

Women in Secondary Leadership  
Leadership Integration Project

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Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Educational Leadership

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### Abstract

This project explored the following question: What are the reasons for an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals? The purpose of this integrative project is to analyze existing barriers women contend with in their pursuit to obtain the secondary principalship. In spite of the fact that women are overcoming the glass ceiling in primary school principalship there remains an underrepresentation of female secondary principals in school districts across Canada due to a large number of barriers. The research also focused on what measures could be taken in order to close this gap. A standard Systematic Literature Review methodology was employed to identify three different kinds of studies: (1) women in secondary leadership; (2) barriers, obstacles and challenges for women considering the secondary school principalship, and (3) how mentoring can benefit female teachers aspiring to become principals. As a result of my research I have created an Improvement Plan where I focused on developing three leadership competencies which are rooted in the *Transformational servant leadership* (TSL) values & ethics: (a) Vision and Strategic Planning; (b) Adaptability and Change; and (c) Team Leadership and Competency Development. This study found that mentoring and networking can help to ameliorate the gender impediment in secondary school leadership. Achieving gender balance in administrative leadership for school districts is complex given the fact that there is no statutory law in place mandating gender balance. It is recommended School boards adopt mentorship programs geared specifically for women pursuing careers in secondary school principalship.

*Key words: women, principal, secondary, educational leadership, discrimination, gender, equality, educational administration, mentorship, barriers, transformational servant leadership*

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## CHAPTER 1-Introduction

*“We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly”* (Margaret Atwood as cited in Northouse, 2015, p. 398). There are few female secondary teachers working in the Langley School District 35 (LSD35). In fact, currently, there is only one female secondary principal in the entire district (G. McCarthur, personal communication, July13, 2017). This revelation is alarming and begs the question what is preventing women from being chosen for this role? Are qualified female educators being unfairly discriminated against? Or are women feeling inadequate for this role? Today’s society is socially aware of gender equity and on many fronts, women are pushing old drawn boundary lines. Take for example in both Canadian federal politics and, as well in British Columbia’s provincial politics, both Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the newly elected Premier of British Columbia, John Horgan, have mandated for gender balanced cabinets as they strive to be forward thinking leaders (Murphy, 2015; Premier & Holmwood, 2017). Despite Canada’s policy initiatives on gender equality (Government Canada, 2017) Langley School District 35 along with numerous other school districts across the country persist in appointing more male secondary principals than female. This integrative project will look at this question: ***What are the reasons for an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals?*** See Table 1 for a more thorough list of questions being asked on this topic.

Table 1.1

*What are the Major Questions Being Asked in the Literature Pertaining to this Topic?*

- Are women underrepresented in positions of leadership?
- Are women still being discriminated against?
- Do women lack motivation in pursuing a secondary principalship position?
- Why aren't more female educators being mentored and encouraged to move into leadership at the secondary level?
- Why aren't more female teacher leader graduates choosing to be administrators?
- What factors could enable women to take their place as the equals of men in educational administration?
- Do women have equal opportunities in educational management?
- What are the reasons for an imbalance in the numbers of male and female principals appointed to secondary educational management?
- What does the existing literature on women and leadership reveal?
- What are the perceived obstacles women have encountered, for those who successfully obtain a principalship/assistant principalship?

*Note.* (Crosby –Hillier, 2012 as cited in Neuscheler, 2017, pp.8-9).

### **Statistics on Gender and Leadership**

According to Sociologists, Davies & Guppy (2014), since the 1950s the number of women enrolled in full-time undergraduate studies has been growing. By 2009, Davies & Guppy (2014) assert that “61.3 per cent of women obtained undergraduate degrees”, surpassing men

(p.139). Scholars Davies & Guppy (2014) and Northouse (2016) state that not only are more women today obtaining a post-secondary education, research shows “by 2010, 56 per cent of all master’s students were female” (Davies & Guppy, 2014, p. 139). Furthermore, according to Davies & Guppy (2014), “women are also earning more doctoral degrees at a rate greater than or nearly equal to that of men” yet women still remain despairingly underrepresented in principalship positions (p.399). Scholars Reynolds, White, Brayman, and Moore (2008) posit that although more females are obtaining their qualifications to become administrators men are still being chosen for “inner city places like Regina” (Reynolds et al., 2008, p.35).

According to Canadian teacher statistics 2016-17 from the BC Ministry of Ed (2017) Provincial Reporting on K-12, as of September 2016 there were 35, 875 Educators in British Columbia public schools. From this total there were 25, 954 (72 per cent) female educators and 9,921 (28 per cent) male educators. These statistics reveal that male educators are still significantly greater in number than female educators’ even if more women are surpassing men with university degrees. To illustrate this point further, another statistic from the Provincial Reporting on K-12 from the BC Government (2017) looks at the average salary base of female and male educators. Females earned \$73,596 as opposed to males who earned slightly more at \$75,849. Likewise, the report shows that in 2016-17 there were a total of 2, 521 administrators in BC public schools (BC Government, 2017). From this total, 1,367 were female and 1,154 were male. Although it appears as though there were more female administrators, this does not suggest that there were more female administrators in the secondary schools. Also, important to note is their salary. Female administrators earned a full time base salary of \$104,572 compared to male administrators who earned \$107, 897 (BC Government, 2017). From these results it is evident that there are still existing barriers for gender equality in terms of salary.

### **Hogg's Social Identity Theory**

The Hogg (2001) theory social identity theory, also referred to as 'in group-favoritism', discusses leadership emergence, as 'in-group' and 'out- groups' form over a period of time (Northouse, 2016). Hogg (2001) argues, that a group prototype also develops (Northouse, 2016). In this environment, Hogg (2001) illustrates, as cited in Northouse (2016) how "individuals who emerge as leaders within this group dynamic tend to be the ones appearing *most* [emphasis added] like the group prototype" (p.9). Therefore the social identity theory demonstrates why it might be that men who are already in the upper echelons of the school board and school trustees, end up promoting other men into principalship positions rather than women.

## **CHAPTER 2-Methodology and Research Design**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to explain my approach to the research, and the methods used to collect and analyze data. The first section explains my rationale for using a grounded theory (GT) methodology. The second section outlines the use of exploring individual experiences as told through stories documented by other researchers in semi-structured interviews as a method. It also highlights why this was a good choice for researching factors that both influence and deter the career path aspirations of women seeking secondary school principalships. The third section describes the process of collecting and screening data from various academic journals.



## **Methodology**

A 'restoried' narrative approach within the context of GT and a critical paradigm was utilized for this research (Plano-Clark & Creswell, 2015). The 'restoried' narrative approach allowed me to critically analyze the factors that both influence and hinder the career aspirations of women vying for positions of administrative leadership in secondary schools across Canada and abroad. A critical lens was essential to understand the participants' personal stories and diverse experiences from a variety of peer reviewed scholarly work.

## **Methods**

A standard Systematic Literature Review methodology was employed to identify three different kinds of studies: (1) women in leadership with an emphasis on women in secondary leadership; (2) barriers, obstacles and challenges that exist for women considering the secondary school principalship, and (3) how mentoring programs can help benefit female teachers who are looking at making the leap from teacher to administrator. The search of published peer reviewed articles, theses and dissertations was conducted with different databases (EBSCOhost, Eric, JSTOR, Academic Search Complete, Open Access Theses and Dissertations and Theses Canada). A database search was conducted for 2000 to 2018 and I looked specifically for articles from Canada, America and other commonwealth countries such as Great Britain and New Zealand. The following search descriptors (with appropriate Booleans and English and American spellings) were used for the first literature review: women, leadership, secondary, educational leadership and Canada. Next, the following search terms were employed for the second literature review: barriers, obstacles, challenges for women and secondary school principals. Lastly, the third literature review focused on these terms: women, high school

principals, women in educational leadership, secondary school leadership, mentorship, mentoring and education.

The articles were then manually screened for relevance and attainability. Searches of bibliographies from relevant articles were also performed, which identified a number of additional studies. The articles were either kept or eliminated due to inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included the following components: studies on women in leadership, women becoming principals, and secondary principals, educational leadership, women in secondary leadership and barriers or obstacles, women becoming principals, and secondary principals, women in leadership which address mentoring, and educational leadership. The exclusion criteria were studies about women secondary principals in other fields of work such as in the medical field, women as leaders, higher education, women leaders in college and university, graduate studies, race and gender in leadership.

The following literature reviews will establish a basis for the recommended improvement plan and resolve to answer the following questions:

1. What special leadership qualities do women in leadership have that would make them good candidates for the secondary principalship?
2. What existing barriers and obstacles cause an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals?
3. Are mentoring and networking valuable supports for women endeavoring to move into positions of leadership?
4. How can mentoring help women in leadership?

The purpose is also to provide an overview of recent research findings in significant literature.

## CHAPTER 3-Literature Review: Women in Leadership

### Introduction

Leading educational change and school improvement requires new ideas, new approaches to teaching and assessing student achievement but securing the *right* kind of leadership at the helm is fundamental in driving about real change (Sergiovanni, 2007). Both men and women can be leaders and indeed women possess a myriad of leadership traits that would make them rival any male candidate (Northouse, 2016). Current research studies show that women have superior social skills and are socially intuitive (Coleman, 2005 and Reynolds et al., 2008). Research findings also highlight that women are far more collaborative (Coleman, 2005, p.45), emotionally responsive (Northouse, 2016), collegial (Reynolds et al., 2008), and consultive (Reynolds et al., 2008).

Furthermore, it has been argued by many researchers that women exhibit more nurturing and caring traits (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Murakami & Törnsten, 2017; Reynolds et al., 2008 and Northouse, 2016). Coleman (2005) found that women have better “mediation skills” and “can better empathize with mothers and other female staff” (p.14). Aquaro and Stokes (2016) maintain that “women are more democratic than men and more participative” too (p.132). Reynolds et al., (2008) point out that women have a special set of leadership traits. In a more recent study Murakami and Törnsten (2017) go on to say that women have a special “leadership style” (p.819). Lastly, Coleman (2005) found that women are great at multi-tasking.

This literature review will look at this question: *What special leadership qualities do women in leadership have that would make them good candidates for the secondary principalship?*

### **Definitions**

*Androcentric bias*: showing favor towards male opinions over female (male bias) (Tabin and Coleman, 1993)

*The glass ceiling*: an invisible barrier which hinders women from moving into elite leadership positions (Northouse, 2015).

