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HAVE APPROVED THIS CAPSTONE PROJECT

**MENTORING GENERATION X WOMEN:  
PROGRAM ELEMENTS TO INCREASE  
SUCCESS FOR PRINCIPALS OR  
NONPROFIT LEADERS**

By  
Mollie Bond

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August 2017

**Mentoring Generation X Women:  
Program Elements to Increase Success for Principals or Nonprofit Leaders**

By

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Capstone Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctorate of Education in  
Interdisciplinary Leadership – Nonprofit/Social Entrepreneurship

Governors State University  
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2018

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## **Abstract**

Mentoring may encourage leadership development in Generation X women who wish to gain leadership positions in nonprofit sector organizations or school administrations. However, cultural values and female natural tendencies may form a glass ceiling for females seeking leadership roles. This qualitative study asked 11 women about their experiences in mentoring programs to determine if what elements are necessary for mentoring programs to help female Generation Xers be successful. Participants were mentored by females in one of two programs: the Chicago Women in Philanthropy (CWIP) Women's Leadership Mentoring Program (WLMP) or the Metropolitan Institute for Leadership in Education (MILE) Principal Mentor Program. Within interviews, discussion occurred regarding beneficial elements that may help women advance toward their definition of success. Beneficial elements include: an emphasis on supporting mentees, mentors considering one-on-one mentoring in conjunction with observations and role playing, and networking with other mentors. Mentoring program administrators may consider intense training about work-life balance, as well as power and office politics. Generation Xers' upbringing caused them to learn best by active learning, rather than formal classroom lectures and instruction. Therefore, Generation X females like experiential learning opportunities within mentoring programs. By implementing beneficial mentoring program elements, mentees may reach their desired success; whether that includes objective career success, or subjective career success in relationships, happiness, helping others, and enjoying meaningful work.

*Key Words:* Generation X, mentoring, CWIP, WLMP, MILE, mentoring elements, women in leadership, work–life balance, power, office politics, objective career success, subjective career success, success

## Chapter 1. Introduction

Females born between 1961 and 1981 may face two roadblocks to reach upper-level roles within the nonprofit sector: their gender and their generation. One possible avenue through these roadblocks is mentoring. This capstone research project studied if a mentoring program for Generation X women should be structured differently to meet their unique needs.

Generation X females have a distinctive challenge because of the size of their generation and the size of other generations. Today, four generations are in the workplace (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). One of the largest generations, called the Baby Boomer generation, is facing retirement. As Baby Boomers slowly begins to exit the workforce, the succeeding generation, Generation X, waits for a promotion (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Gilley, Waddell, Hall, Jackson, & Gilley, 2015) that may or may not come. Generation Xers are no longer in entry-level positions, which could spur on “tremendous potential for success or conflict” (Mosley, 2005, p. 186). Stereotypically, Generation X assumes that hard work and loyalty pay off for those who wait (Gilley et al., 2015; Holden & Raffo, 2014; Wiedmer, 2015). Meanwhile, the largest generation in the workforce, the Millennial generation, may crave upper-level positions and crowd out Generation Xers who are still waiting for their promotion (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Stahl, 2013).

Millennials sometimes receive direct investment by Baby Boomers in the form of mentors, who pass along their knowledge and experience (Buckley, Beu, Novicevic, & Sigerstad, 2001; Reyes, 2003; Swap, Leonard, Shields, & Abrams, 2001). With the second largest generation (Baby Boomers) mentoring the largest generation (Millennials),

the generation between the two—Generation X—could be forgotten (Stahl, 2013). Mentoring, which can occur inside or outside organizations, is a tool that can help Generation X thrive and succeed. Nonprofit organizations, universities, and corporations sometimes incorporate formal mentoring (Ehrich, 1995; Fuentes, Ruiz Alvarado, Berdan, & Deangelo, 2014; Holt, Markova, Dhaenens, Marler, & Heilmann, 2016; Jackevicius, Le, Nazer, Hess, Wang, & Law, 2014; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Reyes, 2003), but perhaps these programs lack the elements that high-potential Generation X leaders need.

