Placing conclusions in topical categories.

Step 3 was a meta-analysis of each conclusion to determine where each fit in the nine topical categories on the draft conceptual framework/early model. In order to reveal the significance of each conclusion (determined in Step 2), two concentric circles were added to the draft model to represent areas of enhanced and original learning so the conclusions could be placed in the model where they fell in relation to the reviewed literature.

To complete this step, each topical category from the literature was reviewed for its major findings. Next, each conclusion was reviewed and placed with the corresponding topic of literature. Last, conclusions were placed upon the draft model to show whether they were supporting/enhancing the literature, extending the literature, or were original learning from the study. Because conclusions were sorted into topical categories taken from the literature, each topic and its relationship to sorted conclusions are discussed below: 1) Theory; 2) Practice; 3) Women; 4) Needs; 5) Gender; 6) Power; 7) Benefits; 8) Misuses; and 9) Choice.

Theory.

Mentor Theory (Kram, 1995) asserts that the goal of mentoring is to support an individual's personal and professional development. The benefits of mentoring and being mentored are well known (Daresh & Playko, 1992). Further, mentoring is also the traditional route into positions of educational leadership. The inciting element in the creation of mentoring relationships, and by extension, the identification of aspiring leaders, occurs when a seated leader identifies leadership skills in another and

demonstrates willingness, in a public way, to commit to bringing such skills to fruition for the benefit of both the individual and the school. Conclusion #24 states that, in large part, this is not happening for women. Instead, women educators and aspirant leaders become bored, or dissatisfied with teaching and seek other avenues of fulfillment. It is in this search that women discover their mentors, once their paths to leadership have begun. This original learning casts new light on a theory of mentoring that depicts an experienced leader taking an aspirant leader under his or her wing immediately after the identification of valuable skills. Mentor theory must address the need to provide the “tap on the shoulder” that women need to move forward into leadership.

Practice.

The practice of mentoring has served to maintain the status quo of leadership. In other words, those who have always been leaders mentor those most like them, thus replicating the picture of how a leader looks (literally). Also, the traditional practice of mentoring does little to open leadership to women or leaders of color (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Conclusion #20, somewhat like Conclusion #24, states that seated school leaders must provide opportunities to women and these opportunities need to occur early on. It is this early tap on the shoulder that allows women to understand that school leadership is a viable option along their career path as educators. This original learning states that without this acknowledgement, many potential women leaders are left to the alternative of perhaps bumping into leadership as a result of being frustrated and bored with their teaching.

Kamler (2006) explained that mentoring structures influenced by feminine thinking needed to be explored in order to create opportunities for women and to “build a diverse community of learners” (p. 301). Original learning brought forward by Conclusion #14 illustrates that women school leaders are hypersensitive to the abilities of the women they supervise. Further, the data from this study demonstrates that seated women leaders know specifically what attributes they are looking for in aspiring women school leaders.

Women.

The reviewed literature repeatedly reports that women do not lead the way their colleagues who are men do (Grogan and Shakeshaft, 2011). Conclusion #2 extends the list of skills that women school leaders possess. These skills include being more innovative, better able to focus on multiple details, and strong verbal skills. Women have specific skill sets that are a benefit to schools. Conclusion #1 supports the literature by specifically naming these differences in leadership approaches. One such benefit is the relational approach women use to gather information, relate to the people they interact with, and share their power. Conclusion #12 extends the literature by naming an additional skill not specifically named in the reviewed literature. What participants called the “mom thing,” or the perception of being maternal, allowed women to nurture yet also to be strong disciplinarians. The research of Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) repeatedly states that these differences require women to be mentored differently.

Needs.

Based upon their work with women superintendents, Brunner and Grogan (2007) developed a list of skills (e.g. interpersonal skills, responsiveness, maintaining relationships, improving instruction) that were all deemed important to women school leaders. Leimon, Moscovici, and Goodier (2011) detailed a list of key areas the women must master to be successful leaders. One of these areas, the balance of a woman's personal and professional lives, was supported by Conclusion #5, with one difference; Conclusion #5 enhances the literature by explaining that what is the *appearance* of a lack of balance, according to the literature, is in reality an ever-shifting list of priorities for women leaders, a list on which their children remained on top.

