WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON THE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This study examined Tennessee secondary women’s perspectives on the under-representation of women in secondary principalships. Although researchers cite gender theories for the preponderance of men in school leadership (Glass, 2000, Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011), gender theories may not be the full answer. This qualitative study was framed through social role theory and was guided by three research questions:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?
3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

To answer these questions, data was collected from 101 women, who responded to surveys with Likert-style and open-ended questions, and from nine interviews of women in three categories of secondary education: principals, support administrators, and teachers. The three major findings were that: prospects for women attaining a secondary principalship are improving, women make choices not to pursue principalships primarily due to family obligations, and gender bias continues to help men while hindering women from attaining building leadership.

Key words: Women, Secondary Leadership, Glass Ceiling, Glass Escalator, Social Role Theory, Secondary Principalships, Gender Bias, Work-Family Conflict, Choices, Good Old Boy Network, Institutional Gendered Practices, and Coaching.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Gender is the strongest and most common way by which people are categorized, stereotyped, and sorted (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In education, women are over-represented in the classroom and under-represented in leadership (Glass, 2000; Kowalski, 2006; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan, & Ballenger, 2007). Bernadette Mosala provocatively said, “When men are oppressed, it’s a tragedy. When women are oppressed, it’s tradition” (as cited in Bell, 2002, p. 290). Although 84% of K-12 teachers are women (Feistritzer, Griffin, & Linnairvi, 2011), men hold 76% of the superintendencies and 72% of the secondary principalships (Aud et al., 2012). Surprisingly, researchers have yet to ask secondary women about their perceptions of this phenomenon. The purpose of this research study is to investigate secondary women educators’ perspectives about the under-representation of women in the secondary principalship.

Statement of the Problem

According to the U.S. Census data, the American school system is the most male-management dominated profession in the United States (Wickman, 2007). In 1984, 99% of the superintendents were men and 97% of the high school principal positions were men, yet 84% of the teachers were women (O’Reilly & Borman, 1984). Despite significant gains for women in previously male-dominated professions such as medicine and law, women secondary educators have yet to gain parity in leadership (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich, 2000).

Three studies were the inspiration for this study: Kim and Brunner (2009), who studied the typical career paths for superintendents and determined the link to the secondary principalship; Young (2007), who determined that the male secondary teacher-coach was a fast-track to gaining a secondary principalship, and Hobbler, Wayne, and Lemmon (2009), who identified that hiring managers allow their beliefs about women’s social roles to limit the
opportunities for women. Kim and Brunner (2009) found that “even when women have the same career ambitions as men, they do not have the same opportunities in the hiring and promoting processes” (p. 76). Young (2007) found that nearly 9 out of 10 Alabama secondary principals were former male coaches thus establishing the coaching link to secondary leadership. If women do have aspirations for secondary principalships, and coaching is a fast track to leadership, then the coaching link is the elephant in the room that deserves to be studied. In their quantitative study of 178 participants, Hobbler et al. (2009) determined that managers categorize women as having greater family-work conflict even when these same women reported no great conflict. Organizational expectations and job fit perceptions by managers created a discrimination against qualified women due to social gender roles.

Most education leadership researchers cite gender theories as the basis for the preponderance of men in school leadership (Glass, 2000, Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). However, gender theories may not be the full answer. Women hold the same credentials, are equally capable, and hold more advanced degrees than their male counterparts (Feistritzer, et al., 2011; Kowalski, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007); it is time for scholars to ask women about their choices, aspirations, observations, experiences, and perceptions of the why there is an under-representation of women in secondary leadership.

**Justification for the Research Problem**

The superintendency has been researched extensively, but the principalship, as a stepping-stone to top leadership has not been equally considered. Researchers have considered the feminist perspective but not the institutional or social explanations for the under-representation of women in secondary principalships. Women are often seen in support roles such as: lead teachers, curriculum directors, and department chairs, yet they rarely attain the
direct supervisory and budgetary roles necessary for career advancement (Kanter, 1977a; Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999; Smith, 2012). The problem becomes a paradox for women educators: without the opportunity to serve in a secondary principalship, their potential for breaking the superintendent glass ceiling is unlikely. Further, researchers should consider how institutional hiring practices affect the morale and career decisions of women. Kanter (1977a) found that marginalized groups tended to accept the limitations and their marginalization. There is a gap in the literature with respect to secondary female educators’ perceptions of their opportunities and ambitions for building-level leadership.

**Research Problem**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the under-representation of women in secondary school leadership and to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the experiences and perspectives of Tennessee female secondary educators.

**Deficiencies in the Evidence**

Middle management experience is the key to attaining an upper management position (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Smith, 2012). Several researchers have conducted comparison studies of principals and non-education middle managers. These researchers have shown that women educators are not keeping pace with women in non-education fields and middle management promotions (Cinnamon & Rich, 2005; Whitmarch et al., 2007). Researchers have suggested that studies should be conducted on: (a) female-dominated professions (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Smith, 2002; 2012), (b) how institutional practices affect women’s experiences and perceptions (Skrla et al., 2000), and (c) whether personal choices contribute to the under-representation of women in mid-level management in pink-collar professions (Snyder & Green, 2008). This study hoped to address these gaps.
Few researchers have considered the principal’s or assistant principal’s office as the stepping-stone to administrative leadership, and this researcher has as yet to find a study that addressed a varied cross-section of secondary female educators. Until researchers speak to women in the classroom and in support roles, the picture remains unclear. Common sense would indicate that the lack of opportunity for upward mobility affects women’s morale and may impact their career decisions, but there is a lack of research that clearly documents this practice.

**Significance of the Research Problem**

This study is important for school boards, school hiring administrators, teachers, and girls in the school system. As school systems move away from the industrial age business-manager model toward an innovative, student-centered, distributive leadership model with an emphasis on curriculum and instruction, the experiences and decisions of women educators need to be considered more realistically (Kim & Brunner, 2009). If women are choosing not to pursue leadership because they feel that they do not have an equal opportunity to pursue leadership positions, school systems should reconsider their training programs, administrative hiring practices, and the hidden messages that schools send to both the women educators and the young women they serve as students. Conversely, if women are choosing not to pursue leadership for other reasons, researchers need to affirm their choices and not attribute them to gender theories.

Because the secondary principal position has been shown to be a male-dominated job (Glass, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al. 2011; Young, 2009), the question arises as to how that male domination in the predominant female education system affects the career aspirations of women educators. Kanter (1977a) determined that people who are marginalized and have little opportunity for promotion have a tendency to accept the conditions of their
marginalization. They learned to contribute to the organization in personally meaningful ways while acknowledging that they had little or no opportunity for advancement.

Research has shown that female instructional leaders have significantly more time in the classroom, more experience in curriculum development (Aud et al., 2012; Kim & Brunner, 2009), and a more collaborative, democratic leadership style which is well suited for schools (Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993; O’Rielly & Borman, 1984). However, those skills have not translated into higher female promotion rates (Blount, 1998; McGrath, 1992). Once women do attain a principalship, they typically have positive evaluations, are more likely to have higher morale in their teaching staff, and have great support from parents (O’Rielly & Borman, 1984). Researchers have also determined that the educational system is entering an era of principal shortages (Oplatka, 2011; Tallerico, 2000). Exploring how women make sense of their opportunities could help hiring officials to find new ways to encourage capable women to apply for positions that would help to alleviate the impending shortages.

The primary reason given by educators who leave the classroom for administrative positions is to make a difference in students’ lives and to promote student success (Young, 2007). The problem of practice for this study was not whether male principals are less effective; the problem is whether women have an equal opportunity for advancement, and/or if women actually desire the principalship. When researchers use a qualitative approach to understand the experiences of those affected by the problem of practice, they help leaders and society to acknowledge reality (Creswell, 2013). This study seeks to inform educational hiring practices and has implications for educational reform, for women in education, and for young female students who may notice the hidden barriers to their own potential.
The United States prides itself with being an inclusive society with a desire for justice and equal rights. In many ways, U. S. society has become more inclusive, but a century after the suffragette movement and more than 50 years after the passing of Title IX and the Civil Rights Bill, women are not offered the same opportunities for promotion (Blount, 1998). Schools are a reflection of society (Brint, 2006), and America is seen as a leader for individual rights. School leaders espouse the mantra of equality in education (Larson & Barton, 2013), yet they fail to see the inequity in their hiring practices for women (Blount, 1998; Sobehart, 2004).

One of the last barriers to female equality was broken in November of 2013, when three female U.S. Marines graduated from the U.S. Marine Corps Infantry Training Course (Salitan, 2013). When reporting on the occasion, Salitan (2013) wrote, “The list of things that women can’t do is evaporating. This is what happens when you stop excluding whole groups of people from tests and careers” (p. A7). While women in the U. S. do have more opportunities for equality and education than do other cultures, it is important that American female educators give their voices to educational hiring practices, as well as to women’s choices and opportunities, so that light can be shed on the importance of equal opportunities for society at large.

A primary benefit from this study will be that women will have their voices and experiences heard. The ability to describe their experiences in both the survey and the interviews will hopefully help women to gain empowerment by being a part of the solution not only locally, but nationally and even internationally. Through their participation, they bring light to a subject that has yet to be addressed. As such, potential hiring practices, mentor programs, and leadership training programs may change. University leadership programs may also consider how they discuss marginalization, bias, cultural, and institutional practices in school leadership. Through scholarly discussion, women can become better prepared, and they may gain the
confident to change their path, change their perspectives about leadership opportunities, and/or they may embrace their choices more positively.

**Research Questions**

The research questions are:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?
3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

**Theoretical Framework**

Because this researcher is focusing on women’s perceptions of the under-representation of women in secondary school leadership, gender-roles and socialization of women as potential factors that contribute women’s perception of their roles in schools, their opportunities, and their contributions to the organization, Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) was used to frame the study. Role theories, which include gender role theory, social role theory, and role congruity theory have been proposed as reasons why women work in the classrooms while men lead in the administrator’s office. Role and social role theorists that informed this study were: Bandura & Bussey (2004), Biddle (1986), Eagly (1987), Eagly & Karau (2002), and Eckman (2003, 2004).

Role theories posit that a person has multiple roles such as teacher, mother, daughter, etc. These roles explain how people behave, interpret their lives, and interact with others (Biddle, 1986). Biddle (1986) defined role theory as
a theatrical metaphor, [which is] . . . concerned with a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behavior that are understood by all and adhered to by performers (p. 68).

These expected behaviors are learned from experiences based on social and organizational structures (Biddle, 1986), social relationships, and how people cooperate with each other within those social and organizational structures (Trinidad & Normore, 2004). In education, men are perceived as natural leaders; thus the majority leadership positions are given to men (Björk, Glass, & Brunner, 2005). Researchers believe that gender stratification and gender roles hold women in teaching and support roles making it tremendously difficult for female teachers to escape gender role expectations. Contrastingly, men are and especially male coaches are seen as better disciplinarians which also helps men to gain leadership positions while hindering women (Kanter, 1977a, 1977b, Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993).

Eagly (1987) proposed an expansion of gender role theory by including the socialization of gender roles. She theorized that these social and gendered expectations “describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (p 13). Social Role Theory ascribes that each gender has specific roles that become ingrained in males and females as socially learned expectations. As such, these expectations become predictors of behaviors, activities, and aspirations. A commonly held belief of social role theory is that women have a more communal expectation to care for the “welfare of other people” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 54). In contrast, men have the expectation of being ambitious, controlling, confident, are natural leaders. Grogan (2000) indicated that women have been socialized to deny their personal leadership ambitions and to focus on meeting the needs of others at work and at home.
Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review was conducted to examine how other researchers have investigated the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. Researchers have primarily studied gender and the superintendency; few scholars have considered the hiring practices for principals. More importantly, researchers have not asked women about their perceptions of their career opportunities or of their career choices and aspirations. The vast majority of studies cite gender theories as the reason for the under-representation of women in school leadership (Glass, 2000, Kowalski et al., 2011); however, gender theories may not be the full answer. Judith Butler (1990/2007) argued that when feminists [and scholars] categorize all women as a group they fail to recognize that women are more than a gender. The purpose of this study was to examine the under-representation of women in secondary school leadership from the experiences and perspectives of women secondary educators.

This literature review has twelve sections. A brief overview of the leading researchers and search topics will be presented followed by the definition of common terms and the historical trends in educational leadership. The primary foci for the literature review will be: leadership career paths, gender barriers, societal barriers or practices, role theories, secondary principal backgrounds, opportunities for promotion, women’s role-work conflict, leadership styles of men and women, implications for research and a summary the literature will be presented. The search of pertinent literature continued until a saturation point was reached revealing the same articles, authors, and theories.

Leading Researchers and Topics

From a review of the literature and by noticing a recurrence of primary sources, the leading educational leadership researchers were: Shakeshaft (1989), Glass (2000), Blount (1998),
Björk (2005), Brunner (1999), Kowalski (2006, 2011), Tallerico (2000), Tyack (1982), Eagly (1987, 2002), and Karau (2002). Influential researchers that helped to define the problem of practice for this study were: (a) Kim and Brunner (2009) who investigated the career paths of superintendents, glass ceiling, and glass escalator theory; (b) Smith (2012) who investigated the glass escalator and female-dominated occupations, (c) Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, and Vanneman (2001) who investigated the glass ceiling effect and proposed four criteria by which to evaluate the potential for a glass ceiling; (d) Young (2007) whose dissertation also examined the coach in the principal’s office from a male-coach-principal point of view, (e) Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon (2009) who conducted a non-educational study of bosses perceptions of family-work-life conflict and found that bosses feel that women are less promotable because of their gendered-social role expectations, and (f) Eagly and Karau (2002) who applied social role theory to explain the lack of women in leadership.

The stratification of labor refers to the division of labor based on gender, age, and/or social class. Researchers have found that this labor practice continues to exist in American and in international school systems (Brinia, 2012; Krüger, 1996; Oplatka, 2006). However, in the United States, which strives for the equality, the fact that gender inequality not only exists but seems to be quietly accepted as a social construct of educational leadership conflicts with American national education policies and national values (Shakeshaft, 1989). In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited the discrimination of employment and promotions based on gender. Eight years later, Title IX was established to ensure equal academic, athletic, and extra-curricular opportunities for girls. Despite Title IX and the Civil Rights Act, women still experience discrimination in promotion and hiring practices especially in the American school system (Glass, 2000; Grogan, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989; Smith 2012).
American schools are not only educational institutions, they are also social institutions that instruct children in the cultural constructs of American society (Brint, 2006), yet school officials fail to live up to the nondiscriminatory practices that they preach. Historically, female teachers have outnumbered male teachers and yet they have no parity in educational leadership, not even in the elementary system in which women outnumber men by almost six to one (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 2000; Reynolds, et al., 2011; Shakeshaft, 1989).

Definitions: The Principalship and Glass Barriers

Principals are school administrators who are responsible for the instructional, curricular and visionary leadership of their schools (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2009). Principals are accountable for instruction, curriculum, student learning, safety, student discipline, community relations, buildings and grounds, and all financial/logistical needs of the school, students, and staff (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2007). The principalship is a commonly used term that refers to the leadership of a school by the building principal.

In most of the studies used in this literature review, schools have been categorized as elementary, middle, secondary, and/or high schools. Aud et al. (2012) defined elementary principals as leaders who govern grades Pre-Kindergarten to fifth or sixth grade. In most school districts secondary schools are split into middle schools for grades six through eight and high schools for grades nine through twelve. A secondary school as defined by Aud et al. has one or more grades from 7-12 and no grades below grade 7. For this study, the Aud et al. (2012) definition of a secondary school was used.

Two gender barriers to promotions are the glass ceiling and the glass escalator. These glass barriers are metaphors used to explain the social, political or systematic constructs that help white males rise to leadership more quickly and prevalently than women. The glass ceiling
symbolizes an invisible barrier that limits the potential of qualified women (Quest, 2011) while holding women in jobs that have few opportunities for autonomy or supervisory experience (Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999; Smith, 2012). The glass escalator describes a dual pathway that the rapidly advances men in female-dominated occupations up the escalator while holding women in place—requiring women to work harder to maintain their positions as if they were walking up the down escalator (Smith, 2012).

Role theories include: gender role theory, social role theory, and role congruity theory. Role theories posit that a person has multiple roles such as teacher, mother, daughter, etc. These roles help to explain how people act, understand their life purpose, and work with others (Biddle, 1986). Social role theory states that gender is a part of a person’s understood societal role and that society preconditions boys and girls to accept certain behaviors the predisposed girls for service roles and boys for leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

**Historical Understanding of Gender and Educational Leadership**

In 1909, Chicago’s first female superintendent, Ella Flagg Young prophesied that women would soon be in control of the United States education system. At that time, women superintendents comprised 10% of the superintendent workforce and led in mostly rural districts (Blount, 1998). Surprisingly in 1984, twenty years after the Civil and Equal Rights Act was signed, only 1% of the superintendencies were occupied by women and only 3% of the secondary principalships were women but 84% of teachers were women (O’Reilly & Borman, 1984) and 66% of the secondary teaching staff was women (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). The statistics in the early 1980s prompted Shakeshaft (1989) to write her seminal call to arms about the lack of gender equity in educational leadership.
To understand the problem of practice, gender trends in education leadership need to be investigated. Since the early 1800s, data delineated by gender and job title were maintained by state and national agencies. During the suffrage movement and the civil rights era, scholars could easily find data that was disaggregated by race, gender, and type of school (Blount, 1998). In the early 1980s, objective and consistently collected data that included gender and race for leadership positions became more difficult to find (Blount 1998, Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Tyack and Hansot (1982) asserted that the lack of a consistent and accessible database was by design and that with all “kinds of statistical reporting in an age enamored of numbers…data by sex became strangely inaccessible [creating] a conspiracy of silence [that] could hardly have been unintentional” (p. 13). As a result of the inaccessibly of gender and race leadership data, researchers have had to rely upon self-reporting surveys by professional organizations (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass et al., 2000), which by nature of self-reporting may not be a complete data set (Glass, et al., 2000).

The under representation of women in the superintendent’s office. Because there are few studies that have identified the under-representation of women in the principal’s office, this literature review will investigate the history of women in top leadership. In the early years of the American public school system, male teachers in the larger urban areas outnumbered women teachers. As teacher working conditions, teacher pay, and the status afforded to teachers diminished, teaching became a female-dominated occupation (Blount, 1998; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Strober, 1981). Surprisingly from 1909 to 2009 the number of women superintendents only broke the 10% ceiling twice: in the early 20th century and 100 years later when the U.S. entered the 21st century (Kowalski et al., 2011). During the 1970s and during the Vietnam War, the number of male teachers in secondary schools rose to approximately 25%
(Snyder & Dillow, 2012) while the rate of males in top leadership hovered near 93% (Glass, 1992). The male-dominated hierarchy in schools reached an all-time high in 1980 with 99% male superintendents and 97% male high school principals (O’Reilly & Borman, 1984), but only 34% of the secondary teaching staff was male (Snyder & Dillow, 2012).

Education researcher Charol Shakeshaft (1989) broke the silence about the disproportionately low percentage of women leaders in the female-dominated profession of education. She sent a wake-up call to the education community about the gender inequity in the promotion practices of educational leaders. Her seminal study encouraged others to investigate both K-12 school leadership and university leadership hiring practices. She has been credited with helping to turn the tide in educational leadership hiring practices.

The under representation of women in the principal’s office. The majority of data on K-12 school leadership has focused on the superintendency; data on secondary and elementary principalships has been less examined. Researchers indicated that from 1905 to 1928 women were slightly more likely to be elementary principals than men, but by 1972 their number had decreased to 20% (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986; Riehl & Byrd, 1997; Shakeshaft, 1989). In 1905, only 6% of secondary principals were women; the decreasing trend continued to an all-time low of 1% in the early 1980s (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Twenty years later, after researchers identified the lack of women in educational leadership, 16% of secondary principals were women and 41% of elementary principals were women (Riehl & Byrd, 1997).

A recent self-reporting survey study using 2007 data indicated that the number of secondary female principals had risen to 29% while the number of women secondary teachers was 66% (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). Moreover, the rate of women elementary principals increased to 59% while the elementary female teaching force was at a high of 84% (Aud et al.,
2012). This increase optimistically was believed to be a chance for women educators to gain parity with respect to leadership opportunities. Although only 16% of elementary teachers in 2007 were male, 41% of the elementary principals were male (Aud et al., 2012), and many of these male principals had little to no elementary teaching experience (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Feistritzer et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study of 146,500 kindergarten to twelfth grade public school teachers using a K-12 marketing research dataset. Feistritzer et al. (2011) included gender as a question in their survey. They determined that that 84% of the K-12 public teachers in 2011 were women, more than half of the female teachers held masters degrees, and 21% of their female respondents held doctorate degrees. This data helped to refute the contention that a pool of qualified women was not available for educational leadership (Glass, 2000). Feistritzer et al. (2011) identified two interesting and unique statistics that impact the problem of practice: secondary teachers had a greater desire to move into administration than did elementary teachers and only 6% more males than females had aspirations for administration.

Researchers have proposed that the lower number of women leaders might be because women did not desire to lead (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1986), but Feistritzer et al.’s study (2011) refuted that contention.

The Career Path to Educational Leadership

To gain insight into the disparate number of women top educational leaders, Kim and Brunner (2009) researched the career paths to top school leadership. Using the Glass et al. (2000) American Association of School Administrators (AASA) data in addition to the Brunner and Grogan (2007) data, Kim and Brunner (2009) confirmed that the pathways to the superintendency were very different for men and women. Men tended to move up the leadership ladder vertically and quickly, while women tended to hold secondary support staff roles, took
longer to rise in leadership, and followed a lateral path through central office staff positions. These researchers described the typical superintendent a male, former secondary school principal, who held a vice principal position, coached an athletic sport, taught for an average of seven years, and began his administrative career when he was thirty years old or younger. In contrast, the typical female superintendent began her administrative career five to ten years later, was a former secondary teacher with ten or more years’ experience, served as a department chair, then worked in the central office as a director, often followed by a principalship, followed by an assistant superintendent position. This path gave women superintendents more expertise in curriculum and a clearer understanding of the needs of teachers, schools, professional development, parents, and students (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Lee, Smith, & Cioci, 1993).

Kim and Brunner (2009) also investigated the different career choices and opportunities among women educators who were not planning to enter top leadership versus those for women who aspired to leadership. The career patterns for aspiring and non-aspiring women leaders were rather similar. Kim and Brunner (2009) did not find that one pathway produced more effective leaders. However, Kim and Brunner did establish that gender and secondary principalships were directly related further leadership promotions.

Women elementary teachers have experienced the most difficulty attaining parity in educational leadership positions (Björk et al., 2005; Kim & Brunner, 2009). Although the trend is improving, researchers have found that this lack of parity is in part because elementary teachers rarely have an opportunity to serve as a department chair or vice principals (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989). Ortiz & Marshall (1986) found that women had a better chance of gaining an elementary principalship because women are socialized to stay close to young children and men are socialized to move into management.
The majority of male superintendents started their administrative careers as an assistant (or vice) principal (Björk et al., 2005; Brunner, 1999; Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009). Brunner (1999) identified the vice principal position as the gateway to educational leadership. Further, Björk et al. (2005) found that this path was true for both large and small districts. Additionally, secondary teaching experience was deemed to be the most successful pathway to a superintendency. More than 80% of male superintendents rose to their position from secondary teaching positions to either elementary principal or to assistant secondary principal positions. From these paths, men typically were promoted to a secondary principal, followed by either an assistant superintendency or full superintendency (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989).

The typical superintendent was a male former secondary school principal, who held a vice principal position, coached an athletic sport, taught for an average of 7 years, and began his administrative career at the age of 31 (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009). In contrast, the typical female superintendent was a secondary teacher with 10 or more years of experience, who served as a department chair, then worked in the central office as a director, often followed by a principalship then by an assistant superintendent position (Kim & Brunner, 2009). Regardless of gender, the direct correlation between the superintendent’s office and secondary principal experience has been identified (Glass, 2000; Ortiz & Marshall, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1998). Lee, Smith, and Cioci (1993) determined that gender stratification occurred at all levels impeding women from escaping gender roles while aiding men.

Kim and Bruner also indicated that men move into administration five to six years earlier than women. Men move vertically up the path with direct supervisory positions while women move horizontally through support positions. Hiring officials believe that the secondary principal and vice principal positions are critical for district leaders to gain the direct supervisory
and budgetary expertise needed to be good administrators (Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). The lack of opportunity for mid-level leadership creates a paradox for women; they cannot get there because they have not been there. In an era of increased importance on instructional leadership by principals, researchers need to consider the loss of these experienced women in leadership. Women have the leadership skills and credentials to successfully perform supervisory leadership positions (Kowalski, 2006), yet few women ascend to leadership (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

**Principalships and Gender Theories**

Israeli researchers, Addi-Raccah and Ayalon (2002) wrote, “Gender inequality in appointments to managerial and supervisory positions in organizations is a well-known phenomenon” (p. 157). Researchers have statistically documented this phenomenon in the American school system (Aud et al., 2012, Feistritzer et al., 2011, Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009, Ortiz & Marshall, 1986; Shakeshaft, 1998). Further, scholars have found that male teachers tend to be promoted to executive positions that involve management of people and policies while women tend to be given less authority and are promoted to mid-level or intermediate positions in pedagogy, counseling, and educational support (Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002, Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Education leadership positions mirror corporate America’s job stratification in that there are executive leadership positions, which are called line positions. Line positions are defined as having direct supervisory and budgetary authority. Women in education and in corporate America are more likely to be in support staff positions with limited autonomy (Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002; Kim & Brunner, 2009). In education, line positions that give managerial experience would be: the superintendent, the principal, and the vice principal positions, and support staff positions would be: the director of curriculum, assistant superintendent for
instruction, and communications director. Shakeshaft (1987) stated that these hiring practices were a result of male hegemony and male dominance in key hiring positions.

Although this study was framed using social role theory, a literature review of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership would not be complete without an investigation of gender marginalization and glass theory. Two common terms that have been used to explain the inability for women to rise to the top are: a glass ceiling—an invisible barrier that inhibits women from reaching top promotions (Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia, & Vanneman, 2001) and a glass elevator or escalator—an invisible fast-track that speeds men into higher positions while holding women in place (Smith, 2012; Williams, 1992). These constructs have been found to exist in school systems in America (Kim & Brunner, 2009; McGarth, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989), Israel (Addi-Raccah & Ayalon, 2002), Canada (Smith, 1991), and Europe (Krüger, 1996).

The glass ceiling. In 1999, Carleton Fiorina was promoted to the CEO position of Hewlett-Packard and her promotion was heralded as a sign that the glass ceiling had finally been shattered (Cotter et al., 2001). The glass ceiling is a metaphor for an invisible barrier that hinders women from advancing into leadership positions (Quest, 2011) while holding women in lower-level positions with few opportunities for direct supervision, authority, or budgetary power (Kanter, 1977a; Smith, 2012). The metaphor of the glass ceiling is more about equality for qualified women-plural not for a woman-singular.

The truth is women at the highest levels of business are still rare. They comprise only 10% of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies, less than 4% of the uppermost ranks of CEO’s, . . . and 3% of top corporate earners (Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999, p. 127).
Meyerson and Fletcher’s (1999) descriptions of the glass ceiling phenomenon not only gave a historical context for this research study but also provided “small-wins strategies” (p. 131) to help women to overcome the glass ceiling barrier.

Cotter et al. (2001) provided a framework for the investigation of the glass ceiling effect, which were not encountered by white males but are obstacles to women and minorities. The first test to determine an outcome was: “a glass ceiling inequality” (p. 657) was that the phenomena could not be explained by employee job performance (or lack thereof) or by any other employee job-related characteristic. The key to this difference was that establishment-hiring executives could not truthfully defend the variance. An example of an attempt to justify the non-defendable outcome in educational leadership was the contention that fewer women held the credentials for promotion to leadership positions, yet statistics have shown that the percentage of men and women educators with masters, specialist, and doctoral degrees were very similar (Glass, 2000; Glass et al., 2000; Kowalski et al., 2011; McGrath, 1992; Snyder and Dillow, 2012; Ortiz & Marshall, 1986). Further, in her extensive New York state study, Shakeshaft (1998) revealed that two-thirds of the administrative certificates issued in New York were to women, and in the United States, the number of qualified and credentialed women across the country were more than adequate to provide parity in hiring practices of educational administrators (Glass, 2000, Glass et al., 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Krüger, 1996; Ortiz & Marshall, 1986).

Cotter et al.’s (2001) second outcome of the glass ceiling was that the “inequality . . . is greater at higher levels of an outcome than at lower levels of an outcome” (p. 658). The key to these criteria was that the promotion rates became more stifled, took longer to attain, and once attained often resulted in continued marginalization (Smith, 2012, Williams, 1992). Kim and Brunner (2009) noted that women superintendents took five years longer than men to achieve
their first administrative post, and that women were less likely to achieve mid-level executive positions such as the vice principal or principal positions which provided the experience expected for top leadership. Interestingly, these researchers found that once women obtained the superintendency there was no difference in their effectiveness as compared to their male counterparts who had been groomed for the position (Kim & Brunner, 2009).

Cotter et al.’s (2001) third and fourth outcomes of the glass ceiling were a “gender or racial inequality reduces the chances of advancement into higher levels…” (p. 659) and an inequality that “increases over the course of a career” (p. 661). Researchers have revealed a male-coaching network that gave male secondary teacher-coaches advanced notice of job openings. This network of leader former-coaches ushered other male coaches into leadership positions (Young, 2007), while women were not given the same opportunities (Kim & Brunner, 2009; McGarth, 1992; Shakeshaft, 1989). Research has also shown that the gender disparity of promotion practices has created ever increasing obstacles for women (Lee et al., 1993) which points to the reality of a glass ceiling effect in educational leadership hiring practices.