*The glass escalator*: refers to the advancement of “White” men over women into top management positions in female-dominated fields (Broner & Asselmeier, 2013 and Northouse, 2015).

*Transformational Servant leadership*: a style of leadership which was coined by Greenleaf (1977); whereby the leader is a servant first (Imbenzi & Page, 2013; Northouse, 2016; Page, n. d. and Sergiovanni, 2007).

### **Low Numbers of Female Secondary Principals**

In the ever increasing fields of women and educational leadership, research shows that although historically women have predominantly found autonomy in the elementary principals’ chair (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Guihon, 2017; Murakami & Törnsen, 2017; Reynolds et al., 2008; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014; Rousmaniere, 2007; Schautz, 1995; Tabin & Coleman, 1993) the opposite remains true for women vying for secondary principalships. In fact there remains a disproportionate ratio of male secondary principals versus female secondary

principals in education (Reynolds et al., 2008; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014 and Tabin & Coleman, 1993). See Table II.

The literature shows that there are low numbers of female principals in secondary principalships (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Dunbar & Kinnersly, 2011; Guihen, 2017; Murakami & Törnsten, 2017; Northouse, 2016; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014; Rousmaniere, 2007; Smith, 2011 and Toogood, 2012). Yet, in a day and age that is over two centuries removed from the harrowing French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the French Citizen (1791), Northouse (2016) posits that even in occupations that are typically female dominated, like education, “women still face the glass ceiling” while their male counterparts “ride a glass escalator to the top leadership positions” (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Northouse, 2016, p. 399). French writer and feminist, Olympe de Gouges, argued that women are born free and should therefore have equal rights to men; it is this worthy cause of equality which women today still persistently advocate to set right (Cranny & Jarvis, 2013). It is therefore questionable why after so many advances in terms of women’s rights that women still experience barriers and discrimination when trying to move into secondary principalships. Harris (2014), in her book *Distributed Leadership Matters*, asserts that “the world is changing, learning is changing, and so should leadership” (p.36). To further the point, scholar Koyzis (2014) stresses how important it is that both “women and men living in a post-industrial society should be guaranteed legal equality” (p.51).

Table II

*Secondary Principals and Vice Principals LSD 35*

Secondary Principals	Male	9	Female	0
Secondary Vice Principal's	Male	12	Female	4

*Note.* At the time of writing these were the actual numbers from the Human Resources department at Langley School District #35.

Education is currently in a mode of transformation from the old way of doing things. In other words, this necessitates that change be implemented in the hiring of gender balanced administrative teams at the secondary level. A transparent hiring process would thus eliminate an unbalanced, exclusionary male only system.

### **Female Principals**

In reviewing the literature, (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Shautz, 1995; Sergiovanni, 2007 and Toogood, 2012) state that female principals work differently and exhibit a different leadership style than their male counterparts. In fact, this concurs with current research questions which ask “Do men and women lead differently?” and “Are men more effective leaders than women?” or “Why women are underrepresented in elite leadership roles?” (Northouse, 2015, p. 398). Sociologists Davies and Guppy (2014) have noted that “women and men have different aptitudes for different kinds of tasks” (p.144). Davies and Guppy base their hypothesis on grade 12 course enrolment by gender and year for subjects such as English, History, Math and Physics. Findings

show that fewer women than men are enrolled in grade 12 physics, which suggests that women and men have different aptitudes for different skills (p.145). Accordingly, Northouse' (2015) research asserts that women and men are more compelling in positions of leadership that are more compatible with their gender (p.402). For example, Northouse states, "women are less effective than men in military positions yet, women are somewhat more effective in education" (p. 403). On the contrary, Northouse goes on to point out that women tend to be less effective than men are when supervising a higher number of male subordinates (p.403).

Aquaro and Stokes (2016), interviewed women who were aspiring to positions of leadership in a male-centered boys' secondary school. They noted that a "woman's way of leading is unique" (p. 136). Moreover, Aquaro and Stokes go on to contend that the women had a "strong sense of social responsibility to both the organization and the boys" (p.136). Men tend to be more abrasive, harsh and tough when disciplining whereas women might be calmer in their choice of words and demeanor. Aquaro and Stokes contend that "women just come at things from a different angle" (p.137). A women's perspective, according to Aquaro and Stokes, is justified and a benefit to educational leadership positions, especially when addressing punitive subject matter.

Shautz' (1995) research claims that not only do female administrators go about their everyday tasks differently than men their administrative tasks are funneled through a female perspective (p.210). As cited in Shautz (1995) one study by Gross and Trask (1976) found that female administrators find more "satisfaction in supervising instruction" than their male counterparts (p.210). Furthermore, female administrators encourage their staff to talk about their problems more than men (Schautz, 1995). The aforementioned article also proclaims that

women leaders have a “more pastoral approach” to their leadership (p. 138). Female leaders gravitate towards maternal instincts of nurturing and caring for those under their care.

Shautz (1995) maintains that women have a more collaborative culture (pp.212-13). Collaboration is made possible because female principals have a tendency to trust their staff (Shautz, 1995). Trust is indeed a key element required for good collaboration. Trust is also mutual and therefore if teaching staff feel their principal has their back and will go to bat for them, then it can be also expected that the same holds true for the principal, if she believes she has the support of her staff.

The literature also acknowledged that female principals have special administrative skills and character traits. Not only are women more “empathetic, intuitive, warm and emotional, but they are also more nurturing, cooperative, and understanding” (Tabin & Coleman, 1993, p.389). Tabin and Coleman’s (1993) research suggests that female principals are the right fit for the job.

To further the point, Cates (2012) and Shautz (1995) found that women also have a better retention rate of interacting with new teaching staff (Cates, 2012 and Shautz, 1995). In fact, women are better mediators and thus, having the ability to communicate appropriately with staff can work in a female principal’s favor (Coleman, 2005). Female administrators are excellent for the secondary principalship (Schautz, 1995). Adams and Hambright (2004) point out that women “demonstrate promising leadership potential” and “have exceptional leadership skills” (p.209). Therefore school boards should reconsider their innate leadership abilities and consider hiring more female secondary principals.

Female principals are transformational leaders who exhibit contemporary leadership skills that are required for leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007; Shautz, 1995 and Toogood, 2012). As



cited in Toogood (2012), research reveals that “women are more likely than men to use leadership strategies such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership” models (p.48). Generally, women tend to gravitate towards the nurturer/care-giver role and seek to transform young people into exemplary citizens through relationship building. Sometimes they also find themselves in the position of granting rewards and/or administering punishment and at other times they abstain from getting too involved.

Finally, the literature goes on to say that women are more deliberate about creating a positive culture Toogood, 2012). One way women leaders do this is by providing more professional development for staff which thus “aligns with women’s propensity for instructional leadership” (A. Castellon, personal communication, August 2, 2018; Toogood, 2012).

From this research it is evident that leading educational change and school improvement requires new ideas, new approaches to teaching and assessing student achievement but an essential part of this educational change also requires securing the right kind of leadership at the helm in order to bring about any lasting change. The following chapter will look at existing barriers and obstacles that hinder aspiring women who hope to take the helm of secondary school principalship. There are two kinds of barriers that will be discussed: (1) external barriers, and (2) internal barriers.

## **CHAPTER 4- Literature Review: Barriers & Obstacles for Women in Leadership**

### **Introduction**

This literature review explores barriers and obstacles for women seeking a leadership role in secondary schools. Current research reveals there are barriers and obstacles hindering female secondary teachers from moving up the glass escalator into the principalship (Acquaro & Stokes,

2016; Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cates, 2012; Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Guihen, 2017; Jones, 2016; Lumby, 2013; Moreau, Osgood and Halsall, 2007; Kossek, Su & Wu, 2016; Reynolds, White, Brayman, & Moore, 2008; Rhodes, 2018; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014; Rousmaniere, 2007; Smith, 2011; Steele Flippin, 2017; Tabin & Coleman, 1993; Toogood, 2012 and Wilkinson, 1991). Taking a closer look at the underrepresentation of women in the secondary principalship literature reveals both external and internal barriers and obstacles that are culpable for this inequality (Jones, 2016; Moreau et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2018; Smith, 2011; Steele Flippin, 2017 and Wilkinson, 1991).

Merriam Dictionary defines barrier in two ways: (1) “as something material that blocks or is intended to block passage; a natural formation or structure that prevents or hinders movement or action; and (2) something immaterial that impedes or separates; behavioral barriers” (M., 2018).

The most prevalent external barriers that hinder women in their path to the principalship include hiring practices, negative perception of the principal, competency, appearance, token appointments/androcentric bias, differential salaries, family responsibilities, mobility, lack of networking, lack of encouragement and loneliness (Adams et al., 2004; Guihen, 2017; Jones, 2016; Kossek et al., 2016; Moreau et al., 2007; Reynolds et al., 2008; Rousmaniere, 2007; Rhodes, 2018; Smith, 2011; Smith, 2011; Steele Flippin, 2017; Tabin et al., 1993 and Wilkinson, 1991).

Other significant barriers for women in their pursuit of secondary leadership positions are internal barriers: sex stereotyping and gender bias, agency, social role, role conflict, lack of self-confidence, negative attributes of women (behavior and low-self-image) (Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Kossek et al., 2016; Jones, 2016; Lumby, 2013;

Moreau et al., 2007; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014; Rhodes, 2018; Steele Flippin, 2017 and Wilkinson, 1991).

The issue of barriers and obstacles for women seeking leadership in secondary schools is very broad. It transcends municipalities, provinces, states, countries and even continents as can be seen in the vast array of literature.

Most of the studies I have reviewed focused on women high school principals and the labyrinth they must traverse in order to overcome the barriers and obstacles to the principalship. Research reveals that women high school principals face barriers and obstacles hindering their chances of moving into the principalship. Women can be great leaders but research/literature indicates that a woman's behavior gets in the way of where she would like to go in her career path.

Recent studies have shown that a woman's journey into secondary administration is a pipeline problem (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Further studies indicate discriminatory barriers (Eagly & Chin, 2010) and gender discrimination (Lumby, 2013 and Moreau et al., 2007). For example, Lumby (2013) found that women who were successfully appointed to principalship posts in two South African provinces were placed in more remote locations, in smaller schools and were paid less than men. Moreau et al., (2007) identified one respondent from their qualitative study of 44 individual interviews and focus groups with both primary and secondary female teachers who felt discriminated against. Although she was open to pursuing leadership opportunities at her school, had great training and lots of skills, men were continuously selected for leadership opportunities and therefore attributes it to a "strong masculine ethos" (p.245). Furthermore,

Moreau et al.,’s (2007) respondent also noted how “initiatives she developed were handed over to male colleagues” (p.245).