Conclusion #13 further extends the literature by explaining that in truth, the personal and professional lives of women schools leaders are balanced. Unfortunately, these leaders have been unaware of their successes, as if it were a given that they should be struggling despite no evidence in either their personal or professional lives that they were. Additionally, Conclusion #13 explains a third area of balance, self-balance, or the care women leaders give to themselves.

The original learning from this study continues the idea of the relationship between the personal and the professional. Conclusion #15 explains the idea that women educational leaders reject the notion that their family lives are barriers to positions of leadership. It was only with further questioning did the participants discuss the sacrifices that had to be made to have a family and a school leadership position. Conclusion #16 added the additional barrier of the conflict that school leadership creates in their personal

lives. The increased visibility that comes from leadership created issues with romantic relationships and how and where leaders spent their free time. Rather than the idea of the conflict the literature depicts between personal and professional lives of school leaders, Conclusion #18 explains that women in leadership have a fluid list of priorities they attend to depending upon circumstances of each day. Finally, the original learning expressed in Conclusion #19 states that one other need that women school leaders require is an equal partner in life, someone who supports them both personally and professionally.

Gender.

Most, of what surfaced about gender, supported or enhanced the literature that states that there is a difference in being mentored by a man and a women school leader. While Ragins and McFarlin (1990) warned about the difficulties of being mentored by a man, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stressed that, “Women supporting women is a foundation for women to bring about systemic change” (p, 110). Conclusion #3 supports the reviewed literature by explaining that women face personal barriers that men do not and Conclusion #4 adds the professional barriers that are unique to women. The premise to these conclusions is that effective mentors must be able to know and understand the nature of women’s lives.

Similarly, Conclusion #8 highlights the difficulties that arise when men mentor women. In addition to the risk of being unable to be above reproach, men often do not understand the difficulties that women face and quite often have a different style of leadership. Conversely, Conclusion #9 highlights the value of an aspirant women school

leader having a woman mentor who understands firsthand the obstacles on the path to leadership.

The original learning that is present in Conclusion #23 states that many men see mentoring as being beneficial for the exchange of resources, power, or what the mentor and mentee can do for each other. The participants of this study did state the benefit that men can provide in solving practical problems of leadership.

Power.

Brunner (1997) explained the difference in the way that men and women tend to use power. While men tend to define power in terms of dominance, women tend to believe power is used to help others achieve goals. Ragins (1997) explains that to break into the ranks of educational leaders, it takes the power, resources, and influence of a seated leader. Conclusion #11 supports the work of these scholars by explaining the importance of networking for aspirant leaders. Potential women leaders need their mentors to share their power and invite them into their networks in order to move their careers forward. Networking broadens a potential leader's perspective and increases a candidate's chance of attaining a leadership position.

Benefits.

Conclusion #7 posits that mentoring is a valuable experience for educational leaders. Participants believed that anyone who was mentored was at a distinct advantage because of the new learning both the mentor and the mentee receive as well as the impact it has on the creation or recreation of leadership style. Both Daresh (2004) and Noe (1988) discuss the multitude of benefits having and being a mentor bring.

Not discussed in the reviewed literature is the original learning presented by Conclusion #22—the life-long relationships women mentors create with their mentees. Women mentors have a vested interest in their mentees and what begins as a connection due to common priorities and/or philosophies transforms into friendships that extend through retirements and changes of assignment.

Misuses.

Perhaps as lasting as the benefits derived from mentoring are the ways in which mentoring has been misused. In their extensive study of mentoring, Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008) demonstrated how the lack of women mentors and role models has put aspirant women at a distinct disadvantage. Serby and Tripses (2006) explained how the system that has historically been in place for mentoring and networking opportunities for men has served not only to funnel men into leadership positions has kept women out.

Similarly, the new learning in Conclusion #17 extends this idea to current gendered hiring practices for school leaders. The system that excludes women from mentoring is also working to turn women into token applicants in the hiring process. To combat this, Conclusion #17 explains that instead of reducing the opportunities for women, mentoring must be used to teach aspiring women how to navigate gendered hiring/selection practices.

Choice.