The glass escalator. In 1992, Christine Williams interviewed 76 men and 23 women fields in female-dominated occupations to study phenomenon that she defined as a glass escalator. In gender-dominated fields, Kanter (1977b) established that employees fell into a dominant group or a token group. Typically, the token group experienced isolation, prejudice, and discriminatory practices as members of the group attempted to assimilate into the organizational culture. Researchers have further determined that women in male-dominated fields experienced barriers that limited their promotion opportunities (Kanter, 1977b; Smith, 2012; Snyder & Green, 2008; Williams, 1992). However, in female-dominated occupations, such as nursing and education, a different outcome was shown to exist.
Williams (1992) discovered that males did not encounter the negative effects of tokenism; rather, men had an advantage in hiring and advancement. Williams coined the phrase the glass escalator, to describe this reverse tokenism that gave token men promotion precedence. The glass escalator phenomenon provided men an easier path to leadership while women had to work harder to simply maintain their positions as if they were running up the down escalator.

Ryan Smith (2012) included 3,480 workers in an urban wage, benefits, and power study to test if the glass ceiling and glass escalator were gendered and racial. Smith determined that white males experienced a double advantage in most work settings. The glass ceiling and escalator helped white males while these barriers hindered the opportunities for women and minorities. Smith’s (2012) study was not only associated with educational leadership but also existed in other female-dominated fields such as nursing. The majority of glass escalator studies have been conducted in nursing. This study may shed light on the glass escalator and on another similar fast track to leadership—athletic coaching.

**The glass cliff.** One place in which women have an advantage of gaining leadership opportunities is in failing or doomed organizations (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). In three different experimental scenarios Haslam and Ryan gave hiring managers hypothetical resumes of equally capable men and women. Managers were asked to identify their choice for a leader to head either an improving organization or for an organization that was in decline. As Haslam and Ryan (2008) hypothesized, men were consistently chosen to lead the improving company and women were consistently chosen to lead the declining or failing organizations. Further, managers gave women the opportunity only when the stakes were deemed to be too great to risk failure for a man. Haslam and Ryan called this phenomenon a glass cliff and stated “glass cliff positions offer women their best opportunity to break in to upper management” (p. 543).
The coaching connection. Few studies have been specifically conducted connecting principalships, superintendencies, and athletic coaching. During the mid-1970s, more than 80% of superintendents reported that they had been an athletic coach before they assumed positions in educational administration (Blount, 1998; Shakeshaft, 1987). Young (2007) investigated the phenomenon of the coaching connection to the principal’s office. He coined the phrase The Scarlet ‘C’ to identify what he perceived to be a commonly held myth that coaches predictably move into secondary school administration. His study found that the myth, in Alabama secondary schools, was in fact, reality: (a) 76% of the secondary principals were male; (b) 87% of the secondary male respondents were coaches; and (c) 54% of the secondary female principal respondents were coaches. Young’s study was the first that quantitatively and qualitatively published a link to the male-coaching-principal connection, which limits promotions for non-coaching women. A limitation to Young’s (2007) study was that he only interviewed male principal-coaches and did not gather information from female coaches or female principals.

Young (2007) determined that the male secondary social studies teacher-coach pathway provided principals with leader-manager skills. These principals believed that they lacked the appropriate training to be curriculum and instructional leaders. In an era of increased importance on instructional leadership, researchers need to investigate the high number of athletic coaches in leadership and the loss of experienced women in educational leadership. Researchers have yet to address the perceptions of women educators who have strengths in curriculum and instruction (Kim & Brunner, 2009) or how this coaching connection impacts women’s morale, their aspirations, and potential for promotion. As previously stated in this review, Kanter (1977a) found that the “opportunity structure” for women in “low-mobility or blocked-mobility positions . . . will tend to limit their aspirations” (p. 416).
Social Barriers

Meyerson and Fletcher (1999) found that there are unnamed “unintentional” (p. 129) forms of discrimination that continue in current business practices. These unintentional biased practices were also found to exist in education (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Education researchers have a myriad of different ways to categorize these unintended practices. Gender and social expectations were factors that were perceived to be inflicted upon women, keeping them in less prominent jobs and positions in education and/or keeping women in the classroom (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986).

Gender roles are a multi-faceted problem for women: the roles that women assume upon themselves and the roles that society places upon women and men. Gender roles affect the personal expectations that women put upon themselves with respect to taking care of the family, which may result in postponing their careers (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986). The homologous reproduction theory suggests that the group in power justifies its power by promoting people who have nearly identical career paths (Kanter, 1977b) without realizing that this self-reproduction may not be equitable or may not even be best for the organization (Glass, 2000; Lee et al., 1993; Young, 2007). Self-replication hiring practices in educational leadership could be an explanation for why male secondary coaches follow similar career paths (Young, 2007).

Promotion practices for educational leadership create an additional barrier for women: capable women teacher-leaders are kept in their place by not giving them the opportunities or the experiences to move up in leadership (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986). Ortiz and Marshall indicated that this situation resulted in women earning administrative support positions rather than executive positions with authority and autonomy. Kim and Brunner’s (2009) research “distinctly reveal[ed] the existence of a glass ceiling and a glass escalator” (p. 103). This researcher
proposes to consider this problem to determine if this gender bias could be a result social and gender-role expectations that impact women’s career development and advancement.

Some of these unintended practices have been imposed upon women by school organizations (Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999). Motivational theory has indicated that when opportunities were denied to a certain demographic, one of three things happen: (a) the oppressed group learns to accept the situation (Eckman, 2003, Kanter, 1977b; Lee et al., 1993; Shakeshaft, 1986); (b) individuals within the oppressed group learn how to work within the system (Eckman, 2003; Meyerson & Fletcher, 1999); or (c) the best of these individuals leave the current system to find fulfillment elsewhere (Papa, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2002). Shakeshaft (1986) found that women experienced an “I win, you lose” (p. 501) mentality which teaches women that their opinions and contributions are not valued.

Lee et al. (1993) studied power structures in secondary schools and observed that the infrequency of women leaders created female motivational problems. As a result, even highly qualified women had less confidence and believed that pursuing positions in leadership was futile. According to researchers, elementary teachers have the least chance to rise into top educational leadership (Glass, 2000, Kim & Brunner, 2009), and Feistritzer et al. (2011) found that fewer elementary teachers aspired to leadership.

**Role Theories**

Role theories, which include: gender role theory, social role theory, and role congruity theory have been proposed as reasons why women work in the classrooms while men lead in the administrator’s office. Role and social role theorists that informed this study were: Bandura & Bussey (2004), Biddle (1986), Eagly (1987), Eagly & Karau (2002), and Eckman (2003, 2004). Role theorists posit that a person has multiple roles such as teacher, mother, daughter, etc. These
roles explain how people behave, interpret their lives, and interact with others (Biddle, 1986). Biddle (1986) defined role theory as “a theatrical metaphor, [which is] . . . concerned with a triad of concepts: patterned and characteristic social behaviors, parts or identities that are assumed by social participants, and scripts or expectations for behavior that are understood by all and adhered to by performers” (p. 68).

These expected normed behaviors are learned from experiences based on social and organizational structures (Biddle, 1986), social relationships, and how people cooperate with each other within those social and organizational structures (Trinidad & Normore, 2004). Examples of these types of role behaviors might be the expectations that a secretary is helpful, serving, and respectful while the executive makes decisions, is aggressive, is abrupt, and has more autonomy. Role theory is a large umbrella under which many other role and gender theories have emerged. For this paper, the role theories that will inform the research are that roles are: (a) gendered (Bandura & Bussey, 2004; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Kim & Brunner, 2009), (b) constructed and adopted due to societal norms (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Karau, 2002), and (c) positional within an organization and society (Biddle, 1987; Smith, 2012).

In education, commonly held gender role expectations are that men were born to lead because they have an innate aggressive nature, an ability to organize, to think logically, are analytical and competitive. In contrast, women educators are believed to be best suited to teach due to their nurturing and caring natures (Blount, 1998; Brunner, 1999; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Glass, 2000; Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Wrushen & Sherman, 2009). Because men are perceived as natural leaders, the majority leadership positions are given to men (Björk et al., 2005). Researchers believe that gender stratification in educational leadership holds women in

Eagly (1987) proposed an expansion of gender role theory by including the socialization of gender roles in society. She called her theory social role theory. She theorized that these social and gendered expectations “describe qualities or behavioral tendencies believed to be desirable for each sex” (p 13). Parents begin gender socialization as soon as they know the sex of the unborn child or as soon as the child is born by how they decorate the child’s room, dress the child, talk to and about the child, and by how they interact and play with the child (Bussey & Bandura, 2004). In a study of parents and children, parents tended to nurture and talk with their daughters in more supportive ways and were more careful when girls began to crawl or walk. In contrast, parents of boys had less nurturing conversations, brushed off bumps and tumbles, and were less helpful when baby boys began to crawl and walk (Clearfield & Nelson, 2006).

As children mature, these gender expectations follow boys and girls to school and the workplace. Historically, boys have been perceived as family’s chance to move up in society, and the expectation for girls was to marry well (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Sandberg & Scowell, 2013). Therefore, boys are expected to do better in math and science than girls (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999; Shapiro & Williams, 2011) and girls are encouraged to pursue more altruistic jobs like nursing or teaching (Smith, 2012). In the classroom, boys are given more attention and are allowed to dominate classroom activities, while girls are expected to be quiet, compliant, and follow the rules (Wheldall & Kemp, 2006). As women enter the workforce, they continue to follow the rules, waiting quietly to be recognized for a job well done. In contrast, men promote their accomplishments, and use political connections to move up the leadership hierarchy (Eagly & Karau, 2002).
Eagly and Karau (2002) theorized that: (a) social and gender roles create two norms which affect how men and women typically react in different contexts; (b) when a person fails to act in the expected manner an incongruity occurs; and (c) gender roles are a subset of social roles. Thus women are believed to act for the good of the community and men are believed to act in a more organizational manner thus they are groomed for leadership. Finally, as a result of role incongruity, prejudice is exhibited towards people who deviate from their expected behaviors. Eagly and Karau call their theory “role congruity theory” (p. 573) which indicated that men and women who do not co-opt social norms have an incongruity with their work relationships which affects their promotability.

**The Principal’s Background**

Teacher turnover and job satisfaction impacts student achievement (Papa et al., 2002). To consider the connection between teacher turnover, student achievement and principal impact on these variables, Shen, Leslie, Spybrook and Ma (2011) conducted an in-depth quantitative study of principal background, school processes, and teacher job satisfaction using the 2003-4 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). The data was compiled from 7,670 principals and 40,770 teachers. As with the other quantitative studies, Shen et al. (2011) found that the most common pathway to principal leadership was through the vice principal position (72%) and the least common pathway was from a curriculum specialist (23%) or a department chair (36%) background. Unlike the other studies only 38% of the principal respondents had been an athletic coach/director. Principal background included the number of years as a principal, years at the school, previous position held, and school size. The background did not account for dual-experiences prior to the principalship. Typical superintendents or principals have held more than
one position such as: the teacher and department chair, or department chair and vice principal, or vice principal + coach, or other similar combinations.

The researchers determined that each of the following had higher teacher efficacy: smaller schools, fewer students with reduced/free lunch, longer years as a principal and fewer years teaching. School processes were more important to teachers than were the principals’ backgrounds. The principal-coach pathway had a slightly higher impact on teacher efficacy than the department chair pathway did. Shen et al. did not determine why this effect existed. They suggested that the reason for this result might be that department chair-principals may hold teachers to higher instructional standards than coaching-principals did, thus the lower efficacy rate for department chair-principals (Shen et al., 2011).

Young (2007) examined the principal-coaching relationship in Alabama. Initially, he surveyed 683 Alabama principals and had a 33% response rate. From those surveys, he chose to interview 16 mostly white male principals with a coaching background. Young quantitatively established that the principal-coach relationship was the most common pathway for gaining a principalship (84%). After the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was instituted the coaching connection was even more revealing; the percentage of secondary coach-principals hired in Alabama after NCLB rose to 93% (Young, 2007).

Young also qualitatively examined the strengths and barriers that were a result of their coaching connection. Male coaches believed that their competitive spirit, strong discipline, organizational skills, financial skills/working within a budget, working with the local media, ability to speak with parents and experience working with the community provided principal-coaches with the experience necessary for the principal’s job. When asked about instructional leadership, the principal-coaches believed that management skills and instructional leadership
skills were identical skill sets. Using a definition of instructional leadership by Supovitz and Poglinco (as cited in Young, 2007) and comparing the principal-coaches’ responses, Young (2007) determined that “effective instructional leadership is the glaring weakness for most of these men” and that they were not “change agents in the specific area of instruction” (p. 194).

Young’s analysis was well reasoned but there was an undertone throughout the study, which left the reader feeling as though Young wanted to find redemption in the current statistics. Early in his introduction, Young wrote, “These experiences often stem from a background in coaching which assumes effective managerial abilities . . . and a mastery of motivational techniques” (p. 6). Similar expectations by school boards have helped to keep the percentage of males in educational leadership high while diminishing the opportunities for women (Ortiz & Marshall, 1986). This researcher would have appreciated hearing the perspectives of female and non-coaching principals who responded to Young’s (2007) survey. The comparison of both sets of answers would have strengthened Young’s (2007) research.

In the early 1900s there was a concern that the education system with female teachers could result in a feminization of boys. As the American school system grew from one-room rural schools to larger school systems with secondary schools, the importance of men in the classroom became important to parents and administration (Hansot & Tyack, 1988). While male coaches bring a mentorship and role-model aspect to their classrooms and to the principalship, the hiring practice that favored men sent two messages to students, one to boys and a different, less positive message to girls (Hansot & Tyack, 1988). School is a gendered institution; balance and equity is important for both young men and women, as both need role models.
Opportunities for Promotion

Researchers of organizational leadership studied evaluators and bosses perceptions of promotability and found that role congruity is not always a blatant bias. It was often a subtle unacknowledged undercurrent that limited women’s potential to move up the corporate career ladder (Blickle et al., 2011; Hobbler et al., 2009; Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). Maume (2004) added that women are at a distinct disadvantage because managers believe that men have more time to devote to the job and that women have to divide their time between their job, their husbands, and their children. Rather than be groomed for leadership like their male counterparts, young women are kept in place while being given extra support duties. Young (2007) and Smith (2009) suggested that hiring practices may be a result of males mentoring males, male proximity to hiring leaders, and visibility at social and athletic events rather than an explicit, intended bias.

In 2002, Professor Flynn conducted a study in his Harvard graduate business class. Flynn altered high-powered woman’s resume to instead be a man’s resume; this was called the Heidi-Howard study. Heidi Roizen was a CEO of a Silicon Valley Venture Group and a Vice President of Apple Computers. Two groups of students rated the resumes, one group rated Howard as tremendously capable for leadership and another group rated Heidi as capable but unlikeable, difficult to work with, and she was not considered to be a team player (Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). The participants of the Heidi-Howard study decided that although Heidi was qualified she was abrasive and aggressive. Flynn added, “the more assertive that [the students] thought she was the more harshly [the students] judged her” (p. 2). In contrast, the student participants believed that Howard’s assertive nature made him more promotable.

Ten years after the Heidi-Howard study, researchers at the United States Naval Academy uncovered similar results. Student evaluators considered the promotability of two officers with
the same resumes but different genders. These evaluators determined that the male candidate was more promotable, that male leaders were less emotional, and that women leaders were more understanding. These Naval Academy Midshipmen were more accepting of women leaders (Loder & Spillane, 2005). Their acceptance contradicted the findings of Smith (2009), who found that women tended to promote men more readily. While Midshipmen at large were more willing to accept women as leaders, the women Midshipmen did fall into the gender-role trap feeling that men with the same credentials were more promotable (Loder & Spillane, 2005).

Also conducting a study of women’s potential for promotability, Hobbler et al. (2009) considered a boss’ perception of gender and family-work conflict at a Midwestern Fortune 100 transportation company and employee promotability. Family-work conflict is the degree of difficulty for workers to balance the needs of their family and the needs of their job. Social role and role congruity theory indicate that managers in hiring positions are socially conditioned to believe that women have greater difficulty balancing work and family than men. Even when women rated their work-life balance as low, managers ascribed a higher conflict for women than for men. The managers in Hobbler et al.’s study allowed their perception of women’s work-life balance to affect their hiring practices. Role incongruity affects women’s potential but also limits how a woman can behave once she has been promoted (Hobbler et al., 2009).

**Social Gender Roles and Work-Family Conflict**

Social gender roles and work-family conflict is the level of stress that employees feel while balancing their gender roles with their work roles. For example a male nurse may experience a different conflict than would a female nurse because the gender role for a female nurse is more societally acceptable (Smith, 2012). Work-Family conflict is the stress that employees feel as a result of the pressures of work on their family expectations. Typical reasons
for the high percentage of women in teaching are the gender role expectations of women as being nurturing, caring, helpful, gentle, and child-centered, as well as the working hours and conditions that are considered family friendly (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). Cubillo and Brown (2003), in their study of nine international women in a graduate program, found that women who want to move beyond the classroom and into administration experience additional stress from their mothers, their husbands, and male administrators. These women indicated that gender-role expectations resulted in work-family conflict. Surprisingly the primary support that these women had was from their fathers who taught them to push through the marginalization.

Eckman (2003) conducted a survey of 237 female principals in three states to consider role-conflict, role commitment, and job satisfaction. From this initial survey eight teachers were selected for the phenomenological aspect of the study. The majority of the female principals credited family support, female mentorship, and networking as reasons why they were able to balance their lives and their jobs. Eckman’s quantitative data showed “a moderate degree of role conflict” (p. 9) affected job satisfaction. As expected, working mothers experienced a higher degree of work-life-role conflict as did women principals of extremely large and very small schools. Eckman concluded that role conflict impacted career choices. These female participants said that women delay their careers because they have greater role-conflict than their male counterparts. Unfortunately, the unanswered question from this study is that the delay may jeopardize qualified women from gaining the principalship. Yet this researcher has not been able to find a rigorous qualitative study of women participants who are in support roles but have not yet acquired the principal or vice principal positions.

In a different type of educational leadership study, Cinamon and Rich (2005) conducted a quantitative comparative study to determine if Israeli teachers had less difficulty balancing role
conflict than did women in careers that had been male-dominated but were now gender-neutral. This study showed that teachers had very similar work-family conflict results as non-teachers yet female teachers had a lower rate of moving into management. This study helps to dispel the notion that teachers have an easier time balancing work and family than do other occupations and reinforces the fact that school leaders promoted fewer female middle managers than did the computer science firms and law firms that participated in the study.

Similar to the Cinamon and Rich (2005) study, Whitmarch, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers, & Wentworth (2007) compared the leadership opportunities and styles for women in gender-neutral professions that had once been male-dominated, with traditional female occupations, in which leadership continues to be male-dominated. A premise that sparked the study was that young children see all careers as possible but as they become socialized they begin to see jobs as either male or female appropriate (Alexander, 2003; Gottfredson, 2005). The Whitmarch et al. (2007) study was framed through glass ceiling theory and work-life balance conflict. Their participants were social workers, teachers, professors, physicians, and attorneys. Six themes emerged from the study: a) women in both career patterns experienced family-career interruptions, b) women in traditional female careers were more affected by parental influence for job choice, while women in gender-neutral jobs had non-family member mentors, c) women in traditional positions were less likely to discuss gender barriers while women in gender-neutral jobs openly discussed barriers, d) second careers gave both groups of women greater confidence to take on new responsibilities, e) both groups of women made career compromises for family balance, however, women in traditional roles were more likely to compromise, and f) women in traditional female occupations tended to see their careers as static.
The researchers called for deeper investigations into the career patterns for female-dominated occupations like teaching to better explain the implications for specific occupations.

Grogan (2000) indicated that women have been socialized to deny their personal leadership ambitions and to focus on meeting the needs of others at work and at home. They also felt that they had to find a way to balance the needs of their family with the needs of their office. Work-family balance for women leaders can be lessened by a strong support network (Grogan, 2000, Eckman, 2003), which is usually provided by a supportive partner spouse (Sandberg & Schowell, 2013). Women also said that they maintained balance by employing a more distributive leadership style that empowers others (Cubillo & Brown, 2003).

**Women Leaders**

Many of the women who have successfully achieved leadership positions were coaches themselves and learned to play the game by men’s rules (Young, 2009). Other secondary women leaders stated that they learned to navigate the male networks by having male mentors. They also stated that they choose not to mentor other women because such a mentorship would draw attention to themselves and further alienate the men with whom they work (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Davies-Netzley, 1998; Eckman, 2003; McGarth, 1992). Women tend to have a servant and distributive leadership style that creates a sense of community (Brunner, 2000; Jordan, 2012 Loder & Spillane, 2005; Sandberg & Schowell, 2013). Women must fight against role-gender expectations to gain leadership (Jordan, 2012).

Once leadership has been attained, for female leaders to be seen as legitimate by her new peers, these women leaders need to adopt some of the male attributes of strength, decision-making, and an assertive style. However, women must be careful to balance a male-style with a caring, democratic, nature or she will alienate herself in the organization (Eagly & Karau,
2002; Toegel & Baroux, 2012). They must be decisive enough to be seen as credible, but they must also display enough compassion to not be labeled a “bitch” (Toegel & Baroux, 2012, p. 3).

Researchers Christman and McClellan (2008) believed that women principals would gravitate toward a theorized female distributive leadership style. Seven highly respected women in leadership doctoral programs were chosen to participate in an anonymous, asynchronous focus group. The participants indicated that gender discrimination was an obstacle to women, but they overcame these obstacles by: a) adopting an androgynous style of leadership; b) relying on a support system of other women or their partners; and c) adopting male behaviors of authority for certain types of problems balanced with the female nurturing characteristics when the situation warranted a gentler approach. These women participants felt that adaptation was a key to obtaining and surviving in leadership (Christman & McClellan, 2008).

This literature review would be remiss in scope if the researcher did not offer advice for aspiring or current women leaders from the research. According to Toegel and Baroux (2012), women leaders need to exploit their feminine side when dealing with subordinates but adopt a more male approach with superiors. Eagly and Karau (2002) cautioned that women who adopt a male leadership style risk role incongruity thereby alienating the men with whom they work because men tend to have stronger connections to gender-role expectations. Further, women need to be aware that when superiors, colleagues, and subordinates are over-stressed, they tend to revert to gender-role expectations. Therefore, women who are aware of these expectations will be able to reduce the likelihood of role incongruity (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Women leaders are also warned to refrain from taking strong stances that draw attention to their gender (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Toegel & Baroux, 2012).
Implications for the Research

Research is plentiful on glass ceilings, gender-roles, hiring practices, social, and cultural practices in organizational structure, as well as on education and gender. For this study, the primary sources that will impact the study have been included in this literature review. The majority of the studies linking gender and educational leadership have been quantitative studies using self-reporting survey data from professional education organizations. More recent studies that include qualitative data from female superintendents and principals about role-conflicts and job satisfaction have helped to establish the difficulties that women leaders have faced as they try to balance family life and work life (Eckman, 2002; Reynolds et al, 2011).

One of the few studies of women who were qualified for leadership positions but did not apply for principal positions was a non-empirical informal study by Adams and Hambright (2004). These professors noticed that promising female students in their educational leadership program were not applying for principal positions at a university job fair. After administering anonymous surveys to their students, the professors found that female students rated their school administrators negatively, complained that administrators spent too much time in meetings, and did not have a clear understanding of true classroom. When asked specifically about female administrators, the respondents said that women administrators were more supportive and had higher expectations for both teachers and students. While the researchers explained women teachers’ perceptions of their administration, they did not dig deeply enough to explain women educators’ perceptions of the reasons for the under-representation of women in leadership.

For educational leadership the primary source of quantitative data has been the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) decennial data that was compiled and analyzed by Glass, (1992), Glass et al. (2000), Kowalski et al, (2012). These data provided rich quantitative
historical data on the changing trends in top educational leadership. Most researchers of educational leadership, gender differences, career pathways, and gender perspectives relied on the AASA reports as a basis for their research questions and for their studies. The importance of this data cannot be over emphasized, but the data from these types of surveys needs to be validated by non-self-reported data sets such as using Blount’s (1998) name recognition method.

Unfortunately, early historic data from these surveys provided gender-disaggregated data, but researchers believe the lack of disaggregated data is a deliberate attempt to hide the problem (Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Researchers have indicated that gender-disaggregated data threatens the male establishment, thus the data has been harder to find in recent years (Blount, 1998; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Glass et al., 2000; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1998). As Tyack and Hansot (1982) suggested, in an information age that has a propensity of numeric data, an objective, consistent data set should be available to educators and researchers. The self-reporting surveys of the professional organizations are excellent references but they are incomplete. Without complete data, researchers are unable to fully understand a phenomenon and are unable to remove any bias.

The criteria that Cotter et al. (2001) suggested for connecting a statistical trend to a glass ceiling in education has also been shown to exist in international school systems. Further the unfounded premise of too few credentialed and qualified women was proven to be false (Brinia, 2012; Oplatka, 2006, 2011; Smith, 1991). In the United States and abroad, education promotion practices and gender researchers used different lenses to examine the phenomenon, but Cotter et al.’s (2001) glass ceiling criteria was general enough to serve as a good model for verifying the existence of a glass ceiling regardless of the theoretical lenses of other studies.
Kim and Brunner (2009) in an extensive quantitative study of 1,953 male and 723 female superintendents, and 543 female administrators, considered glass ceiling, glass escalator, and a modified Schein’s (1971) Organizational Career Mobility (OCM) model. The Schein OCM model was a three-dimensional model that considered the movement paths of employees based on vertical, radial, and circumferential career patterns. Employee mobility patterns were affected by the employee’s rank/position, proximity to executives in power, and organizational cultural norms (Schein, 1971). Kim and Brunner’ (2009) modified the model by adding a hierarchical glass ceiling as an additional vertical boundary and included the possibility of a glass escalator as one of the cultural norms. Kim and Brunner determined that the lack of women in educational leadership using a clear three-dimensional model of a glass ceiling and a glass escalator with lower inclusion boundaries and higher hierarchical boundaries at the ceiling level. The study was well defined and served as an influential work for this researcher and her study.

Researchers have avoided speaking directly to women in the classroom about obstacles pursuant to administration. Further, they need to understand how those situations affect teachers’ personal motivations, their role perceptions, and their career decisions. Role theory and incongruity studies have not asked women if marginalization affects their career choices. Are women in education socialized to accept the terms of their marginalization thus choosing to stay in the classroom? Women in other fields have spoken and continue to speak out about the disparate differences between male and female career paths, but women in education stay quiet (Moreau, Osgood, & Halsealt, 2007; Skrla et al., 2000).

Skrla et al. (2000) interviewed retired women superintendents and found that women who have made it to the top leadership positions tend to be silent sufferers who individually break down barriers. Even women who reached the pinnacle of an education career stated that women
perceive gender bias as impolite conversation. Very successful, capable men had mentored most of these women leaders. As a result, these women felt that they needed to be true to those who had helped them. Calling attention to the problem would imply that their mentors were part of the problem. These successful women suggested more research below the superintendency be conducted to open the eyes of the public. These women wondered why the problem was never discussed at the school level because it is obvious to women who are living in the system. Finally, these study participants criticized university teacher and leadership programs that fail to engage education leadership students in gender bias discussions.

Hoobler et al.’s (2009) study has huge implications for gender and social role theory as well as for women in education. These researchers documented that male managers use family-work conflict against women and help to explain some of the problems that women have in attaining educational leadership positions. Hobbler et al. challenge researchers and organizational leaders to consider their hiring practices. Researchers have stated that women need to become mentors and need to find sponsors (Sandberg & Schowell, 2013), but Hoobler et al. (2009) showed that women could not break this belief system by themselves.

Combining Hoobler et al.’s research with a recent article on leading for equity in Principal Leadership (Larson & Barton, 2013) demonstrated a strange dichotomy in educational leadership. Educational leaders are correctly called to promote equity in the classroom, to provide staff development for educating teachers, and to ensure that cultural, racial, and gender equality in schools, yet these same leaders are not espousing equity in hiring and promoting school leaders. Cubillo and Brown (2003) indicated that gender stereotypes and the under-representation of women in secondary leadership not only sends a message to the teachers but also sends a message to the students in the schools which perpetuates the problem.
Cinamon and Rich (2005) was one of the few studies that primarily focused on the teacher rather than the administrator. Not surprisingly, the results showed that experienced teachers learn to find ways to balance their lives. The researchers did not ask teachers if they had ever aspired to leadership, if they had temporarily delayed their careers for balance, or if they later realized that institutional practices were also limiting factors. However, this study did suggest that after many years of balancing family-work conflicts, experienced teachers might decide to finish out their careers with balance rather than in leadership. Adams and Hambright’s (2004) informal study in which nearly half of the graduate students in a principal leadership program chose not to apply for principal openings helps raise questions that need to be more formally researched: Are qualified women interested in rising to administration and if so, how does the system change to allow the best to rise to the top? Researchers may need to change the questions, the focus, and the framing theory to give a clearer picture of the problem.

Educational researchers have suggested that women may not want positions in educational leadership because they prefer the nurturing role of a teacher and the autonomy of the classroom with children rather than leading adults (Blount, 1998; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989). Recently, Feistritzer et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative study of 2500 kindergarten to twelfth grade public school teachers using a random selection process and a thorough demographic survey, which refutes the social role expectations and women’s lack of desire to lead schools. Feistritzer et al. determined that secondary teachers had a greater desire to move into administration than elementary teachers. A surprising outcome of their study was that only 6% more men than women indicated that they had aspirations for leadership positions. For this study this finding is further validation that a qualitative study of secondary women educators is needed to shed light on the topic from women’s points-of-view.
Summary

Historically, school administrators were teacher-scholars. However, as the United States became an industrialized nation, superintendents and principals evolved into a business manager model of leadership rather than an instructional leadership model (Kowalski et al., 2011). More recently, principals have been charged with becoming the instructional leader of the school. In his study of Alabama former coaching principals, Young (2007) revealed 87% of the male secondary principals were former coaches and that the principals he interviewed believed that instructional and curricular leadership was the weakest aspect of their leadership skill set. In contrast, Kowalski et al. (2011) determined that female leaders “were twice as likely to have had more than 20 years of teaching experience before becoming an administrator” (p. xvii) and extensive experience in curriculum and instruction. Their experience in curriculum and instruction combined with a distributive and culture building leadership style prepares women educators extremely well for instructional leadership (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Trinidad & Normore, 2004). Although women educators are valued for their support roles, hiring officials continue to promote the male leadership model that limits access to capable and qualified women who have earned the right to lead (Trinidad & Normore, 2004).