Attitudes are less favorable toward females than male leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The literature also looks at role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and social role theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Chin, 2010 and Jones, 2016). Role congruity theory adduces when a group of people identify to their prescribed social role characteristics, like a woman cooking food, or taking care of a baby, they will be positively evaluated (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, the opposite remains true if they deviate from the norm. For example a female who smokes a cigar would not be looked upon favorably. Social role theory purports that most everyday human activities are acting out of socially defined groups meaning when a young girl plays with a doll or pushes a baby in a baby carriage she is acting out her socially defined role in society (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Other studies mention glass ceiling limitations (Eagly& Karau, 2002; Kossek et al., 2016). In contrast, Steele Flippin’s (2017) research looks at a rift in the glass ceiling caused by generational differences and baby-boomers who are retiring and creating new openings in administrative positions. Finally, family responsibilities is a common theme in many of the articles (Kossek et al., 2016; Lumby, 2013; Moreau et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2018 and Steele Flippin, 2017).

This literature review will look at this question: *What existing barriers and obstacles cause an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals?*

## **External Barriers**

**Hiring practices.** The existing literature states (unfair) hiring practices are a significant road block which pose an external barrier for females being hired as principals at the secondary level (Guihen, 2017; Kossek, Su & Wu, 2016; Reynolds et al., 2008; Rhodes, 2018; Rousmaniere, 2007 and Tabin & Coleman, 1993). According to Rousmaniere (2007), there is a marginal chance for women vying for a principalship position at the secondary level because “hiring practices explicitly exclude women and people of color” (p.22). More to the point, Rousmaniere’s social history research shows evidence that since the end of World War One and Two, “married men were targeted to resolve a masculinity crisis caused by too many women in elementary schools. The athletic, married male principal offered school districts a vision of stability, heteronormativity, and professionalism” (p.17). According to Rhodes (2018) “schools prefer male principals” and one female teacher described the appointment of men principals over women as “the elephant in the room” (p.51).

Tabin and Coleman (1993) point out, despite equal opportunity legislation the school board is partly responsible as they tend to have a preference for male administrators. This concurs with Kossek, Su and Wu’s (2016) research which implies “women are less promotable” (p.239).

Similarly, in a more recent study, scholar Guihen’s (2017) qualitative research contends that women teachers are being unjustly led to believe secondary school leadership is inaccessible to them (p.69). Guihen, also asserts that some female teachers believe there are other factors at play, “conspiring to exclude or deter them” from obtaining a principalship (p.70).

In their study, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) found that, even women who try to break the glass ceiling may still be held back in their career progression by those at the school board office who are ultimately responsible for appointing and promoting:

Well when I first started teaching I went for an increase within the school. I went for a post within the school...And I didn't get it. I was told afterward that I didn't get it because my husband was ambitious and he wasn't going to stay in the area for long. (B. Koston, personal communication, n. d., as cited by Moreau et al., 2007, p.246)

Another teacher was quoted as saying:

I know when I went for deputy head interviews without exception if there was a male candidate that he got it...If you go into an interview room and you see a male candidate sitting there your heart sinks because you know you've got to be twice as good...Not against whether you're a better candidate than them, but the fact that you're the wrong gender. (O. H. Tree, n. d., as cited by Moreau et al., p.246)

In a life history study on the factors affecting the career decisions of 40 female secondary teachers in England, Smith (2011) used snowball sampling to collect her various snapshots of women's teaching careers (p.10). One interviewee, Stella, notes how people are already pegged for openings and then encouraged to post for the position:

I haven't actively looked for things...I think it's probably partly the school I work in..When a post comes up they often know who they think would be suited to the post, so a little gentle nudging sometimes ...and that would probably start at the top, I would think. (Stella, personal communication, n. d., as cited by Smith, 2011, p.19)

The literature also points out that some female principals who enter the profession experience bullying by male board members, parents and other professionals (Coleman, 2005). This is especially prevalent at district board leadership meetings when there are just one or two female principals amongst a room full of men.

**A negative perception of what it means to be principal.** A second barrier standing in the way of women moving into the principalship is a false assumption that the principal's office holds a negative connotation which does not make it a very inviting place (Rhodes, 2018 and Rousmaniere, 2007). In fact, Rousmaniere claims "the principal has always been a shadowy figure on the educational landscape" (p.9). To elaborate, teachers who cross over from teaching to the principalship have in a sense crossed over to a place of no return where the principal's prime duty consists of juggling "administrative tasks and supervisory responsibilities" (p.10). Rousmaniere asserts that "the people who sit in that office are viewed with some misgivings" (p.6). According to Rhodes' (2018) research there is also a perception that "leadership is not what education is about and is not pupil centered" (p.14). Rhodes (2018) and Smith (2011) also maintain that women in general are not attracted to the competitive nature of leadership. Carol, one interviewee explained why she refrained from pursuing a leadership position:

In the management culture there is this expectation that you've got to 'perform', you've got to 'deliver'...the culture of management is to beat people about the head if they don't achieve, and I don't want that...I think the whole blame-punishment thing is a very male thing. (Smith, 2011, p.16)

For many women, trying to find a work-life balance can also be a challenge as the literature shows that wearing the "principal hat" comes along with a huge time commitment (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Cates, 2012). The responsibilities of a principal are many and there are numerous extra obligations like school board meetings, sports games, graduation ceremonies, community events, school plays, concerts, and chaperoning nearly every big event which the school

spearheads. By being present and showing their support, a principal's home life is often relegated to second place.

**Not fit for leadership.** School board trustees believe that women are not fit for leadership (Coleman, 2005; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014 and Schopp, 2008). The findings reveal a negative perception about women being inadequately prepared to manage difficult students. Coleman asserts there is a perception that women “would not be able to handle boys” (p.8). One example is of a female who had applied for a principalship of a tough inner-city school who came second to her male counterpart. After further inquiry, she discovered that “the school board had felt more confident in the internal male candidate's ability to manage students” (p.8). This concurs with Schopp's (2008) multicase study of three female principal's and their journey to the principalship. One teacher, Jan, tells her experience when applying to the assistant principal position:

I was five years at Washington High School (as a teacher) when I applied for the assistant principal job at Patrick Henry Middle School in 1983. I was told because I was in legislature they did not want to give me the job. The true issue was that the principal was uncomfortable in giving me the job. He did not think I was able to handle discipline, and the teachers would not follow a female. (Schopp, p.58)

Furthermore, the literature reveals how there are certain perceptions about women not being able to manage difficult and/or ineffective staff and a feeling that men are the better fit for the job (Coleman, 2005; Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2007 and Rouleau-Carroll, 2014). Scholars Moreau et al., (2007) interview one teacher in a focus group who maintains that men are the preferred choice as both teachers and administrators:



They're better because the children listen to the men more. It's this stereotyping as well, and it's not helped I don't think by falling percentage of children who have a male authoritative figure which comes into school and because less children have it at home, it's got harder in the last twenty years since I've been teaching, you see it quite clearly. (O. H. Tree, as cited by Moreau et al., p.247)

The literature also illustrates women tend to find less confidence working in a male dominated field (Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Rouleau-Carroll, 2014).

**Youthful appearance.** A fourth barrier are age and attractiveness. The literature infers that age creates a significant barrier for women (Coleman, 2005; Hewlett, 2014 and Rouleau-Carroll, 2014). For example, if a woman is too youthful when she is hired into a position of principalship, Coleman (2014) argues, this will make it more challenging for others to take her seriously. Research findings also highlight appearance as an obstacle (Coleman, 2005; Hewlett, 2014). Hewlett (2014) notes "women tend to be judged more harshly than men" (p.98). To expand the point, Hewlett notes how attractiveness is a dichotomy, on the one hand it can work in a person's favor "attractive people are hired more often", and are "paid more" but on the flip side being "overtly sexual does not go over well in the executive office" (pp.88-89).

**Token appointments & androcentric bias.** A fifth barrier are token appointments, androcentric bias. There appears to be a growing evidence base in the literature that token appointments and androcentric bias work against women successfully moving into positions of leadership (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Kossek, Su & Wu, 2016; Rhodes, 2018 and Tabin & Coleman, 1993). Crosby-Hillier (2012) contend that in the fight for equality token positions are given out to make it appear as

though racial equality is being considered when in fact it really is “exacerbating the challenges women already face” in the pursuit of parity in the workforce (p.96).

As Acquaro and Stokes (2016) point out, token appointments are given out to make it appear as though there is no underlying bias, when in fact, women were only being given the VP roles or temporary positions that later were filled permanently by a male candidate.

Tabin and Coleman (1993) posit male bias as a hindrance when it comes to appointing principals. They state that it is common for school board members to “hold attitudes more favorable to men than women in administration” (p.382).

Unfortunately, discrimination is evident as Kossek et al., (2016) assert “employers expect poor performance of women in these positions, hiring and promotion policies favor men, resulting in biased selection and advancement” (p.235).

**Differential salaries.** The existing literature shows that differential salaries are another quandary that women face (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Moreau et al., 2007 and Rousmaniere, 2007). Research mentions that there is a significant difference in pay salaries between elementary and secondary principals across Canada (Rousmaniere, 2007). According to Rousmaniere, “elementary school principals earn between two-thirds and three-fourths less of what a secondary principal earns” (p.17). This is not surprising to see that for equally long hours, and just as much responsibility, secondary principals are rewarded more for their efforts and thus more men gravitate towards this lucrative secondary career path than women. Moreau et al., (2007) contend that females earn less than males, irrelevant of level, even when position and education are taken into consideration. However, it is important to note that the size of a school plays an important role in determining a principal’s salary.

**Family responsibilities.** One of the most overwhelming barriers to women advancing into a secondary principalship role are family responsibilities. In reviewing the literature, it is evident that women prioritize family over career (Kossek et al., 2016; Lumby, 2013; Moreau et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2018 and Steele Flippin, 2017). Choosing family first often entails working part-time rather than full-time hours which is expected in the role of a principal.