The literature around choice falls in two categories; women are either willing *or* unwilling to mentor. Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2011) said that women are not mentoring to a large degree due to the lack of access they had, the additional barriers that

women must navigate, a lack of confidence, and the fear women have of looking like they stand in opposition to men. Conclusion #10 supports this view by calling forth the image of the Queen Bee, the women who does not wish to do anything that does not serve her own self-interests. Conversely, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) stated that seated women leaders mentor to address the social justice issues that impede women's lives and because of the relational approach women tend to have. Conclusion #21 agrees that women are willing to mentor, but this original learning states that mentoring hopes to create a lasting effect on education. Some women hoped to leave a legacy that would continue on through their protégés, while other women felt a responsibility to bring more women into education. The participants of this study felt it was important for them to “grow their own” leaders and repaying a debt by doing to others what was done for them.

Step 4: Final meta-analysis of conclusions' attitudinal foundations

A final meta-analysis, of the conclusions, was conducted using a lens of Matthew's (1995) works on women's attitudes (see Chapter II) to identify potential categories that each of the conclusions would fall into as well as participant's attitudes. Knowing the attitudes of women administrators may increase understanding about mentoring seated and aspiring women leaders by women leaders. The final meta-analysis of the study conclusions occurred in three *Stages*: 1) Theoretical perspective; 2) Using Matthew's categories for sorting; and 3) Possible implications.

Stage 1: Theoretical perspective.

The first step of the meta-analysis involved reviewing Matthew's (1995) work/theory concerning women school leaders. She gathered data from superintendents,

assistant superintendents, high school principals, and assistant principals to determine their views on their careers, issues they faced, gender stereotypes, gender discrimination, and perceived problems of isolation (p. 247). From her data, she concluded that the women school-leader participants in her study fell into one of four categories: activists, advocates, isolates, or individualists.

First, activists are those who care “passionately about issues of gender equity and actively supported efforts to correct the imbalance of women in educational administration” (Matthew, 1995, p. 247). Activist women will typically choose to further the career of a woman over a man with equal qualifications in an attempt to correct the imbalance that exists and to right social wrongs.

Matthew’s (1995) second category is the advocate. Advocates offer support and take support from other women. Advocates think women bring strength to administration due to their awareness of and relationship with others.

The third category defined by Matthews (1995) is the isolates. Isolates are not as willing to further the cause of women aspiring to positions of school leadership. Isolates do not relate to issues of gender inequality and tend not to see it as a problem. Isolate women usually received support from supervisors as they advanced through their profession, and because they think the same is true for all women, isolates may simply not see the need to act as a role model. Unfortunately, Matthews (1995) also discovered that many of these women were seen to be overly critical of other women leaders.

Finally, the individualists thought that individuals took priority over the group and are concerned with the attributes of individuals rather than equity for all. These women

were often recruited into school administration by men and usually expressed a fear of alienating them. In terms of mentoring, the women who fall into this category do not consider serving as mentors and are more than willing to accept ongoing guidance from a superior without returning the favor for an aspiring leader.

Applying Matthew's (1995) categories to this study's conclusions may help us understand whether women with different attitudes mentor in different ways or choose not to mentor at all. Of course, this final meta-analysis is only suggestive, since further exploration of this idea is beyond the scope of this study.

Stage 2: Using Matthew's categories for sorting.

The second stage of the meta-analysis involved reviewing the study conclusions through the lens of Matthew's (1995) work. Study conclusions were analyzed and placed into one of the four categories that best fit. While most conclusions fell into the categories of *activist*, *advocate*, *individualist*, or *isolate*, established by Matthews (1995) some conclusions did not. For those conclusions, a fifth category, *ambiguous*, was created and added to the Model. Ambiguous was used when a conclusion was a) not clear or not understandable, b) fell across all of the categories, or c) could fall across multiple categories at different times or in different contexts.

During this stage of the process the conclusions were repeatedly analyzed. This repetition occurred because the majority of the conclusions fell under the activist category, which raised questions. The fact that the group of participants were chosen because of the study's purpose, one might assume that willing participants were also

believers in mentoring and open about their desire to support other women. This reason alone could have biased the study's selection of participants in favor of activists.