The “good-old-boy” network continues to be alive and well (Christman & McClellan, 2008; Burnner, 1999; Kim & Brunner, 2009). Skrla, et al. (2000) wrote, “the U. S. public school superintendency continues to be the most gender-stratified position the country” (p. 46). They determined that male teachers are 40 times more likely to be promoted to superintendent than women. Since the principal’s office is the stepping-stone to top leadership, researchers need to conduct studies of principalships more than of superintendencies to determine what patterns are contributing to the under-representation of women at all levels of educational leadership.
Most previous research has been framed through critical theory (Blount, 1994; Kim & Brunner; 2009; Glass, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1998; Smith, 2012; Williams, 1992). Framing the research through social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2001) changes the perspective and sheds a different light on the phenomenon. In May 2013, the Pew Report indicated that in 40% of working households a female is the primary breadwinner or sole breadwinner, married women had more advanced degrees than their husbands, and that the public is more comfortable with women earning more than their spouses (Wang, Parker, & Taylor, 2013). Combining this literature review with the Pew Report, leads one to question whether societal expectations may be changing. As a result of this literature review, researchers could extrapolate that role stereotyping limits the careers of women educators. However, in research, assumptions and inference may give rise to further research, but scholar practitioners need to confirm their assumptions by speaking to the participants who are experiencing the phenomenon.

The researcher of this problem of practice does not suggest that male principals are not prepared to lead, nor is she implying that male coach-principals are not effective. Rather this researcher desires to determine if qualified women are interested in holding leadership positions, and if they believe that they have been afforded an equal opportunity for pursuing those positions. This researcher wonders if Ella Flagg Young in 1909 was correct when she said, “[Education] is a woman’s natural field and she is no longer satisfied to do the greatest part of the work and yet be denied the leadership” (as cited in Blount, 1998, p. 1).

When women temporarily put their careers on hold due to social roles, they may have aged-out or burned-out by the time they are recognized as potential leaders (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). From the comparison studies of educators and non-educators (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Whitmarch et al., 2007) as well as from the promotability studies (Loder & spillane, 2005;
Toegel & Barsou, 2012), women educators need to realize that other professions are making headway against gender marginalization. These types of studies have shown that gender bias in promotion rates will not be addressed unless women begin to discuss the problem openly.

Schools are both educational and social institutions that instruct children in the cultural expectations (Brint, 2006). Teachers teach children to respect the differences in people and to respect the strength that each person brings to the table (Larson & Barton, 2013), yet the discussion about equity for women in educational leadership has not been as readily received (Shakeshaft, 1989). This dichotomy sends the wrong messages to boys and girls and limits the potential for capable women in education. Unlike in Finland, where teaching is a highly competitive career that attracts the best and brightest students (Sahlberg, 2011), this phenomenon limits the potential for top female students who may pursue other careers as they notice the lack of potential for their female mentors (Skrla et al., 2000). The implications of this study are important for educational hiring practices, for educational reform movements, for the impending principal shortage, and for young female students who see these connections as a hidden barrier to their own potential. Is the lack of women in leadership a case of women need not apply, women choose not to apply, or “think leader, think male” (Hobbler et al., 2009, p. 930)?
Chapter III: Research Design

Creswell (2012) indicated that the purpose and research questions of a study drive the methodology. The purpose of this qualitative research study was to provide a better understanding of the under-representation of women in secondary school leadership with a particular interest in Tennessee public secondary schools. I initially used a survey to inform the qualitative study and the interview questions. To provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, nine women were interviewed—three women from each category of participant. The chapter is presented in nine different sections: methodology, research tradition, participants, recruitment and access, data collection, data storage, data analysis, trustworthiness, and protection of human subjects.

Methodology

The research strategy for this study was an inductive qualitative research design with a constructivist-interpretive paradigm. The justifications for these choices are discussed in this section. The research design was based on my desire to understand the problem from a qualitative perspective to more clearly examine the under-representation of women in secondary leadership from the experiences of secondary women educators who have the potential, experience, and ability to be school leaders.

Research questions. The research questions are:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?
3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

**Research design.** Researchers use qualitative research methods to explain the multiple interpretations of people’s experiences, which impact their behaviors, beliefs, and ambitions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The qualitative research approach is most appropriate when researchers are investigating a complex problem that can only be understood by talking to people who have lived in the social context of the problem (Creswell, 2013). A qualitative research methodology lends itself well to investigate the many different possibilities for the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. Only by considering these female educators’ perceptions and experiences can researchers better understand what women educators’ experience. From these different experiences, I hoped to gain insight into women’s perspectives of their secondary career promotion opportunities, as well as how they perceived the organizational practices and social dynamics in secondary schools.

Perceptions are reality; if female educators perceive that entry-level leadership positions are closed to them, researchers need to understand why these positions appear to be closed from the female perspective. Equally important is that women may choose not to enter into leadership as a result of their experiences and their interpretations of their social roles. Without asking the secondary female educators, the problem cannot adequately be addressed. Through this study, I hoped to shed light on the under-representation of women in secondary leadership and hoped that this study will provide a much-needed addition to the research literature.

**Research paradigm.** Ponterotto (2005) wrote, “strong qualitative research can emanate from multiple paradigms, each valid in its own right” (p. 132). Through this study, I considered
the problem from women’s points of view. Potential themes were expected to emerge, such as social-gender roles, personal choices, and gender bias. Because of these very different possibilities, two paradigms were possible for this study: (a) the constructivist paradigm, which indicates that a people’s reality depends on the perceptions of those who live in a particular context and (b) the critical theory paradigm, which focuses on the marginalization and ultimate emancipation of a population.

Although gender bias was a possible outcome of the study, I planned to investigate the multiple themes that women educators believed contribute to the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. At the beginning of the research design, I wondered if women were interested in leadership and were denied the opportunity, or if women chose stay in the classroom for personal and/or social role reasons. Therefore, a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm was adopted to uncover hidden and multiple themes that contribute to the phenomenon (Ponterotto, 2005).

Constructivists believe that researchers and participants can co-construct meanings from the participants’ perceptions, senses, day-to-day and historical experiences, as well as through the participants’ experiences (Ponterotto, 2005). Bryman (2012) added that constructivists understand that people fit into multiple roles or categories that are a part of society and affect how people make sense of their experiences. Categories such as, teacher, wife, mother can then become social constructs, which are built upon through social interaction within groups.

Researchers using this paradigm must disclose their connections and biases in their study and must be careful ensure sure that their perspective does not impact the participants’ responses (Creswell, 2012). Constructivists use the participants’ words to tell the participants’ experiences. The participants and I experienced the phenomenon together to discover the multiple meanings.
My role was to facilitate the discussion by helping each participant to be self-reflective. To accomplish this purpose, I tried to establish a dynamic, trusting relationship with the participants, so that I would be able to write in rich detail thus allowing the participants’ reality to surface. My purpose was not to make judgments. Rather it was allow the reader to “judge the rigor of the study on the basis of its thick description” (Ponterotto, 2005, p. 130).

**Research tradition.** Researchers using a general inductive approach strive to identify the determine the common and dominant themes that emerge from the participants’ rich descriptive data to describe their similar experiences and perceptions (Thomas, 2006). This method uses a systematic, logical procedure:

(a) “To condense extensive and varied raw text data into a brief, summary format;

(b) To establish clear links between the research objectives and summary findings derived from the raw data and to ensure that these links are both transparent (able to be demonstrated to others) and defensible (justifiable given the objectives of the research); and

(c) To develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences of processes that are evident in the text data” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238).

General inductive studies are often used as an initial study of a phenomenon that may later be expanded upon by a more analytic quantitative or a recursive grounded theory approach (Thomas, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Terrell (2012) simplified the reasons for using quantitative and qualitative methods writing, “Quantitative tells ‘If’; qualitative tells us ‘How or why’” (p. 258). The research questions for this study were grounded in the participants’ perspectives of what was happening, why they believed it was happening, and how it made them feel and react.
Employees construct meaning from their perceptions of organizational dynamics. They also understand that there are social constructs within every organization, which define how the system functions and what each employee’s perceived role is in the organization (Goulding, 2004). Schools are social organizations. Culture, role expectations, and organizational dynamics affect the perceptions, opportunities, and decisions that are made by employees (Dowling, 2007).

By combining the use of interviews, surveys, and the general inductive qualitative approach, I wanted to identify the common themes of the phenomenon from multiple interpretations of people’s experiences, which impact their behaviors, beliefs, and ambitions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Descriptions of topics, patterns, ideas, and their links are at the center of the inductive philosophy (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Further in an inductive study, shifting, sorting, coding, and analyzing the raw data are the driving forces for the research (Thomas, 2006). The final outcome of an inductive research study is usually a model that describes the common themes, links between the themes, and a theoretical model that researchers have developed from the raw data. Using an inductive approach for data analysis enabled me to: (a) give a voice to the perceptions of women secondary educators; (b) identify the common trends of women educators’ career decisions, promotion opportunities, and their perceived barriers to promotion; and (c) investigate the many possibilities for the under-representation of women in secondary leadership from the female educators’ perspective.

Participants

The problem of practice involves gathering data from the multiple perspectives of women who made career choices based on personal choices, perceived institutional practices, or social role expectations. Further, some of these women experienced marginalization due to gender or
institutional practices. As a result of these multiple possibilities, the use of surveys to inform the interviews was determined to be the best way to understand and discuss the problem.

The qualitative study. As part of this qualitative study, an initial quantitative survey of Tennessee secondary school female principals, female teacher leaders, and former secondary teachers in administrative support positions was conducted. Women from each category and from rural, suburban, and urban school districts were surveyed. The survey had several distinct purposes: (a) to inform the inductive data collection, (b) to inform the interview questions, and (d) to aid in the selection of the interview participants. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

I asked participants about their career ambitions, observations, and school experiences. Additionally, I asked open-ended questions about their perceptions of promotion opportunities and challenges. The last question I asked was if the participant would like to be included in an individual interview. After an analysis of the survey data, I interviewed nine purposefully selected participants from the pool of survey respondents.

Miles and Huberman, (1994) indicated that researchers should focus on “small samples of people, nested in their context [who can be] studied in depth” (p. 27). Because the study was concentrated on potential principal candidates, I interviewed women who had at least six years experience, a master’s degree, and demonstrated leadership potential in their career. Most district web sites did not provide educator experience levels, degrees, or leadership experiences. Therefore, I had to survey a larger number of women than had been originally planned. I conducted a survey of 74 female secondary principals, three former principals, and 353 women secondary educators in Tennessee. This study’s response rate of 25% and 24% fell in the lower but acceptable online survey rate 20% to 40% determined by Nulty (2008).
From the surveys, nine participants were selected to take part in an hour-long interview to provide a deeper narrative to the study. The women were interviewed in an off-campus convenient location for each participant or by telephone. The three categories provided the diversity that Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested. Participants were purposefully selected from three secondary educator categories:

- Female secondary principals and former principals;
- Former secondary teachers who held masters degrees and are currently in a district support administrative positions; and
- Female secondary teachers with at least six years of experience, a master’s degree (which is typically required to gain a leadership position), and served in a leadership position such as a teacher leader, department chair, mentor, or other similar position.

This mixture of these different types of female secondary educators and the range of their school types helped to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon from the three perspectives of women in secondary education.

**Recruitment and Access**

Creswell (2013) suggested steps for researchers to follow to gain permission to conduct their study from the Institution Review Board (IRB). Researchers should provide the IRB with a “detailed description” (p. 210) of the research proposal. For this study the detailed description included: (a) the research procedures, (b) the protection of the participants, (c) access to the research site, (d) detail with respect to the amount of time that the participants were asked to donate to the study, (e) an assurance that power imbalances would be minimized, (f) how the research would benefit the participant and the literature, and (g) clear examples of the types of
interview questions and interview protocol. Prior to recruiting participants, I was given permission to conduct my study from the Northeastern University IRB.

I began the initial purposeful sampling with an Internet search of regional and state education public domain databases. **Because the state public record data from the Tennessee contained significant mistakes, I had to access each of the individual 111 school district websites to obtain the principal names, emails, and teacher data.** I also searched through the district and **individual school websites.** I contacted female educators via email (see Appendix B) to ask them to complete a short survey (see Appendix A). The email also contained a copy of the unsigned survey informed consent (see Appendix C). The final question on the survey asked participants if they were willing to participate in an interview to delve deeper into the phenomenon. The interview template can be found in Appendix D. The IRB determined that the risk of harm was minimal, thus they waived the need for separate interview informed consent. However, I did offer to provide one to each participant (see Appendix E).

**Protection of Human Subjects**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office for Human Research Protections (2013) has established a set of directives that must be followed to ensure not only the ethical respect of subjects but also the moral and legal implications that can arise during a research study (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], 2013). As suggested by Creswell (2012) and the OHRP (2013), participants were informed of the nature of the study, the significance of their voice being heard, and of the importance of the protection of their identity, their rights, and their feelings.

Each participant was provided a copy of the unsigned survey informed consent (see Appendix C) and was offered a copy of the interview informed consent (see Appendix E) as
proscribed by the Northeastern University’s IRB. (The Northeastern IRB waived the need for signed consents forms.) Interview participants were advised: that their consent was an ongoing process, that they did not need to answer questions with which they were uncomfortable, and that they could withdraw from the study at any point in time. They were reminded that the interview would be digitally recorded. Additionally, I made the results available to any participant who asked for a copy of the study. Given the nature of the topic and the potential that women had been subjected to marginalization, I understood the importance of protecting the participants throughout every phase of the process of the research to include after the research has been completed (Creswell, 2012).

To minimize the potential for re-victimization, the surveys and interviews were held in confidence; pseudonyms for districts and participants were assigned. All interviews were conducted off school grounds or over the phone. I further identified to the participant that this was scholarly work with no agenda, that her choices and her career paths are not being judged, and that this was not an effort to lay blame but to arrive at the commonly lived experience of women in secondary education.

During the analysis of the themes and responses, demographic information and any identifiable information was removed such that the participants’ identities would not be traceable. Participants were not pressured to answer questions. Transcripts were washed of any identifying information especially with respect to any specific events, people’s names, etc. (Creswell, 2012; Morgan, 1998).

To further protect the identities of the participants, all transcripts and data were secured in a locked location. I was careful not to make promises and informed participants of the known risks to participation as well as the potential benefits of the study. Given that interviews were
dynamic (Kruger & Casey, 2009; Rubin & Rubin, 2012), a general outline of the questions were provided to the IRB in the initial submission. This outline can be found in Appendix E.

Data Collection

Prior to any data collection, I obtained permission from the Northeastern University IRB. Selected participants were emailed an informed consent form that delineated the purpose of the study, an assurance of protecting their identities and confidentiality, a general outline of the data collection, the risks and benefits of the study, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process (Creswell, 2012). The Northeastern University IRB determined that the interview participants would not incur any undue risk. As a result, I was not required to obtain a signed informed consent from them. I did however inform each participant of her rights and offered to email her an informed consent. Each of the interviewees waived the need to sign an informed consent.

Because the state (and national) databases do not include gender with job title (Blount 1998, Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1998; Tyack and Hansot, 1982) are not available, the first part of the study was to conduct a first name analysis of school administrators, to identify if the principal is a male or female. When the first name was gender-neutral such as Terry, I accessed the school website to look for a picture or title (Mr./Ms./Mrs.) of the principal. From the list that was obtained, female principal emails were put in a spreadsheet for selection to participate in the surveys.

According to the Tennessee Department of Education website (2013), Tennessee has 521 secondary schools that fit the definition of a secondary school—a school that has one or more grades from 7-12 with no grade below 7 (Aud et al., 2012). However, some of these schools were homeschool cooperatives and/or had fewer than 50 students. Because the secondary
principalship is the most common career path for public school superintendents (Kim & Brunner, 2009), the principals and teachers that were selected came from Tennessee secondary schools. After culling out the correctional schools, extra small schools, K-12 schools, etc., there were 303 traditional public school secondary schools in Tennessee. Using name analysis and website verification, I determined that Tennessee had 86 female principals, however only 74 principals had deliverable emails available on the school Internet sites. Teacher and central office administrator expertise was more difficult to obtain. Therefore I oversampled women in these positions, sending 353 surveys and had to delete the responses of those that did not fit the purposeful sampling criteria.

The surveys asked demographic questions and had open-ended questions that asked about women’s career aspirations, career choices, experiences, perceptions of the opportunities for advancement, and observations of organizational practices. Each woman surveyed had the opportunity to volunteer to participate in individual interviews. A copy of the survey questions is provided in Appendix A.

To provide a deeper narrative about women’s perception, experiences, and observations, I conducted and recorded interviews with nine participants from the three categories of secondary women educators: principals, non-principal administrators, and teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The actual length of the interviews varied from person to person depending on their comfort with the process and on their individual experiences (Groenewald, 2004). I made every effort to “facilitate and guide, rather than dictate what happened during the encounter” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 63). The participants were encouraged to provide as much detail as possible.
The purpose of the interviews was to allow me to gain an understanding of each participant’s self-reflection of her career choices, school experiences, and opportunities. My primary purpose was to gain an understanding of the women’s collective experiences. I kept notes of my thoughts, observations, and feelings during the data collection and data analysis phases. During the data collection and analysis, I also used memoing as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Creswell (2013).

**Data Storing Methods**

Interviews were recorded using a digital audio recorder. The recordings were downloaded to an external device, which was kept in a locked file cabinet in my private residence; I was the only person who had access to the cabinet. The protection of the participants and respect for their perspectives was paramount. The original recordings were destroyed after the transcriptions were verified. I developed a master list as a data collection matrix to easily file, store, and sort the information (Creswell, 2013).

Creswell (2013) cautioned researchers to ensure that they have multiple backups of all the data and that it be held in a secure location. To ensure that the data was not lost or corrupted the transcription records were put onto two external drives. These drives were stored under lock and key. The master matrix was also stored on the external drives. I used a password-protected personal computer not associated with my workplace for all data analysis and data management. I made every effort to protect the identity and confidentiality of the participants, their demographics, their identities, and the location of their schools and districts. Furthermore, all data collection methods adhered to the guidelines outlined by the IRB and human protection agencies.
Data Analysis

The initial data analysis was first name analysis similar to Blount’s (1998) of current Tennessee secondary principals to determine if the Tennessee’s data mirrors the data of Feistritz et al.’s (2011) national self-reporting sample survey data. Because the Internet school web pages typically include a picture of the school principal, gender-neutral names were less of a problem for this study than they were for Blount in 1998. Through the survey analysis, I tabulated female secondary educators’ responses about their opportunities, choices, and obstacles. The open-ended questions in the women’s surveys were inductively analyzed to determine trends.

The primary purpose of the study and the inductive approach was to allow the participants’ experiences to emerge from the data. Thomas (2006) instructed researchers that the inductive philosophy is used to consider the similarities and differences of the participants’ experiences by identifying most frequently stated occurrences. He also indicated that this method helps to determine linkages between participants’ perceptions and group behaviors. I systematically used the inductive strategy as Thomas (2006) suggested to analyze the data so that a general model of the phenomenon and the links between experiences can be drawn.

Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote that social phenomena is described through words and that by reading the transcripts word-for-word to gain a familiarly with the setting, the participants’ perspectives, and participants fit into the study. This method helped me to put aside research bias and ground the analysis in the participants’ experiences. I investigated the similarities and differences between the participant’s experiences using a code reduction process (Creswell, 2013, Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Bracketing researcher experiences. This step occurred late in the methods section under the role of the researcher as suggested by Creswell (2013). To bracket my experiences, I explained to the readers my experiences in secondary education. I realize that I cannot completely remove myself from my experiences, but with careful self-reflection and by stating my experiences early in the study, I was able to focus on the participants’ experiences (Miles & Huberman, 1994, Thomas, 2006).

Survey analysis. Prior to the interviews, I did a simple tally and percentage analysis of the survey data and a reduction of themes for the open-ended questions. The survey analysis informed the interview questions and the deeper qualitative data collection. I computed and recorded the statistics from the participants’ survey responses and had those available for the interviews. Surveys also helped to purposefully select the interview participants.

Interviews. Qualitative data was collected from interviews with three categories of female secondary educators: female secondary teacher-leaders, former secondary teachers in district support positions, and female secondary principals and three former principals. During the analysis phase, I looked for trends and differences between the types of participants, their school types, marital and family statuses to see if the participants’ perceptions and experiences are universal or if they are different. From the interview participants’ responses, I analyzed the transcripts using the steps delineated below.

Coding. I read the open-ended responses and transcripts for common themes, identifying and using various categories, synonyms, and coding frames. With each new code, I re-read the open-ended responses and transcripts to determine if the emerging theme was consistent or linked to another theme (Thomas, 2006). As suggested by leading researchers, I used highlighting, underlining, and circling of key words (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to help
determine the common participants’ perceptions and experiences. Miles and Hubbard (2004) strongly encouraged researchers to continually return to the transcripts and to the participants’ specific verbiage to re-center oneself. I tried not to “lose the forest for the sake of the trees.” My purpose was the forest that reflects each tree.

The analysis cycled through reading the open-ended responses and later the transcripts, reading the research questions, coding, making a list, and going back to the transcript and questions. Periodically I needed to pull away from the data to re-read the transcript for context. Color-coding for specific research questions was also used. I used Excel, memoing, visual tools and a word map or chart to provide insight into the codes and common themes (Saldanña, 2013). The combination of methods was helpful to provide me with a clearer picture of the participants’ experiences (Kruger & Casey, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Thomas, 2006).

Researchers are warned to stay as true to the participants’ verbiage as much as is possible so that their perceptions emerge while reducing the passages from unnecessary words (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This process was lengthy and repetitive. I performed multiple cycles of coding to cluster the codes, to consider similar contexts, and to determine linkages between codes and participant experiences (Saldanña, 2013).

**Reduction.** The reduction of themes in a general induction analysis is to look for commonalities that emerge from the participants’ words. By reviewing to eliminate redundancy, I was able to reduce the categories to 15 to 20. From those 15 to 20 categories, I continued the reduction process until I had six commonalities that have helped me to gain and document a better understanding of the common phenomenon (Thomas, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**Articulating themes.** I wrote short descriptive synopses of the emerging themes and the context of each theme (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Similarities and differences between the
participants and the specific groups were noted and documented. From the synopsized themes, I displayed the data in a model that helped me to draw conclusions about the participants’ experiences (Thomas, 2006). I also used the pattern coding described by Miles & Huberman (1994). Thomas cautioned researchers that pattern coding in an inductive approach is different from the Miles & Huberman (1994) pattern coding as inductive coding may not provide researchers with the ability to provide causal explanations (Thomas, 2006).

Continually return to the research questions and the original transcripts. This step was repeated over and over to keep me grounded in the study. Given the vast amounts of qualitative data from the surveys and the interviews, the data was overwhelming at times. I made every effort to stay grounded to the participants’ voices and in the research questions, so that I could extract valid data for the final common descriptions.

Repeat the previous steps until saturation has occurred. Saturation is defined as reaching a point in the data analysis where no additional themes emerge from the data. I used the above steps and multiple sorting passes to validate data and to search for themes. I also used Excel, hand coding, and color-coding. Additionally to reach saturation, I used word mapping, charting, and diagraming.

Summarize the results and write a description. Creswell (2013) suggested that this step be richly descriptive so that the reader can fully empathize with the participants about how they experienced the phenomenon. The descriptions of the participants’ understanding, sense making, and the contexts in which these were experienced were recorded. The purpose of a general inductive approach is to identify the most relevant categories and emerging themes and to provide a general description and model that represents the experiences of the collective.
Trustworthiness

For the study to have validity, I ensured that measures are taken during each phase of the research. Trustworthiness of the study began with my study design, and positionality statement provided. By using bracketing and by continually referring to the transcripts, I stayed grounded in the participants’ perspectives rather than in my experiences.

Researchers use triangulation of the data to provide validity to the study. My use of a survey to inform the study was one form of validity checking. By including rural, suburban, and urban locations in Tennessee as well as the three groups of women at different stages of their careers, I tried to provide different perspectives, data richness, and triangulation. Interviewing three women from each category was another form of triangulation. Cross-referencing the data across groups, demographics, and the literature review findings also provided trustworthiness.

Validity during data collection and analysis. Triangulation of the data was used to provide validity and credibility to the study. Several ways that researchers can triangulate data are: (a) collecting data from at least three different sources, (b) having at least three different researchers collect data, or (c) collecting data from the same sources in at least three different ways (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By survey and interviewing women that were at three different stages of their careers in different types of school systems, I tried to provide additional validity for data collection. While taking notes during each interview and referring to them after the transcriptions, I was also able to fix transcription errors and to remember the context of participants’ comments.

During the coding process, I used visual tools, graphic representations, journaling, and memos to test for common themes, to help to understand the participants’ experiences, and to describe my thinking. I also used patternning to include clustering techniques, frequency word
counts, and logic chains to help sift the data into major themes. An example of the logic chain can be seen in Figure 1 in Appendix F. Making contrasts/comparisons and seeking plausibility helped to provide validity to the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Rich, thick description is another form of data validation. Rich, thick description was achieved by providing the readers with enough examples of the lived experience from different participants so that the reader can determine if the findings are transferrable (Creswell, 2013). As advised, I was careful about making broad assumptions beyond the confines of the study.

**Threats to validity.** Because qualitative research requires interpretation and knowing that every researcher brings his or her personal perspective to a study, researcher bias is a threat to internal validity. I provided a positionality statement, bracketing, and re-centering to continually ground the study in the participants’ experiences. By establishing my experiences early in the study, readers should be able to draw their own conclusions with respect to presentation and interpretation of the data, the plausibility of the conclusions, and the overall the validity of the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I made every attempt to credibly and logically present the findings with easy to follow constructs, as well as providing any conflicting or rival data to help further validate the study. Credibility/truthfulness of the participants was another threat to validity. Through a careful, logical procedure for selecting interview participants, I hoped to identify participants with enough experience to give a clear picture of the lived experience. I tried to capitalize on participants who had a wealth of experience and an ability to speak truthfully without fear of any repercussions. Cross referencing and regrouping during the interviewing process and having deep rich data helped to minimize the threat. Ultimately, readers will have to decide for themselves as to the veracity of the study.
Positionality Statement

Education is my second career. My first career was in software systems development, which gives me unique insight into technology and instruction as well as giving me a broad sense of organizational needs. I have taught in public systems in three states and currently work in a large private Pre-K-12 system. I am currently the only administrator in my system that continues to teach students. My current position is the Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Pre-K-12, the high school Math Department Chair, the Accreditation Chair, Teacher Evaluation Coordinator, and Honors Calculus teacher. I hold a traditional female district support role. I realize that the study is by nature confrontational to the status quo and used bracketing to continually center on the participants’ perspectives rather than on my own.

Young’s (2007) coach-principal dissertation which explored the connection of coaching and the principalship and Kim and Brunner’s (2009) superintendent glass escalator study were the sparks that fueled this study of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. These researchers challenged me to reflect upon: (a) my career path and the choices I made for my family (social role theory); (b) my assignments to committees that gave me an opportunity to demonstrate my abilities beyond the classroom; (c) my chairing critical committees that enabled me to gain an important support leadership role but not a principalship; (d) my mentoring by a male superior that led to my entry into administration; and (e) the career paths of my supervisors. Because I am a woman, district administrator, and teacher, there is an immediate perception of a potential for bias. However, as a result of the literature review, I have a genuine curiosity of the plausible reasons for the phenomenon that may not have been addressed in previous research.

As a military spouse, I have moved frequently. After reflecting on the administrators in the three different school systems where I have worked, I was surprised that my experiences
were similar those determined by Kim and Brunner (2009) and Young (2007). I have worked for 21 different administrators in secondary schools. Of those 21 administrators: 18 were men (86%); only one of the men had never coached; three of the administrators were women (14%); one of whom was a female coach resulting in 90% of all the administrators, for whom I have worked, coaches or former coaches. This revelation came as a surprise to me. The majority of my administrators were excellent; I have no bias as to men’s ability to lead.

After reflecting further on my career path, I know that I made choices delayed my administrative career. Combining my experiences with the literature review prompted me to consider whether glass ceilings and escalators were the primary reasons for the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. I believed that only by talking to women in the school system can researchers truly shed light on the phenomenon.

Summary

The purpose for the study was to understand the disparate difference in the promotion rates of men and women in secondary school leadership and how female secondary educators make sense of the career opportunities for women in secondary leadership. Women superintendents have been studied at length, but women in the classroom and women in secondary education have not had their voices heard. My choice of a general inductive research approach was a logical choice for the study of secondary women’s experiences.

This research study helps to fill a gap in the literature and provides additional information that both validates and refutes the expectation that women are subjected to glass theories by showing that women believe that there is gender-bias but women also are choosing not to apply for leadership positions. The research also validated social role expectations as a reason for
fewer women secondary principals. I hoped to give the readers a new perspective of what women want and what women feel.

Common sense would indicate that school leadership hiring practices affect women’s morale and career aspirations, but research has yet to confirm what women believe about the phenomenon. For women to begin to enter administration in greater numbers, women need to challenge the existing system. Rather than researching around the subject, researchers need to: (a) speak directly to the women in the trenches; (b) challenge current leadership development programs; (c) re-establish a national database that maintains data disaggregated by gender and job title, as was the case prior to the 1980s; and (d) consider leadership opportunities through the new lens of the teacher participants of this study.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

Nationally 24% of superintendents are women (Kowalski et al., 2011), and 28% of secondary principals are women (Aud et al., 2012). The true glass ceiling for women in education is the superintendent’s office, and the most direct path to the superintendency is through a secondary principalship. This more direct path helps men and becomes a filtering boundary (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Schein, 1971) that impedes women from gaining the experience and opportunities needed to break the glass ceiling. Regardless of gender, there is a direct correlation between the superintendency and a secondary principalship (Glass, 2000, Ortiz & Marshal, 1986, Kim & Brunner, 2009). Thus the purpose of this study was to gain a better insight into the incongruence between the high percentage of women in teaching positions and the much lower percentage of number of women in secondary principalships. Women school leaders are often in support roles such as lead teachers and curriculum directors rather than as secondary principals. Since women rarely gain a secondary principalship, they have less potential to break the glass ceiling of the superintendency. The research questions are:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?
3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

This study focused on the secondary female educators’ perceptions of their career aspirations, decisions, and opportunities from a social role theory perspective. The study began
with an Internet web-site search to determine the gender and regional percentage of principals in Tennessee and to identify potential participants for a survey and for interviews. This findings section begins with the results of the Internet search. The extensive data obtained from the detailed survey will be presented in this section as a thematic analysis that provides support for the specific research questions. For each question: (a) the survey quantifiable data that supports the research question will be presented, (b) the open-ended supporting responses will give a voice to women’s perspectives, and (c) the themes from the survey Likert-style and open-ended questions will be supported by the nine interview results.