Another personal factor women wrestle with is whether they will relocate for work, which many end up deciding against (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014). One reason women are less willing to relocate has to do with “the impact it would potentially have on their family” (p.34). Unless women are the sole provider, relocating could potentially upset the work-family life balance. Therefore women are quicker to sacrifice their career ambitions in order to accommodate for their spouses. In some instances, Kossek et al., (2016) note women are “prone to a wage penalty and end up taking jobs that are family-friendly” (p.239). Thus, family responsibilities weigh heavily on women and often create barriers for women who might otherwise consider a career in secondary leadership.

Moreau et al., (2007) and Steele Flippin (2017) note career breaks can be another obstacle for women vying for the principalship. Not only do career women have to juggle work, family and domestic responsibilities they also take career breaks once they begin building their families. Moreau et al., (2007) go on to assert how younger candidates therefore may be looked at more favorably than women who take lengthy maternity breaks. Thus, taking a career break can jeopardize a woman’s chance for a promotion into the principalship.

Lumby’s (2013) findings are based on interview respondents who help shed further insight into the responsibility that weighs on women care givers who have children and a

husband to take care of compared to single female principals who are much more at liberty to be available around the clock.

**Lack of mobility.** In a review of the literature, a lack of mobility is another external barrier which limits some women from the principalship and administrative offices (Moreau et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2018 and Wilkinson, 1991). Moreau et al., (2016) assert geographical and successive relocations were an issue for a number of their interviewees.

Moreau et al., (2016) also noted many women's flexibility relied on their partner's job/career and for that reason were not flexible in relocating, "Such decisions for women to 'follow' their partner rather than the opposite seemed overall to be due to representations of men as main breadwinner and women as main childcare" (p.242).

According to Rhodes (2018), her findings reveal a need for flexibility in the work place. One female teacher, Laura, took a part-time position in order to be there for her young children. Meanwhile another female teacher, Amina, who had very young children placed them in childcare close to her school.

Wilkinson's (1991) research noted how important it is for a woman to be mobile. However, few women are willing to relocate because of family obligations and are "more place-bound" than men (p.23). Overall, research findings reveal how women, especially women with young families prioritize working in close proximity to their children and therefore mobility can become a barrier.

**Lack of networking.** Current research shows a lack of networking is an obstacle for women hoping to move upwards in their career (Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018; Moreau et al., 2016 and Rhodes, 2018). If women do not socialize and invest time getting

to know colleagues and the administrative staff then they are less likely to stand a chance at being considered for an administrative role as the following interviewee states:

If you go drinking with the boss, if you play golf with him, if you do this and that, you get to know him. When jobs become available he wants someone that he can work with and socialize with and you get offered those jobs or interview that gives you extra brownie points. (Interviewee, personal communication, n. d., Moreau et al., 2016, p.246)

Rhodes (2018) research reveals how important “building a strong reputation and networking” is in the pursuit of achieving the principalship (p.43).

Helgesen and Goldsmith (2018) in their book *How Women Rise* emphasize how important it is to actively build up ones web of connections and purposefully make alliances especially with powerful people “recognize that alliances are more important than what you know....having powerful people vouch for you is the best way to establish yourself in a competitive marketplace” (pp.114-15).

To expand the point, Crosby-Hillier’s (2012) research claims networking is not only a “key factor in professional development” but also a “contributing factor to those who succeed in leadership positions” (p.76). Therefore it is important for female teachers to continue building upon their existing networks (Crosby-Hillier, 2012).

**Lack of encouragement.** Various studies have shown that a lack of encouragement is another impediment for women in their journey into secondary school leadership (Rhodes, 2018 and Wilkinson, 1991). Coleman (2002) in her national survey of secondary head teachers found that “men were more likely than women to have received encouragement from senior managers than women” (as cited by Moreau at al., 2007, p.244). Rhodes (2018) found that women who

received encouragement from a colleague were far more likely to consider pursuing the principalship than those who had not received any. Wilkinson (1991) says women “need more encouragement than men” that they are capable of doing the job (p.18). Wilkinson goes on to point out how beneficial it is when women leadership potential is noticed. According to Wilkinson, women principals who had been personally encouraged found that to be a “motivating factor” on their journey (p.22).

**Loneliness.** Rhodes (2018)’s research found one external barrier limiting women from pursuing the principalship is the feeling of being an outsider in a mostly male environment. To further the point, there remains a mostly male homogenous structure in many school boards and at district-wide administrative meetings which contributes to a feeling of loneliness for the minority sex (Rhodes, 2018). Rhodes (2018) explained how one female teacher viewed the principal’s role as being a “lonely place”:

Laura confessed that the role of “administrator holds no interest for me”. She was mindful in her perception of the principal’s role as a “lonely” job and that you needed to be “made of steel” to cope. She mentioned this twice, reinforcing her view.

(Interviewee, personal communication, n. d., p.40)

### **Internal Barriers**

**Sex stereotyping & gender bias.** There are a number of internal constraints which have been known to hold women back from pursuing the road to administrative leadership. Sex-stereotyping, gender bias and agency are common barriers found throughout the literature (Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Kossek et al., 2016; Lumby, 2013;

Moreau et al., 2007; Rhodes, 2018; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014; Steele Flippin, 2017; Tabin & Coleman, 1993 and Wilkinson, 1991).

Tabin and Coleman (1993) argue how both “sex-role stereotyping and behavioral stereotyping, create a double standard” (p.394). Rouleau-Carroll’s (2014) article asserts that women tend to have less expertise at being in a leadership role and for this reason they may feel less confident (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014).

Likewise, Coleman contends that a gendered discourse drives how women are “perceived to act in a more socially prescribed role of leader” (p.9). Clearly and compellingly, women principals “must transcend the social expectations of femaleness” in order to be taken seriously (p. 9).

Crosby-Hillier (2012) purport gender politics and gender blindness are larger issues that are occurring more frequently due to an increase in immigration trends. According to Crosby-Hillier (2012), gender blindness is the “lack of acknowledgement or presence of gender’s influence in the ongoing discrimination toward women” (p.100). Some parents have irrational thoughts about women in the administrative role:

I think that there are still people out there and, you know, parents, who have the stereotype and when they come in, “ugh it’s just a woman, I can deal with this” compared to a man. A parent as a male versus a woman. And even perhaps some of your colleagues, you’re going to have to work with some of your teachers. Some of them might have the same stereotype and absolutely. People make judgments based on your appearance, based on your gender, based on your stature. (Interviewee, personal communication, n. d., p.98)

Meanwhile, there are parents that have a gender biased view of what a woman's role is in society as one of Crosby-Hillier's (2012) interviewees pointed out, "I had one father come to me and say, 'you don't belong in the school, you belong at home!' And it was a cultural difference" (p.99).

**Agency.** Kossek et al., (2016) and Rhodes (2018) purport agentic traits such as "being assertive, dominant, competitive and achievement orientated" pose a barrier for women hoping to advance into the principalship role because these traits are expected in leadership roles (Kossek et al., 2016, p.234). On the flip side, these "agentic qualities are less desirable in women" (p.236). To further the point, women entering into male dominated roles receive "backlash and are penalized for adopting role-incongruent characteristics" (p.236). The literature shows that females who adapt agentic male character traits are more often "punished and disliked" in managerial roles by their peers (p.236).

Eagly and Chin (2010) claim that there is a double standard for female leaders. Not only is there an expectation for female leaders to emulate their male counterparts in a take charge kind of way, they are also expected to convey "warmth and friendliness" (p.218).

Eagly and Karau's (2002) findings reveal how important it is for women leaders to make agentic adaptations to their character in order to succeed as a leader.

**Social role.** Various studies show social role acts as an internal barrier for women hoping to climb the glass escalator. The existing literature examines social role theory as it pertains to female teachers (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Eagly & Chin, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Jones, 2016 and Kossek et al., 2016). From as early as birth, Kossek et al., (2016) note gender socialization is instilled in a person's identity. Scholars Diekmann and



Steinberg (2013) found “women less likely to consider their possible selves as high in status or in powerful positions with masculine traits” (as cited in Kossek et al., 2016, p.234).

Social stereotypes play a role in determining who should be chosen as the next principal (Coleman, 2005). In society there are long withstanding beliefs that certain positions are distinctively male and therefore a woman who transcends the glass ceiling and usurps a male vying for the same position must eschew qualities of being female (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016). According to Coleman (2005) these women are ‘abnormal’ and their “abnormal status as women makes them ‘outsiders’ in their organisations” (p.9).

Eagly and Chin (2010) and Eagly and Karau’s (2002) research explains how cultural stereotypes can sabotage leadership opportunities thereby making women feel inferior to the opposite sex, anxious and overtly cautious about moving into a leadership role. According to the literature, female leaders may receive both mixed “negative and positive evaluations”; a female leader may “elicit negative reactions while receiving positive affirmations for her role” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p.576).

**Role conflict.** Another study presents a belief that women are less committed than their male counterparts (Crosby-Hillier, 2012). The reason being that women take time off to have children and sometimes do not return to their profession for a number of years. Furthermore, women who return to work might only choose to work part-time and prioritize their parental obligations over work obligations.

Numerous studies reveal that gender differences and discrimination play a significant role in deciding who should be promoted to the principalship and who does not make the cut (Acquaro & Stokes, 2016; Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Guihen, 2017; Murakami & Tornsen,

2017; Reynolds et al., 2008; Rhodes, 2018; Rouleau-Carroll, 2014 and Rousmaniere, 2007; and Wilkinson, 1991). One study indicates that “female principals are less likely than male to hold the professional credentials for the position (master’s degree, professional license and membership in an association)” (Rousmaniere, 2007, p.19). These studies show how prevalent gender differences and discrimination are in determining who should be granted a principalship and who is less worthy. One dissertation reveals that “public school administration is a male-dominated career, in which females are underrepresented at all levels” (Rouleau-Carroll, 2014, p.36).

One Canadian study highlights the disproportionate numbers not only of female teachers in secondary schools but also the appalling numbers of female secondary principals (Reynolds et al., 2008). Reynolds et al., posit that “patterns of discrimination and disadvantage persist for many women, especially those who wish to take on administrative roles in the school” (p.38).

Another study conducted in Australia found that there is an underlying “systematic gender bias” when it comes to selecting permanent principalship postings (Aquaro & Stokes, 2016, p.139). More often than not, Aquaro and Stokes (2016) point out that “male teachers were selected” (p.139). One response to this was “Well, she wasn’t an Old Boy, she wasn’t male” (p.139). These findings reveal that gender bias has not been completely eliminated in the hiring of secondary school principals.