Diverse populations also benefit from mentoring (Ragins, 1997) In particular, women could face a steeper incline toward leadership positions because of their gender; this barrier is referred to as the *glass ceiling* (DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed, & Wheatly, 2014; Giscombe, 2007; Morrison, 1992; Terri, 2005; Wilson, 2014). Some career opportunities have opened to women (Ragins & Cotton, 1991), yet scholars suggest women are still not fully equal to men in numbers of senior leadership roles held (Eckman, 2004). Despite the challenges for women to hold as many leadership roles as men, advancement readiness can occur. Mentoring may be an avenue to prepare women for leadership roles, particularly Generation X females (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Williams, 2014).

### **1.1 Statement of Research Problem**

When the dual issues of generation and gender intersect, mentoring seems to be a possible solution to advance women of Generation X to leadership roles. This qualitative study exposes how a mentoring program should be structured to fit Generation X's needs and desires so they may obtain their definition of success.

This study uses two programs as a basis for comparison. The first program, Chicago Women in Philanthropy (CWIP), focuses on women who work in the nonprofit sector in Chicagoland and who have embraced the help older generations can give to younger generations. This organization has two core activities: professional development events and mentoring. Its mentoring program, Women's Leadership Mentoring Program (WLMP), began as a collaboration with the Young Women's Task Force (YWTF) in the 2000s; CWIP provided mentors, and YWTF supplied mentees. YWTF's Chicago chapter dissembled a few years after the mentoring started, but CWIP continued the program. WLMP has 10 alumni cohorts, with the last cohort having been started in the fall of 2016. WLMP was originally designed for entry-level women in the nonprofit sector with three to five years of experience. However, after CWIP participants consistently voiced a need for mentoring women who are further along in their professional development, WLMP began a mid-career program in 2016 for women who have higher roles than entry-level positions.

The second organization is Governors State University's Metropolitan Institute for Leadership in Education (MILE) Principal Mentor Program. The state of Illinois requires all first-year principals to be mentored if the district can pay for it, per Public Act 094-2039 (Illinois General Assembly, 2007; Cunningham, 1999). The MILE program has eight alumni cohorts, with approximately 22 new principals each year (personal communication, D. Fitzgerald, November 3, 2016). This study compares this highly-structured MILE program with the WLMP program to determine the elements needed in a mentoring program geared toward Generation X women.

## 1.2 Statement of the Research Question

The purpose of this study is to interview women born between 1961 and 1981 who have participated in the WLMP or MILE program to determine if the structure, specific elements, or the definition of *success* could enhance mentoring programs designed toward Generation X women. To ensure consistency, participants must have been mentored by females. The participants have had experience in a nonprofit organization as an assistant principal, principal, or assistant superintendent. Other positions, such as superintendent and teacher, were not available for this study, because none of the potential participants held these positions.

This study sought to identify what elements women wanted in a mentoring program so they could be successful in their current stage of life. The central research question was, “What elements of a mentoring program are requested by Generation X female mentees to reach their definition of success?” From this question, a few theory questions came forth. For example, “What programmatic structure was the most beneficial for females who are part of Generation X?” The career experiences of the women could also taint their perception of what elements are important in a mentoring program; Therefore, another theory question was, “What experiences in careers make mentoring different in this stage of life?” Literature examined in Chapter 2 reveals trending concerns for Generation X. From these readings, two more theory questions emerged; “What, if any, work-life balance issues exist?” and “Did gender play a role in the workspace?” These five questions were posed to participants in the vernacular (Wengraf, 2001), and not asked directly (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

The leader–member exchange (LMX) theory is the basis of the theoretical framework. LMX developed from the vertical dyad linkage (VDL) theory (Liden & Graen, 1980), which is based on the notion that a leader and a follower creates a relationship that develops over time (Graen & Cashman, 2010). The interaction and role-making process are what links the leader and the follower together, creating a VDL (Graen & Cashman, 2010; Liden & Graen, 1980). A key to determining if a VDL exists is when a member views the “relationship with his leader as a source of individualized assistance” (Graen & Cashman, 2010, p. 391). Through the interaction with the leader, a member can have “in-group exchanges” or “out-group exchanges.” The quality of the exchange and the trust of the leader determine if the exchange is considered an in-group or an out-group (Godshalk & Sosik, 2007; Graen & Cashman, 2010). Therefore, questions posed to mentees revolved around the interactions between a mentor and a mentee. The exchange between the two people helped determine what elements were beneficial or not beneficial for a mentee.