There are a number of variables that shed light on this study which are wide-ranging. For example, women may make decisions based on institutional practices, family obligations, current career experience, perceptions, and social gender role expectations. Due to the varied scenarios, the researcher conducted sorting and analysis based on job-title only, job-title and family-marital status, and job-title and experience levels. Much of this data was beyond the scope of the research questions for this study. However, the sorting was necessary to thoroughly examine the trends and perceptions that ultimately informed the research questions. Therefore in this section a smaller subset of the data sorting is provided. For the reader and future researchers the detailed tables that are synopsized in this findings section are provided in the Appendices G through I.

**Internet Search for Female Tennessee Principals, Superintendents and Board Chairs**

The *Tennessee Education Staff Directory* identified nearly 1700 principals in the state. Unfortunately, the directory contained many inaccuracies with respect to principal contact information. To determine accurate principal contact information, the number of women superintendents and principals in Tennessee, and to select survey participants, the researcher conducted a district-by-district and school-by-school Internet search.
At the time of this study, Tennessee had 303 public secondary schools which fit the description of schools with the experiences of the principals-turned-superintendents in the Kim and Brunner (2009) study. Of those 303 schools, female principals lead 86 schools, but only 74 of them had active deliverable emails. The percentage of women principals in Tennessee secondary public schools was 28%, which equaled the national results of the Aud et al. (2012) study. Table 1 shows the differences between the Tennessee and National male-female leader percentages. Because some participants said, “Men hire men,” the percentage of female school board chairmen was included in the study. The low number of women board chairs and superintendents in Tennessee, might give some credence to the perception that more men are in secondary principalships because men hire men.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Percentage of Superintendents, Principals, and School Board Chairmen</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Superintendents</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationally (Kowalski et al., 2011)</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Internet Web-site search</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary Principals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationally (Aud et al., 2012)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee Internet web-site search</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Board Chairmen</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee (Tennessee Department of Education, 2014a)</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Results

Surveys were sent to three categories of secondary educators: secondary principals, non-principal administrators, and teachers. The non-principal support administrator surveys were
sent to district support leaders and assistant principals. Sixteen principals and three former principals of the 77 female principals responded (a 25% response rate). From the 347 emails sent to non-principal educators, 82 responded (a 24% response rate). This study’s response rate of 25% and 24% fell in the lower but acceptable online survey rate of 20-40 percent determined by Nulty (2008) and was similar to the 24% rate found by Sheehan (2006).

Survey demographics. Participants were purposefully selected from women with enough experience to gain a principalship. According to the Tennessee Minority Report (2012), the typical woman educator in Tennessee is: Caucasian, married, and works in a rural district. Tennessee school types are: 20% urban, 60% rural and 20% suburban districts (Tennessee Department of Education, 2014a). Survey participants represented urban (23%), rural (37%), and suburban (42%) districts. Thus, participants over-represented suburban and under-represented rural school districts. Only 8% of the participants were African-American, which is below the Tennessee average of 12% (Tennessee Department of Education Report, 2014; 2012).

Most survey respondents were married or in committed relationships (84%) and had children (75%). Twice as many participants had children (56%) than those who did not have children (27%). For participants with children, 46% had younger children still living at home and 27% were empty nesters. Almost all the administrator respondents held principal licenses (95%), while fewer teacher respondents (47%) did. Nearly all the women had a master’s degree or higher (97%) and most of principals and other administrators had advanced degrees (73%).

The average experience in the classroom for administrator participants is 13-14 years while teachers had 19 years experience. The average age at which these Tennessee women became an administrator was 40 years old, which was slightly higher than the 36 year-old Kim and Brunner (2009) determined average age for female entry-level administrators. Other than the
low rate of African-American participants (see Table 2), the participants fairly represented the multiple dimensions of Tennessee female educators’ lives and school experiences in Tennessee. Table 2 provides the respondents’ demographic information with respect to the three categories of women participants.

Table 2

**Female Educator Participant Survey Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Principals and Former Principals N=19</th>
<th>Assistant Principals and District Administrators N=44</th>
<th>Teachers, two counselors, and one librarian N=38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>32% African-American</td>
<td>5% African-American</td>
<td>0% African-American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>68% Caucasian</td>
<td>2% Biracial</td>
<td>100% Caucasian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>79% Committed relationship</td>
<td>86% Committed relationship</td>
<td>79% Committed relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21% Single</td>
<td>3% Single</td>
<td>3% Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0% Divorced</td>
<td>11% Divorced</td>
<td>21% Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>37% None</td>
<td>27% None</td>
<td>24% None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32% Yes, no longer at home</td>
<td>20% Yes, no longer at home</td>
<td>32% Yes, no longer at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32% Yes, still living at home</td>
<td>53% Yes, still living at home</td>
<td>45% Yes, still living at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Type</td>
<td>32% Rural</td>
<td>32% Rural</td>
<td>45% Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32% Suburban</td>
<td>47% Suburban</td>
<td>37% Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38% Urban</td>
<td>21% Urban</td>
<td>18% Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Experience</td>
<td>24 years in education</td>
<td>24 years in education</td>
<td>19 years in education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 years in the classroom</td>
<td>14 years in the classroom</td>
<td>19 years in the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age when first promoted to administration</td>
<td>40 years old</td>
<td>39 years old</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Degree Obtained</td>
<td>53% EdD or PhD</td>
<td>41% EdD or PhD</td>
<td>11% EdD or PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16% EdS</td>
<td>34% EdS</td>
<td>21% EdS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31% Masters</td>
<td>25% Masters</td>
<td>61% Masters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has principal credentials</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%.

**Survey findings overview.** Six general questions using a 5-point Likert-style scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), Yes/No questions, and open-ended responses were asked to the three categories of women educators: principals, former principals, non-principal
administrators, and teachers. Two separate surveys were given: one to female principals and a different one to non-principal participants consisting of district support administrators, assistant principals, and teachers. Principals were asked about the obstacles that they have encountered, about their perceptions of why there are fewer women in principalships, and about their experiences as a female principal. District administrators and teachers answered eight additional questions on their surveys that asked about their career aspirations, experiences, social role expectations, and their desire to lead schools. Although this study may spark discussions among policy makers and academicians, caution must be taken about drawing specific national conclusions from the results, as the participants represent Tennessee, and several of the demographic categories are not extensive enough to draw national conclusions.

Tables and figures, which help the reader to visualize the findings that inform the research questions, are included in this findings chapter. The initial quantifiable results are displayed in Table 3 and Table 4. Table 3 provides the results for the Likert-style questions that were asked of all participants, and Table 4 displays the results of the questions that were only asked of the non-principal participants.
Table 3

Participant Survey Responses to Five-point Likert-Scale Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>A mentor helped/encouraged me to become/pursue a principalship.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I was encouraged to pursue a principalship by my spouse/family.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men are more interested in being a principal.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men and women have an equal opportunity for promotion.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Teachers = teachers, 2 guidance counselors and 1 librarian. Not all participants answered every question.
Table 4

Responses to the Additional Non-Principal Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Principal Admin (N= 47) Teachers (N=38)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to be a principal.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I put my family needs above my personal ambitions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you ever applied for a principal or vice principal position?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>Yes 58%</td>
<td>No 38%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>Yes 75%</td>
<td>No 13%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>Yes 58%</td>
<td>No 42%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Yes 16%</td>
<td>No 82%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you see yourself in administration?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>Yes 100%</td>
<td>No 0%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Yes 26%</td>
<td>No 68%</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer 5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions. On a few of the questions, assistant principals had very different responses than the central office administrators; for those questions, the differences are shown.

The Interviewees

Because the remainder of this findings section will focus on results that answer the research questions using the surveys, open-ended answers, and interview data, prior to presenting
the findings for the specific research questions, this researcher will provide a short description of each interviewee. Nine women were interviewed (a) three current secondary principals from different types of schools and experiences, (b) three non-teacher support administrators including one former principal, one assistant principal, and one district administrator, and (c) three teacher-leaders. Each participant and her school were given pseudonyms, and identifiable information was scrubbed to protect the women’s identities.

**Principals.** Each of the principals stated that she gained the job of assistant principal because she had been encouraged by others in the system to help the school. They all said that they never envisioned serving as an assistant principal or a principal but felt compelled to make a difference for the students, parents, and staff. They all experienced gender bias. They also all said that they could not have done the job without their supportive husbands.

**Barbara Kennedy.** Barbara Kennedy is a Caucasian, 39-year old married mother of two school-aged children, with a master’s degree. She has worked in education for thirteen years and has nine years experience in administration. She is a principal in a small suburban school system with approximately 1500 students. She is confident, has a team-leadership approach, and says that she “speaks her mind.” She grew up in the north and moved to the south to play college sports. Her first teaching experience was as a university graduate assistant and athletic college coach where she says, “I gained a ton of experience in curriculum and in training new teachers and then in adult education . . . which is what principals do.”

She became a public school teacher so that she could coach high school sports. She taught social studies, English, and computer technology classes. After teaching three years in a large urban school “with a lot of gang activity,” she was offered a curriculum and technology integration position and was later promoted to an assistant principal. She switched from the
urban system to a smaller suburban school system to become a principal. She was the first
targeted community to hire a female principal to carry on in her system.

**Jill Martin.** Jill Martin is a 36-year old married woman with elementary-aged children
who originally had a career in criminal justice in a non-southern state. She is the principal of a
medium-sized rural school in a district with a “gender-balanced” administration. She has her Ed.
D. and has 16 years experience in education. She began her education career as a teacher
assistant in Special Education, was a classroom teacher, an assistant principal, and now a
principal. She is confident and says her world-view is “rooted in equality and opportunity.” She
described how she became an educator saying,

> I was working in [corrections] . . . and I found my path to the idea of prevention rather
> than just criminal justice and all. I started working with emotionally disturbed kids in the
> prison system as a teacher assistant and fell in love with it first teaching experience was
> in the prison system with emotionally disturbed children.

Initially, she has met with gender bias from the community bias. She believes that her previous
job in corrections helped her to gain credibility and acceptance with school board members and
hiring officials.

**Meghan Taylor.** Meghan Taylor is 60 years old and has an Ed.S. degree. She is married
and is an empty-nester with older children. She taught for 29 years in the classroom and has 10
years experience in administration. She is currently the principal of a large suburban-
metropolitan high school. She described herself as nurturing, principled, not easily intimidated,
and is a student advocate. She was an English teacher, a director of Special Education, an
assistant principal, and for the past five years has been a principal of a school that she describes
as, “having had a hard time keeping principals because it is a very diverse school with respect to race and socio-economic status.”

Meghan had no intention of being a principal, but several teachers came to her and asked her to apply for the principalship to save the school from cronyism. She commented saying, “To be honest with you, I never, ever, ever want to be a high school principal . . . but when people approached me and I saw that the inept coach was going to be principal, I had to do something for the kids and staff.”

**Non-principal support administrators.** Three women were selected for this category: a former principal/assistant superintendent, a central office director, and an assistant principal. Each described herself as competitive, driven, and wanting to make a difference. They all had a confident wisdom and talked about having a team, cooperative leadership style. The responses of the assistant principal and the director were more similar, while the former principal responses and experiences were more similar to those of the principals. Although all three believed that women, generally, do not desire to lead a school, the assistant principal and director often referred to social and gender role expectations while the assistant superintendent did not.

**Cindy Walters.** Cindy Walters is in her sixties and is a married empty nester. She currently works as an assistant superintendent of a metropolitan school district. She told the researcher that she had never planned to go into education. She had planned to go to law school in the fall of the year that she agreed to help out a friend who had to fire a teacher in the middle of the school year. She says, “I had a gift, I fell in love with it.” After teaching for eight years, she entered into a leadership program that also helped to “shape policy” in Tennessee.

After the program, she was offered an assistant principal position to help turn around a school. She described her new principal as one of those good old boys who told her that she did
not belong in high school administration and that he was forced to take her on staff. He seemed to purposefully be unhelpful and hurtful to her. She said her competitive spirit kicked in. Two years later, when the principal resigned, the superintendent promoted her to principal. She was one of 12 female principals in the state. Within three years, her failing school was ranked as a top school in the country (not just the county) and white flight private school students started coming back.

Eight years later, she became the Director of High Schools and had tremendous success turning around the schools of the county. Her credibility and success continued flourish. She served on regional boards and committees and was a finalist in multiple superintendent searches, one of which started with 70 candidates. Each time it came down to her and a man with fewer success and fewer credentials. Each time, the man got the position. She recalled being told by a board member, “You’re exactly where you need to be. We already thought this out. You need to stay in district support because that is where you are strongest. That’s where you are making things happen. You just don’t need to be a superintendent.”

**Ruth Grant.** Ruth Grant is a single woman in her sixties. She has no children and has been in education nearly 40 years at a small suburban-metropolitan school. She was a teacher for 25 years, coached, worked on all the important committees in her school, and was promoted to assistant principal where she handled discipline. She has never worked for a female principal. When describing how she got her position, Ruth reported that she was promoted to assistant principal to handle “girl issues” because a very successful male football coach who was horrible in the classroom had just been promoted to assistant principal and he did not want to have to deal with the girls. She said, “It was a breakthrough for my school. I was the first women administrator in the high school.” Since she was single and had to support herself, she did desire
a high school principalship. For a while she resented the fact that less capable men were promoted over her, but added, “At my age and I don’t know wisdom caught up with me. I realized I was happy where I am. I don’t need to prove it anymore.”

**Donna Carter.** Donna Carter has been in education for 14 years in a large rural school. This is her second year in administration. Her high school currently has had a female principal who she believes is equally capable and effective. She taught in the classroom for eight years then moved to guidance and then was promoted to Director of Guidance. She is married and has children that are still living at home. She said that she had always wanted to be a teacher. As to why she wanted to leave the classroom for administration she says, “I'm a leader. I'm a born leader. I like to lead. I like to be in charge, I guess. . . . If you go into [administration] with the right intentions then yes, you do have the opportunity to impact the school culture.” She is not interested in the pressures, the time, and effort it would take to be a principal. Like others in the study, Donna believed that the new evaluation program and the new expectations for principals are helping to change the phenomenon.

**The Teachers.** All of the teachers described themselves as strong women who love teaching and are not willing to give the time needed to be a principal. Two of them had worked for female principals, and one has always worked for male administrators (Rachel Baker). When asked about their perceptions of men in the principalship and women in support roles or the classroom, all three women talked about the perception of men being better at discipline and women having different social roles and more family obligations.

**Mary Brown.** Mary Brown has been a classroom teacher for 34 years, has her doctorate and is able to retire within the year. She is married, and her children are all grown. She plans to continue to teach for now saying, “I love education. I love figuring out why they can learn and
why they can’t learn versus standing at the board and teaching math.” She has taught middle and high school math in several different states; she currently works in a large, urban high school. She currently works for a female principal who has an all-male support staff. She says that this is a good combination for her school. Although she holds an administrator’s license, she has never had a desire to move into administration. She believed that her family and her marriage would suffer from the time obligations that principals experience in their jobs.

Rachel Baker. Rachel Baker is a married, 37 year-old mother of three young boys. She is currently working on her dissertation. She has taught in both private schools and public schools. Her current school is a small school in a suburb of a large metropolitan city. She has taught Spanish for 13 years and loves what she does. Education is her second career; she worked in the corporate world where she said that, just like in education, women work harder but get overlooked for promotions. She thinks that at some point in her career she might pursue administration but that family obligations make such a move impossible saying, “Maybe someday, I love being in the classroom. Right now, my place is in the classroom. I’m very good at what I do, and I love being with the kids.”

Tara McDonald. Tara McDonald is a married mother of three grown children. Education is her third career. She served as a United States Marine Corps Officer in her first career and worked in customer relations in a Fortune 500 firm. She said that her military service gave her more credibility with male administrators than did other traditional teachers and that, too, was a form of bias. She recently retired from a large, urban high school of 2400 students. She has mainly worked for male principals but did have one unmarried female principal who had no children. She never desired to be a principal. She believed that women often prefer to stay where they are comfortable and that family naturally comes first for women.
Answering the Research Questions

The remainder of this findings section answers the research questions from the survey data, the open-ended participant responses, and from the interview data. The research questions were generally informed by the Likert-style survey questions, richly informed by the open-ended survey responses, and deeply expanded upon in the interviews. Previous researchers coded men mentoring men, male networking, and men grooming other men as forms of gender bias (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Glass, 2000; Smith, 2006). This researcher used previous researchers’ definitions as guide for coding. For example, she coded the phrase men are perceived to be natural leaders as a social gender role and the phrase the good old boy network as gender bias.

Research question one and question two are similar. Question one asked how women think about the opportunities for men versus women while question two asked how women account for the differences in the representation of men and women in principalships. Kanter (1977) defined opportunity as having a promise of an upward mobility, and that opportunity is ultimately measured by promotion rates. Thus difference in these two questions is subtle. The researcher wanted to speak more generally for question one and more specifically for question two. Question three asked the women how their perceptions have impacted their career aspirations, decisions, and actions.

Research question one: How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary leaderships as opposed to those that exist for men? The women participants felt that women do have opportunities for leadership, but those opportunities are typically limited to support roles rather than the direct supervisory and budgetary roles of principalships and superintendencies. Table 5 provides the four themes that emerged to answer this research question. A discussion of each of these themes follows Table 5.
Gender bias and gendered institutional practices limit women’s opportunities while helping men to gain secondary leadership positions.

Men and women have different familial obligations, which give men an advantage while hindering women’s opportunities to gain secondary leadership positions.

The opportunities for women to gain secondary principalships are getting better.

Most women do not believe that they limit themselves from opportunities for promotion.

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**Gender bias and gendered institutional practices limit women’s opportunities while helping men to gain secondary leadership positions.** In all three of the data collection phases—surveys, open-ended survey responses, and interviews, study participants cited gender-bias and gendered institutional practices as major reasons that hinder women’s opportunities but helps men to attain secondary principalships. Women believed that they have opportunities for leadership in support roles or in elementary principalships. However, participants did not believe that they have an equal opportunity for secondary principalships.

**Surveys.** Two different surveys were used in the study. The principals were asked the same questions as the non-principals, but the non-principals were asked eight additional questions. One of the eight questions asked of non-principal participants was to rank the common perceptions of why more men gain principalships than women. This ranking question strongly informs each of the research questions. Because the ranking question allowed women to choose more than one category, the percentages do not add to 100%; rather, they represent the percent of how many of the 82 non-principal respondents selected those reasons. Table 6 displays the results from the ranking of these reasons by the non-principal respondents.
Table 6

Rating of Reasons by Assistant Principals, District Administrators and Teachers

Which of the following represents why there are fewer women secondary principals? Choose up to 3, if you agree with multiple reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Women’s Personal choices</th>
<th>Family Obligations</th>
<th>Gender Bias</th>
<th>Men are natural leaders</th>
<th>Women not qualified</th>
<th>School Policies</th>
<th>Men are mentored/groomed</th>
<th>Gender roles</th>
<th>Other: Unintentional bias, coaches, tradition, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Personal choices</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Obligations</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Bias</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are natural leaders</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women not qualified</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Policies</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men are mentored/groomed</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>Gender roles</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Other: Unintentional bias, coaches, tradition, etc.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The percentages represent how many women out of the 82 non-principal respondents selected that topic in their ranking.

Gender bias by itself was one of the top three choices in the ranking with 41% non-principal respondents choosing gender bias as why there are fewer women secondary principals. Additionally, several of the ranking choices were gendered institutional practices. The categories, such as men are mentored/groomed and a write-in other, category supported women’s beliefs that gendered institutional practices contribute to men having a greater opportunity for leadership. Participant’s write-in: tradition, unintended bias, and coaches for the other category. Combining gender bias, male grooming, and the specific other write-in responses resulted in 76% of participants choosing gender bias and gendered institutional practices as the reason for fewer female secondary principals. Another survey question asked all participants (principals, former principals, assistant principals, district administrators, and teachers) if men and women had equal opportunities for promotion. The results of this question are displayed in Table 7.
Table 7

Participants’ Perceptions of Men and Women Having an Equal Opportunity for Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Principal Administrators</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not equal 100%.

Only the non-principal administrators (66%) predominantly believed that men and women have an equal opportunity for promotion. In contrast, teachers (52%) believed that men and women do not have an equal opportunity for promotion. Principals were nearly equally divided over the question of equality. This question did not give reasons why the participants had these perceptions. The open-ended responses and the interviews provided great insight into why women felt that they had or did not have an equal opportunity for promotion.

Open-ended responses. The researcher coded open-ended comments like *men hire men*, *male coaches are groomed for principalships*, and *male networking* as institutional practices, while *the good old boy’s club*, *stereotyping helps men*, and *men are mentored* as gender biases. From the reduction of themes, participants mentioned the combination of gender bias and gendered institutional practices 43% of the time in the open-ended responses. Thus participants believed that these practices are a primary reason for men having greater opportunities for promotion to secondary leadership than do women.

Gender bias and gendered institutional practices had tremendous crossover in the open-ended responses of the 101 participants. The most common specific phrase participants used to describe gender bias was the *good old boy network*. The most common institutional practice cited by the participants was coaching as a type of male fast track to the principalship. An
example of such crossover is from a teacher who said, “Male coaches are often hired for principal positions. Again the ‘good ole boy’ system is alive and well.” A principal similarly said, “People pick from people they have relationships with. Men coach together resulting in familiarity.” Another principal said, “It is the ‘good old boy’ story. Sometimes they think men should have the position because they need more money than women.”

Male networking was another common practice that participants identified as giving men a hiring advantage over women. At times, the participants not only identified practices of bias, but they also expressed their frustration with the system. For example: a director wrote, “I do not play golf. You laugh, but some superintendent conferences revolve around a golf course.” Clearly this participant was giving an example of the male networks, which exclude women from the proximity of those who have hiring power, but she was also displaying her feelings of exclusion. A district administrator and former middle school principal similarly wrote, “The good ole boy” network is still alive and well in many districts and school boards. This mindset limits women's participation in some social situations whereby relationships are built and decisions are made.” A teacher pointed out that, “Administrators, who are usually males, do not often choose to mentor women into those same positions. We don't coach with them or drink beer with them, so we aren't often seen to be in the same club.” Thinking similarly, an assistant principal said that there is a “tapping process—women aren't encouraged in the same way men are.” By using the phrase tapping process, she implied that women are at a distinct gendered disadvantage. Additionally a teacher stated, “It is a men's club first and foremost. You would think in the second decade of the new millennium that such conduct would have changed, but not here in Tennessee.” This last comment conveyed a tone of anger or frustration. Women also believed that secondary principalships are “saved” for male candidates. One teacher illustrated
this saying, “The women who want to become administrators are sent to the elementary level. This leaves openings for the men at secondary.”

Interviews. One hundred percent of the interviewees’ cited gender bias and institutional practices which included networking, traditionalism, and coaching as reasons for men having a greater opportunities than women. An example of these perceptions was given by principal Megan Taylor as she spoke about her new superintendent who had a bias against women and hired friends into positions for which they were not qualified saying, “He hired a buddy and he only had his bachelor’s [degree], and had never been in administration as the new assistant superintendent of our district.” Also echoing the perceptions of gendered institutional practices and a general bias that helps men and hinders women was Assistant Principal Ruth Grant saying, “Men hire men that they know . . . Men talk with other men, so they get the offer or the “head’s up” to apply—even before it [the job] is posted. Then the woman is given a token interview but that’s all it is, a token interview.”

Some of the interviewees felt that women’s career opportunities are fewer because male principals and superintendents choose strong capable women to work in the background to help the men who were less capable while males (and most often male coaches) are given greater opportunities for leadership. A teacher said, “Lots of times the female educators float the coaches who are promoted. Women create the materials for SACS accreditation, and other important committees.” Several of the interviewees used the phrase, the Peter Principle, which means people are often promoted to their level of incompetence. However, in the educational setting, many of the participants believed that strong capable women were put in assistant support positions to help the groomed ineffective male leaders to succeed. Further, the respondents believed that as a woman support administrator excels, the hiring officials are afraid
to promote her to a principalship or superintendency because she is too valuable in her current support position. Thus the system limits her ability to move up to a principalship. Teacher Rachel Baker said, “[Men] usually also have strong women who help them complete their job duties. Women get the work but not the credit. Men often get the women around them to do the heavy lifting.” Assistant Principal Ruth Grant also believed that strong women are kept in support roles saying,

> Usually a man gets the credit for their work. Those of us in the trenches or in the classroom, we really know who is the brains behind the policy or changes. We see it.

> But the man, he’s happy to take the credit and keep her in the background. Rarely do the upper people see it. Maybe that’s because they see it as normal.

Director Cindy Walters shared a personal experience that had happened to her on three different occasions. She was told, “You’re exactly where you need to be . . . . You need to stay in district support because that is where you are strongest. That’s where you are making things happen.”

**Men and women have different familial obligations, which give men an advantage while hindering women’s opportunities to gain secondary leadership positions.** In all data collection phases, participants said they believe that there are fewer opportunities for women than for men because women put family obligations ahead of their careers and men do not have that same limitation. Women said that they choose to stay in the classroom or in support roles that require less time away from their children, husbands, or parents who need assistance.

Further, as a result of so many women choosing family over career, participants said that hiring officials overlook women who do desire a secondary principalship in favor of men.

**Surveys.** Two of the non-principal survey questions supported the finding that women put their familial obligations ahead of their careers. The first of these questions asked
participants to rate the reasons for fewer women secondary principals (see Table 6). The top two reasons the women chose were familial obligations (68%) and women’s personal choices (64%) as reasons for fewer women in secondary principalships. Because participants were able to choose more than one category, the percentages represent how many of the 82 non-principal respondents selected each particular reason. Family obligations affect women and men differently. Men traditionally have the breadwinner obligations while women typically have more job-family time constraints that impact their ability to serve as a principal.

Most of the survey questions did not specifically address this research question, yet in the open-ended questions and in the interviews, the link between family obligations, personal choices, and the difference in opportunities based on gender became more apparent. Participants said that because society holds women more responsible for taking care of the family, women in general have fewer opportunities, whereas men are afforded more opportunities.

Open-ended responses. Open-ended responses were riddled with women’s comments about familial obligations and choices that women have to make while men are not held to the same obligations and choices. Several of the women wrote that men have the time to pursue networking and women do not. As a result, hiring officials see men differently and see men as more available for the time-consuming job of principals. These statements support the position posed by researchers of organizational leadership (not of educational leadership) in which the perceptions of promotability by managers were that role congruity is an unintended bias that limited women’s potential to move up the corporate career ladder (Blickle et al., 2011; Hobbler et al., 2009; Toegel & Barsoux, 2012). Organizational leadership researcher Maume (2004) added that women are hindered because managers judge women, believing that they do not have the time to devote to a job because they have to divide their time between their job, their
husbands, and their children. Thus managers keep capable women are in place while giving them extra support duties. The participants in this study agreed that this practice is not only in industrial situations but also in education.

An assistant principal mentioned the dichotomy between the expectations for men and women and their choices saying, “Women take a great deal of time off when they have children, when children are sick and . . . when their children get married or have babies of their own. Men don’t often do that.” In essence, the participants felt that men have fewer family commitments, which allows them more time to devote school. A central office director wrote, “Men pursue principalships more often and take the time to pursue higher education while women are focusing on their families.” A young teacher posed a question back at the researcher saying, “I have begun to question if my district will overlook me for a promotion if I decide to start a family; will this move weaken my perceived abilities or commitment?”

_interviews_. Interviewees not only spoke about familial obligations but also about women’s choices due to those obligations. Tara McDonald believed that women enter into teaching with a very different perspective than men do. She expressed this sentiment saying,

I think a lot of men go into education with the intent of rising, where women do not . . . . [W]omen go in thinking, “Yes, I want to be a teacher. I want the full stability of staying home with my kids for a while, and having summers off.” I don’t know very many women who go in saying to themselves, “Teaching is just a stepping stone.” I do think a lot of men . . . go into it with [that] intent.

Similarly, interviewees addressed the choices that women make and the cultural pressures that women feel. Principal Barbara Kennedy believed that women feel the need to stay at home, that society expects them to be available for their children, and that these two needs cause
women to make choices because they feel that they can not do both. Yet as a principal, she said that she has found the balance between family and school that is needed to be an effective principal. She credited her husband with helping her to break from societal pressure. As for other women she suggested, “It might be one of those things where there’s that sense in which the kids come first, I come second and without understanding about being able to explore balances and options for your family.”

**The opportunities for women to gain secondary principalships are getting better.**

Although the surveys did not address if women’s opportunities were improving, in both the open-ended responses and in the interviews, participants indicated that it is getting better for women. The reasons that women believe that opportunities are changing were because of the emphasis on school improvement, on instructional leadership, on principal accountability, and on the new teacher evaluation program in Tennessee. Participants did not feel the women have reached equity in promotion opportunities, but they do see change on the horizon.

*Open-ended responses.* The participants spoke of the changing trends due to accountability and the emphasis on instructional leadership that may be giving women more opportunities. A principal wrote that tradition has helped men; but “as educational leadership becomes more challenging more women will fill the positions. This trend is quite evident in Tennessee.” Another principal indicated that a decade ago in Tennessee, there were only 12 women in Tennessee secondary principalships, but as her school became “widely known as an academic school” the opportunities have expanded in her district and in others. A district director suggested, “I strongly feel that athletic coaching has generated a large number of administrators. Though I now see that that trend diminishing as academic outcomes and accountability increases. Many coaches I know seem overwhelmed with the instructional
responsibilities of administration.” Some of the open-ended responses that support the contention that conditions are getting better for women were testimonials from women who currently work in districts with female secondary principals. A teacher indicated that “women are given more opportunities in my experience . . . . I’ve had three principals and two [of them] were women.” A district supervisor also said, “The district secondary supervisor, high school principal, and high school assistant principal are all female.” Although participants said that it is getting better, Tennessee currently matches the national statistic of 28% women principals and 72% male principals (Aud et al., 2012). Whereas ten years ago there were 97% male secondary principals and only 3% female in Tennessee, so it is getting better, but still has farther to go.