This particular question is beyond the scope of this study. If time had allowed, additional research questions could have been developed to explore this idea further. Additional review of the placement of the conclusions did not result in any changes.

In order to add another layer of certainty to the placement of the conclusions in Matthew's (1995) categories plus the additional category of ambiguous, further analysis was based upon the study participants. Participants were identified as activists, advocates, individualists, or an isolates based upon original interviews and observations. Each conclusion was reviewed through the lens of a participant who "belonged" to each category. It is important to note that this level of meta-analysis was left to the interpretation of the researcher, thus this final analysis is, again, *suggestive*, not conclusive.

Stage 3: Possible Implications.

The last stage in the final meta-analysis of the study conclusions involved thinking about what implications the additional knowledge regarding the placement of the conclusions in Matthews's five categories could mean for women mentors and mentees and for future research. It was surprising that most of the conclusions of the study fell into the activist category. This could lead one to believe there is a connection between mentoring and activist women, but more research is needed in this area to make that determination.

Implications of the Study

In order to move purposefully, from the conclusions to their implications, one must stay focused on why and for whom the study itself matters. This purposeful focus insists that researchers spend some time identifying the possible implications of their work. Five categories of implications emerged from the current study: 1) For Schools; 2) For Educational Leadership Preparation Programs; 3) For Potential Women Leaders; 4) For Seated Women Leaders; and 5) For Future Research.

For Schools

Schools need the strongest and brightest leaders. As the demands of education change, so must school leaders. From the reviewed literature, one gathers that people mentor those for whom they feel an affinity and most frequently, in whom they find a likeness (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000). Therefore, using traditional mentoring techniques does little to attract leadership styles/types that fall outside the status quo and/or leaders who reflect student populations of color. To be clear, if most secondary school and superintendency leaders are white men, mentor theory maintains that those who are mentored into leadership will be white men (Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan, 2000).

School systems need to make leadership a worthwhile endeavor for non-traditional leaders, by encouraging women and persons of color to mentor teachers into leadership. Not only does this approach reward trusted seated leaders, it continually enhances the expertise of school and district's leadership and welcomes leaders who reflect non-white and female student populations.

For Educational Leadership Preparation Programs

Educational leadership programs need to partner with area school districts. Part of the responsibility of educational leadership programs is to continually attract new leaders to the field. In understanding that women do not enter into teaching to be school or district leaders (Young & McLeod,), efforts must be made to recruit them.

Certainly one such resource for recruiting leaders falls to teacher preparation programs. One required course in leadership may be enough to set more pre-teaching women on a path to school leadership. Another important recruitment resource is seated women school leaders. If universities and educational leadership programs created partnerships with school districts to identify women with leadership attributes it would be a substantial step toward addressing the issue women not considering leadership as a career option. Despite this issue, we know from the reviewed literature that students in educational leadership programs generally consist of at least half women (deCausal & Mulligan, 2004; Logan, 1998; Tallerico & Tingley, 2001). Regardless, these women are not attaining leadership positions at the same rate as men. Educational leadership preparations programs could address this issue by providing coursework or professional seminars for women addressing the barriers that are in place.

Another important element in a partnership between school districts and educational leadership preparation programs is a structure for its students to acquire mentors. In order to attain licensure as a school leader, most preparation programs require an internship. Professional development opportunities regarding mentoring and/or re-licensure credits could be provided to seated leaders in exchange for their time

and energy. An example of this type of effort occurred when one professional networking group for seated women leaders in the area offered free admittance to teachers being mentored into leadership when they attended the event with their mentor.

For Potential Women Leaders

The difficulty for potential women leaders is that some simply do not know leadership is an option until it is presented to them. Most women school leaders discover leadership as a result of searching for an end to the stagnation they are feeling as classroom teachers. Then, when the desire for leadership is discovered, many are faced with the dilemma of blending educational leadership preparation programs with their personal lives. For potential women leaders, the data of this study reveal the benefit of women mentors to help navigate such dilemmas.