The exchange between a mentor and a mentee can impact their relationship. Sparrowe and Linden (1997) provide examples of how the leader–member exchange can help or hinder a mentee. A low leader–member exchange would involve someone who was given an assignment that the supervisor knew that person could not complete well, or a supervisor withholding information that would be helpful for the success of the subordinate (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). Low LMX comes from low trust from the mentor or the mentee. Sparrowe and Linden (1997) propose that low LMX means less sponsorship in the mentor’s network. The mentor could decide to introduce the mentee



only to those with whom the mentor also has a low LMX because it decreases the possibility of a lower reputation status for the mentor (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). As a result, a low-quality formal mentor can cause a mentee to find an informal mentor (Holt et al., 2016). A low LMX between the mentor and the mentee results in a decreased motivation for success (Holt et al., 2016).

In contrast, a higher LMX and, therefore a higher trust could mean more access to the mentor's network, according to Sparrowe and Linden (1997). By working with a highly networked leader, the subordinate—or mentee—can gain access to that network through introductions. This sponsorship is voluntary for the mentor and benefits the mentee more than the mentor. Trust is essential in this situation, because the interaction between the person being introduced and the mentee reflects the reputation of the mentor. A higher LMX would create the atmosphere for the potential to meet those in whom the mentor has a higher trust (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). A shared network can create the environment for higher leader–member exchanges in the future because the person who is not the mentor can confirm the trustworthiness of the mentee. The performance of the mentee toward the person being introduced can also affect the future relationship between the mentor and their network (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). A high LMX combined with high trust can broaden the mentee's network through the mentor's network. Trust is part of high-quality relationships viewed through the LMX theory.

A high exchange within the LMX theory framework is “based on trust, mutual obligation, and mutual respect” (Breevaart, Bakker, & van Demerouti, 2015, p. 755), while a low exchange causes mentees to do as they are told and no more (Breevaart et al., 2015; Holt et al., 2016). Sparrowe and Linden (1997) suggest that perhaps those with

high LMX are similar to each other and that the pair likes each other more; Therefore, the pair will have a higher trust level (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). A high-quality formal mentor, by way of LMX, can give the mentee or subordinate reason to seek more responsibility and can increase that person's ambition (Culbertson, Huffman, & Alden-Anderson, 2010; Holt et al., 2016). High LMX leads to more development opportunities for the subordinate because the subordinate is able to work on self-growth (Breevaart et al., 2015).

The higher-quality exchange leads to a better work environment in which workers are more engaged; such an environment is evident through a higher job performance and is attributed to the supervisor's high expectations of the subordinate (Breevaart et al., 2015). A higher LMX also effects the leader: the leader may be more willing to spend time with an employee, especially during training periods. In addition, a leader may be more understanding of a pressing need at home if the LMX is higher (Culbertson et al., 2010). People who are passionate, proud of their accomplishments, and ready to work are described as experiencing *work engagement* (Breevaart et al., 2015). Work engagement can lead an employee to help another employee during high workload or absenteeism. LMX is the foundation that builds autonomy, facilitates career development opportunities, and provides social support. A high-quality LMX results in a good relationship between employers and employees, which creates a better work environment (Breevaart et al., 2015).

The overlay between supervisors and mentors within the LMX theory is apparent. The LMX theory is used in relationships between supervisors and their direct reports in earlier scholarly work, but Raabe and Beehr (2003) applied the LMX theory to

mentoring. The LMX theory is a natural application to mentoring because both are based on one-on-one relationships. Therefore, Raabe and Beehr (2003) studied dyadic pairs who were within the same organization in a formal mentoring program. In this study, a mentor was not a supervisor of a mentee. LMX is based on contribution, affect, loyalty, and professional respect (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). These variables are important in a mentoring relationship as well. Contribution, affect, loyalty, and professional respect can be a transactional response between a mentee and the supervisor/mentor.

Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) say LMX is a transactional approach. As an example, manufacturing firm subordinates could not tell the difference between career mentoring and leader–member exchange, but superiors saw the difference between the two (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). The authors conclude (but do not prove) that supervisors know if they are functioning as a supervisor or a mentor while speaking to mentees. It is possible the different mind-sets cause the mentor/supervisor to behave differently depending on the context of the meeting. Meanwhile, employees do not necessarily distinguish the two frames when meeting with the mentor/supervisor. No matter the context, the mentee is still meeting with the same person for guidance and knowledge (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994).

Whereas the authors place the exchange between mentor and mentee as a transactional situation, they place the act of mentoring as a transformational situation (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). Supervisors may have additional expectations of production and outcomes from an employee regarding wages, while a mentor does not have those additional pressures (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). However, consistent contact, formal rewards, and performance reviews allow the supervisor more options to interact

with the individual being developed (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). It is possible that a high LMX positions a person well for a great performance evaluation (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994). Yet longer-term goals like salary increases and promotions are boosted when a mentee is mentored by a direct supervisor who has a mentoring frame of mind (Scandura & Schriesheim, 1994).

LMX is the foundational theoretical framework for this study. As seen above, Scandura and Schriesheim's (1994) study challenges the differences between a mentor and a supervisor. Therefore, presented below are definitions of some terminology within this research paper.

#### **1.4. Operational Definitions**

Definitions fluctuate throughout research, particularly for defining the generations through birth years. Defining terms boosts the reader's understanding of this descriptive study.

- **Baby Boomer** – The Baby Boomer generation includes people born between 1943 and 1960 (Rickes, 2016).
- **Formal mentor** – A formal mentor is a supervisor or another person with authority within the organization (Holt et al., 2016; Reyes, 2003).
- **Generation X** – People born between 1961 and 1981 fall under Generation X (Mosley, 2005; Rickes, 2016; Wiedmer, 2015).
- **Informal mentor** – An informal mentor is interested in the growth of the mentee, responds as a friend, and can show the ropes of being an administrator but does not have technical skills knowledge of hiring

policies, budgeting, and other organization-specific necessities (Reyes, 2003).

- **Mentee** – A mentee is a learner, usually the less experienced person, within the mentoring relationship (Sanfey, Hollands, & Gantt, 2013). Often, mentees are responsible for their growth and taking action to reach a goal or to claim success (Lee, Theoharis, Fitzpatrick, Kim, Liss, Nix-Williams, Griswold, & Walther-Thomas, 2006).
- **Mentor** – A mentor is a guide or sponsor for a mentee; the mentor “looks after, advises, protects, and takes a special interest in another’s development” (Sands, Parson, & Duane, 1991, p. 175).
- **Mid-career** – Mid-career refers to the stage in people’s careers when they have worked for 15 to 25 years (Baldwin, Lunceford, & Vanderlinden, 2005); people in this stage are approximately ages 35 through 55 (Baldwin et al., 2005; Rae, 2005).
- **Millennials** – People born between 1982 and 2004 are considered part of the Millennial generation (Rickes, 2016).
- **Success** – Success means sustaining meaningful relationships (Eckman, 2004; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005), while in a professional sense, success can be defined as “the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person’s work experiences over time” (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005, p. 179).

- **Supervisory mentor** – A supervisory mentor takes extra care to develop an employee (the mentee) through long-term “sharing of values, knowledge, and experience” (Holt et al., 2016, p. 79).

## **Chapter 2. Review of the Literature**

Studies on mentoring within the past two to three decades have increased. In the 1990s, leaders in peer-reviewed research explored different aspects of mentoring (Ragins, 1997; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Ragins & Cotton, 1993), and a large amount of the ensuing theories formed the groundwork for experts today. The foundational studies highlight the importance of mentoring—especially for women—explained in more detail below. This literature review is split into seven sections based on the scholarly work of other researchers and the issues of this capstone project: why is mentoring important, gender roles, workplace culture, developmental networks theory, generational differences, work–life balance, and best practices for a mentoring program.