Interviews. All but two of the interviewees indicated that opportunities for women are getting better due in part to the emphasis on instructional leadership and accountability models. Principal Barbara Kennedy said that her district is looking for people who have instructional leadership backgrounds and that they try to give those people a chance regardless of their gender. Principal Jill Martin also talked about instructional leadership and times changing, saying “I really believe that there is a shift in the expectations of principals . . . . I’m expected to be an instructional leader. I’m expected to be able to have conversations about teaching, learning, achievement, and growth.” Director Donna Carter expressed, “The new evaluation system has done wonders for the role of an administrator . . . forcing them out of their offices into the classroom again, interacting with the students, interacting with the teachers, making them accountable for deadlines.” Later she added, “Women are better multi-taskers . . . if the role itself is going to evolve into a balancing act, then women are going to be more natural candidates for that.” Teacher Tara McDonald gave two reasons for the changes in opportunities for women. The first was that school officials “are recognizing the perception of bias. They might still be
biased, but they don’t want to appear so, so they hire one woman.” She also believed accountability models are discouraging coaches from moving into administration saying, “There’s feedback [now]. Those principals are now being evaluated by the people they should serve, and they aren’t doing well. So they are leaving on their own terms.”

**Most women do not believe that they limit themselves from promotion.** This theme emerged solely in the open-ended responses. An open-ended survey question asked: *Do women limit themselves by not taking the initiative or not having the will to lead?* The results were 34% of participants saying “yes” and 66% saying “no.” Although this question was a yes or no question, the format was actually an open-ended question.

The comments that the participants made ran the gamut from participants saying that women do have the opportunity to them, saying women do not have the opportunity due to bias, personal choices, and family obligations. An assistant principal wrote, “I disagree. For women who want them the opportunities are there.” She was one of three participants (out of 101 survey participants) that expressed this feeling. Most of the comments were about women not having the opportunity or not taking the opportunity. A director expressed social gender expectations saying, “I think women take the initiative but are not as effective as men at self-promotion due to socialization. It is easier for men to network with other men due to gender differences.” Another director commented saying, “I disagree, I think we lead in many ways—but they aren’t all traditional leadership roles.” A teacher talked about family obligations writing, “I do not think it that women are not taking the initiative to lead. I think having children/family definitely makes it harder for women to take on that role.”

Most participants’ comments reiterated the feeling that women do have the initiative, but they do not have the same opportunities as men. A principal said, “No. I think in many cases the
opportunities are not available [for women].” Similarly, an assistant principal wrote, “No. I think that they are provided with fewer opportunities to lead.” Another principal wrote, “I disagree—I believe the leadership styles of women (nurturing) presents a disadvantage for them [women] in contrast with the leadership styles of their male counterparts (assertive).”

**Summary for research question one.** In summary, the participants did not believe that women limit themselves. Rather they cited gender bias, different forms of institutional practices, family obligations, and personal choices, for both men and women as the primary reasons for men having greater career opportunities than women. Finally, participants believed that Tennessee’s new school accountability model, new teacher evaluation program, and the focus on instructional leadership are changing who applies for and who will gain promotions to principal.

**Research question two: How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?** Although very similar to research question one, research question two was designed to be more specific about the participants’ perceptions of why there are a disproportionally higher percentage of male secondary principals than female rather than about opportunities. Some of the same themes emerged for research questions one and two, but research question two was more directly answered by the surveys, open-ended responses, and interviews. Table 8 displays the themes that emerged in the study that answer this research question. A discussion of these emerging themes follows Table 8.
Table 8

*Women’s Perceptions of Why There Are More Men Than Women in Secondary Principalships*

Gender bias and gendered institutional practices help men but impede women from gaining secondary principalships.

Family obligations impact women differently than men, which result in fewer women secondary principals.

Social gender roles help men to ascend to secondary principalships, but are obstacles for women.

*Gender bias and gendered institutional practices help men but impede women from gaining secondary principalships.* This theme primarily emerged from the participants’ open-ended questions and in the interviews. Only one survey question directly informed this theme. However, in the reduction of themes of the open-ended responses and in 00% of the interviews, gender bias and gender institutional practices identified these linked practices are hindering women while helping men to gain secondary principalships.

*Surveys.* Only one of the survey questions informed this research question. The researcher asked non-principal participants to rate specific reasons for the under-representation of women in secondary principalship as was shown in Table 6. Participants rated gender bias (42%) and men are mentored/groomed (31%) highly as reasons for more male secondary principals and fewer female principals. Additionally, this survey question provided women the opportunity to choose a write-in category. Three women (3%) wrote in that coaching and tradition also hinder women and help men. Combining gender bias and these male-dominated gendered institutional practices resulted in 76% of the surveyed women believing that these practices put women at a distinct disadvantage for promotion while giving men with an easier
path to secondary leadership. Also in the ratings question was the choice school policies (18%) which could include some of these practices.

*Open-ended responses.* Participants’ open-ended responses identified gender bias (26%), coaching (9%), and institutional practices (8%) as the top reasons given for fewer women principals. During the reduction of themes, this researcher relied upon the decisions of previous researchers who defined phrases like *men mentor men, male networking, and the grooming of men* as forms of gender bias (Kim & Brunner, 2009; Glass, 2000; Smith, 2006). This researcher used these coding definitions as a guide for her coding. Therefore subsets of gender bias and gendered institutional practices participants stated were: the good old boy network, men promote men, male coaches have an advantage, and tradition favor men.

The most common single phrase used by the participants was *the good old boy network.* That phrase was said 32 times by the 101 participants in the open-ended portion of the survey. Comments of good old boys ranged from the short phrase of: “good old boys” to more in depth explanations such as: “The unwritten practices are promoting friends of friends, loading the school board in favor of certain factions, and certainly the special good old boy relationship.” Likewise, an assistant principal wrote, “Good old boys, white male networks and friends promoting friends” are the practices that promote men more often than women. An assistant principal cited gender bias and institutional practices saying, “Limited perspective and the good old boys networks are real.” A central office district administrator also referred to bias revealing, “The strongest obstacle I faced in my former school system was the promotion of friends rather that qualified individuals - in other words the ‘good old boy system.’”

In the open-ended responses, across all three categories of participants coaching was mentioned as a specific type of male networking, grooming, and bias against women. Coaching
was mentioned 55 times by the 101 participants. Many participants linked coaching to other hiring practices, and to the perception that men are more suited for principalships, saying statements like: “Men promoting male coaches and male colleagues. The ‘perception’ that male coaches would be better high school principals has greatly influenced more males being promoted to administration.” Participants often combined coaching and networking stating, “Coaches tend to go into principalships and they network with each other.” A district administrator said that athletic directors are often “waiting in the wings for an assistant principal to vacate a position so he can come out of the classroom and have an ‘easier’ job.” A central office director of a large rural district noted the impact of athletics over academics expressing, “Many of the standing leaders in our secondary schools are or have been athletic coaches. Those men are now filling the role of principal. I believe that high school leadership (on occasion) is guilty of prioritizing athletics over academics.” A principal felt similarly saying, “Most men that are administrators have been coaches and the belief is that if you can coach a team then you can run a school.”

Some of the participants cited coaching as helping men to gain principalships, but a few of the participants also said that female coaches are given an advantage over non-coaching women. A teacher remarked, “There are a few women who make it into the club; they get the coaching job and then a principal's job by having connections through male contacts.” In the open-ended survey questions, 43% of the women principal participants volunteered that they were former coaches. The researcher did not specifically ask about the participants’ coaching experience, because she did not want to skew any open-ended answers. Some of these female principals echoed Young’s (2006) findings saying that they believed that their coaching experience translated into stronger leadership qualities. One principal felt that coaching helped
her saying, “I was an old coach. I think having a coaching experience does prepare you for the rigor of secondary school leadership. Also, coaches are experts in developing relationships and communicating, which are two valuable characteristics all principals need to be successful.”

While coaching seems to help both men and women to gain a principalship, one participant stated, “more men coach” and another said, “I think coaches have a leg up because they are popular, and men tend to be coaches.” The cyclical logic of men hire men, and male coaches hire male coaches becomes a pattern that excludes the majority of female educators.

Other institutional practices that women cited as helping men were: politics, men mentor other men, and cronyism. A teacher spoke about networking and financial bias recalling, “The former director of schools appeared to promote his ‘buddies’ to principalships to increase their salaries prior to retirement. Most only served as principals for 3-5 years.” Study participants either implied nepotism and cronyism or specifically stated them. An assistant superintendent implied nepotism suggesting, “I believe that in many systems these jobs are reserved for friends of school board members or others who are politically connected.” A teacher blatantly used the terms nepotism and cronyism saying, “Most of the women in my district know better than to try to aspire to principal of any school . . . . My choices and qualifications would not have mattered. ALL the positions are filled through nepotism or cronyism.”

Another theme that is a subset of this finding was that fewer women apply because they can see that they do not have a fair opportunity for promotion. An assistant principal clearly articulated the paradox that exists for women saying that, even when a woman makes it to the assistant principal’s office, still does not get the same necessary experience to move up. She recalled an instance of this problem saying,
I know a principal who created opportunities for his best friend to learn the duties of an AP [assistant principal] before he finished certification . . . . African American Female's responsibilities are never changed from facilities, safety, lockers, parking, and many other low profile and non-technical roles. So, when it was "time," she had a lack of experience in scheduling, budgeting, and interviewing.

Another unfair practice was financial bias that helps men. A district director gave an example of this type of bias saying, “I think it is often financial. The only way to move up in pay in education is to enter administration. Often, men are the major breadwinners for their families.” Another teacher said, “Why should [they] pay a woman to do a job when [they] can get a man?” Similarly a district director offered, “Another aspect that occurs, and is noted, is that secondary is higher paying, so it should be offered to the male. I have heard it expressed, with a somewhat half-hearted apology for expressing it.” Finally and sadly, an assistant principal who cited bias also said, “It is definitely a man’s world and women are hesitant to apply knowing they will not be selected.”

Interviews. Every interviewee believed that gender bias and gendered institutional practices are a primary reasons that women are under-represented in secondary principalships. Just like in the open-ended section of the survey, gendered phrases like “male coaches have an advantage,” “men hire men,” and “lesser-qualified men seem to get a pass” were used to describe why there are more male secondary principals than female. All but one of the interviewees shared experiences and insight into blatant bias and common school practices that make leadership roles easier for men to attain. Meghan Taylor indicated, “Women have to work twice as hard as men to prove themselves.” She also believed that male teachers use the principal’s
office as a stepping-stone to the central office and the superintendency and that the best people
do not always get the principalship or the superintendency.

The “good old boy” comment was mentioned by most of the interviewees. Donna Carter
talked about her prior superintendent saying, “We had a very chauvinistic power control kind of
a guy . . . a good ole boy that was a home grown good ole boy.” Cindy Walters, also mentioned
the good old boys may have been an impediment but they ultimately became her allies once they
got to know her. She recalled her initial welcome to the assistant principalship by her principal
saying, “When I got there, the principal did not want me there, he said that he didn’t want me.
He was one of those good old boys.” He actually told her that she did not “look” like an
administrator and that she was too pretty, not strong enough, and too petite for the job. He never
asked her about her credentials, successes, or even how she handled discipline. She remembered
his comments indicating, “He looked at me and he said, ‘We didn’t request an administrator.’ He
said, ‘Well, the superintendent directed that you work here. Don’t say I didn’t warn you.’ I
thought I’d die first.” She overcame bias and was promoted to principal when he retired. At the
time, she was one of only 12 women principals in the state of Tennessee.

Principal Meghan Taylor spoke about coaching and cronyism. She explained that in her
system the previous principal had been grooming an “unsuccessful, horrible” football coach for a
principalship. He had been taken out of the classroom, had been given cafeteria duty and other
“soft” jobs in the high school. He and his benefactor had made it very clear that he was next in
line for the principalship. Further, he had promised his assistant coaches assistant principalships.
Meghan said, “I never, ever, ever wanted to be a high school principal . . . but when people
approached me, and I saw that the coach was going to be principal, I had to do something.”
When asked to elaborate on her feelings, her experiences, and perceptions, Donna Carter talked about two coaches in her district, “We did keep a coach [as] an aide in a classroom; we didn’t want to lose him until we moved him up to a principal job.” She also knew of a second coach who had two certifications but was “ineffective in the classroom and ineffective in the guidance area.” So they made an assistant principal job for him in attendance.

Meghan Taylor remembered talking with a superintendent from a neighboring county who told her, “I don’t know what I’m going to do . . . I’ve only got one coach that wants to be a principal. I don’t know what I’m going to do.” She elaborated saying, “It’s like it was the end of the world, and I couldn’t believe that I was hearing that!” In her own district, she recalled principals who definitely groomed other coaches saying that they had the mentality that only other coaches would be successful. She added that male coaches have a bravado that exclaims, “You owe it to me.”

Another problem identified by the interviewees was that men are typically in hiring positions. Ruth Grant addressed this saying,

Men hire men that they know . . . . There is definitely bias. I think coaching plays into it a lot because men hire men. And men do rise faster usually with a lot less experience.

They put themselves out there more, but they are also hanging out with the hiring people. Director Donna Carter believed that men hiring other men extended to school board members. She offered, “In my experience, the women on our school board are token members. They don’t have the same voice as the male ones do.” Thus men are more visible and are in positions to influence hiring practices. Principal Jill Martin was told by her male superintendent that community leaders told him, “Do not hire a woman. A woman cannot work in this school.” She remembered thinking, “I was shocked by that. I had never experienced that and I also thought
you probably shouldn’t be telling me this.” But his reasoning for telling her was to better prepare her for the job saying, “Are you prepared to deal with that? Can you handle that?”

Rachel Baker suggested that women who want the position may be hindered by the choices of other women. As Rachel Baker said, “Women who want the position may be overlooked because they [women] are not the norm in education.” Sadly, her insight is similar to Kanter’s (1977a; 1977b) theory that token women are seen as an anomaly to the system. Therefore they do not actually pave the way for other women.

**Family obligations impact women differently than men, which result in fewer women secondary principals.** While the participants rated gender bias as a top reason for men gaining leadership positions more readily than women, participants also cited that women have more responsibilities at home, thus they make personal choices not to pursue principalships. Additionally, the participants believed that men have wives who take care of the family, so men are able to make career choices that give them an advantage over women for secondary principalships. Participants also mentioned that women delay their careers until their children are grown, which changes their career trajectory giving younger men a benefit in hiring. Lastly, in the open-ended responses, participants stated that they preferred support leadership positions rather than principalships.

**Surveys.** The surveys more directly addressed this theme and this research question of how women in education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in secondary leadership. Six survey questions helped to explain the participant’s perceptions about family obligations, choices, and encouragement that help women to get a principal or assistant principal position. Table 9 summarizes the survey results that that link family obligations, choices, and encouragement with the problem of practice.
Table 9

Survey Questions Addressing Familial Obligations, Choices, and the Under-representation of Women in Secondary Leadership

Non-principals only: Rate the following as reasons for the under-representation of women:

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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<td>Family Obligations</td>
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<td>Personal Choices</td>
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Non-principals only: I put my family needs above my personal ambitions.

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<th>Agree</th>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<td>District Administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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Non-principals only: I would like to be an administrator in district support but do not desire a principalship.

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<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Administrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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All participants: A mentor encouraged me to pursue a principalship.

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<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
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<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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All participants: I was encouraged pursue a principalship by my spouse/family.

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<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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Non-principals only: Do you see yourself in administration?

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<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non-principal Administrator</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Due to rounding percentages may not equal 100%. Women were able to select multiple answers in this rating question thus the percentages represent the how many of the 82 women chose the particular topic as a reason for more men in leadership.

The two questions that directly supported this finding of family obligations are the ratings question for reasons why there are fewer women secondary principal. Also the Likert-style question: I put my family needs above my personal ambitions strongly supported this theme. In the non-principal survey rating question of reasons for fewer women in leadership 68% of the
participants chose familial obligations and 64% of these non-principals selected personal choices. As was stated in the discussion for research question one, participants were able to select multiple answers in this rating question, thus the percentages represent the how many of the 82 women chose the particular topic as a reason for more men in leadership. In the second question *I put my family needs above my personal ambitions*, assistant principals were neutral on this question, but district administrators (78%) and teachers (85%) were overwhelmingly in agreement of this statement.

Three other questions from the survey indirectly informed this finding: (a) *I would like to be an administrator in district support but do not desire a principalship*; (b) *A mentor encouraged me to pursue a principalship*; and (c) *I was encouraged pursue a principalship by my spouse/family*. In the survey question that asked participants if they preferred to be in support leadership positions, assistant principals (62%) and teachers (85%) said that they preferred support roles. Additionally, 68% of the teachers said “No they did not see themselves in administration.” These survey findings are expanded upon in the discussion of the open-ended responses that linked the desire for a principalship to family obligations and to personal choices.

Encouragement was also linked to the women gaining the supervisory positions of principals and assistant principals. Principals and assistant principals were more likely to be encouraged by their spouses and families (73% and 75% respectively), and they were more likely to have been mentored into their secondary leadership positions (73% and 77% respectively) than were district administrators and teachers. In contrast, only 37% of teachers indicated that they were mentored and encouraged family or spouses. Likewise only 37% of the district administrators were encouraged by their family or spouse, and 50% said that they were mentored. The two most common reasons for this lack of encouragement as presented in the
open-ended discussion section were that women are not typically the primary breadwinners, but women are typically the primary caregivers. A surprising result was that empty-nester women district supervisors and teachers were less likely to have been encouraged by their family or spouse than were younger teachers with children at home. Similarly, women with over 15 years experience believed that more men enter into principalships because women have greater family obligations that limit their availability for promotions.

In the surveys, personal choices rated much higher than in the open-ended responses reduction of themes. The reason for this disparity was that survey participants lumped all choices under the personal choice category. However, in the open-ended section the personal choices were split between family obligations and social gender roles. The open-ended responses and interviews shed greater light on the connected themes of family obligations and personal choices.

*Open-ended responses.* The participants rated family obligations and the choices that women make as top reasons for the under-representation of women in secondary principalships. Not surprisingly, married participants (28%) and participants with younger children (30%) often spoke of family obligations in the open-ended responses as a primary reason for men having an advantage over women for promotion to secondary principalships. Teachers (27%) and district administrators (28%) were more likely than principals (17%) and assistant principals (18%) to mention that family obligations hinder women from gaining principalships. This finding was confirmed in the survey-rating question and in the reduction of themes for open-ended comments. Study participants with more than 15 years experience were the most likely to cite family obligations as impeding women from gaining secondary principalships. Table 10 displays the reduction of themes from the open-ended responses.
Table 10

Reduction of Themes by Job Title, Marital Status, Family Status, and Experience Level from the Open-ended responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Social Gender Roles</th>
<th>Family Obligations</th>
<th>Gender Bias</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Gendered Institutional Practices</th>
<th>Personal Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totals (N=101)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals (N=16)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Prin. (N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (N=80)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (N=70)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher (N=38)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Prin (N=16)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced (N=13)</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Prin. (N=3)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (N=80)</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (N=70)</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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<td>Teacher (N=38)</td>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Prin (N=16)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced (N=13)</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher (N=38)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N=28)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=38)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants with Children</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children still living at home (N=16)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empty Nesters (N=22)</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children (N=30)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Ranges</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 years Experience (N=12)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 years Experience (N=18)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 years Experience (N=19)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 20 years Experience (N=50)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of times that theme or term was mentioned in the open-ended questions is listed. Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%.

A common comment made by participants in the open-ended responses was that the time-constraints that secondary principals have create more work–family conflict for women in secondary education than they do for men. In the reduction of themes, the concept of family obligations was mentioned 141 times and the combination of family and lack of time for principals was said 69 times. These two are strongly linked. A former principal talked about the family obligation saying, “I think that the lack of mobility on the part of females—family
obligations and the culture of following the spouse—has probably had a greater impact than most researchers have noted.”

Participants remarked about the many events that secondary principals needed to attend including: athletic events, fine arts programs, and extra curricular events at night. Attending these types of evening events suits men better. In contrast, participants believed that women may gravitate to elementary principalships because elementary principals were able to go home right after school, which suited women caregivers better. A principal discussed the difference between secondary and primary principals writing, “Women do not feel like they can take on all of the responsibilities that come with being a secondary principal especially, if they have small children. The demands at the secondary school level are much greater than at the primary level.” With respect to why men have an easier time with the demands of a secondary principalship, an assistant principal wrote, “Men don’t shy away from the time it takes to be in a leadership position, whereas many women I know say they want to spend more time with their families and their jobs are not as important as their families.”

Principals and former principals credited their very supportive husbands for enabling them to successfully meet the demands of a secondary principal. An example of a principal appreciating her husband’s support is, “The support from my husband makes it possible for me to have this job. Without his support the guilt and stress level would be impossible.” In contrast, one principal talked about the difficulties of pursuing a secondary principalship as a single mother. “My primary obstacle [for promotion] was being a single mother at the same time I was pursuing becoming a high school principal. The time challenges were very difficult to work through.” Several of the principals spoke first hand about the difficulty of balancing family and work with almost identical statements. “In many cases the dual role of family caregiver and
professional puts restraints [on women] due to the element of time. Career and family life are extremely hard to juggle especially with the demands in the secondary education field.”

Similarly, a district supervisor presented an interesting perspective of female bias against women who chose to leave the classroom as she wrote, “Family obligations and social pressures from my colleagues early on [were my obstacles]. With all teachers there was a thought that someone who went into administration did not really love teaching or kids.” She finished her thought saying that she had to overcome this female-on-female bias by realizing that her support position allowed her to ensure that “all children receive the education that they deserve.”

*Interviews.* Interviewees not only spoke about familial obligations but also about women’s choices with respect to these obligations. Jennifer Murphy, a Director of Counseling, discussed the personal and family choices that women make saying, “I have two boys, I’m a wife, and I’m active in my church. For me the trade off wasn’t what I wanted to do . . . You only have x amount of energy in a day and to expend it in another thankless role, an additional thankless role wasn’t what I wanted to do.”

Teacher Mary Brown spoke about her personal decisions saying, “I was not willing to give up time with my children . . . I love the classroom, so it wasn’t that I have ever been unhappy in my job . . . I was not willing to work sixteen hours a day at school.” Now that her children are grown and gone, she indicated that family obligations still impact her life saying, “I have often had to help with my parents who are in their eighties, and I’m the only one of four children who happens to live in the same town with my parents.” Many teachers said that they entered into teaching because it was compatible with their family life, as their children grow a different type of family-work-life balance impacts their work-life balance.
The interviewees also said women may purposefully delay their careers due to family obligations but that their delay may impact their promotability later when they are ready. Assistant Superintendent Cindy Walters discussed this, saying that when women are ready hiring officials give them traditional support roles saying, “Women are usually in support . . . . You’ll see women being number two and not number one. Really we need to get people to recognize that charge.” Additionally when women are given a chance for a principalship, Cindy said, “If you look at the schools, that are given to women they [women principals] were not given premier schools.” Similarly, Ruth Grant spoke about women being older “when they are available to move up, maybe that makes them less hirable or more intimidating to the men. . . . They [women] often end up in elementary, support, or given a school that is less desirable and needs a lot of work. Men tend to shy away from those schools.”

**Social gender roles help men to ascend to secondary principalships, but are obstacles for women.** Social gender roles as defined by social role theory states that gender is an understood part of a person’s societal role and society preconditions boys and girls to accept certain behaviors which predisposes girls for service roles and boys for leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). From the participants in this study their perception is that fewer women are principals because of: (a) society’s predisposition is that women are nurturing, have more family demands, and should serve as teachers or support administrators and (b) society’s predisposition that men are strong, ambitious, and more natural leaders for secondary schools.

**Surveys.** Five of the survey questions directly addressed the concept of social gender roles and women. The social gender roles category was the third highest category chosen. The four other survey questions that directly focused on social gender roles as impacting women’s attainment of the principalship were: (a) *Men are more suited to be a principal*, (b) *Men are
more interested in being a principal; (c) Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role; and (d) Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools. As this study is qualitative in nature, the open-ended responses and the interviews provide context for the survey questions. Tables 3 and 4 in the first discussion of the survey findings displayed the results of these questions.

Social gender role theorists indicated that society trains men for leadership and that women are kept in support roles. Only non-principals were asked the question, and a large majority (89%) of these district administrator and assistant principals disagreed with the statement that men are more suited for secondary principalships. Also in disagreement were 81% of the teacher participants. This survey finding was confirmed in the open-ended section as the participants often used the phrase “the perception that men are more suited to lead schools.” In spite of this societal perception, overwhelmingly, the participants agreed with the statement, *Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools.* One hundred percent of the principals agreed that women are equally capable, 98% of the non-principal administrators agreed, and 74% of the teacher participants agreed.

Participants gave mixed results for the question that *Men are more interested in being a principal* than are women. Principals and former principals were nearly equally mixed with 34% agreeing, 33% neutral, and 33% in disagreement. Teachers were also split in their feelings about men being more interested in principalships with 34% in agreement, 17% neutral, and 47% in disagreement. In contrast, non-principal administrators had 61% who disagreed, thus indicating that women do desire a principalship as much as men do. Supporting this belief was that 50% of these same administrators had applied for a principalship or a vice principalship.
The survey-rating question primarily informed this research finding, as 20% of all participants chose the social gender role category. Once again, choices and social gender roles crossed over with choices and family obligations. Since society expects women to be nurturing, accommodating, and to be the primary caregiver, there is crossover between family obligations and gender roles. Likewise, society expects men to be leaders, aggressive, competitive, disciplinarians, but men are not expected to devote as much time with the day-to-day family errands, appointments, children’s activities, and household chores that women must do.

*Open-ended responses.* The theme of social gender roles also emerged in one-fifth of coded comments made by the participants. Participants believed that society has the perception that men are more appropriate for secondary principalships than women are. Participants also felt that hiring officials perceive that the physical size of men makes men better disciplinarians. The engrained societal expectation of women being seen as emotional and men being more natural leaders also emerged in the open-ended responses. Participants believed that all of these social expectations contributed to more men rising to a principalship and more women being pushed toward support roles.

In the open-ended responses, participants often stated the perceptions of society in general and of hiring officials in particular that lead to an over-representation of men in building leadership roles. The participants used the word *perceptions* repeatedly to describe the idea that men are predisposed to be better leaders and women are perceived to be less capable or less appropriate for secondary leadership. A former principal cited perception by district officials saying, “There seems to be a perception that these roles should go to men, regardless of their ability to lead instructionally.” A central office director wrote, “I believe that much of it has to do with the perception that men make stronger leaders. I also think that physical attributes (of
many men being bigger and stronger) impact those decisions.” In a slightly different aspect of perception and bias, another central director disagreed saying, “[there is a] perception that they [women] are not as committed to their career as men.” The continued use of the phrase the perception that men indicates that these women do not feel that the perception is valid and that perception becomes an unfair form of social gender bias.

Women’s familial social roles as opposed to their personal feelings of familial obligation contribute to the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. An assistant principal who waited to move into administration until her children were older said that her husband’s job was not flexible. Her perspective was, “Societal roles place women as the primary care givers for their children--true or not.” The participants were very clear to say that social expectations for women and men are part of the problem. A rural teacher posed, “Men have assumed the role of leaders at the secondary level for longer. Societal expectations may presume men are more ‘natural’ leaders as they are perceived as less emotional.” An urban district teacher stated, “I don’t know if women limit their potential or if society has a culture of limiting women, and if you’re a women who accepts societal dictates you allow yourself to be limited.” A suburban teacher expressed women’s social-gender roles that women face, writing

Spouses resent the amount of time spent away from home. Women typically have more responsibilities at home, too. They handle the majority of household chores, parental duties, and elderly parent care. Personal feelings of guilt also contribute to women not applying for leadership positions. And of course there is the stereotypical, "Old Boys Club" mentality that males are more effective leaders.

Social Role Theory posits that the preconditioning of girls affects their ability to draw attention to themselves (Eagly & Karau, 2002). A principal talked about the social
preconditioning of girls adding, “Honestly, I think men probably promote themselves better than we women do. Women are basically not as aggressive and usually have issues related to family and self-esteem.” A director added, “I think women take the initiative, but we are not as effective as men at self-promotion due to socialization.” An assistant principal added that men are supposed to be confident and to assert authority; but when women pursue leadership, she said, “Women get the reputation of being bitchy or aggressive when asserting authority.”

Similarly another assistant principal combined personal choices and societal expectations saying, “I believe more of there is a higher percentage of men who pursue the principalship and that our society still expects men to lead.” An assistant principal also spoke of tradition and society saying, “Men are traditionally the wage earners. Men want to make more money so they pursue leadership roles more often.” Participants indicated that there are more men in secondary principalships because more men apply for them. Thus men have a greater chance of gaining the principalship. However, 75% of the assistant principals said that they had applied at least one time in their career, 58% of district administrators had applied but only 16% of teachers had ever applied for a principalship. These findings suggest that once a woman gains an administrative job, she is more likely to continue to pursue other opportunities for leadership.

The size of secondary students, discipline, and the perception that men make better disciplinarians was another theme that emerged in open-ended responses. In some cases, the participants seemed to agree that women may have difficulties with boys in secondary schools, but others said that they have no problem handling discipline in the classroom. So, they wondered why the community and hiring officials would think that the principal’s office would be any different. A director believed that “Discipline issues may be a concern for some women. The size and nature of secondary students and the school environment is not as nurturing. Most
women enjoy the elementary impact on providing a caring, nurturing, environment for students.”

A teacher who said she would consider a principalship when her young children are older said, “I believe most people think men are stronger in a leadership position, which is not true. Women can give the same discipline and [have the same] leadership qualities as men”

The idea that men are less emotional was touched on by many of the participants. The previously quoted teacher summed up her thoughts saying, “I think the public see men as stronger . . . they fear women are too emotional and not strong enough to voice their opinions.”

Another teacher summed up the idea that society does not accept leadership qualities in women saying, “I believe society doesn't recognize those qualities in females. A woman who takes the initiative, engages in networking, and demonstrates a will to lead is considered arrogant, domineering, and judgmental.” She further said that women are called “too emotional” but men who voicing the same concern are called “passionate.”