Rhodes (2018) mentioned how some women feel they cannot balance being both a mother and a principal:

Amina was unsure about timing when it came to promotion as it was a huge obstacle in her aspirations. As her youngest child was only three years old, she did not feel it was possible to be fully effective in both the roles of principal and mother. (p.39)

Role conflict affects women more so than men, according to Amina's personal point of view:

I do everything, and I get called superwoman by my children, it's true, but the sacrifice is huge, and it doesn't do you any favors." (Amina, personal communication, n. d., p.50)

**Lack of self-confidence.** Another internal barrier for women seeking the principalship is a lack of self-confidence. There is a growing evidence base that women are less likely to seek the principalship because of a lack of self-confidence (Rhodes, 2018; Moreau et al., 2007 and Wilkinson, 1991).

In a more recent study, Rhodes, (2018) found her respondents recognize the value in obtaining further education in order to feel more confident:

While Amina aspired to principalship in the long term, in the short term she planned to study so that she would be better prepared once she wanted to progress" ...Laura had already participated in a post-graduate programme and said that her master's degree was "hugely significant" and she draw(s) on it every single day. (p.45)

In their study, Moreau et al., (2007), found that a deficiency in self-composure can be perceived as impeding career advancement:

In teaching I do think so. I don't think so in all careers. But I think in teaching. It's also down to the individual. I mean it's also how weak or how strong you are. And I think as long as you've got drive and you've got ambition in teaching I don't think it's going to

make a massive difference whether you're male or female. (A. H. Common, personal communication, as cited in Moreau et al., pp. 247-8)

**Negative attributes of women (behavior & low self-image).** Adding to the discussion on internal barriers which hinder a woman from becoming a principal, the literature also points out that women have negative attributes which might hinder them from the selection process for the principalship (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Cates, 2012 and Coleman, 2005; Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018; Jones, 2016 and Kossek et al., 2016).

One study conducted by Adams and Hambright (2004) looked to answer the question why so few female teacher leader program graduates did not go on to become principals once they were finished with their Masters of Educational Leadership degrees. So, they undertook a survey in order to glean some answers to their observation. Some respondents noted negative attributes such as “authoritative, strict, assertive, emotional, unpredictable, moody and power hungry” as some of the reasons why they were not interested in becoming a principal (p.210).

Scholar Scott Cates (2012) qualitative research on emotional intelligence in principal's reveals how important it is for principals to be able to “effectively manage their internal and external emotional environment, in order to have a significant impact on the culture and performance of a school” (p.5).

Kossek et al. (2016) posit that “women have a greater need to watch their emotion” since it is based on internal characteristics in contrast to men whose emotional display is based on external factors (p.236). They also contend that one's behavior can be explained by negative gender stereotypes which can lead to physiological stress response (p.234). Furthermore, one's

behavior can also compromise women's hope to "seek leadership in a male-dominated industry", such as the secondary principalship (p.235).

## **CHAPTER 5 Literature Review: Mentoring as a way to level the playing field**

### **Introduction**

The job of a school principal is both intricate and complex and requires a unique set of character traits. Noteworthy principals stand out because of their virtue, self-control, decisiveness, charisma, friendly nature, approachableness, flexibleness, organizational skills, fairness, empathy, good communication and patience (Adams & Hambright, 2004; Alpern, 2016; Bynum, 2015; Cates, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011 and Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Patterson Felicello, 2017). While many principals fulfill the requirements of the profession and learn to hone these praiseworthy traits they must do so while bridging the gap between the community, school board, parents, staff and students.

Principals also don a multitude of hats on any given day and must be able to multitask a variety of different jobs such as: disciplining students, planning the budget, meeting with the administrative team, planning staff meetings, holding telephone conferences, attending board meetings, hosting head of department (HOD) meetings, and meeting with the secretaries, counselors, resource teachers and the school RCMP. While managing all of these responsibilities and at the same time being on the front line, principals need to remain composed, serene, positive and approachable. Not to mention, it is the principal's position to remember all the staff and student names. This is certainly a hefty load to bear for any administrator but imagine how much more daunting it is for female administrators who multitask numerous other responsibilities outside of their day job on the home front. Not only is their job physically

taxing, as they carry a heavy responsibility for the entire school on their shoulders, but at the end of their long work days, many come home and must transition to their traditional, mundane responsibilities. Some of which might be: caring for their family, meal planning, grocery shopping, cleaning the house, planning kids hectic schedules, chauffeuring children from extra-curricular activity to extra-curricular activity, being a wife, a mom and a romantic partner. Cates' (2012) research on principals' perspectives on emotional intelligence suggested that in order to avoid emotional burnout from a "highly demanding emotional work environment, resources should be made available to act as a buffer to mitigate" against the added stress and pressures of balancing career and home life (p.80).

Support is needed in particular for female administrators who are considering a transition into school leadership. Alpern (2016) posited an important question "How could leaders assure that new [female] incumbents are adequately prepared" (Alpern, 2016, p.101)? She stated "educational [female] leaders must be given supports to navigate this complex playing field so that they are adequately prepared" (p.101). One idea that is prevalent in the literature is the idea of mentorship programs to help prepare principal candidates for leadership (Alpern, 2016; Adams & Hambright, 2004 and Cates, 2012).

This literature review will look at this question: *Are mentoring and networking valuable supports for women endeavoring to move into positions of leadership?*

### **Theory of Mentoring**

The literature states that once a mentee/protégé has become proficient in a number of skill areas they will be able to transmit this new information on to other women who are aspiring to move into positions of leadership (Hume, 2015). It is akin to the concept of *paying it forward*

where one person invests time, energy and knowledge into a novice mentee only for the mentee to turn around and repeat the process while thus taking on a new mentee under their wing (Hume, 2015 and Rhodes, 2018).

### **Types of Mentoring**

The literature indicates a variety of different models used for mentoring which are explained here:

**Formal mentoring.** Formal mentoring is a very structured model of mentoring which has specific goals, rules and schedules set in place (Dunbar et al., 2011). Under this style of mentoring, the mentor/mentee are paired through a mentoring program (Dunbar et al., 2011). It is also common to find group interactions under this model of mentorship where there is one mentor and a few mentees (Hume, 2015). This model of mentoring is good for novice teachers who are new to a district and do not already have any personal connections with principals in the district.

**Informal mentoring.** Informal mentoring is another model which looks different than formal mentoring in that it is more serendipitous; it evolves autonomously of any school board (Dunbar et al., 2011). In some cases this style of mentoring might “occur when someone shows leadership potential and is taken under the wing of an administrator” (Hume, 2015, p.32).

According to the literature, at the heart of informal mentoring are similarly held views between the mentor and mentee (Dunbar et al., 2011). For example, the mentor and mentee might share a similar leadership style or have similar personality traits that endear them to one another (Dunbar et al., 2011). The research also suggests that informal mentoring relationships are more

advantageous than formal relationships (Dunbar et al., 2011). Scholar Patterson Felicello (2014) summed it up succinctly by stating:

Mentoring, whether formal or informal, provides a support system that addresses the intricate, complex, and sometimes novel situations principals are faced with on a daily basis which a university degree does not come close to addressing. (p.10)

This model of mentoring is very advantageous because the mentor and mentee already know each other and have a history together. It is easier for them to share and be transparent with each other.

**Men to women mentoring.** The most predominant form of mentoring for novice women learning the ropes of leadership is what is known as *men to women* mentoring. In reviewing the literature sometimes gender inclines women to seek out male administrators (Crosby-Hillier, 2012). Crosby-Hillier (2012) point out that some women choose to turn to male administrators for tutelage “when seeking quick and emotionally detached advice” (p.80). It is evident that being transparent makes it easier for some women to work under males (Crosby-Hillier, 2012). Andrea, one participant in Crosby-Hillier’s (2012) research noted:

I would prefer to work for a male administrator. Because you know, with males, it’s black and white with a little bit of grey area. Whereas, females, it’s all grey. With females the emotions and the heart comes into play. (A. personal communication, n. d., as cited by Crosby-Hillier, p.82).

Lucy, another participant from Crosby-Hillier’s (2012) research also preferred being mentored by a male. From her own experiences, when she worked under a female, she felt a bit stifled:



My other principal was a female, who would not let me do anything. I was really stunted in that role. In fact, I remember saying very clearly, “I won’t be able to do this for the whole year. (L., personal communication, n. d., as cited by Crosby-Hillier, p.82)

The existing literature also advises that women should refrain from seeking out *men to women* mentoring relationships (Leigh Kellar, 2013). Leigh Kellar’s (2013) research indicated such a mentorship is “a difficult dynamic” (p.47). There appear to be a few principal differences between men and women. For one, some men are not patient and may lack the time needed in order for fruitful discourse to happen (Hume, 2015). Diane, one research participant put it this way “I have worked with a lot of men who get impatient. There’s a lot of words and they kind of get distracted” (Hume, 2015, p.204). Hume (2015) went on to point out that another reason why men are not the best mentor for women is because some men might believe that a woman is after his position. Furthermore, Hume (2015) stressed another reason a *men to women* mentorship should be avoided is the idea of romantic involvement. It is naturally ascertained that if a woman spends copious amounts of time with a male, behind closed doors that something suspicious is going on. Whether this is true or not, it is hard to curtail any gossip or rumors that might spread. Another disadvantage is the difference in leadership style between women and men which can conflict (Hume, 2015). According to Fran, men do not understand the issues women leaders face, “They don’t get it. I just don’t think they understand what it’s like to be a woman in leadership. It’s not like it is hard, but I think there are things that they just don’t get” (Hume, 2015, p.199).

**Women to women mentoring.** Unlike men, in a *women to women* mentorship, Leigh Kellar (2013) asserted how women tend to be more verbally supportive. Another advantage is women can “learn lessons from the barriers other women mentors faced” (Hume, 2015, p.187).

On the other hand, one obstacle may be that there are too few women mentors available (Dunbar et al., 2011; Hume, 2015 and Rhodes, 2018). Carol described “There are very few female superintendents. A couple in the urban area still, but in the outlying areas there is just not many of us” (Hume, 2015, p.182).