### **2.1 Why Mentoring Is Important**

Studying mentoring in today’s context leads to early Greek texts. The word mentoring is first exhibited in Homer’s *The Odyssey* (Dymock, 1999; Ehrich, 1995; Sands et al., 1991; Sanfey et al., 2013; Swap et al., 2001). Guidance and direction, as this early manuscript mentions, are helpful during periods of growth within a mentee. Mentoring differs from coaching. A coach is one who has the qualities of a mentor, except the formal relationship has no set beginning or ending. The coach can be from outside the organization or industry (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005); for example, a coach can be a paid consultant. Within the last quarter century, formal mentorship programs have gained popularity. Currently, approximately one-third of companies use mentoring (Hezlett & Gibson, 2005).

Formal mentoring also occurs on college campuses. Mentoring in academia combines sharing professional responsibilities (such as research or co-led presentations)

and meeting regularly (Cunningham, 1999). Mentors help mentees move into the next phase, often supplying advice and emotional support. Generally the mentor and the mentee first work toward career goals, with the mentor acting like a coach, and then also meet for the psychosocial function, with the mentoring being a confidant or role model (Dindoffer, Reid, & Freed, 2011; Sands et al., 1991; Young, Cady, & Foxon, 2006). Research shows that the psychosocial functions are more prevalent for female mentees (Young et al., 2006). Mentorship can include helping another person move in the desired direction, whether professionally or outside the work environment, such as at a conference or a speaking event.

Mentorship is critical for building healthy environments and investing in employees (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). For example, peer-reviewed publications by junior faculty members were higher in quantity if the faculty members had been involved in a mentoring program (Cunningham, 1999). Additionally, 90 percent of the protégés said their mentors were effective in helping them become more successful (Cunningham, 1999). The mentoring process earns loyalty from staff and/or faculty and increases employees' productivity (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005).

Healthy environments for considerable growth opportunities develop in the culture of the organization. Culture is shaped by individuals and what the collective whole considers normal behavior by (Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). Mentors recognize patterns in their past that they share with the mentees. Stories that mentors share help protégés learn cultural norms (Dindoffer et al., 2011). Dindoffer et al. (2011) encourage protégés to share their stories too. Beyond individual growth, mentoring is important because it may benefit the broader organization's culture. Using real life examples aids



mentees (Jackevicius et al., 2014). Feyerherm and Vick (2005) found that if women rise to executive positions, the culture could naturally change to better align with the ideal of women in leadership. Staff learn from the patterns of each other, as well as from the stories of how to deal with certain situations in the contextual culture of that organization (Selzer, n.d.). Mentoring can boost an organization's well-being (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

Swap et al. (2001) reviewed how mentoring components strengthen organizations. The researchers showed the need for the transfer of knowledge in an organization, saying that mentoring can be a conduit to produce that transfer (Swap et al., 2001). Observing others—even subconsciously—is a way to internalize the culture of the organization. Teaching what the organization values, as well as what is considered normal behavior, is also part of a mentor's role, even if sometimes this expectation is not communicated (Swap et al., 2001). Sands et al., (1991) found that mentoring can benefit the entire culture of an organization, since feedback would exist within the boundaries of the organization's values and norms.

On a personal basis, mentoring benefits the mentor and the mentee. For the mentor, benefits include having feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment, being recognized by the organization, having loyalty from the mentee, breaking through the career plateau, and improving performance on the job (Ragins, 1997). Mentors may learn things from mentees that advance their own careers or reenergize them toward their current careers. Mentors' years of experience and knowledge help younger mentees. If a mentee does well, the mentor may gain increased recognition and a more positive reputation, leading

to an advance of the mentor's career, although advancement is not a guaranteed outcome (Ragins, 1997).

Mentees receive many of the benefits mentors receive, including career advancement, except mentees' loyalty might increase toward the organization or the mentor. Mentoring can involve an intense focus on learning to advance a career. Perna, Lerner, and Yura (1995) define *career development counseling* as helping another person in a quest to move into the next stage of his or her career. Having someone walk alongside a person in obtaining a desired career is helpful and beneficial (Perna et al., 1995).