Participants made an interesting social role bias. They believed that women principals prefer to have male assistant principals, male department chairs, and athletic directors. A supervisor wrote that she had interviewed for a vice principalship in a school with a female principal. During the interview, the female principal made several comments that showed she did not want a women assistant principal saying, “She needed a man to help her with things like breaking up a fights and in other situations.” A teacher talked about female-on-female social role bias saying, “I’ve seen women in leadership roles that only want men around them—no other females.” Another teacher believed that women tend to be jealous of other women, so they hire men in their administrative support positions.

*Interviews.* Social gender roles were also a very common theme from the interviews. The interviewees agreed with the other participants saying that social gender expectations affect
women in several ways. Social gender expectations color the hiring process, which gives men an unwritten advantage. Gender roles also hold women back even when they are more capable. They also said that women do not typically plan to enter into administration, but that they are often drawn there due to a desire to fix a problem or to stop an ineffective candidate from attaining the job.

The interviewees talked about social and cultural preconditioned personality characteristics of men and women saying that these characteristics contribute to more men and fewer women in secondary principalships. Assistant Principal Ruth Grant used politics as her example of the different personality characteristics of men and women saying, “Let’s face it, women don’t really play politics or make it known. They tend to do all the heavy work but in the background. They are happy to make a difference.” Similarly, teacher Tara McDonald believed that fewer women apply for principalships saying, “I don’t think women, most of us don’t compartmentalize as well as men do. I don’t think that we are able to leave it at school.” She also felt that men and women deal with confrontation differently. Saying that confrontations are “more anxiety provoking for the average woman than the average man.” Director Donna Carter believed that gaining a principalship is seen as a “stature thing. There’s a little bit more stature if you’re a principal versus a teacher. There’s also the pay raise.” Those two aspects seem to favor men’s social roles more than women’s social gender roles.

Tara McDonald combined the traditional expectations of women and community perceptions of traditional leaders. She believes that parents treat women differently. In parent-teacher conferences, she said that parents get more emotional and confrontational with women teachers than they do male teachers. Further she felt that parent confrontation escalates if the woman is an administrator saying, “Parents push her differently than a man. Both male and
female parents, I think react more strongly and emotionally than they would with a male administrator.” Additionally, she wondered if hiring officials are more reluctant to hire a woman because they worry that problems will escalate up the chain more often with a woman principal.

Discipline was a common reason given by the interviewees. Socially and culturally men are seen as more intimidating, thus they are perceived to be better disciplinarians. The interviewees agreed that this perception helps men and impedes women from gaining principalships. Teacher Rachel Baker said, “I think there is apperception that men are better disciplinarians. But women just do discipline in a different way . . . . It doesn’t make them less effective.” Principals Meghan Taylor and Barbara Kennedy both said that students feared being called to their office for discipline. Meghan Taylor recalled a chance meeting with a student at the grocery store who told her, “Take a look at this face. You’re never going to see this face in your office. I heard you were pretty tough.” Barbara Kennedy also said that the community did not expect her to be able to handle the gangs and the discipline in her school and that there were “some pockets of people who were looking for her to fail.”

An interesting twist on gender roles and student discipline was that men have an even greater chance for leadership experience at the assistant principal-level because women principals tend to hire male assistant principals. In the open-ended sections only a few participants mentioned this idea. However, the idea of women not hiring women was more prominent in the interviews. Teacher Mary Brown offered, “In my case, the woman is the principal and she has surrounded herself by men that can handle that [the discipline].” Assistant Principal Ruth Grant’s experience was also that a female principal needed a strong male on the administrative team because “young men need that role model too.” Although each of the
female principals that were interviewed was known in her community for handling the difficult situations in their school, they all did have male assistant principals.

Interviewees spoke about Tennessee and the Bible Belt. Director Donna Carter posited, “I think men are looked to as natural leaders especially in the Bible Belt. A man is the spiritual head of the household.” Ruth Grant talked about being in the Bible Belt saying, “We are in the South and have strong Christian values. Men are the head of the household. We are taught that men lead . . . . It’s just how we are raised . . . . It a social role thing.” She also added that Southern women are content to stay in the background and to be the nurturers, as long as the man is leading well. But she added, “If the man doesn’t lead well, that is when Southern women take over to fix it for the kids. It’s that protective nurturing side of women. We are born that way.” Teacher Rachel Baker also felt that “if the man is not good,” women step up into leadership to fix the problem. Ruth and Rachel’s perspective fits with why former Principal Cindy Walters, Principal Barbara Kennedy, and Principal Meghan Taylor were mentored into their principalships. They rose to principalships to fix a problem for the students and staffs.

**Summary for research question two.** In summary, the participants in this study believe that gender bias, family obligations, social gender roles, personal choices, and unwritten practices that favor men and hinder women account for the difference between men and women achieving a position in secondary leadership. Gender bias can be blatant or can be in the form of institutional practices such as men helping men, coaching networks, and the good old boy network. Each of these practices makes it very difficult for women to break into leadership. Further, men in leadership tend to promote other men to direct supervisory positions, while keeping women in support roles that give women little opportunity to gain the recognition and experience needed to move up the ladder. The women also believed that more men are promoted
because they have fewer familial obligations with the children or aging parents. Southern women tend to have deeply-seated social gender roles/expectations. They will rise beyond gender roles if they feel that a school or program needs to be saved from poor leadership because they want make a difference in the lives of their students.

**Research question three: How do women in secondary education think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?** As seen in the previous research questions, personal choices are complex, and they are affected by family obligations and social gender roles. Participants expressed that choices were not seen as obstacles; rather participants wanted a work-life balance. For the women that do have aspirations for a principalship, research question three is an important question. Participants were frustrated by the unfair hiring practices that still exist in the twenty-first century more than they said they were discouraged from lack of women in secondary principalships. For women who aspire to leadership positions and do not have an equal opportunity, participants also believed that the system needs to change and in some ways is changing to attract more women to secondary principalships. Table 11 displays the findings that answer this research question.

Table 11

*Women’s Perceptions about Their Career Aspirations, Decisions, and Actions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Although women are equally capable of leadership, they chose not to pursue principalships due to family obligations and social roles.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Many women choose to remain in the classroom or in support roles where they can have direct contact with students, teachers, curriculum, and instruction.</td>
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Although women are equally capable of leadership, they chose not to pursue principalships due to family obligations and social roles. While participants placed gender bias, institutional practices, family obligations, and social roles as outside forces which limit women’s promotability, the participants also felt that women make a conscious choice not to pursue leadership positions. Although the participants had strong convictions about gender bias and institutional practices that favored men for promotion, they also gave examples of the choices and decisions that they made due to family obligations and social roles. Additionally some of the participants simply did not want the principal’s job.

Surveys. Five survey questions were related to this research question about career aspirations and choices: (a) Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools; (b) Men and women have an equal opportunity for promotion; (c) Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role; (d) I would like to be a principal; and (e) I would like to be an administrator in a district support role but do not desire to be a principal. Although 90% participants believed that women are equally capable of leading a secondary school, only 34% the non-principal participants wanted to be a principal. Only 10% of the teachers wanted to be a principal. Not surprisingly, the assistant principal participants (44%) were the most likely to desire a principalship while teachers (58%) and district administrators (78%) preferred to be an administrator in a district support role. As Assistant Principal Ruth Grant said in her interview, “I want women to have the opportunity. If they want it, they should have an equal shot at it.”

Open-ended responses. Although most participants believed that women do not limit themselves and do not get the same opportunities as men, women also believe that women make choices, delay their careers for their family, and/or simply do not want the job. Teachers and
district support participants were more vocal about choices than were principals and assistant principals. Participants believed that women make choices to stay at home, which then changes their career path to a traditional women’s support leadership path. One teacher reflected these feelings saying, “I think many women put administrative positions on the ‘back-burner’ until their kids are raised. If they have no children, I think they are as competitive as men.”

In the open-ended responses, participants stated that they chose to stay in the classroom, took on support roles that required less time away from their family, or pursued a principalship when their children were older. A principal supported the idea that women delay their careers due to family obligations saying, “I waited until my children were grown because I did not feel that I could do it justice, as I put in many hours as an administrator.” An assistant principal indicated that she purposefully “chose to slow down [her] career when [her] children were young.” A teacher also took this position indicating, “Right now, I do not have time to be an administrator because I have two small children at home. Once they are grown, I can see myself getting into an administrative role.” A district director summed up the family-job balance for women saying, “It is difficult to maintain a clear career path that includes movement through the career ladder that does not impact the amount of time for your own children.” Participants also discussed the special difficulty that professional women have in balancing their desire be good mothers and wives against their desire to make a difference in the education of children.

Interviews. As seen in the previous research questions, personal choices are complex and are linked to family obligations, and social gender roles. For this research question the concept of choice was seen as something that holds women back, rather it was about truly having a work-life balance choice that is personal rather than one that is forced upon women by society.
Delayed careers and becoming comfortable in their school and family roles was a theme the interviewees mentioned. The non-principals that were interviewed also offered different theories about women’s career aspirations. The interviewees were very careful to say that they could not speak to all women, rather they could only talk about their personal situations and ones that they had seen in their schools.

Non-principal interview participants said that some women might intend move up to administration later in life, “when their children are older.” Rachel Baker succinctly said, “Maybe some day [I’ll consider administration]. I love being in the classroom.” She also mentioned that right now in her life her children are young, “Family is my number 1 priority right now. I feel like I need to be with them more right, not at work more.” Although women may begin with the thought that they will pursue a principalship later in life, women may change their intentions once they become comfortable with the time they have with their husbands, grown children, and grandchildren. As a result, these women who want to make a difference beyond the classroom choose to enter into support positions. Donna Carter, talked about teachers “getting into a rhythm” and that teachers “don’t like change, so that when they take time off to be at home with children they leave the profession all together or come back to what is familiar. Teacher Mary Brown, who had all the qualifications and experience to move into a principalship, spoke of this phenomenon saying, “I’m probably not willing to do it now due to my marriage.” She is one year from retirement and loves the time she has for her husband. Jill Martin said that a teacher had told her that although she had wanted a principalship, she did not have the time to get the doctorate that women must have the job. This teacher said, “I’m not going back to get it, because my age and I’m not going to live long enough for it to matter.” Rachel Baker also said that women weigh the life-balance differently saying, “I think some
[women] may want to [move up] but they are good in the classroom and they know they make a difference there, so is it worth it to move up?"

**Women choose to remain in the classroom or in support roles where they can have direct contact with students, teachers, curriculum, and instruction.** As was previously stated in the interview discussion of the previous research questions, many women entered into education to teach children and do not aspire to a principalship. Some of the teachers very clearly stated that they wanted to remain in the classroom. Others do desire to enter into support roles to make an impact on curriculum and instruction and to help the system in a broader sense. A subset of this desire is that these participants said that the principalship is not the only type of secondary leadership that matters. The non-principal survey questions greatly affirmed this finding. The open-ended responses and interviews gave explanations for those survey answers.

**Surveys.** As can be seen in Tables 3 and 4, six of the survey questions were directly related to this finding about choices and career aspirations: (a) *Do you see yourself in administration?* (b) *Have you ever applied for a principal or vice principal position?* (c) *Do you hold the degree/credentials for an administrative position?* (d) *Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role;* (e) *I would like to be a principal;* and (f) *I would like to be an administrator in a district support role but do not desire to be a principal.* The question asking non-principals if they saw themselves in administration was telling for the teachers. The question did not ask if they saw themselves as a principal. Only 26% of the teachers said “yes” they did want to be an administrator. Similarly, although 47% of the teachers held the degrees and credentials for a principalship, only 16% of teachers said that they had ever applied for either a principalship or assistant principalship. These responses are a strong indicator that many women teachers prefer to stay in the classroom.
As previously shown in the survey discussion of the previous finding, the non-principals participants (34%) wanted to be a principal and even fewer of the teachers (10%) had aspirations for a principalship. Assistant principal participants (44%) were more likely to want a principalship. A strong majority of the district administrators (78%) preferred to be an administrator in a district support role and had no plans to use their district support role as a stepping-stone to a principalship. The facts that 68% of the teachers did not see themselves in administration, 58% of teachers considered pursuing a district support role, but 10% of them do not see themselves in that administrative support role, and only 10% of teachers wanted to pursue a principalship, gives this researcher the impression that a great number of secondary women educators prefer to stay in the classroom.

Open-ended responses. Teachers and non-principal administrators indicated that they lead in different ways and that they prefer to stay in the classroom or in support positions that have direct impact on teachers and students. Teachers shared that they want to stay in the classroom where they make a difference in individual student’s lives. A teacher wrote, “I have direct contact with my students, which is why I became an educator.”

Some participants said that women do have the desire to lead a secondary school. Others stated that women define leading in different ways than men do. A district director spoke of the importance of other types of leadership saying, “I personally never wanted to be a principal, but I do like to be a leader and have a voice at the district level.” Another district administrator said, “I think we lead in many ways, but they aren't all traditional leadership roles.” A teacher from an urban district passionately responded saying, “I AM A LEADER WHERE I AM!! Why is that such a hard concept for my building principal to understand, and why is HE so threatened by it? Sigh. I LOVE my subject area, and I LOVE teaching kids.” An assistant principal indicated that
she made a choice not to pursue a principalship saying, “The number one reason I hold back is my lack of interest in having to oversee athletics.” Another assistant principal spoke to the idea of some women preferring different types of leadership as she wrote, “I think women often take on just as important roles in leadership such as curriculum instructors, data coaches and supervisors. I wonder if some women such as myself don’t like the idea of such a public position—a head principal.” A math teacher expressed the feelings of many of the teachers saying, “I think I am affecting more students in the classroom positively, than if I were in administration. I do, however, wish I had a voice in educational decisions.”

One open-ended question directly answered this research question about women’s personal choices. The question came immediately after the survey question that asked if participants wanted to move into administration. The next question asked if participants did want an administrative position, what type of position they wanted. The most common choice was a district-level curriculum and instruction director or supervisor. They believed that this type of role gave them the ability to influence policy that affects teachers and students in the most positive, productive way. Other top choices were instructional coaches and assistant principals. Since many teaches were content to stay in the classroom, many participants left this question blank. Although some teachers did respond with comments like,

I desire interaction with kids. I cannot stand watching great teachers go to administration . . . because students always lose . . . . I would NOT leave the classroom for TRIPLE the money and headaches. I watched this departure with my dear friend (female) and my brother (male), and our high school students lost two great teachers. It is never the same again, because relationships and classroom dynamics are at the core of teaching.
**Interviews.** This research question was specifically asking about how the participants’ aspirations and decisions are impacted by their perceptions. Principal participants spoke about the demands of the job, the support of their husbands, and the work-life balance that they have been able to maintain. District support administrators chose to enter into leadership positions but did not want to move into a principalship. They wanted to have an impact on policies and the implementation of programs, but they also wanted to have the direct contact with students and teachers. The interviewed teachers said that they wanted to stay in the classroom. They acknowledged that the system favors men, and that women who want to move up should be given the chance. However, they personally for now want to have direct contact with students.

Director Donna Carter theorized that there are three types of teachers who truly do not want to move into administration saying. The first are the “paycheck teachers and they don’t want any more responsibility beyond their 15 minutes before school and their 15 minutes after school.” The second type is afraid of change. She spoke of the difficulty of the first year of teaching saying, “It takes a while after your first couple of years of teaching to really settle into a groove, and I think for many teachers change is scary.” The third type of teachers “goes into teaching because they want to make a difference.” She further stated that these teachers are split between wanting to stay in the classroom and wanting to move into administration.

All of the interviewed women principals said that they had not originally planned to pursue the principalship, but that they were asked to take the position to fix a broken school. Additionally, three of the non-principal interviewees had a common belief that women tend to step-up to the principalship when they feel that the man in charge is an ineffective leader. Assistant Principal Ruth Grant summarized this perspective saying, “If men lead well, women don’t want it. If the man does what he should, most women are happy. But if the man doesn’t
lead well, that is when Southern women take over to fix it for the kids.” Similarly Rachel Baker spoke about women moving up when men are not capable saying, “If the administration is not good . . . someone will say, so-and-so should move up, she’d fix the problem,” so they talk to her and convince her to apply. These mentalities imply that women are not making career decisions based on the lack of opportunity or on the few number of women in principalships. Rather women prefer to stay in support positions because they feel they make a difference there and because they entered into teaching to be available for their children and spouse.

The interviewees considered themselves strong women with a competitive nature, but they also believed that women make choices based on their current family needs. The interviewees also believed that women may chose to go into support leadership roles because they want to stay connected to curriculum and instruction and because women do not want the stress and time constraints that principals experience. Teacher Mary Brown summed up these positions saying, “I think a lot of them are just comfortable making a difference from where they are [as] curriculum and instruction leaders.” Principal Barbara Kennedy summed up the concept of choice saying, “I would say is what I hear from my teachers, my young teachers, is a very clear choice. They either decide that they want to do it, or they decide they don’t . . . . They know what the job entails, because it does require more time, especially at the high school level.”

**Summary for research question three.** In summary, although women cited gender bias, social expectations, institutional practices that favor men, most teachers and many district administrators in the study indicated, “I just don’t want it!” The participants of this study felt that the negative perceptions of a lack of opportunity did not impact their personal career choices or aspirations. The principals and former principals said that they entered into administration because they were asked to turn around a school that needed them. They had not planned to
become an assistant principal or principal. Rather they were recruited and mentored into the position, much like the typical male that enters into administration as cited in Kim and Brunner (2009). Some of non-principal participants feel that they may pursue a principalship once their children are older, while others prefer to stay in support roles or in the classroom. Several women said, “You couldn’t pay me enough to be a principal!”

**Summary of the Findings**

In summary, while participants believed that gender bias, family obligations, institutional practices, and social gender roles limit women’s opportunities for promotion to secondary principalships, participants also felt that women make personal choices which contribute to the under-representation of women in secondary principalships. Often these choices were related to family obligations and social gender roles. The survey results, the open-ended responses, and the interview data all supported these results. Gender bias with special types of grooming such as athletic coaches and good old boy networking elicited strong responses from participants. However, participants also believed that many women preferred to either stay in the classroom where they had direct contact with students, or they preferred to work in support roles rather than in principalships. These same women who did not desire a secondary principalship felt that more women will be have the opportunity and will have the desire to pursue a principalship accountability measures become more common place, and as the role changes from a managerial position to an instructional leadership position. The participants also appreciated the opportunity to speak for themselves and for other female educators.
Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

In the United States, women comprise 84% of the K-12 teaching workforce (Feistritzer et al., 2011), yet men hold 76% of the nation’s superintendencies and 72% of the nation’s secondary principalships (Aud et al., 2012). Researchers have focused on the superintendency as a glass ceiling but have conducted little research on the secondary principalship, which is the most common pathway to the superintendency (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Although women have made significant gains in other male-dominated professions like medicine and law, women educators have yet to make the same strides in gaining the leadership experiences needed to break their glass ceiling (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Skrla et al., 2000). This study is framed by social role theory and considers the problem of practice from the perspectives of women principals, teachers, and support administrators. This chapter is broken into nine sections: a review of the methodology, a discussion of the major findings, a model of the results, a discussion of the findings with respect to the theoretical framework, the conclusion, the significance of the study, validity, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Review of the Methodology

This qualitative study was undertaken to ascertain secondary women educators’ perspectives of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership positions. To truly understand women’s perspectives and experiences, a qualitative study was the best possible choice for this study. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?

3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

To explore the participants’ perspectives, experiences, and opportunities the researcher received responses from 101 female secondary educators in Tennessee. The survey included five-point Likert-style survey questions and extensive open-ended questions. Additionally, the researcher interviewed nine female secondary school educators, three from each of the following: principals, support administrators and teachers.

The survey and open-ended survey questions helped the researcher to identify trends and themes from a larger group of participants so that the interviews might be able to delve deeper into the participants’ experiences. The open-ended survey questions were read, coded, and re-read to determine an aggregate set of emergent themes. The reduction of themes by job-titles, experience levels, and marital/family status were also determined to see if the themes were different among the three categories of women. Finally, the interviews were transcribed and coded for emerging themes and supporting details. The researcher engaged in rereading and recoding of the transcriptions and the open-ended comments until saturation was reached.

**Discussion of Major Findings**

Because researchers measure opportunities for promotion by the rates at which different groups attain them (Kanter, 1977b), the findings in the fourth chapter can be condensed into three major findings. Each of these findings will first be discussed and then they will be
discussed with respect to the theoretical framework and the literature review. Table 12 provides the major findings of this study.

Table 12

*Major Findings from Participants’ Perspectives on the Under-representation of Women in Secondary Leadership*

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**Leadership and secondary principalship opportunities for Tennessee female secondary educators are getting better.** The Internet search conducted by this researcher combined with the open-ended participants’ responses and interviews in this study revealed that the opportunities for women are getting better in Tennessee. In 2003, there were only 12 women secondary principals in Tennessee; thus women held only 4% of the secondary principalships. Women currently hold 28% of the principalships in Tennessee. This 24% increase is a huge improvement from just a decade ago. Similarly, in Tennessee, ten years ago women held 14% of the superintendencies (Tennessee State Department of Education, 2004; Yates, 2005). From this study the researcher found that women currently hold 21% of Tennessee’s superintendencies. Tennessee’s 7% increase in women superintendents and the nation’s 10% increase (Aud et al., 2011) support the perceptions of the women who participated in this study—the situation is getting better for women, both nationally and in Tennessee.

The participants believed that opportunities for women were increasing because of the emphasis on instructional leadership, curriculum, and due to the new accountability models,
which have tied student improvement to principals’ evaluations. An example of this sentiment is by a district supervisor, who wrote,

> While I strongly feel that athletic coaching has generated a large number of administrators, I now see that the trend is diminishing as academic outcomes and accountability increases. Many coaches I know seem overwhelmed with the [new] instructional responsibilities of administration.

These improvements in the attainment of principalships seemed to foster a feeling of more opportunities for the women in this study. This finding reflects Kanter’s (1977b) premise that as marginalized groups begin to attain promotions, others in the group begin to feel empowered about the new opportunities. A teacher shared this optimism saying that her district is focused on academics and that ability and results are the criteria by which leaders are hired, not gender.

**Although women are equally capable of leadership, women choose to remain in the classroom or in support roles often due to familial obligations.** Participants identified familial obligations (68%) and choice (64%) as strong contributors to the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. Of the three categories of the study participants, teachers were the most likely to indicate that they deny their leadership potential and ambitions in favor of taking care of their families. The women indicated that women genuinely want to be available for their children and husbands but that they are also expected to support their husbands’ careers over their own.

Participants also felt that by delaying their careers for their families, women impact their promotability. An assistant principal illustrated this belief saying, “Men don’t shy away from the time it takes to be in a leadership position whereas many women I know say they want to spend more time with their families and their jobs are as important as their family.” Further,
participants believed that male hiring administrators may *see* women as less dedicated than their male counterparts. Participants felt pressured by society, their spouses, and their families/parents to stay at home. Teachers said they had less support from their families, but principals and former principals praised their spouses, parents, and children for supporting their careers. Whitmarsh et al. (2007) could have been talking about some of the teachers from this study when they wrote, “Women in the female-dominated careers did not believe that a woman could balance the responsibilities of career and parenting young children” (p. 233). However, the principals in this study said that they were able to achieve family-work balance.

Additionally, non-principal participants indicated that they choose to stay in the classroom or in support roles because they wanted to maintain contact with students, teachers and curriculum due in part to the long hours principals must keep. Principal Barbara Kennedy summed up the concept of choice saying, “[For] my young teachers, it is a very clear choice. They either decide that they want to do it, or they decide they don’t. . . . They know what the job entails, because it does require more time, especially at the high school level.” Family obligations were the primary reason that women said they chose not to pursue a principalship. Only 10% of the surveyed teachers and only 34% of the district administrators had aspirations for a secondary principalship. Teachers (58%) saw themselves in some sort of support administrative role but not a principalship. This finding sheds significant light on the under-representation of women in secondary principalships from a non-gender bias perspective.

**Gender bias continues to limit women from attaining secondary principalships.** In the surveys and open-ended questions, 76% of the participants believed that the gendered practices and socialization contribute to fewer opportunities for women and greater opportunities for men. Participants felt that the men in power often make choices for women. Unwritten
institutional practices may be unintentional and a result of tradition. The participants did not often use the terms glass ceiling or a glass escalator rather they used phrases like: “good old boy networks,” “coaching,” “men mentor men,” “men hire men,” and “politics, nepotism, and cronyism.” Participants also talked about principalships and assistant principalships as being “saved” for coaches and for friends of friends or for “politically connected people.” Participants in this study said that men get a “head’s up” of a job posting prior to its posting and that this practice may not lead to promoting the most qualified candidates.

Coaching was the most common institutional practice identified by the participants as helping men and hindering women from gaining secondary principalships. Participants believed that coaches are more commonly promoted because principals and superintendents had the same career path and because coaches typically have the traditional leadership and discipline styles of the building-manager model rather than as an instructional leadership model. Participants believed that female coaches also had an advantage over non-coaching women. They saw coaches as being a large part of the good old boy network that saves jobs for friends.

Another commonly stated gendered institutional practice was that women are often put into support positions to bolster ineffective male administrators. Participants felt that this practice often occurs in conjunction with the promotion of a good old boy, a coach, or as a result of a politics or nepotism. These practices may be a form of tradition and is so prevalent that those in power do not realize the extent of the bias. Thus, principalships are saved for men by men. This justification creates a problem for all women. Just because women may not be the primary breadwinners, this practice of saving jobs for men is highly discriminatory. Because this finding is steeped in tradition and culture, it will be difficult to change.
Regional aspects factored into the participants’ perspectives. The participants believed that women in the South and in the Bible Belt are subjected to gender bias and male hegemony more than women in other regions of the country. This type of regional socialization was seen as a result of stronger male/female gender roles that are experienced in the southern region of the United States. Women in the study shared that women who try to break into principalships are seen as “bitchy” or “emotional,” whereas men are seen as “confident” or “passionate.”

An interesting finding that resulted from the study was a type of discrimination by women against women. Participants stated that women principals tend to surround themselves with male assistant principals for discipline and for athletic leadership. Interviewee Mary Brown illustrated this phenomenon saying, “In my case the woman is the principal, and she surrounded herself by men that handle that [discipline].” Thus even women principals tend to bow to social morés, which limit other women from leadership opportunities. Hiring officials may not realize the underlying messages that they are sending to female students who watch the marginalization of effective female teachers.

A Model of the Inductive Approach and the Findings

A general inductive qualitative research design with an extensive survey provided the researcher with the ability to “condense extensive text data in to a brief summary of the findings” (Thomas, 2006, p. 238) and to provide a model of the links between the commonly held experiences of the participants. This researcher drew an adaptation of Schien’s (1971) career mobility model that had also been adapted by Kim and Bruner (2009). Figure 2 shows the model for this inductive study.
Figure 2. A Three-dimensional Model of the Under-representation of Women and the Over-representation of Men in Secondary Principalships and Superintendencies

The core of this adapted model is a glass escalator, which provides a fast track through the barriers for men but are exclusionary barriers that hold women in lower paying, non-supervisory, and non-budgetary support roles. This adaptation shows the pink exclusionary barriers for...
women: gender, coaching, secondary principalships, and the superintendency. The core shows men as having greater proximity to, and similarities with those in power, which improves their chances for promotion. For men, the core escalator has inclusionary advantages such as: gender bias, gendered institutional practices, and networking. In contrast, women have exclusionary disadvantages such as gender bias, personal choices, social roles, and family obligations. There are subsets of these disadvantages such as: women are less visible, do not have similar experiences to those in hiring positions, tradition, politics, nepotism and cronyism, and women’s social roles. While the model is not inclusive of all reasons and situations that lead to an under-representation of women in secondary leadership, it does help to illustrate the perceptions of the participants in this study. Further, it expands the concept of inclusionary benefits for men and the exclusionary barriers or boundaries for secondary women educators as they pursue leadership positions.

The next section will discuss the above findings with respect to the theoretical framework. While many of the findings may have been predictable, there was a gap in the literature with respect to the documentation of secondary women educators’ perceptions in a non-gender bias framed study. To consider the many reasons for the under-representation of women in educational leadership, the researcher framed this study through social role theory.

**Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Theoretical Framework**

This study was framed in social role theory. Social role theory considers the socialization of gender roles combined with society’s expectations for males and females within the family, in work relationships, and in society in general (Eagly & Karau, 2001). Social roles and the socialization of boys and girls shape their future decisions and help to explain some unintended bias (Eagly & Karau, 2001; Sandberg & Scowell, 2013). Men and women are conditioned to
accept gendered roles and personality traits that are deemed as proper for each sex (Eagly & Karau, 2001). Men are expected to be natural leaders, and women are expected to be nurturing and supportive. With respect to this study, social role theory posits that women should be in the classroom and men should be in leadership.

From the participants’ words, three of the findings are reflected in social gender roles:

- Although women are equally capable of leadership, women choose to remain in the classroom or in support roles often due to familial obligations.
- Gender bias continues to limit women from attaining secondary principalships.
- Leadership and secondary principalship opportunities for Tennessee female secondary educators are getting better.

The first of these was clearly identified by the participants as a result of choice but also because of social gender roles. The second of the above findings is steeped in a long tradition of social expectations and gender stereotype. The last finding of an improvement in opportunities for women is believed to be a result in the shift from a business leadership model to an instructional leadership model in Tennessee gives hope that these practices will some day result in an equal opportunity for women in secondary education.

The participants of this study believed women have different family obligations than men and that those obligations result in delayed careers, shifts in career choices, and staying in the classroom or support jobs due to society’s expectations and due to their desire to be at home with their children. They also said that the community’s and male leaders’ perceptions of women’s social roles result in fewer women promotions to secondary principalships. The respondents remarked that even when women had the experience and were empty-nesters, male hiring officials continue to see women as less able to lead secondary schools. Women were seen as less
capable in discipline and in leadership, and due to their nurturing nature women were better suited for the classroom or an elementary principalship. In contrast, school boards, community leaders, and hiring officials saw men as stronger, natural leaders, decisive, and better suited for secondary leadership. One participant said that she was perceived as emotional and her male counterpart was called passionate over the same issue. Tara McDonald in her interview illustrated the difference in how men and women are perceived by parents and administrators, saying that when women administrators or teachers have a conference with parents, the parents push harder, are more confrontational, and escalate their concerns. In contrast, parents are calmer and more receptive to male teachers and administrators.