**Teacher-On-special assignment (TOSA).** Yet another type of mentoring is *teacher-on-special assignment* where teachers complete practicums in leadership to test out whether being a principal has any appeal to them or not (Patterson Felicello, 2014). In the United States, for example, once teachers have completed their Masters of Educational Leadership (MAEL) they are then required to do a one year Residency Administration Certification which requires them to shadow both the Vice Principal (s) and the Principal. One current Resident Administrator in Ferndale, WA explains:

I shadow both the VP and the principal at my school. I am treated like a VP, I do everything they would do except I can't suspend without consulting the principal first. My school administrator is my SA. I have a professor from Western Washington that checks in as well. (R. Dhillon, personal communication, February 17, 2019)

This program is similar to the mandatory teacher practicum in Canadian schools, however, in this case future administrators are the ones receiving hands-on-experience first, under the watchful eye of a mentor administrator, before being parachuted into a VP or principalship position.

**Principal-teacher job sharing.** A further mentoring model is called principal-teacher job sharing. This method of mentoring is akin to job shadowing (Patterson Felicello, 2014). Here both the principal and the aspiring principal get to shadow each other in their respective roles (Patterson Felicello, 2014). In this collaborative experience both the principal and the

teacher get something out of the collaboration. For example, while the teacher is shadowing the principal he/she gleans something from what it is like to be an administrator. Whereas the principal can evaluate the teacher and “offer performance feedback” (Patterson Felicello, 2014, p.23).

**110-day mentoring.** This mentoring model is especially allocated to retired principals who are re-employed by the school district for specific intervals to help support new principals with coaching and internship supervision (Patterson Felicello, 2014).

The literature posits a wide variety of mentoring models which can be utilized depending on ones’ personal preference. It is therefore highly advantageous for women hoping to move into the principalship to search out mentorship opportunities. The literature strongly advises women seek out other female administrators to mentor under, so they can learn firsthand experience of how to navigate their new responsibilities.

This literature review will look at this question: *How can mentoring help women in leadership?*

### **Mentoring Relationships**

Mentoring relationships are a key factor in enabling women to move into the principalship (Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Leigh Kellar, 2013 and Rhodes, 2018). An examination of Crosby-Hillier’s (2012) research revealed a number of current aspiring female administrators conceded that they would feel more qualified in their current position, if they received some mentoring. Likewise, all principals both experienced and new, who participated in Cates (2012) research had an inclination for more peer-to-peer support. Dunbar et al., (2011) concurred with

the results of this literature review noting how important it is for women endeavoring to move into administrative positions to find a mentor in order to help achieve their goals.

### **Effective Mentorships**

What do effective mentorships look like? The current research postulates that mentoring is most salient when both the mentor and mentee share similar character traits and interests (Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Dunbar et al., 2011). Sharing common values, experiences and interests or coming from a similar race, sex and or ethnicity can help strengthen the mentorship relationship (Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Dunbar et al., 2011). Some researchers believe it is important for a female to be mentored by another female because they can relate on more levels than between a male and a female (Dunbar et al., 2011). While both men and women can be effective mentors, Dunbar et al., (2011) concluded that mentorships are more fruitful when both the mentor and mentee are of the same sex. Furthermore, Steele Flippin' (2017) research asserted "53 percent of Gen X females reported that their most helpful mentor was female" (p.38). Other researchers hold the view that it does not matter which gender one is mentored by so long as they are mentored (Dunbar et al., 2011). The literature recommended that minority women such as the Indigenous people of Canada be mentored by someone of the same ethnicity (Dunbar et al., 2011).

### **Benefits of Mentorship**

The existing literature maintained that there are copious benefits to being mentored (Alpern, 2016; Bynum, 2015; Cates, 2012; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Dunbar et al., 2011; Hume, 2015; Leigh Kellar, 2013; Patterson Felicello, 2014 and Steele Flippin, 2017). Mentoring fosters a holistic and pragmatic way for aspiring female administrators to build up expertise and

confidence in their new positions. More to the point, Alpern (2016) and Cates (2012) state how mentoring helps mitigate against stress, feelings of emotional seclusion and nervous breakdown from an intensely high pressure career. Moreover, sagacious mentors provide words of encouragement, guidance, visibility and sponsorship to their mentees (Leigh Kellar, 2013). In a review of the literature, Crosby-Hillier (2012) noted mentoring and networking are not just “key factors in professional development but are also contributing factors to those who succeed in leadership positions” (p.76). When thinking about an educator’s toolbox, discovering a mentor is much like “a tool for advancement” (Dunbar et al., 2011, p.22).

Adding to the discussion, “mentorship builds leadership capacity, self-efficacy, and career planning acumen” (Steele Flippin, 2017, p.40). Furthermore, Leigh Kellar (2013) asserted how mentoring is an integral component of a woman’s advancement into the principalship chair. The existing literature also notes how mentorship is a model for women who aspire to positions of leadership (Hume, 2015).

Another benefit which comes out of being mentored are the personal and trusting relationships that are built; which typically “last well beyond the attainment of school leadership positions” (Hume, 2015, pp. 195-96; Leigh Kellar, 2013).

The literature also notes benefits to being part of a school board’s leadership mentoring program (Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Hume, 2015). For one, many women who were part of Crosby-Hillier’s (2012) study saw the “school board’s leadership mentoring program as an opportunity to build upon their existing network” (p.87). Mentoring benefits anyone who hopes to attain a leadership position as is mentioned by one principal:

I think anyone who is mentored has an advantage... I think to be an effective leader, you have to have someone who is willing to have real conversations with you. And help you see things that maybe you wouldn't see. Just to have those real conversations and be able to bounce things off of people. So, for me, I am better because of what I have.

(Interviewee, personal communication, n. d., as cited in Crosby-Hillier, p.157).

### **Lack of Mentors**

A review of the literature (Adams and Hambright, 2004; Bynum, 2015; Cates, 2012; Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011; Hume, 2015; Kossek, Su & Wu, 2016; Rousmaniere, 2007; Patterson Felicello, 2014; Rhodes, 2018 and Steele Flippin, 2017) clearly illustrates a lack of role models/mentors is a barrier for women in their pursuit of moving into the principalship. Scholars Dunbar et al., (2011) pose how challenging it can be for a woman new to administration to find an appropriate mentor who has experience in the principal role. To further the point, Crosby-Hillier (2012) put forth that “women have limited access to productive mentoring relationships which further limits their access to top-tier educational leadership positions” (p.77-79).

There is a growing evidence base which highlights the importance for additional mentoring and sponsoring of women to be implemented so women can feel more empowered about moving into the principal role (Adams & Hambright, 2004 and Cates, 2012). Cates (2012) articulated how mentorship programs “can help prepare principal candidates for leadership and reduce feelings of isolation and stress” (p.79). Likewise, Dunbar et al., (2011) stress how beneficial it is for women attempting to progress into administrative positions to have a mentor who holds likeminded morals. According to Crosby-Hillier's (2012) study, women found positive results from mentoring opportunities that were available to them. In fact, Crosby-Hillier

asserted that “many women considered the mentorship position a “stepping stone” to the principalship (p.90). These studies show that while a lack of mentors can pose a barrier for women aspiring to leadership roles, at the same time those women who are mentored find the practice very rewarding and helpful.

### **Networking**

A recent PhD dissertation examined how similar peer networking and mentoring are to one another (Hume, 2015). Networking helps school leaders build professional relationships with other school leaders in neighboring school districts (Hume, 2015). These connections can not only help novice school leaders glean new ideas from other districts but also help them to learn about potential job openings and ultimately help to advance one’s career (Hume, 2015).

Another stream of studies maintain how being part of a peer network relationship is also imperative to a woman’s career advancement in her leadership role (Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Hume, 2015; Leigh Kellar, 2013; Rhodes, 2018 and Steele Flippin, 2017). According to Steele Flippin, (2017) “networking was found to be the most salient to accelerate Gen X women’s careers” (p.40). To elaborate, Leigh Kellar (2013) stated “having a network of people is far more valuable than any workshops or professional development courses” (p.51).

Stephanie explained how invaluable her support network is:

I would say our admin are such a tight team for supporting each other through any single question, through helping with interviews...our friendship goes really deeply that we would never leave somebody stuck, so we have professional book clubs, we have professional support groups. (Stephanie, personal communication, n. d., as cited in Leigh Kellar, p.51)

Maya's explanation of her support network:

We dialogue a lot. We have pretty strong, healthy relationships in our family of schools. Now I will still call up a principal that has, maybe only two or three years [of experience], if I find they have more strengths in one area or another than I do.. and our superintendents are really, really supportive. (Maya, personal communication, n. d., as cited in Leigh Kellar, p.52)

The literature mentions numerous ways in which aspiring female administrators can foster peer networking relationships. For one, Crosby-Hillier (2012) contended that being involved in coaching, which is typically male dominated, is one way to build key professional connections. Another example is being part of social gatherings whether that is a book club or a district-led committee (Steele Flippin, 2017).

Various studies illustrate the advantages to networking (Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Hume, 2015; Leigh Kellar, 2013 and Steele Flippin, 2017). Networking has many advantages, one common benefit is reputation building (Crosby-Hillier, 2012). Establishing a positive reputation helps aspiring female administrators increase their visibility within the school district (Steele Flippin, 2017). Building strong allies is another valuable benefit of networking; allies can be helpful in promoting people they know when a posting becomes available (Steele Flippin, 2017). Helgesen and Goldsmith (2018) point out that allies must not necessarily be close friends but can be just acquaintanceships.

In spite of all the good attributes ascribed to networking, it comes with some setbacks for women (Hume, 2015). For one, the literature also highlights that networking does not come as easy for women as it does for men (Coleman, 2005; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Dunbar et al., 2011;



Hume, 2015 and Kossek et al., 2016). This could be due to the fact that there are insufficient networking opportunities for women to choose from because of a lack of female administrators in the pool (Dunbar et al., 2011). Another barrier for many women is time. After working a long day, most women still need to rush home to make dinner for their family or drive their children to extra-curricular activities, unlike most men, who for the most part, are still more liberated to go for drinks after work or play a game of golf on the weekend. Women therefore are pressed by the many other family responsibilities they need to attend to and are far quicker to pass up social events where they may have had some networking opportunities.

## **CHAPTER 6- Analysis and Findings**

### **Introduction**

As a result of my research I have created an Improvement Plan where I focus on developing three leadership competencies which are rooted in Transformational servant leadership (TSL) values & ethics: (1) vision and strategic planning, (2) adaptability and change and (3) team leadership. The first section of the plan discusses vision and strategic planning in terms of changes that are currently happening within an aging society. Presently, many baby boomers are retiring which presents an opportunity for leadership positions to be filled with a more gender-balanced workforce. Likewise, changing old leadership styles means a move away from the top-down leadership approach, and move to a more lateral and collective approach. The second section of my plan looks at ways in which to change one's behavior. In particular, it looks at seven barriers that will help me realize my goal. Finally, the third section of my improvement plan explains why mentoring is important. I will discuss my own personal

experiences with mentoring and I will explain how I would employ a mentorship program in the Langley School District.