For the benefits of mentoring to be realized, mentees must have a basis of connection with their mentors (Swap et al., 2001). Mentees' willingness to learn allows them to have shared meaning with their mentors and become active participants in gathering knowledge (Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Swap et al., 2001). By providing feedback, mentors can guide mentees in the expectations of an organization (Swap et al., 2001). Asking questions like, "How does this organization implement its mission and values?" gives mentees space to reflect on what they have gleaned and how to apply what they have observed. As a result, the active learning phase blooms into metacognition and self-monitoring (Swap et al., 2001).

Mentoring is important for those, particularly women, who wish to move into leadership roles (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Giscombe, 2007; Jackevicius et al., 2014; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006). Mid-career women working in leadership roles can look to mentoring to help them gain confidence (Alsburry & Hackmann, 2006), and find balance between home and work (Dindoffer et al., 2011; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007;

O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). In the next section, the focus shifts to gender, and how assumptions appear in mentoring pairs.

## **2.2 Gender Roles**

Scholarly work shows that if both male and female leaders share the leadership of a team, that shared leadership does not make the team function better (Mendez & Busenbark, 2015). Even more, women are sought out for positions where leadership can fail. This situation widens the gender gap. Recent studies use the term *glass cliff* to describe when women are appointed leaders for crisis management positions (Mendez & Busenbark, 2015). The female leader becomes a person to blame when the crisis management tactics and strategies fail; hence the term *cliff*.

Beyond the failure rate, women have noted they have been “undervalued and underutilized” (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005, p. 222) because of their age and gender. Research says a male-minded culture still underlies the best intentions. To improve the mentality of a culture in which female leadership is disregarded, “mutual respect, openness, and continuous learning” are needed (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005, p. 223). Failing to comprehend the necessity of a diverse team, particularly gender diversity, reveals leaders’ ignorance of the need for all types of opinions and experiences (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). Women should be included in leadership roles.

### **2.2.1 Women in leadership.**

Holden and Raffo (2014) asked Generation Xers and Millennials what leadership traits were best and reviewed if those traits were feminine, masculine, or gender neutral. Holden and Raffo (2014) found transformational leadership to be equalizing. No other

significant differences existed in either gender; they discovered that the traits they tested were gender neutral. However, it's possible that the traits they tested were based on what makes a good leader, not what the respondents had experienced in a leader (Holden & Raffo, 2014).

If traits are gender neutral, then perhaps some people would conclude there is less need for women to be in leadership. Males are already leaders, and gender equality among leaders cannot heighten leadership capabilities, some people believe. Yet cutting out viable members of society based on gender does not proactively seek out the best candidates for leadership, and some people who have potential may not have the opportunity to apply their skills and talents. For leadership to reflect the greater population's diversity requires women to be a critical mass (Ehrich, 1995) of the leadership. The critical mass theory states that a percentage of a minority group appropriately represented becomes *critical mass*. Ehrich (1995) suggests that when women make up 33 percent or more of the total number of principals administrators, then female representation has hit critical mass (Ehrich, 1995).

Attitudes about female leaders are changing (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). Today people more often accept women as leaders, although still not everyone recognizes their complete equal acceptance (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Williams, 2014). Jacobs (1992) investigated if women who had been promoted to manager between 1970 and 1998 received only title changes or also a change in pay and responsibility. Women in banking got "promotions" in title to satisfy the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission. No indication of increased pay or responsibility was present. However, for other industries

studied, female managers did tend to gain earnings and authority with promotions (Jacobs, 1992).

Unequal promotion does not end at American borders. Damman, Heyse, and Mills (2014) reviewed the healthcare industry in Holland and found that women are less likely to be promoted than men. A high rate of women in management occurred in the medical emergency-aid sector (Damman et al., 2014). The researchers found that even in this industry, which generally employs more women than men, women were significantly underrepresented in management (Damman et al., 2014). The researchers noted that women tend to stay home, and that those who do work are less likely driven to pursue management positions (Damman et al., 2014).

Over the course of the study in Holland (Damman et al., 2014), 11 percent of female and male leaders transferred from nonmanagement to management positions in about 1.6 years. Overall, 57 percent of the leaders studied were women. Previous experience seemed to help workers get promotions. The type of occupation seemed to make a difference too. Promoted women often worked in what people consider “female” occupations, and promoted males worked in “male” occupations. If a group was comprised of both males and females, the promotion rate was less for women than for men. For example, male doctors were promoted 55 percent more often than women. Overall, 45 percent of women shifted to a management level. However, most of the doctors did not enlist for another year of volunteer service: turnover in the doctor role was high and skewed the results (Damman et al., 2014).