For Seated Women Leaders

The results of this study are important for seated women leaders. For those women school leaders who desire: 1) to provide a more balanced image of leadership for her students, 2) who wish to strengthen school leadership as a whole, or 3) for those who are in favor of leveling the playing field, mentoring potential women school leaders is a must. This study illustrates the necessity of mentoring—starting with the identification of future of women leaders and then mentoring them into a position.

For Future Research

Future research needs to continue the exploration the deeper causes for the dearth of women in secondary schools and the superintendency. This study points to mentoring as a potential solution, therefore the exploration of women-to-women mentoring is an area

in need of further attention. Questions such as: *Do women mentors help increase the hiring opportunities and final selection for women who aspire to school leadership?* will provide needed data that could impact opportunities for women leaders.

Further, future research is needed to illuminate and articulate the idea of the “tap on the shoulder” that some leadership candidates receive. More research needs to be gathered to understand what it means to both the leader providing the identification of potential and the individual receiving it. Determining who gets this tap on the shoulder, why they get it, who gives it to them, and when they get it may be key in bringing new and stronger leadership to our schools. Scholars need to discover why women are not receiving a tap on the shoulder at the same rate as men and how seated leaders can rectify that situation.

Another related area in need of further research is how best to mentor potential women school leaders. This study points to the fact that women have several specific personal and professional needs that are different from potential leaders who are men. Understanding how best to meet these needs and to identify who is best to meet these needs has a strong potential to have a positive influence on women in school leadership.

Further research needs to be conducted regarding Matthew’s (1995) categories of women leaders. Questions used to determine specifically which category a woman school leader falls into might shed increased light on why and how women school leaders are mentoring or not mentoring.

Finally, more work needs to be done to examine the idea that women, when asked about personal and professional balance, most often respond saying they have failed to

find balance. The social stresses that make a woman feel like she is not successful with her personal responsibilities when she has professional responsibilities may have implications for the number of women school leaders. Research may shed some light on whether this push and pull between work and home is keeping women out of leadership or even keeping the idea of leadership unattractive to women.

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APPENDIX A

The purpose of these questions is to develop a base for the selection of study participants. The plan is to use an electronic survey (e.g. Survey Monkey) to first determine if a woman has experience with mentoring, second to gather information regarding those experiences, and third to collect basic demographic information for those with mentoring experience.

1. What is your name?
2. In what school/district are you currently working?
3. What is the geographic location of your school/district?
4. Were you mentored, either formally or informally, on your path to a position in educational leadership?
5. What professional position did your mentor hold?
6. What was your professional position at the time of this mentoring relationship?
7. Have you mentored, either formally or informally, a potential woman school leader?
8. What was your professional position at the time?
9. What was the professional position your protégé at the time?
10. Would you be willing to participate in a study about women-to-women mentoring?
11. What is the most effective way to contact you?

APPENDIX B

Preliminary Interview Questions Women School Leaders Who Have Been Mentored

These questions are leveled according a phenomenological approach. First, participants will be asked about past experiences, or those things that have built their understanding of the phenomenon of women-to-women mentoring. Second, questions about current experiences with mentoring will be explored. Potential probe questions are indicated when needed.

PAST EXPERIENCES

1. What was your first position in school leadership?
 - a. What attracted you to that position?
 - b. How old were you when you attained that position?
2. What was your path to your position of school leadership?
 - a. What personal barriers did you encounter on your path?
 - b. What professional barriers did you encounter on your path?
3. How did you realize being a school leader was an option?
 - a. Do you feel you had administrative role models? Who are they?
 - b. Did a school leader encourage you into leadership? Describe that experience.
4. Why did you want to be a school leader?
5. Define mentoring.
6. How did your mentoring experience affect your decision to become a school leader?
7. As an aspiring school leader, who were the women available to mentor you?
8. What is the value of having a woman mentor?
9. Who was/were your mentor(s)?
 - a. Were they men or women?
 - b. What position did they hold at the time of your mentoring relationship?
 - c. How did your mentor discover your interest in school leadership?
 - d. How was this mentoring relationship established?
 - e. Approximately how long did the mentoring relationship last?
 - f. How was the mentoring relationship supported by your organization?
10. Describe the leadership style of your mentor.
 - a. How has this mentoring affected your leadership style?
11. How do you feel the gender of your mentor affected the mentoring relationship?