### **Vision and Strategic Planning**

Having a clear vision is necessary if I hope to see gender equity improved in the hiring of secondary school principals municipally, provincially and even across the country (Hord & Roussin, 2013). In particular I would like to realize an opportunity for myself to make use of my MAEL degree in an administrative position.

“Currently, local school districts in the province of British Columbia are in the process of implementing curricular changes and while they do this they are in search of “teacher change agents” (Fullan, 2013, p.25). Long term, it is my intent to become an administrator at Walnut Grove Secondary (WGSS) and it would be my hope that this school would “look for leaders from within the school,” like myself, during this transitional phase (Dufour & Fullan, 2013, p. 71). Research has shown that “educational systems that have successfully been able to sustain improvement over long periods of time have promoted leaders from within” the school (p.71). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) also have found similar findings when they write “planned succession is one of the most neglected aspects of leadership theory and practice in our schools” (p.699). At WGSS one of our very own VPs graduated from the same school and then returned to teach at WGSS. Soon afterwards he became HOD of the Socials department before finally being promoted to the position of VP.

I believe there is great potential for such an opportunity for me to visualize a similar possibility taking shape, as demographically, many baby boomers and Gen Xers are headed for retirement within the next 10-20 years, which will in turn open doors for new soil to be sprinkled

and new bulbs to be planted at WGSS. Harris (2014) citing Collins, (2009) says it succinctly “improvements can be made only if certain staff “get off the bus” (p.24). Many older teachers are nearing retirement and that means there will be more opportunities for female administrators to move into once-male principalship chairs. Barth (2002) asserts that “to change the culture requires that more desirable qualities replace the existing unhealthy elements” (p. 8). Therefore, I will foster more growth in collaborative leadership and professional learning communities (PLCs)” (Neuscheler, 2018). As well, I will utilize my skills as a transformational servant leader in school leadership (Imbenzi & Page, 2013; Northouse, 2016; Page, n. d. and Sergiovanni, 2007).

The existing literature described numerous attributes of female leaders that bring a fresh new perspective to leadership, and one in particular is the transformational leadership model which focuses on building relationships. Taking a more collaborative approach by utilizing PLCs is how I would approach relationship building as an administrator.

“I would also keep moving in the direction of engaging more staff in distributed leadership, as well as adopting a servant leader culture. By using the right leadership model and striving to move away from the top-down leadership approach, which has a tendency to promote male principals over female; and move to a more lateral and collective approach, I believe WGSS can become a prize winning garden in the district” (Neuscheler, 2018).

Lastly, social-emotional wellness is important and all potential leaders should be required to take a workshop in order to address any concerns of social emotional instability. It is especially important for administrative school leaders to be balanced both socially and emotionally in order to best respond to the demands of the job. The reality is, administrators and teachers, are “altruistic and devoted to making a positive difference in children’s lives but the

growing demands of education can create stressful working conditions and can lead to feelings of discouragement, burn-out, and being ready to quit” (Jennings, 2015). School leaders often give everything they have to the running of their schools and thus have very little time or energy to take care of themselves. Cates (2012) research highlights the importance for school leaders to “effectively manage their internal and external emotional environment” as it can have a detrimental effect on the “culture and performance of a school” (p.5). Therefore investing time in learning techniques on how to stay in control of ones emotions is especially advantageous for anyone pursuing a career in leadership.

### **Adaptability and Change**

As part of my personal improvement plan I have considered the following two questions:

1. *What makes it hard for me to adapt? /change?*
2. *If I have an obstacle or barrier in advancing to the next level then how am I willing to adapt or change?*

I have gleaned valuable information from two books on how to change my behavior in order to move ahead in my career. Sylvia Ann Hewlett’s book *Executive Presence* (EP) (2014) clearly presents tangible, practical advice in helping signal if women and men are leadership material and what they can do to overcome any barriers. In her book she points out three distinct areas to master: (1) “How one acts (gravitas), (2) how one speaks (communication), and (3) how one looks (appearance)” (p.5). Sally Helgesen and Marshall Goldsmith’s book *How Women Rise* (2018) unpack 12 habits women tend to encounter as they try to advance to the next stage in their career. This book looks in particular at women’s behavior and how they can “adapt their behavior” in order to move ahead in their careers (p.5).

Helgesen et al., (2018) admonish that in order to move beyond old behavior patterns that can keep people stuck and prevent them from moving forward one must “recognize it as a habit” (p.25). They exhort “you need to bring it to conscious awareness so you can begin to try out new responses and see if these get you different results” (p.25).

Why then is it so difficult to change? What makes people resistant? Helgesen et al., (2018) allegorize resistance to that of a demon, when they say one needs to “battle the demon of resistance” (p.29). Being resistant to change prohibits one from leading the life one could only imagine. Therefore, Helgesen et al., (2018) assert how important it is to acknowledge and work through one’s own resistance in order to do something positive for oneself.

Another reason why it is so difficult for most people to change even when they know change could ultimately bring about a positive difference in one’s life is physiological (Helgesen et al., 2018). According to Helgesen et al., (2018), “your entire neural system is designed to favor the path of least resistance” (p.29). They go on to contend that women and men deal with resistance in different ways and therefore the three different stages men go through are differently categorized than women (Helgesen et al., 2018). When a woman is asked to change something about her behavior or performance Helgesen et al., (2018) purport she will first feel “discouraged and undervalued” which is like paralysis (p.33). In the next stage she will most often ask: “Were the grounds valid? What were the circumstances? Did the critique have to do with her as a woman?” (p. 33). In the third stage, women will begin to self-reflect how their own behavior may have played a role in shaping the perceptions that led to the critique” (p.33). “Stages two and three offer a bridge of constructive action” enabling women to analyze the feedback in a constructive way (p.33).

After reading this newfound knowledge on change and how to triumph over resistance I am ready to raise my game and close the gap between visualizing my long term goals and turning dreams into reality. However, there are six notable barriers I need to work at overcoming in order to realize my goal.

**Six notable barriers.**

*Decisive.* To begin with, I need to be more decisive (Hewlett, 2014). I know that I struggle in this area and have often apologized for being too indecisive. I am in the habit of asking lots of people for advice before making a move. For example, when I apply for job postings, I talk to a few different teacher contacts to get their opinion before trying to make my own decision. In a leadership role I need to think quickly and not waver with my decision making. In the role of principal or vice principal I certainly will not have a lot of people around me to inquire and ask for their opinion before making a decisive decision on which way to proceed.

*Calm and confidence.* Second, I need to exude an aura of calm and confidence while under stress (Hewlett, 2014). Being able to be calm and composed when trouble strikes is an area I need to master. I know I have had stressful days at work when students let me down or colleagues have acted ruthlessly. Sometimes I have gone into my office and vented with a trusted colleague. I usually feel better after I talk about it and my colleague listens and shows support. According to God's word it says "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires" (James 1:19-20). Being able to think clearly and calmly are behavior traits I want to work on improving.

***Emotional intelligence.*** Third, I need to work on my emotional intelligence (*gravitas*). Helgesen & Goldsmith (2018) state “the whole business of emotional expression can be a landmine for women” (p.159). They go on to say “women have too much emotion, use too many words, and too much disclosure” (p.160). Therefore it is most critical for me to learn how not to lose my composure in a crisis. Hewlett (2014) writes “it is handling catastrophe that confers *gravitas*” (p.19). Every morning on my way to work or before I leave the house I pray over the details of my day and sometimes I even call a friend to stand with me in prayer, if there is something extraordinary that warrants prayer support. As a believer, I have been set apart from the world to be different from the world and people look at me and expect me to act in a Christ-like way. I am an ambassador for Christ. I need to be poised and self-controlled in my actions, behavior and words (Hewlett). After all Hewlett writes “*gravitas*, is the cornerstone of a real leader” (p.21). Like Hewlett (2014) admonishes I need to “consider what larger vision [I’m] here to fulfill, and make sure it informs each of [my] everyday actions...People with a clear goal who show they are determined to achieve it exude *gravitas*” (p.39).

***Minimizing.*** Fourth, I need to cut to the chase and refrain from minimizing (Hewlett, 2014, p.58; Helgesen et al., 2018, p.150). I realize that I like to give a lot of details when presenting information to my students or even when just sharing a story. Hewlett explains that while in some cultures it is acceptable to build up to the main point with lots of data, “here in North America people just want your conclusion” (p.58). I am also in the habit of minimizing. According to Helgesen et al., (2018) minimizing “diminishes ones power” (p.149). Saying “I’m sorry” to open conversation or using words such as “*just, only, little, tiny, small, and quick*” actually suggest that what I want to share and think is in fact very important is not as valuable as the other person’s time” (p.150). Helgesen et al., (2018) attribute this behavior to a “verbal tic or

habit of speech one may not even be aware of” (p.52). I have been in the habit of exercising this verbal tic in my own pattern of speech. Now that I am aware of it, I will try to refrain from using this speech pattern.

**Confidence.** Fifth, I need to “know my material cold” and exude confidence (Hewlett, 2014, p.59). Depending on how much time I have to prepare lessons or presentations determines whether I can proceed without using notes or not. Teaching social studies I find I have needed to rely on power points with notes in order to get the bulk of material assimilated to my students. My first year teaching, even though I read the material over at home and even practiced, I still found that in my first lesson I would have to read from my power point. Now that I have taught grade 9 and 10 socials a few years in a row it should become more fluid. However, in university courses or workshops when one is broken into a group and has 30 minutes or one hour to put together a presentation that is where I lack confidence and rely on notes. One thing I always try to do is to make eye contact with someone in the audience and I do try to scan the room. Hewlett (2014) asserts that reading notes detracts from a person’s gravitas and focuses attention on a person’s lack of confidence” (p.59). Going forward, I will consciously try to be as over prepared as possible in order to exude my confidence.