Many of the participants indicated that the South and especially the Bible Belt region of the United States instills stronger, more ingrained gender roles in boys and girls than do other areas of the country. They believed that in Tennessee, religion is a part of socialization and girls are taught to be subservient and to quietly accept their roles. Eagly and Karau (2002) posited that as girls enter the workforce they continue to follow the societies expectations and wait to be noticed, but boys tend to be rewarded for speaking out and either circumventing rules or using them to their advantage. The participants acknowledged that women are quieter about pursuing leadership and that they tended to wait for opportunities. In contrast men politicked for promotions even when they were less qualified. Additionally, the participants believed that when women do pursue leadership positions they are only given token interviews or are relegated to assistantships to bolster or support male leaders. The participants also felt that women who do gain principalships usually had a male mentor who helped to pave their way. Additionally, the participants felt that Southern women had to be twice as good as the males to break the stereotype.
Discussion of Findings with Respect to the Literature Review

A review of the literature related to this problem of practice, provided in the second chapter, investigated the under-representation of women in school leadership. Much of the literature was framed through the lens of gender bias. The review also included an investigation of social gender roles and work-family conflict. This section will discuss the results of this study with respect to the topics that were presented in the second chapter. The two major areas of this discussion will be gender bias and social gender roles.

**Gender Bias.** The majority of the organizational and educational leadership research has been framed through gender bias theories and has been focused on the superintendency as a glass ceiling for women in education (Blount, 1998; Bjork et al., 2005; Brunner, 1999; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Cotter et al., 2001; Glass, 2000; Grogan, 1996, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Kanter, 1976, 1977a, 1977b; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Moreau et al., 2007; O’Reilly & Borman, 1984; Shakeshaft, 1998; Shakeshaft et al., 2007, Skrla et al., 2000, Smith, 2000; Tallerico & Blount, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Williams, 1992). There was a gap in the literature with respect to asking women in middle management and women who have not attained a principalship about their perceptions of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership.

**Glass ceilings and glass escalators.** For this study the primary “glass” researchers were Cotter et al. (2001), Glass (2000), and Kim and Brunner (2009). Glass ceilings and glass escalators are two constructs researchers have used to describe the difficulty that women and minorities have in their rise to top management. Glass ceilings are boundaries that keep women from reaching top leadership positions. Glass escalators are pathways of least resistance that move men into leadership in female-dominated careers such as teaching and nursing (Kim &
Brunner, 2009; Smith, 2012; Williams, 1992). Cotter et al. (2001) considered the glass ceiling and criteria by which researchers can examine the existence of a glass ceiling. Glass (2000) provided seven reasons for more male superintendents, which are related to the attainment of a secondary principalship (Glass, 2000). Kim and Brunner (2009) researched the existence of a glass escalator in educational leadership, and Young’s (2006) study influenced this researcher to consider unwritten institutional practices that limit women’s opportunities.

Cotter et al. (2001) provided four criteria for researchers to investigate the existence of a glass ceiling. The first criteria was that the lack of promotion for women cannot be explained by job performance or by any other job related characteristic. The women of this study believed that women are equally qualified and capable. The participants had years of experience, had advanced degrees, and held the administrative licenses necessary to be a secondary principal. The second criterion of Cotter et al. was that the “inequity is greater at higher levels than at lower levels” (p. 658). The participants indicated that there are currently more assistant principals, principals, and superintendents than in the past, but they believed that the glass ceiling still existed. They also said that men rose faster and with less experience than women. Numerically, Tennessee currently has 28% secondary principals and 24% superintendents. It is possible that if the trend continues the ceiling may indeed be shattered in Tennessee. The third glass-ceiling criterion is that gender inequality reduces the opportunity for promotion. The participants (76%) strongly agreed that, due to bias, men have more opportunities. The final criterion was that the inequities increase over the course of the career. There are fewer men in the profession, yet they have greater numbers in secondary principalships. Further the participants said that women are just as capable, if not more so, than men, but that men rose faster and more prolifically than women, not only to assistant principal, and principal but also all
the way to the superintendency. The participants in this study would say that the Cotter et al. (2001) criteria for the existence of a glass ceiling have been met in Tennessee.

Williams (1992) proposed a glass escalator to describe the preponderance of male leaders in occupations where men are in the minority. Further, Williams indicated that “men take the gender privilege with them when then they enter predominantly female occupation—this translates into an advantage in spite of their numerical rarity” (p. 305). Men in her study indicated that they received “preferential treatment” (p. 296) in part because they fit societal expectations for leaders, as well as to get better paying positions (Williams, 1992). The women in this study also said that men received preferential treatment because men fit the expectations of the community and upper management. The participants also indicated that women had to work twice as hard to be noticed, but that once women were noticed they were usually promoted to positions below the men, to bolster the standing of the man for whom she worked.

Kim and Brunner (2009) documented the existence of the glass escalator and a glass ceiling in the superintendency. They proposed the concept of exclusionary boundaries that limit women further below the glass ceiling and that men experience inclusionary advantages within the glass escalator. The participants in this study definitely described situations that give the men in secondary schools these same types of advantage. Men’s careers were described as easier. Women said that even when they played by the expected rules and paid their dues, they were still were overlooked. The participants in this study identified inclusionary advantages for men, which became exclusionary boundaries or mini-glass ceilings that women had to breach in their quest for leadership.

**Gendered promotion pathways.** Glass (2000), Kim and Brunner (2009), Shakeshaft (1998), and Young (2006) all determined that male secondary coaches more readily move into
positions that lead to secondary principals, and secondary principals are most often the paths taken to reaching a superintendency. Further, women are held back by institutional practices over which they have no control.

Glass (2000) used the American Association of School Administrator’s Survey of superintendents to examine seven arguments for the reasons that men are more often in superintendencies than are women. Glass proposed that: (a) “women are not in positions that normally lead to the superintendency” (p. 1); (b) women do not have the credentials; (c) women do not have budgetary experience; (d) women are not interested; (e) “school boards are reluctant to hire women” (p. 3); (f) women enter education for different reasons; and (g) women enter administration later in life. The participants in this study confirmed most of Glass’s (2000) suppositions but disagreed with one of his findings. The participants agreed that male coaches rise more readily to rise into secondary assistant principalships and principalships and expanded upon this believing that women who coach also have an advantage over non-coaching women. They believed this because women coaches had access to male networks and mentorships. Participants also gave specific examples of women being kept in support roles rather than being able to gain budgetary or supervisory experience. Also like Glass (2000), the participants in this study explicitly stated that women enter into education for different reasons than men and that in general women are not as interested in administration as men. The participants agreed that women enter into education to help children, to be available for their families, and to teach. Several women spoke about their school boards and/or their communities as not supporting women in leadership. Two interviewees cited explicit actions and comments by their school boards that said, “Do not hire a women.” Finally, the participants confirmed that women often
delay their careers for their families and that this contributes to women being seen as less promotable. Thus, all but one of the findings by Glass’s (2000) was supported in this study.

The participants disagreed with Glass’s (2000) premise that women have fewer advanced degrees or administrative licenses. Of the women in this study, 100% of the principals, 93% of the district administrators, and 47% of the teachers had the credentials to be a principal. To be fair, Glass (2000) was speaking about superintendencies and the participants in this study were speaking about secondary principalships, but as has been shown throughout this study, the two are intrinsically linked (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009). In fact, one of the interviewed women had more experience, had served in several secondary principalships, and as an assistant superintendent in two districts. She had been a finalist on multiple occasions for superintendencies, but had always come in second to men with less success and less experience.

**Gendered institutional practices.** Institutional practices included that “men set the rules,” “men hire men,” “nepotism,” “politics,” and “coaching.” Addi-Raccah and Aylon (2002) documented the hiring practices for men and women in Israel. Young (2006) studied what he called the myth of the coach in the principal’s office in Alabama. Kim and Brunner (2009) studied common career paths for superintendents and some of the reasons for more men in superintendencies. These last two studies influenced this researcher to consider women’s perspectives on the opportunities for women in secondary leadership.

Like the participants in this study who said that “men promote other men” and that “women tend to also hire men for leadership,” Addi-Raccah and Aylon (2002) found that in Israeli schools men have the power, and they tend to promote other men. Further, women, who make it into positions of power, had to learn to play by the male rules and gendered political structure to be seen as credible. Further, these researchers said that women in education tended
to accept the patriarchal, traditional social structure that favors men. The participants in this study also tended to accept the situation as it was; they recognized the gender bias and attempt to work within that system. There was a feeling that the only way to change the system, as it exists, would be from the inside. Several of the participants remarked that until researchers bring more light on the middle management positions of assistant principals and principals, women in the system will continue to experience gender bias but chose to work within the system.

Coaches in the principal’s office. Young (2006) studied male perceptions of coaching and the leadership qualities that male coaches bring to the principalship. Like Young’s male participants, the women in this study admitted that society and hiring officials perceive that male coaches have innate leadership qualities and are better disciplinarians. These participants took issue with that contention. This researcher wants to caution the reader, she is not suggesting that male leaders are less effective. The words of the participants clearly indicated that many of their male principals are highly effective, but they also indicated that the best person is not always hired due to gendered and institutional practices. These women also felt that women are equally capable and qualified to lead schools. The participants in this study also agreed with Kim and Brunner (2009) and Young’s (2006) who found that male coach-principals tended to have less experience in curriculum and instruction than do women. As such, the women in this study believed that the principal qualifications are changing to favor instructional leaders rather than building managers.

Glass (2000), Grogan and Brunner, (2005), Kim and Brunner (2006) and Young, (2006), found that the pathway to educational leadership was gendered, that men have more help from other men, and that male coaches had a distinct advantage over women. Women in this study mentioned several of Kim and Brunner’s (2006) findings: “men hire men,” “men network with
other men,” “men mentor other men,” “male coaches are more visible,” “men have similar career 
paths, which benefit other men,” and “men are connected to those in power.” Kim and Brunner 
(2009) also found that non-aspiring central office workers were similar to the majority of women 
in this study who preferred support roles. However, women in this study were careful to say that 
for women who do aspire to principalships, the system needs to change.

Marginalization and gender bias. Shortly after the passing of the Civil Rights Bill and 
Title IX, organizational and educational researchers have been studying the impact of gender on 
hiring practices and promotion rates of women. Kanter (1976, 1977a, 1977b) proposed that 
organizational structures and hierarchies create unfair advantages for certain groups while 
marginalizing other groups which accounts for the advantages that white males have in 
organizational structures. Gender, promotions, and career choices in female-dominated fields 
were investigated by Hobbler et al. (2009), Whitmarsh et al. (2007) and Kim and Brunner 
researchers from the 1970s and 1980s. Glass (2000) examined six primary reasons for the under-
representation of women in superintendencies. Finally, Tallerico & Blount (2002) and Tyack & 
Hansot (1982) considered gender bias in education and the lack of a national database with 
dissagregated data by gender and job-title.

Marginalization and tokenism. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1976) spoke to the hierarchical 
power structures within organizations and, most importantly for this research, how those 
structures impact women and men differently. As Kanter said, “It becomes important to 
understand how women and men get distributed across structural position and how this 
differential distribution affects behavior” (Kanter, 1976, p. 416). Women who are in low-
mobility positions tend to: form peer circles for support, avoid conflict, and stay in position
because a promotion is seen as an act of “disloyalty” (p. 422) to the peer circle. The findings from this study support Kanter’s (1976, 1977b) findings. The women in this study did say that women tend to avoid conflict, prefer positions of support, and form social circles of an “us and them” nature.

Kanter (1976) and Lee et al. (1993) also hypothesized that the more a group is held in place, the less aspirations they have for promotions, and the more they work within the confines of the system. Lee et al. (1993) wrote that because women are not groomed for leadership, they tend not to desire the positions because they believe that they will not be given the opportunity. When asked about these findings, most of the interview participants did not believe that women simply accept the marginalization. They honestly felt that many women do not want a secondary principalship. Teachers in the study recognize the bias but do not feel they can do anything about it because those in power are men. Several participants indicated that they no longer felt the need to prove themselves to those in power.

Kanter posits the participants who were lowest rungs of organizational hierarchies had less expectation or aspirations for leadership, but as women rose up in the ranks, more aspirations existed. These seemed to be true of the participants in this study. Teachers felt the most constrained by the system, but empowerment was higher for assistant principals, principals, and assistant superintendents.

Kanter (1976) and Lee et al. (1998) hypothesized that as women see more women in leadership, they will have greater aspirations and will seek opportunities for themselves. The participants optimistically remarked that the system is getting better for women in Tennessee. The younger teachers who were in high school back when there were only 12 women secondary principals across the state are now teaching in schools. They may be more optimistic about
leadership opportunities than the older teachers and district administrators in Tennessee. The younger teachers had open-ended comments, which started with “maybe I will move up when my children are grown.”

Similar to Kanter (1977b), Moreau et al. (2007) found that initially in their focus group study of female teachers in England, the teachers said that they did not feel marginalized, but as the focus group discussion continued, the women began to realize that they were held in teaching and support positions and that they were bowing to society’s standards. One teacher even stated that her career choices were made by her husband and not by herself. Although many of the women in this study clearly stated that they wanted to stay in the classroom, this researcher wonders if this second generation of Title IX girls, who have reached parity in other professions will be content to stay in these traditional roles. These young teachers have witnessed the shift that has occurred in Tennessee. They were in the classroom when only 4% of the principals were women and now they are part of the system with 28% women principals. As women principals continue to have success will more women pursue opportunities for leadership?

_Gender, promotions, and career choices._ Because there was little research on women in the principal’s office, the researcher reviewed literature on women in superintendencies and other types of barriers to leadership. Hoobler et al. (2009) studied managers and the choices that they make for women. Whimarsh et al. (2007) studied the choices women make in their careers. Kim and Brunner (2009) established the most common career pathways for male and female superintendents. The participants in this study support the findings of these researchers.

Hoobler et al. (2009) studied male manager’s social expectations that impact women’s promotions in a male-dominated trucking industry in the Midwest. These male managers allowed their perceptions of women’s social roles and work-life balance to hold women in less
responsible and lower paying jobs. The managers perceived that women were not able to balance their work with their family obligations, but the women rated their stress as much lower than did their hiring managers. Hoobler et al.’s study represented participants in a male-dominated career; it is significant for women in education. The participants in this study continually used the words “hiring officials’ perceptions,” “school boards’ perceptions,” and “the community’s perceptions.” These participants believed that they are not promoted, and men are promoted because of the perceptions of others rather than because of their ability.

Whitmarsh et al. (2007) studied the differences in the career choices in female-dominated occupations and in gender-neutral occupations as framed by glass ceiling theory. Women in female-dominated fields felt more guilt and made more career sacrifices than did women in gender-neutral occupations. Yet, in gender-neutral occupations, women felt that they were able to balance motherhood and their job easier than were the women in the female-dominated professions. Similarly, the principals and assistant principals in this study described an ability to balance family and work due to support from their families. In contrast, like female-dominated Whitmarsh et al., participants, the teachers in this current study were discouraged from pursuing promotions by their families. Based on the comments from the participants in this current study, it is possible that the traditional education preparation programs may attract women who are more willing to put their families ahead of their careers.

Glass barriers restrict women in education from promotions. Further, men and women superintendents had very different career paths. Men tended to have a direct vertical path with less experience in both the classroom and in education, while women had a more horizontal path that provided them with significantly more experience in the classroom and in the other aspects of education (Kim & Brunner, 2009). The women in this study agreed with these findings,
believing that women typically have support roles before entering into principalships. They also
supported Kim and Brunner’s male pathway that has less time in the classroom and that men and
particularly male coaches are groomed for principalships.

**Shifting demographics.** Feistritzer et al.’s (2011) survey analysis of 146,500 teachers
showed that the teaching profession is still female-dominated (84%) and is getting younger. Baby
boomers are retiring and, in high schools, half of the teachers are entering teaching from non-
traditional teacher preparation programs like Teach for America. These alternatively trained
teachers have very different views than the traditionally trained teachers. These teachers are
calling for significant change in the public school system. Perhaps they will be the ones that
finally reach gender equity.

For this current study, an important aspect of Feistritzer et al. is when they asked where
teachers saw themselves in five years: 21% of the men and 15% of the women saw themselves
moving into administration. Feistritzer et al. studied K-12 teachers, and this study only looked at
secondary schools and participants with at least six years experience with a master’s degree, so
the demographics are not the same. However, in this current study, only 10% of the teachers
wanted to be a principal. As the demographics shift to a younger millennial generation, a
longitudinal follow-up study with the participants of Feistritzer et al. (2011) delineated by school
type would show if the sentiments of a larger more diverse group of teachers are changing.

**National databases by gender, race, and job title.** This shifting of the teacher
demographics brings another important point from the literature review to light. Since the early
1800s, education databases of data delineated by gender and job title were maintained by states
and national agencies. After the suffrage movement and the civil rights era, the databases
included race and school type. But in the early 1980s the databases no longer included this data
(Blount 1998, Glass et al., 2000; Shakeshaft, 1989, 1998; Tyack & Hansot, 1982). Tyack and Hansot (1982) alleged that the lack of available data by sex was by design to shield and protect those white men in power. Blount (1998) and Tallerico & Blount (2002) did a study using superintendent’s first names to determine gender. To find the percentage of female principals and superintendents in Tennessee, this researcher performed an Internet district-by-district search because the state database was out of date and did not have data based on gender. This researcher used the state school listing, searched to garner the names and pictures when possible to determine the gender of superintendents and secondary principals. This researcher also believes that there is a need for national and state data disaggregated by gender, race, and job title for public school administrators, as was suggested by Blount (1998), Glass et al. (2000), Shakeshaft, (1989, 1998) and Tyack and Hansot (1982).

**Social Roles and Work-Family Balance.** Social gender roles and work-family conflict is the level of stress that employees feel while balancing their gender roles with their work roles and family roles. Researchers have indicated that teaching is a family friendly profession for working mothers (Cinamon & Rich, 2005). Typical reasons for the high percentage of women in education are due to social role expectations of women as being nurturing, caring, helpful, gentle, and child-centered, as well as the working hours and conditions that are considered family friendly (Cinamon & Rich, 2005; Eagly & Karau, 2002, Eckman, 2004).

Eckman (2004) and Cinamon & Rich (2005) studied role conflict of women in education. Eckman (2004) researched how male and women principal’s social roles affect their work-life balance. Not surprisingly, due to family obligations the women principals in Eckman’s study had more job stress than did the male principals. The women in this study also spoke about family obligations and the long hours that principals keep as a deterrent to the pursuit of a
principalship. However, the interviewed principals in this study did felt that they had achieved a balance between job and family because they had tremendous support from their spouses and school staff. Like Eckman’s participants the women in this study confirmed that women delay their careers because they said that women have greater role-conflict than their male counterparts. The non-principal participants of this study also like Eckman’s participants believed that that role conflict impacted career choices. Additionally the participants agreed with Cinamon and Rich (2005) that when women temporarily put their careers on hold due to social roles, they may have aged-out or burned-out by the time they are recognized as potential leaders.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine incongruence between the high percentage of women in education and the low percentage of women in secondary school principalships, which lead to superintendencies. This qualitative study was designed to gather data from female secondary teachers, principals, and support administrators to answer the following three research questions:

1. How do female secondary educators think about the career opportunities that exist for women in secondary school leadership as opposed to those that exist for men?
2. How do women in secondary education account for the difference between the representation of men and women in positions of secondary school leadership?
3. How do women secondary educators think about their opportunities to successfully pursue and attain secondary school leadership positions and how do their perceptions impact their career aspirations, decisions, and actions?

To answer these questions, data was collected from surveys and from interviews of the three categories of female secondary educators across the state of Tennessee. The major results of the
study were that: women make personal choices that take them out of pool of possible principals often due to family obligations, and that gender bias does limit women who desire the position of principal or other jobs that give women the potential to gain a principalship. In contrast, the women believed that men in education, particularly athletic coaches, have a fast track to the principalship. The most optimistic result of the study was that the opportunities for women in Tennessee have tremendously improved. The 24% increase in women secondary principals in Tennessee in the past 10 years and the younger generation high school students who are now teachers may be part of a change in societal expectations. Additionally, the role of a principal is changing to an instructional leader which favors women’s natural strengths in education. It is possible that Ella Flagg Young’s 1909 prediction, that there will be more women than men running school systems (Blount, 1998), may come true.

**Significance of the Study**

This study was different from the others because the participants represented three constituents of a secondary school staffs and because it was framed by social role theory rather than gender bias theory. The perspectives of secondary women in the classroom, in support roles, and in secondary principalships provide scholars, teachers, and leaders with a clearer understanding of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. Because the secondary principalship as an important mid-level management experience needed for women to shatter the glass ceiling of a superintendency (Glass, 2000; Kim & Brunner, 2009; Shakeshaft 1998), it is important to identify the practices that exclude women from reaching secondary principalships. The study confirmed the findings of other studies in educational leadership, has filled a gap in the literature, and has helped to document the experiences and perceptions of women in secondary education.
The finding of women making choices is important for both sexes because it shows that bias is not the only reason for the under-representation of women in principalships. The participants’ experiences and perceptions show that women want equality, but they also value their family-work-life balance. This finding also shows that there are many women in education who simply do not desire the principalship. Therefore, the pool of prospective female principals is significantly reduced, such that the difference in men and women’s promotion rates may not be as large as the statistics imply. This finding of choice does not remove the problem of bias, but it does show a new perspective to the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. For the women that are interested in pursuing leadership, leaders need to look at the perspectives of these women with respect to bias, social gender roles, and family-work stress, but researchers also need to admit that for this group of participants, the vast majority of the teachers and district administrators did not aspire to a secondary principal position.

The finding of gender bias supports previous researcher’s conclusions of glass ceilings, glass escalators, and gendered institutional practices that limit women and marginalize them, such that some participants felt that they did not need apply (Glass, 2000; Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Kim & Brunner, 2009). From the participants’ choice of words, tone, and tenor of their voices, it was very obvious that they felt that the system was weighted against them. This finding of bias is important for leaders to seriously consider if they contribute to the problem even if they are unintentionally contributing to it. For women who do have aspirations for leadership, they may need to find ways to break from social role expectations without offending those in power. Further, they may need to seek support from their families and spouses so that they can pursue their dreams while maintaining work-family balance. The finding is also important for girls and teachers in secondary schools. Socialization is very obvious in school
systems and sends the wrong messages to girls who may want to teach but see their mentor teachers relegated to the classroom. Female teachers with aspirations for leadership can help their students to recognize societal expectations so that female students can examine their choices and what they can do to improve their opportunities.

The results from this study also serve to inform higher education leadership training programs. Discussions of equity and opportunity for students are commonly held in teacher education training programs. However, equity with respect to gender for the adults in the school is not as commonly discussed. Women in leadership degree programs would benefit from open discussions that shed light on the lack of parity to encourage teachers and leaders to evaluate their own perceptions, experiences, and priorities. If women are interested in principalships, they need to: seek mentors (both male and female), seek opportunities to demonstrate their abilities, take opportunities to network, and take advantage of opportunities to be more visible. Finally, the participants in this study felt that women principals tend to surround themselves with men. Women in leadership should consider mentoring and helping other women, rather than contributing to the problem.

The finding that the trends are improving in Tennessee is encouraging. The participants were optimistic about this trend. Hiring officials should evaluate current practices that are helping qualified, capable women and should consider the practices and biases that hinder women but help the traditional white, male coach into secondary principalships and superintendencies. Further, higher education school leadership programs have traditionally been created around the male leader model (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). Changing university course offerings to address gender bias and discriminatory institutional practices and new trends in leadership such as co-principalships and teacher-led schools with shared leadership may
encourage women to apply for principalships. Additionally, diversity discussions that investigate unintended bias may help school leaders to evaluate their feelings and practices.

Societal expectations, the expectations of those in hiring practices, and the personal expectations of women will not change until the limitations that women experience are identified. As Skrla et al. (2000) said, women tend to be silent sufferers who individually rather than collectively break down barriers.

An interesting finding from the literature and the hiring trends in Tennessee was that when districts used search firms to suggest potential new superintendents, women were 6% more likely to be hired by school boards (Grogan & Brunner, 2005). This statistic may be reflected in the Tennessee increases as Tennessee school districts such as, Memphis, Nashville, and others which have used national search firms to narrow the candidates for Tennessee superintendents. Perhaps this finding will encourage districts to look beyond their traditional methods of selecting superintendents and principals. District leaders in Tennessee and across the nation should look at this finding and evaluate current practices that are helping qualified, capable women and should consider the practices and biases that hinder women but help the traditional white, male coach into secondary principalships and superintendencies. The most positive result of this study is that participants believe that trends are changing in Tennessee.

As baby boomers begin to retire there will be a need for more instructional leaders; school officials, board members, professors, and communities should consider ways to identify women who have the ability to lead. They need to provide them with leadership opportunities and training. They also need to find ways to reduce the role conflict and society’s expectations that put so much more stress on women with respect to the family obligations. Women in this study felt that men get a pass with respect to family obligations but that women have to work two
jobs: one in the school and one at night when they go home. It is possible that the stresses and expectations that women educators experience are reducing with the younger generation, but it is equally likely that, due to traditional power structures in America’s schools, nothing will change unless those in power make the changes.

Finally, this study helped to answer limitations that were suggested by previous researchers. Kim and Brunner (2009) and Smith (2002; 2012) indicated that research on women’s perceptions of men gaining leadership in female-dominated fields needed to be done from a qualitative design, so that researchers can hear from the women who are in the system. Skrla et al. (2000) felt that further research needed to be conducted on how the institutional practices affected female educators’ perceptions of their opportunities for promotions. Finally, Snyder and Green (2008) believed that further research needed to be done on women’s choices that may contribute to the under-representation of women in mid-level management in pink-collar professions.

Validity

Issues of validity include potential bias of the researcher, response bias in the interview phase. Issues with validity were included in the third chapter and especially in the positionality statement. The design of the study was established to collect data from different sources and in different methods to help provide triangulation and trustworthiness in the study. Ultimately, the reader must decide the validity of the study. As presented in the positionality statement, the researcher is a Director of Curriculum and Instruction for her district. Like many of the respondents in the study, she chose to put her family ahead of her career and chose to stay in a support role rather than pursue a principalship. To overcome research bias, she bracketed her
experiences, and immersed herself in the words of the participants by continually returning to their responses and experiences.

To combat interview bias, the research attempted to stay as close to the script as possible but also allowing the fluidity of the conversation to continue. The researcher asked the interviewees to expand on their experiences. The researchers established a rapport with each of the interviewees, and the interviewees felt safe to talk about their experiences. The participants chose the time and the location of the interviews. One participant asked that her interview be only on paper and that she feared that her supervisor would look upon her responses hostilely if it were known that she had participated. However, she was very candid in her responses. The similar responses by the nine women of three categories and the inclusion of rural, urban, and suburban schools from small, medium and large districts helped to show the common experiences and helps with validity.

The design of the study with the triangulation of data by also helped to ensure validity (Creswell, 2010). Three different types of participants were selected to get a cross-section of the secondary school experiences of women. The participants were given three different ways to provide data: Likert-style questions, open-ended questions, and interviews. Using the surveys to inform the interviews also helped to provide trustworthiness. Performing extensive cross-sorting of the participant responses by job title, experience-level, age, marital status, family status and by combinations of the those categories further provided validity. Finally by connecting the data to the literature review findings provided additional trustworthiness.

Limitations of the Study

While the results of this study will help to inform and close the gap in the literature, there were limitations to the study. The findings of this study were limited by: the location in which it
was studied, the purposeful sampling that was used to choose participants, and the participant response rates. Although the percentages of superintendents and principals in Tennessee are similar to the national statistics, the opinions and experiences given in this study are those of the participants. They may be different (a) if women in other areas of the country had been surveyed and interviewed, (b) if younger women had been included in the study, (c) if more women had responded, or (d) if different women had been willing to be interviewed.

The location of the study, Tennessee, limits the potential responses and the results. Tennessee is a Southern Bible Belt state with socially and religiously ingrained gender expectations for men and women. These social gender expectations permeate Tennessee culture. As such, family obligations and women sacrificing their career aspirations may be greater than in other areas of the country.

The design of the study was chosen to purposefully select women who had the experience-level and the credentials to be promoted to a secondary principal. While this sampling was purposeful, it failed to include the thoughts and experiences of men in the system and of the younger millennial teachers. It might have been better aligned with other studies if male principals had answered the same questions as the women principals. Additionally, millennials have witnessed the change from 4% women principals when they were in high school to the 24% women principals that currently exist. Their perspectives may be very different from those in this study.

Although the response rates were in the acceptable range, the response rates of this study were much lower than the researcher had hoped, especially with respect to race. The researcher believes that the rates were lower because the surveys were sent during the last quarter of the school year when secondary teachers and principals are at the most stressful time of the year.
Additionally, the county with a high percentage of African-American teachers and principals had a policy of discouraging their teachers from responding to surveys and research studies. Only a couple of teachers and one principal from that district participated in the study. If the survey response rate had been higher, the results may have been different.

The researcher is very thankful for all the women who did respond and for the nine women who were willing to be interviewed. Only one African-American woman was willing to be interviewed. However, she changed her mind as the time for the interviews approached. These limitations of the study naturally lend themselves as recommendations for further study.

**Future Research**

The findings for this study help to fill the gap in the literature, provide a better understanding of women’s perspective, and help to provide future researchers with an additional body of knowledge with respect to the limitations placed on women as they attempt to rise in educational leadership. Recommendations for future research include the need for broader studies of the under-representation of women in educational leadership. The limitations of the study provide the first set of recommendations. Researchers should consider similar studies that include women from across the nation rather than this statewide study. Future research should consider including all the experience levels of women, not just those who have the experience to be a principal. There was one study included in the literature that considered the different perspectives of male and female high school principals, but teachers and support administrators were not included. Comparing the perspectives of men and women might provide a better picture of the phenomenon and how it may be changing.