- a. Do you feel your mentor face the same personal/professional challenges you faced?
 - b. How did this affect the mentor/protégé relationship?
 - c. What has been your experience with issues of gender politics (i.e. woman gaining power in your organization)?
12. What do you feel was the most valuable aspect of your mentoring relationship?
 13. Describe your overall feelings regarding the mentoring experience.
 14. What has been your experience with gender role conflicts (i.e. administration is a man's job)?

CURRENT EXPERIENCES

1. What is your current position?
 - a. What is the location of school/district?
 - b. How long have you been in this position
 - c. What attracted you to this position?
 - d. What is the ratio of men to women on your administrative team school/district-wide?
2. What is the importance, if any, of networking?
 - a. How do you network?
 - b. What professional supports do you use, if any?
 - c. Describe the networking that takes place within your district and/or professional community.
3. How would you describe the relationship, if there were one, between mentoring and attaining a leadership position?
4. How do you believe mentoring affects a woman's ability to lead a school/district?
5. In your opinion, how willing are women to mentor prospective women leaders?
 - a. What gets in the way of women mentoring women?
 - b. What gets in the way of men mentoring women?
6. What do you feel is your level of responsibility in actively seeking out women who have leadership potential?
 - a. Define leadership potential.
7. How do you feel about women leading schools/districts?
8. What skills do you feel that women need to be successful in leadership roles?
9. What advantages do you see for women in educational leadership?
10. What disadvantages do you see for women in educational leadership?

11. What differences, if any, do you perceive in the obstacles facing men and women leaders?
12. What are your personal/familial responsibilities?
 - a. As a woman school leader, how do you manage family responsibilities?
 - b. How has, or has not, mentoring affected how you manage family/personal responsibilities?
 - c. How has having a family (i.e. children, household, parents) responsibilities/not having family responsibilities shaped your decision to become a school leader?
13. How do you achieve personal/professional balance?

APPENDIX C

Preliminary Interview Questions Women School Leaders Who are Mentoring Aspiring Women Leaders

1. What is the value in being a woman, mentoring a woman?
2. Why do you mentor women aspiring to school leadership?
3. How do you determine who to mentor?
4. Who did you mentor?
 - a. What position did they hold at the time of your mentoring relationship?
 - b. How was this mentoring relationship established?
 - c. Approximately how long did the mentoring relationship last?
 - d. How was the mentoring relationship supported by your organization?
5. How do/did you model the way to lead a school/district?
 - a. What are essential elements your protégé must know?
 - b. How do you transfer your knowledge of these elements to your protégé?
 - c. How do you know when your protégé has learned those skills?
6. What other skills do you model/discuss?
 - a. What, if any, conversations do you have regarding your lives outside of school?
7. What do you feel was the most valuable aspect of your mentoring relationship?
8. Describe your overall feelings regarding the mentoring experience.
9. How do you believe mentoring affects a woman's ability to lead a school/district?

APPENDIX D

TO: [State] School Board Association
[State] Association Secondary School Principals

FROM: Bobbi A. Hume, Member [Organizations]

RE: Request for e-mail to association members

DATE: January 22, 2013

I am respectfully requesting your assistance in forwarding a link to an electronic data-gathering tool, along with the short explanation that appears below, to your members. I am happy to provide any additional information that may assist you. Thank you, in advance, for your time and consideration.

To be sent to members:

My name is Bobbi Hume and I am currently in my seventh year as assistant principal of [City] Middle School, in [City], [State]. I am conducting research for a Ph.D. dissertation in Educational Policy and Administration at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus.

The purpose of my study is to examine the concept and practice of mentoring through the perceptions of women school leaders who are secondary assistant principals, principals and superintendents. I am specifically interested in the link mentoring may have in the number of women school leaders. To date, there has been very little of this type of data collected.

The link below will take you to an electronic survey that will take approximately five minutes of your time.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dG1WcHZCM2Fia0poQzYzX2IPZU5nVHc6MQ>

I sincerely appreciate your time and assistance in helping me collect this important data.

Bobbi A. Hume
Assistant Principal
[Address]
[Phone Number]

[Blank Page: Do Not Remove]