**Posture.** Sixth, I need to work on my posture. Both my husband and my physiotherapist have pointed out that my posture is not perfect. Communication is not just with words but also how one stands in a room and carries oneself. Hewlett (2014) claims that:

When you stand tall, feet planted solidly and somewhat apart, chest out and shoulders back, you actually trigger a hormonal response that boosts testosterone and lowers cortisol, the steroid released from your adrenal glands in times of stress, from your bloodstream...To radiate presence you have to radiate that you are present. (p.71)



If standing tall counters stress and nerves then I need to practice that all the time and retrain myself to purposefully think about my posture. Hewlett (2014) goes on to say:

Since people will be reading you the moment they lay eyes on you, take care to enter a room or take the stage with aplomb. Is your head up, your gaze focused straight ahead? Shoulders back but relaxed? Do you stride or shuffle? And do you look happy at this opportunity to engage? Or do you look like you're nursing an ulcer? (p.70)

*Perfection trap.* Lastly, I must not let the perfection trap steal my joy (Helgesen et al., 2018). Endeavoring to be perfect creates an unhealthy stress (Helgesen & Goldsmith, 2018). According to Helgesen et al., (2018) “being riveted on details, distracts you from the big-picture orientation that is expected when you reach a senior position” (p.127). I know that I have a tendency to plan all the details both in my lessons and even in my day-to-day happenings. I feel most comfortable in the role of project manager but often what happens is if something goes haywire, I get really bothered and think about it for days. It is therefore wise to remember that striving to be perfect and for every lesson to be perfect is setting me up for disappointment (Helgesen et al., 2018).

### **Team Leadership and Competency Development**

This research on the advantages of mentoring and networking is timely, practical and warrants a lot of merit for those who employ this tool in their career. In the following section I will explain why mentoring is important. I will discuss my own personal experiences with mentoring and then I will explain how I would employ a mentorship program in the Langley School District.

Mentoring has many benefits as I have already explained at length in my literature review. Personally, I have been mentored on numerous occasions. For example, while completing my B. Ed degree I was informally mentored by two professors. One professor mentored a post-grad cohort group. She met with us monthly to check in with us and see how we were doing. She always kept an open door, so if we had any struggles or just needed someone to talk to she made herself available. The professor's attentive mentorship over each of us not only helped us survive that very intense first year of coursework but also helped us surpass our goals.

A second professor who taught four Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) Courses was a great encourager. He noticed a keen interest I had for doing a Masters and also for writing and publishing articles. I attribute my pursuit in post graduate studies to his unceasing encouragement.

Another mentoring experience took place during my teaching practicum. I was mentored by two teachers. These mentorships were a mix of both formal and informal mentoring (Dunbar et al., 2011; Hume, 2015 and Patterson Felicello, 2014). While it was part of the degree to complete a long term practicum in order to fulfill the requirements of the B. Ed degree, we were at liberty to find teachers under whom we would like to mentor. I chose the two teachers I wanted to mentor under so in this way my mentoring was considered informal.

Another mentoring relationship I experienced was in reality an extension of my practicum mentorship. When I was first employed by the Langley School District, my principal encouraged me to get involved in the newly created teacher mentorship program which was coordinated by the Langley School District for new teachers to the district. It was a two year program and it was a formal mentoring program because it was coordinated by the school

district. New teachers don't generally know many experienced teachers they could mentor under and this is where the school district coordinator comes in to match candidates with an experienced teacher in their school. For myself, I wanted to continue my mentorship under my former mentors. My primary mentor went on to mentor me for the first year before he retired and then my other mentor mentored me for the second year of the program.

Currently, I am mentored by my thesis advisor. While completing my LIP coursework I was encouraged from what I was reading in the literature to reach out to two female administrators. This school year a spot opened up on the Health and Safety Committee which is chaired by a new female VP. I joined the committee and have since been receiving some informal mentoring under her leadership. My male principal also said I could mentor under him. Lastly, I approached one of the VP's to see if I could shadow each of the administrators this year to get a better feel for what their work entails. Each administrator has uniquely different job responsibilities to fulfill. In observing each of them for a day or even a week at a time, this would allow me to get a better picture of what their daily agenda looks like.

***Leveling the playing field.*** At present I am completing my MAEL coursework and plan on graduating this November (2019). Since I am not already in a position of leadership in my school, here is what I intend on implementing when I have the opportunity to do so. According to much of the literature I have read, there appears to be an overwhelming agreement that supports mentoring for school leaders in two capacities. First, mentoring is advantageous for teachers hoping to move into a leadership role. Second, mentorship is a pragmatic way for novice administrators/principals who are still learning the ropes of their new position.

***Novice administrator mentorship programs.*** First, one thing that is clearly stated in the literature is the importance of school districts investing time in developing a culture that supports

and encourages the mentoring of new administrators through a mentorship program (Adams, 2004; Alpern, 2016; Cates, 2012; Crosby-Hillier, 2012 and Dunbar et al., 2011). I believe my own school district is already cognizant of this point and would certainly embrace the idea of extending their *new teacher mentorship program* to also incorporate a new *novice administrator mentorship program for females*. I would strongly propose that a formal five year program be established for aspiring female teachers hoping to move into leadership positions and then for novice female administrators in their initial years of administration. Offering such a mentorship program geared exclusively for females this would be a tremendous support for women and would empower them to consider moving into positions of administrative leadership. One reason so few women pursue leadership is simply because there are too few women mentors available (Bynum, 2015; Crosby-Hillier, 2012; Dunbar et al., 2011; Hume, 2015; Kossek et al., 2016; Patterson Felicello, 2014; Rhodes, 2018 and Steel Flippin, 2017). In setting up a mentorship program at the district level this would also help “broaden their professional exposure and raise their profile” (Crosby-Hillier, 2012, p. 111). Finally, I suggest five years because initially the novice administrator might be in the early stages of seeking out a position. Five years would allow a novice administrator time to secure a position in leadership with the help of a mentor as well as time to start working in the field while implementing the advice of a mentor.

***Shadowing principals.*** The literature also spoke about *shadowing principals* (Adams, 2004). Unlike *Principal Teacher Job Sharing*, shadowing principals just encompasses teachers shadowing principals and not principals shadowing teachers (Patterson Felicello, 2014). I would implement job shadowing as a means to allow teachers a foretaste of what the principalship entails. Many teachers only see a vague image of what responsibilities a principal has, but are

clueless to the intricacies of what the job really requires. By offering an opportunity for teachers to job shadow this would help them have a clearer idea of what the job entails. In this way, school boards could ensure fewer principals leaving the profession altogether or leaving on stress leave which I have experienced twice in my career already.

*Professional day workshops and guest speakers.* Lastly, according to Steele Flippin (2017) “more should be done to teach women about the importance of fostering deeper connections with peers and leaders at all levels within their workplace as an investment in their career development and advancement” (p.40). I would invite retired female administrators to share their insights to novice aspiring female administrators at Professional Day workshops to help encourage women in their career pursuits. I would not only invite retired female principals from our district but other districts as well and look at inviting Aboriginal female principals and other ethnic minority leaders as well to be inclusive of all aspiring females. As well, I would try to always have a workshop geared more for female educators that would address tips on networking, social emotional wellness, managing stress and finding balance between career and home life. Furthermore, book clubs and other *female only* groups could be coordinated for the purpose of networking and professional exposure.

## **CHAPTER 7-Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research undertaken during this LIP sought to answer these questions: What are the reasons for an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals? The research drew on current narratives documented in various peer reviewed studies which also helped to answer three more questions. The first questioned focused on special leadership qualities women in leadership have that would make them good candidates for the secondary principalship. The

second question examined existing barriers and obstacles that cause an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals. The third question enquired about mentoring and networking as valuable supports for women endeavoring to move into positions of leadership.

The existing literature reveals one underlying issue that a glass ceiling does indeed exist for female teachers who aspire to the principalship (Northouse, 2016). In light of the educational change and implementation of B.C.'s new redesigned curriculum, which is rolling out in all school districts across the province of BC, now is a good time to implement leadership changes by positioning women into secondary principalship roles in order to complete this process of educational change. According to Rouleau-Carroll (2014) more females need to be encouraged into the principalship. Women need to step boldly into these roles of leadership in order to move the markers forward. Educational change starts from the top down. Not only do school boards need to bring about change in educational systems, now is also the time to begin making it easier for women to reach top positions in secondary education (Northouse, 2016). School districts must behoove themselves to address this delicate issue (Northouse, 2016).

Some clear themes presented themselves in the literature in answering the question: "What existing barriers and obstacles cause an imbalance in the numbers of male and female secondary principals?" In a woman's quest to make it up the top ranks of school administration into the principalship post, research pinpoints both external and internal barriers which can be addressed. Clearly and compellingly women have some hurdles to overcome, however even with the many obstacles studies have identified female leaders who have overcome the odds and gone on to have satisfying and successful careers. Women's perceptions about the principal's office need to be re-packaged in order for more young women to consider this career path. One external barrier women will continue to contend with is the family responsibility. As long as

women have children and raise families, it is inevitable that women will come to this crossroad and need to plan accordingly perhaps postponing the more senior principalship role until later in their career. A salient internal barrier women can work on changing is their behavior.

These studies have also identified the importance for women to network and find a mentor or sponsor principal to take under their wings.

The existing literature also revealed how valuable the practices of mentoring and networking are for both aspiring female leaders hoping to move into the principalship chair, as well as those who have already obtained a position. From undertaking this research I have gained substantial new knowledge which I intend to employ on my own journey into leadership. My research findings revealed a range of different methods of mentoring from formal mentoring to informal mentoring and from man to women mentoring or even better woman to woman mentoring. Based on the study findings, mentoring is a valuable tool which provides mentees with guidance and encouragement. Just as far-reaching, networking provides professional support for women seeking timely advice to issues that may arise as they continue on in their careers. Furthermore, my research found female mentoring programs especially noteworthy for women endeavoring to move into positions of leadership. Such programs should be put into place in all school districts in order to help empower women. Mentoring as a way to level the playing field is what is needed to help women overcome the glass ceiling.

### **Scope & Limitations**

The project could narrow down to specific Canadian provinces or even municipalities, like Langley, for example. Initially, I had planned to focus on case study research interviewing three to four current and or retired female principals in the Langley School District, but I was

advised not to focus on Langley and was deterred from pursuing case study research due to time constraints with the completion of my LIP. The findings of my LIP work supported earlier research and confirmed the value in mentoring relationships for women who aspire to the principalship. A mentoring culture has already been adopted in countless school districts for novice teachers to the teaching field as *teachers in training* under mentor School Associates (SAs) and some districts, like Langley, BC even offer a two year mentee/mentor program for new teachers. On the contrary, school board members should aim at developing a culture that also supports and encourages the mentoring of female teachers looking to move into administrative positions such as the principalship.



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