Recommendations for further study also came from the literature review. More research on a larger, more diverse group of women in different regions may help to solidify the
hypothesis of Kanter (1977b) that those who are marginalized tend to work within the system
and have fewer aspirations for leadership because there they have fewer role models and see the
situation as bleak. It is possible that women who choose to teach may have greater desire to stay
in the classroom because they are naturally more socialized to help children, and because they
value their time with their children. If that proves to be true of a wider range of women, then
Kanter’s premise may not hold for teachers.

Additional longitudinal studies of the millennial teachers who have experienced the shift
in more female principals from the time that they were in high school to now when they are
teaching in high schools needs to be conducted. It is possible that their aspirations may be
different from those in this study. The baby boomers grew up in a time of Ozzie and Harriet,
where social gendered roles were strongly ingrained in girls and boys. These younger teachers
have grown up with two paycheck families and with more women who work outside the home.
As such, these millennial educators have experienced a shift in culture with men and women
having much more parity in society. These trends are encouraging; perhaps the field of
education will soon become gender-neutral like the medical and legal fields.

Personal Comments

The initial spark for this thesis came from reading Kim and Brunner’s (2009), Young’s
(2006), and Hoobler et al.’s (2009) research. These three studies prompted me to think about the
under-representation of women in educational leadership, the proliferation of male coaches in
secondary principalships, and the choices that hiring managers make for women, rather than
giving women the opportunity postpone some choices until their children are grown. My own
story is much like the female district administrators who participated in this study. The vast
majority of my previous principals and assistant principals were white, male, former coaches. I
had often been given duties to support or bolster these male-coach administrators. Further, when I was in a position to move into administration, the only opportunities available to me were as a Director of Curriculum and Instruction (equivalent to an assistant superintendency in my district) or as an Elementary Principal (although I had been in secondary education for 20+ years and elementary for only two years).

I realized that I had made choices which at the time were the right decisions for my family’s quality of life, but those choices impacted my promotability. My longer path to leadership mirrored the findings of Kim and Brunner (2009) and had nothing to do with my ability or credentials. Like the female superintendents in Skrla et al. (2000), I was hesitant to speak up because the men in power had welcomed me, relied on me, respected me, and helped me but did not see me as a high school principal. I have no regrets about my choices. Like interviewee Ruth Grant, in this study, I knew I had made a difference, and I no longer felt the need to prove myself. Also like most of the women in this study, I loved my job, loved still having contact with students and families, and had more time to pursue time with my family and my final degree than I ever would have as a secondary principal.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to dig deeper into this phenomenon and to give a voice to the women in this study. I am so incredibly thankful to the women who participated in the study. Their numbers were higher than those in previous qualitative education leadership studies and they were incredibly open in their responses and interviews. They made this thesis an interesting read that allowed women who typically work individually within the system to speak out as a collective.

During the defense of this thesis, I was asked several questions upon which I would like to address in this section.
• One of my readers asked me what findings surprised me the most. During the course of my research, I found that currently Tennessee has 28% female secondary principals but that only ten years ago there had been only 3% female secondary principals. This extremely low rate was equal to the number nationally in 1984! The 24% growth in ten years really gives hope for the future and opens more doors for Tennessee female educators and perhaps nationally, as well.

• A second question that was posed was how the results would have been different if I had framed the study through a different lens, such as through preparation for the position or motivation theory. I do believe that the findings would have been different with either of these. I feel that the women who took part in the study were very open to the surveys and interviews given the framing through social role theory. These other theories would have changed the focus significantly and should be considered in future research. Women are prepared differently and women enter into education from a different perspective than do men. As interviewee Tara McDonald said that men enter into education with the intention to coach and move up to administration, but women enter education to make a difference with children and to have a family friendly job. Perhaps, education attracts women who are more prone to servant leadership rather than to be self-ambitious.

• Finally, I was asked to reflect on my path as a doctoral student and how the course work was different from the thesis work. I honestly have to thank the faculty of Northeastern. I went through two masters programs and neither was as practical as the course work from Northeastern. The focus on analyzing other people’s works in the foundational courses prepared me to look at problems, look for solutions, share
those thoughts in a scholarly discussion, and to collectively consider ways to solve those problems. The beauty of Northeastern’s program is that the professors want their students to make a difference rather than just identify a problem. Much like my father always taught me, “Before you open your mouth to criticize, think of a better solution and BE FLEXIBLE.”

The thesis process was cumbersome but well worth the time and effort. Through every rewrite, the thesis became a better product and reflected the participants’ experiences in their words. I have learned how to take a problem and give it a focus unlike the others that were foundational in its inception. I have grown tremendously in this process. I have also learned how to listen to other women in the field and look for ways to provide opportunities for those who are interested in school leadership. During this study, I have seen five women from within my system gain opportunities for leadership. This has been a rewarding process. I hope that the study helps women, helps hiring officials to consider their part in these women’s stories, and helps to change the way we think about, talk about, and prepare future education leaders.
References


APPENDIX A

Educator Survey

Participating in this survey is voluntary. The information will be used for scholarly purposes as part of an Ed. D. doctoral thesis. Other than reflecting on your career, there are no direct risks or benefits to completing the survey. The purpose of this survey is to ask you about your thoughts, feelings, career decisions and experiences. You do not have to fill out any question that makes you uncomfortable and you can withdraw from the study at any time. District and personal data will NOT be shared or published. This survey should take only 15 minutes. Your answers are anonymous, so please feel free to answer honestly. Thank you for your help. If you have any questions about this study and/or would like to receive the results of this survey please contact: Cathy Bronars email: bronars.c@husky.neu.edu or phone: 901-596-0507

1. With which racial/ethnic group(s) do you most closely identify?
   □ African American □ American Indian/Alaskan Native □ Asian American
   □ Caucasian/European American □ Latino/Chicano □ Multi-racial
   □ Other please specify_______________________

2. Family status: □ Married/committed relationship □ Single □ Divorced

3. Do you have children?
   □ No □ Yes --no longer living at home □ Yes -- living at home

4. What is your current school type and size?
   □ Urban □ Suburban □ Rural
   □ Small School <250 □ Sm-Med. 251-500 □ Med 501-1000 □ Med-Large 1001-1500 □ Large

5. How many years have you worked in education? _________

6. What is your current position in your school/district? _____________________________________

7. If you currently are an administrator:
   How many years did you spend in the classroom? _________
   At what age did you first become an administrator? _________
   How many years have you worked in administration? _________

8. Please indicate the highest level of education that you have attained.
   □ Bachelor's □ Master's □ Ed. S. □ Ed. D. or Ph. D.
Questions for Women Principal Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>A mentor helped me to become a principal.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I was encouraged to pursue the principalship by my family/spouse/significant other.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Colleagues encouraged me to become a principal.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>University officials encouraged me to pursue the principalship.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Men are more interested in being a principal.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>If a qualified person is interested in leadership, he or she has an equal opportunity promotion.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you do not have a graduate degree and have not been teaching for at least 6 years: thank you for your input and time. Your answers will help me in my research. Please skip to the final page.

If you have a graduate degree and more than 6 years of experience, please answer the remaining questions. Please feel free to include an example or story that illustrates your perceptions and observations of why there are greater numbers of women in the classroom but fewer numbers of women principals.

17. As you reflect on your career path, what obstacles did you encounter as you pursued leadership positions?

18. Why do you believe that men are promoted to secondary principal more often than women?

19. A recent book indicated that women tend to limit their promotion potential by not taking the initiative and/or by not having the will to lead. As you consider the paths of other administrators and your own experiences, would you agree or disagree with this perception and why?

20. As you reflect on your career, what choices, priorities, or decisions did you make that might help to explain why there is an under-representation of women secondary school principalships?
21. What, if any, do you believe are the “unwritten” institutional practices that may impede women from gaining leadership positions (especially secondary principalships) yet may help men to gain leadership positions?

22. Some researchers have indicated that athletic coaching helps men to gain principalships while others say that familial obligations/social roles may impede women’s chances for promotion. Did either of these impact your decisions or thoughts about pursuing a principalship? Or if you believe that neither of these results really reflects the situation, please mention why?

23. Please add any comments, stories, observations, or experiences that might help me to better understand why men tend to rise to principalships more than women.

For all respondents: If you would like a copy of the study results, please email me at Bronars.c@huskey.neu.edu. Thank you so much for your help.

For respondents who have a graduate degree and at least 8 years experience: Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in an interview either face-to-face or by phone, lasting 30-45 minutes, please provide your information below. By giving your information on this interview request, your anonymity for these survey questions may be reduced but I will be the only person who can see the connection. Please know that your identity and confidentially will be protected. Thank you so much for your help.

Yes, I would be willing to be an interview participant:

Name: __________________________ Email: __________________________ Phone: __________

Thank you so very much for your time your input is greatly appreciated.
Cathy Bronars
Questions for Women Non-principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. I would like to be a principal.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I would like to be an administrator in a district support role but do not desire to be a principal.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I have been encouraged to pursue the principalship by my family/spouse/significant other.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. A mentor and/or colleagues have suggested that I should pursue a principalship.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Men are more interested in secondary leadership roles.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Men are more suited for secondary leadership.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Men and women are equally capable to lead secondary schools.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. I put my family needs ahead of my personal ambitions.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Women secondary educators are given an equal opportunity for leadership promotions.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you do not have a graduate degree and have not been teaching for at least 8 years: thank you for your input and time. Your answers will help me in my research. Please skip to the final page.

If you have a graduate degree and more than 8 years of experience, please answer the remaining questions. Please feel free to include an example or story that illustrates your perceptions and observations of why there are greater numbers of women in the classroom but fewer numbers of women principals.

21. Have you ever applied for a principal or vice principal position? ☐ No ☐ Yes
22. Do you hold the degree/credentials for an administrative position? ☐ No ☐ Yes
23. Do you see yourself in administration ☐ No ☐ Yes if so in what position? ______________

If you are not interested in administration why do you prefer to stay in the classroom?
24. Which of the following do you believe best represents why there are fewer women secondary principals? (If you believe more than one is applicable please choose your top three.)

☐ Women’s Personal Choices  ☐ Family Obligations  ☐ Gender Bias
☐ School Policies  ☐ Men are natural leaders
☐ Women’s Roles/Expectations  ☐ Women are not as qualified
☐ Men are mentored/groomed for leadership
☐ Other______________________________

When appropriate, please provide a story, observation, or experience that illustrates your point.

25. As you reflect on your career path, what obstacles do you believe women educators encounter as they pursue leadership? And why do you believe men are promoted to secondary principal more often than women?

26. As you consider the paths of other administrators and your own experiences, would you agree or disagree with the perception that women tend to limit their promotion potential by not taking the initiative, not engaging in networking, and/or by not having the will to lead?

27. As you reflect on your career, what choices, priorities, or decisions did you make that might help to explain the under-representation of women in secondary education?

28. What, (if any), “unwritten” rules/practices do you believe exist that may impede women from gaining secondary principalships and that help men to gain leadership positions?

30. Some researchers have indicated that athletic coaching helps men to gain principalships while others say that familial obligations/social roles may impede women’s chances for promotion. Did either of these impact your decisions or thoughts about pursuing a principalship? Or if you believe that neither of these results really reflects the situation, please mention why?

31. Please add any comments, observations, experiences, or stories that might help me to better understand the fewer number of women in secondary leadership.
For all respondents: If you would like a copy of the study results, please email me at Bronars.c@huskey.neu.edu. Thank you so much for your help.

For respondents who have a graduate degree and at least 8 years experience: Please indicate if you would be willing to participate in an interview either face-to-face or by phone, lasting 30-45 minutes, please provide your information below. By giving your information on this interview request, your anonymity for these survey questions may be reduced but I will be the only person who can see the connection. Please know that your identity and confidentiality will be protected. Thank you so much for your help.

Yes, I would be willing to be an interview participant:
Name: ____________________________ Email: ______________ Phone: ______________

Thank you so very much for your time.
Cathy Bronars
Dear Prospective Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a study that will examine secondary educator’s career paths to the secondary principalship and the under-representation of women in educational leadership. This study will consider principals’ academic, extra-curricular, and leadership opportunities that lead the principalship as well as if secondary women have aspirations for education leadership, and women’s perceptions about their opportunities for promotion. Without input from educators this research cannot be completed. I greatly appreciate your willingness to participate. Should you like to have a copy of the results, please identify that on your survey. The results of the study are available to anyone who would like to have a copy. By clicking on the link and completing the survey you are demonstrating your willingness to participate in the study. The link to the survey is: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GGNNXLQ

The study is being conducted in two parts: a survey of career pathways with open-ended opinion questions, and a series interviews to provide deeper insight into the reasons for the predominance of men and the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. As a researcher, I have no preconceived notions; rather I believe that there are many possibilities that could contribute to the situation. With your help, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of why this phenomenon exists. There are no major benefits for you personally as a participant. However, your identity will not be revealed and all interviews will take place in a non-school setting. I will provide pseudonyms for you and for your school districts/schools. You do not have to answer any questions that you find to be uncomfortable and you may withdraw from the study at any point in time.

The only person who will have access to your identity will be me. From the surveys, interview questions will be written. Interview participants will be asked to meet for approximately an hour in a non-school location that is convenient for you. The interview data will be stored in a locked file cabinet at my home and I will be the only person with the key to this data. After 3 years, the data will be destroyed.

Several benefits from the study will be that universities will be able to create programs to address the concerns that you have raised. Additionally, educational leaders and hiring officials may change how they conduct promotion programs and hiring protocols. This study will be conducted as part of a doctoral thesis (dissertation) at Northeastern University in Boston, MA. The study has been approved by Northeastern’s Institutional Review Board and will be under the direction of my advisor, Dr. Chris Unger. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to have a copy of the results, please feel free to contact me at the following email or phone number: bronars.c@husky.neu.edu or 901-596-0507.

Sincerely,

C.T. Bronars
APPENDIX C

Unsigned Consent to Document For Online Survey

Investigator’s Name: Catherine Bronars

Title of Project: Women’s Perspectives on the Under-Representation of Women in Secondary School Leadership

Request to Participate in Research:
I would like to invite you to participate in a web-based online survey. The decision to participate in the survey is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the survey, you can stop at anytime. The survey should take 15-20 minutes. I am asking you to participate in the survey because according to the school websites and the state database you have served as a secondary principal, as a lead teacher, or in school support administration in the state of Tennessee. The purpose of this part of the study is to determine the most common pathway for gaining a principalship in Tennessee and to determine why there is an under-representation of women in secondary leadership.

There are no foreseeable benefits to you from participating in the study. However, your responses will help us to learn more about the career paths of principals and women’s perceptions of the situation. This study hopes to help to update university programs to better prepare future principals. You will not be paid for your participation in this study.

Your participation in the study is confidential. Given the large number of expected participants, it will be very unlikely that any one participant could be identified. The survey questions do not ask questions that specify enough information to easily identify a particular person. Given the nature of web-based surveys, it is possible that IP addresses or other electronic footprints could identify respondents. Neither this researcher nor any other person associated with this survey will be using any means to determine your identity nor the school or district from respondents.

If you have any questions regarding electronic privacy please contact Mark Nardone, IT Security Analyst via phone at 617-373-7901, or via email at privacy@neu.edu.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact please contact C. Bronars, the primary researcher for this study at 901-596-0507 or by email at bronars.c@husky.neu.edu. You can also contact Dr. Christopher Unger by phone at 6-7-373-2400 or by email at c.unger@neu.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MS 02115, email: irb@neu.edu. You many anonymously if you wish.

Please complete the survey by (insert date)

By clicking on the survey link below you are indicating that you consent to participate in this study. Please print out a copy of this consent form for your records.

Thank you so much for your time.
APPENDIX D

Potential Interview Template and Telephone Script

Because the surveys will help to inform the interview questions, the following questions are a rough idea of what will be covered. While some of these questions will have been asked in the survey but the dynamics of an interview may change as the participant to expands upon her responses and provide richer data.

As you know, I am Cathy Bronars, a doctoral student attending Northeastern University. I am investigating the under-representation of women in secondary school leadership. I am providing you with a copy of the informed consent for an interview. (If this is a phone interview, I will email a copy and ask her to return the signed copy to me via mail, email, or fax.) I will explain the informed consent, go over each aspect and ask if she understands the form and is willing to participate. I will ask her to sign one copy for me and will give her a copy for her records.

Do you understand the document and the purpose of the study? Most importantly do you understand that you do not have to answer any question and that you me withdraw from the study at any point in time?

I will digitally audiotape the interview. The tape will be transcribed. I will email you your transcription for you to make clarifications/corrections and will destroy the tape after the transcription is complete. You and your school will be identified by a pseudonym. I will be the only person who has access to the raw data and as the informed consent states, will do my absolute best to maintain your confidentiality. Would it be all right to start the audio recording? At any point in time, please feel free to ask me to stop the tape and/or ask for any clarification to questions.

(The length and breath of the interview will be dynamic—topics that will be pursued but are not specifically limited to are below.)

1. Please tell me about yourself
   a. What is your teaching discipline, school background, career path, and leadership opportunities that you have had.
   b. How long have you been in education?
   c. What prompted you to choose a career in education?
   d. What challenges have you experienced with respect to gaining leadership positions and (for principals and support staff) after gaining a leadership position?
   e. In your experience does it seem that there are more male principals? Nationally the statistics are that men are more often promoted and within our state the male to female secondary principal ratio is 72:28. Why do you believe that men are promoted more prevalently than women?
   f. What institutional practices do you believe hold women back?
i. Can you expand on that? *(If need be include the following to spark discussion: glass escalator, coaching connection, social role theory, delayed careers, family obligations—use the survey to identify trends.)*

ii. Gender bias, the good ol’ boy network, and men do the hiring were trends that the survey found with respect to teacher leaders and secondary leadership, please talk to me about this trend and your perceptions and experiences with respect to this phenomenon. Do you have any stories or examples to further illustrate your point/perspectives?

iii. Did these impact you? Did these affect your motivation to pursue a principalship or support administrative position?

   g. Sandberg in her book *Lean In* indicated that women can at times be their worst enemy by not mentoring each other and by not pursuing leadership as vigorously as men do—what are your feelings, perceptions, and experiences with respect to this premise? Can you elaborate and/or provide a story/example?

   h. Some researchers have indicated that social role expectations are a potential reason for this phenomenon, which men are born to lead and women are born to nurture. Do/did the prevalence of men, the low number of women and/or role expectations discourage you from applying for a position?

2. **For principals:**

   a. What prompted you to leave the classroom and pursue a career in administration?

   b. What obstacles did you encounter on your way to the principalship?

   c. What type of help, mentorships, support, networks, or experiences helped you to gain a position in administration?

   d. Women often delay their careers for having children, etc. and are more likely to be ready to pursue an administrative career later in life; did you experience any age discrimination or “mommy” discrimination?

   e. What other ideas, situations, or practices in your experience are contributors to the few number of women in educational leadership?

3. **For support staff administrators:**

   a. What prompted you to leave the classroom and pursue a career in administration?

   b. Did/Do you want to be a principal? If so why, if not why not?

   c. What obstacles did you encounter on your way to a leadership position?

   d. What type of help, mentorships, support, networks, or experiences helped you to gain a position in administration or hurt your chances?

   e. How do/did family roles and/or social expectations affect your choices and ambitions and/or those choices and ambitions of your colleagues who aspire to leadership?

   f. Why do you believe that women are more often in secondary administrative support positions while men rise to “line” leadership positions? *(“Line”*
leadership is having responsibility for monetary decisions and personnel supervisory as well as having a greater degree of autonomy and policy making power.)

4. For teacher leaders:
   a. Do you want to leave the classroom and pursue a career in administration? If so why, if not why not?
   b. For those that do want to pursue administration, why haven’t you (what motivates you or de-motivates you)?
   c. How do/did family roles and/or social expectations affect your choices and ambitions and/or those choices and ambitions of your colleagues who aspire to leadership?
   d. Women often delay their careers for having children, etc. and are more likely to be ready to pursue an administrative career later in life, why do you think so few of those women gain leadership? What strengths do they bring to the table?
   e. Why do you believe that women are more often in secondary administrative support positions while men rise to “line” leadership positions? (“Line” leadership is having responsibility for monetary decisions and personnel supervisory as well as having a greater degree of autonomy and policy making power.)
   f. Gender bias, the good ol’ boy network, and men do the hiring were trends that the survey found with respect to teacher leaders and secondary leadership, please talk to me about this trend and your perceptions and experiences with respect to this phenomenon. Do you have any stories or examples to further illustrate your point/perspectives?
   g. What other ideas, situations, perceptions, or practices in your experience are contributors to the few number of women in educational leadership?

Within about a week I will email your transcription. Please make any changes or clarifications to the transcript. Please email me back your clarifications within one week of receiving the transcription. If there is any problem with that timeline or something arises, feel free to email or call me. Thank you so very much for helping me with this research, your input has been most helpful and is providing a clearer picture of the under-representation of women in secondary leadership.
APPENDIX E

Informed Consent for Interviews

Investigator’s Name: Catherine Bronars

Title of Project: Women’s Perspectives on the Under-Representation of Women in Secondary School Leadership

You are being invited to participate in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will first explain it to you. When you have made a decision about your participation, please tell the researcher that you are willing to participate. You do not have to participate and you may withdraw at any point in time. You also do not need to answer specific questions. If you choose not to answer, feel free to tell the researcher that you choose not to answer that question.

Why are you being asked to take part in this study?
Your invitation is a result of your response on the survey that you were interested in participating in the interview portion of the study. Your initial recruitment was as result of your experience as a Tennessee public secondary school educator with more than eight years of experience and having held school leader such as lead-teacher, department chair, principal, etc.

Why is the research being done?
The purpose of this research is to gather information about secondary school principal career paths and to provide deeper insight into the reasons for the predominance of men in secondary leadership and the under-representation of women in leadership. This study will also consider women’s perceptions of their opportunities for promotion and their aspirations for principalships.

What will I be asked to do?
If you decide to take part in the is study, you will be asked to participate in an hour long interview about your experiences, choices, and observations while you have served in Tennessee secondary education. Your participation is completely voluntary; you can opt out at any point in time. The session will be digitally recorded and transcribed. You will be given a pseudonym and I will ensure that any identifiable information will be scrubbed from the transcript. You will be provided a copy of your transcript to allow you to make any clarifications that are necessary. I would ask that your return your clarifications back to me by email within a week of receiving the transcript.

Where will this take place and how much time will it take?
The interview will take place off campus at XXXX (most likely the local public library meeting rooms or a local hotel meeting room). The interview will take approximately one hour and will be at a time that you find convenient.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort to you. It is possible that as you reflect on your experiences, career, choices, and institutional practices you may experience moments of unsettled frustration or stress. As a female administrator and 20 year secondary school teacher, I will make every effort minimize any discomfort and to honorably represent your experiences. Although your identity will be held in confidence and your identifying information will be scrubbed from any transcripts or results reporting, it is possible that any discussions that you may have with colleagues could result some form of disclosure to your principal or district administrator. This study is not anti-establishment or anti-male. Rather, the study hopes to determine the most common career paths to leadership and the multiple reasons for the under-representation of women in secondary leadership. It is my hope that your experiences could benefit others.
Will there be any benefit in this researcher?
You will provide a voice to women educators and will be a part of the solution to the problem not only locally but also nationally and even internationally. One of the benefits from the study will be that universities will be able to create programs to address the concerns that you have raised. Universities will also be able to include your perspectives in scholarly discussions and practical solutions for leadership certification programs. Additionally, educational leaders and hiring officials may change how they conduct promotion and hiring protocols.

Who will see the information about me?
Your information and participation will be held in confidence. No reports or publications will use any information that can identify you, your school, or any individual that you reference in any way. The only person who will have access to your identity will be me. From the surveys, interview questions will be written. Interview participants will be asked to meet for approximately an hour in a non-school location that is convenient for you. The interview data will be stored in a locked file cabinet at my home and I will be the only person with the key to this data. After the transcription has been confirmed all audio data will be destroyed. You do not have to answer any questions that you find to be uncomfortable and you may withdraw from the study at any point in time.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information to ensure that the research is being conducted properly. The researcher would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University to see this information. No identifying information will ever be released or shared with officials form any, school district, or Tennessee state agency.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Your participation is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw at any point in time and you do not have to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you can quit at any time; you will not be coerced to continue and your responses will be eliminated from the study should you choose to withdraw.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
Catherine Bronars  
College of Professional Studies  
Northeastern University  
901-596-0507  
Email: bronars.c@husky.neu.edu  
Dr. Christopher Unger  
College of Professional Studies  
50 Nightingale Hall  
Northeastern University  
Boston, MA  
Campus phone #L 617-373-2400  
Email: c.unger@neu.edu

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115 tel. 617-373-7570, email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Will I be paid or receive any compensation for my participation?
There is no compensation for the participation in this study.

Will there be any cost to me to participate?
There is no cost to you to participate.

By signing below you are giving your consent to participate in this research study.

Name: ____________________________________________ Date ____________________

Thank you so very much for your participation.
### APPENDIX F

Figure 1. Logic Chain of Job Title and Marital and Family Status

A mentor encouraged me to pursue a principalship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Job Title Only</th>
<th>Marital Status Only</th>
<th>Family Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agreed (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>Disagreed (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P &amp; AS</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D &amp; S</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High to low % agreement:
- 100% AP depend.
- 84% P&AS depend.
- 79% AP married
- 75% P&AS single
- 71% P&AS none
- 67% P&AS nondep.
- 58% D&S nondep.
- 55% T none

High to low % disagreement:
- 73% T nondep.
- 57% T divorced
- 34% T married
- 33% D&S married
- 30% D&S nondep.
- 30% D&S depend.

Figure 1. AP=Assistant Principal, P&AS=Principals and Former principals, D&S=Directors and Supervisors, T=Teachers, N=Neutral.

As can be seen in Figure 1, Assistant principals answered more closely to the principal and assistant superintendent category. In most instances teachers and the directors and supervisors in almost every demographic were less likely to agree with having a mentor encourage them to pursue a principalship.
### Table 13

**Reduction of Themes from the Surveys**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Divorced (N=13)</th>
<th>Married (N=80)</th>
<th>Former Prin. (N=3)</th>
<th>Single (N=7)</th>
<th>Dir./Supervisors (N=28)</th>
<th>Children (N=76)</th>
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<td>Gender Bias</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td>Gendered Institutional Practices</td>
<td>Personal Choices</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>18%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<td>9%</td>
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<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
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<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>33%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
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<td>20%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
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<td>32%</td>
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<td>6%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
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<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children</td>
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<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>31%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The number of times that theme or term was mentioned in the open-ended questions is listed.
Table 14

*Experience-level and Reduction of Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Ranges</th>
<th>Social or Gender Roles</th>
<th>Family Obligations</th>
<th>Gender Bias</th>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>(Gendered) Institutional Practices</th>
<th>Personal Choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>6 - 10 years (N=12)</td>
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<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-15 years (N=18)</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20 years (N=19)</td>
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<td>37%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>21+ years (N=50)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%.
### APPENDIX H

**Survey Questions Sorted Across Job Title, Marital Status, and Family Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
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<td>Asst. Principals (N=16)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question:** A mentor helped/encouraged me to become/pursue a principalship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Divorced</th>
<th>(N = 13)</th>
<th>23%</th>
<th>23%</th>
<th>8%</th>
<th>15%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
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<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>(N = 2)</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>(N = 3)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(N = 8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>38%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>30%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>15%</th>
<th>19%</th>
<th>3.3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td>(N = 15)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(N = 28)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Single</th>
<th>(N = 7)</th>
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<th>0%</th>
<th>17%</th>
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<th>3.8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td>(N = 4)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>(N = 1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>(N = 1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(N = 1)</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Children still living at home</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(N = 6)</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>4.7</td>
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<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td>(N = 9)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>(N = 18)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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<table>
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<tbody>
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<td>(N = 6)</td>
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<td>(N = 4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
<td>(N = 7)</td>
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<td>14%</td>
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<td>33%</td>
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**Note:** Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions.
Table 15 (Continued)

*Survey Questions Sorted Across Job Title, Marital Status, and Family Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Principals (N=16)</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
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<td>22%</td>
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<td>33%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions.
### Table 15 (Continued)

**Survey Questions Sorted Across Job Title, Marital Status, and Family Status**

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**Question:** Men are more interested in being a principal.

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<td>7%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 7)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 14)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N = 18)</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Nesters (N = 30)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 6)</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 5)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 8)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N = 11)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children (N = 23)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 2)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 6)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N = 8)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions.
## Table 15 (Continued)

**Survey Questions Sorted Across Job Title, Marital Status, and Family Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Divorced (N=13)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals (N=16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Prin. (N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dir./Supervisors (N=28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=38)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married (N=76)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single (N=6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Child (N=24)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question: Most women secondary teachers are not interested in pursuing a leadership role.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Divorced (N = 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Married (N = 78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Single (N = 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals (N = 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N = 0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors (N = 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Children (N = 74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children still living at home (N = 45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Nesters (N = 29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Children (N = 24)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Note: Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions. |
Table 15 (Continued)

Survey Questions Sorted Across Job Title, Marital Status, and Family Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Question</th>
<th>All Divorced</th>
<th>All Married</th>
<th>All Single</th>
<th>All Children</th>
<th>Children still living at home</th>
<th>Empty Nesters</th>
<th>No Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
<td>(N = 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question: If a qualified person is interested in leadership, he or she has an equal opportunity.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals (N=16)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Prin. (N=3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dir./Supervisors (N=28)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divorced (N=13)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Married (N=78)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single (N=7)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Child (N=25)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals and Former Principals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Directors and Supervisors</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Some participants did not answer all of the questions.
**APPENDIX I**

Table 16

*Experience-level and Job Title Sort Sample Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience Ranges</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Avg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 – 10 years Experience</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals (N=1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N=2)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors &amp; Supervisors (N=1)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=9)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 – 15 years Experience</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals (N=2)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N=4)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors &amp; Supervisors (N=5)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 – 20 years Experience</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals &amp; Former Principals (N=4)</td>
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<td>75%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principals (N=0)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors &amp; Supervisors (N=8)</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=7)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21+ years Experience</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
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<td>72%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors &amp; Supervisors (N=15)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers (N=14)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Due to rounding, the percentages may not equal 100%. Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly Agree. Teachers = teachers, 2 guidance counselors and 1 librarian.*