The study in Holland pointed out the promotability of women when skills associated with female characteristics were needed. Within the nonprofit sector, women

who are leaders may have a different leadership style than men. Lansford, Clements, Falzon, Aish, and Rogers (2010) note that the nonprofit workforce is 75 to 80 percent female and suggest that women might be more natural at “softer” skills that the nonprofit space values. These researchers concluded that female leaders possess self-awareness and care about their work, mentoring others, and being authentic (Lansford et al., 2010). When thinking through their relationships with employees, female nonprofit leaders showed a collaborative leadership style (Lansford et al., 2010). Decision-making styles involved group discussion or empowering others to make decisions, sometimes combined with thinking through a decision before finalizing plans (Lansford et al., 2010).

In 2010, women lead 18.8 percent of the top 400 philanthropic organizations (Lansford et al., 2010). However, five out of the nine participants that the researchers studied reported that their positions were not ambitions they originally possessed (Lansford et al., 2010). Instead, female nonprofit leaders and principals had fallen into their roles (Eckman, 2004; Lansford et al., 2010). Yet, Mastracci and Herring (2010) found that more female leaders are in the nonprofit sector than in the corporate world. The reason may be because the nonprofit world is service-orientated, a characteristic that women are better at achieving than males, making women more inclined to apply for nonprofit positions (Mastracci & Herring, 2010). The intentional and formalized hiring of women helps keep hiring fair and equitable (Mastracci & Herring, 2010). However, Mastracci and Herring (2010) defined *leadership* as those in full-time work who had the most impact on the mission, not necessarily the ones with the highest wages or decision-making power. But overall, representation of women in the nonprofit sector was higher versus the for-profit sector (Mastracci & Herring, 2010).

In Australia, females were severely underrepresented as administrative educators (headmaster or higher; Ehrich, 1995). Ehrich (1995) found that women represented 20 to 25 percent of the education administrators in Australia. Even in that country, women face a glass ceiling, missing a strong percentage within administrative roles.

In a study by Morrison (1992), six barriers to administrative roles are higher than 15 other barriers. The six top cited barriers to gaining a position of authority include prejudice, poor career planning, bad working environment, (manager) ignorance, comfort with those who look the same, and work–life balance. In addition, Morrison (1992) noted that a lack of mentors who have broken through the glass ceiling causes it to be more difficult for others to break the glass ceiling themselves and have a greater influence. Leaders are mostly responsible for carrying out ways to make the workforce diverse (during hiring procedures); that role is, therefore, “the single most important factor in the effectiveness of these organizations’ efforts” (Morrison, 1992, p. 18). Organizations gain a diverse team through accountability, tools to develop minorities and women, and great recruitment. The tools that develop minorities and women include educating employees about prejudice and its effects, mentoring, and recruiting (Morrison, 1992). Minorities are encouraged to have more than one mentor (Higgins, Chandler, & Kram, 2007; Ragins, 1997). Without minorities in the higher levels of organizations, there are less mentors who are able to encourage those within the same minority (Wilson, 2014). The third tool, recruiting, can increase the tolerance of individuals within diverse teams.

Wilson (2014) recommends intentionally recruiting minority groups so those individuals are not accidentally ignored. Mentoring can also aid situations when an injustice should be addressed, or when an issue should be ignored (Wilson, 2014).

Meanwhile, corporations should meet minorities halfway by creating space for family/work life, coupled with respecting cultural differences. While an organization's leaders reach out to minority populations within the workplace, Wilson (2014) suggests that minority individuals make a plan to break the glass ceiling to achieve executive roles. By working together, leaders and individuals can propel women into places of authority, like college presidencies.

The induction of female college presidents rose in the past two or three decades, but the number has not consistently hovered at critical mass (Brown, 2005; Ehrich, 1995). Mentoring women into the position of president seems to positively influence this low number (Brown, 2005). Female presidents, vice presidents, and provosts in higher education have found themselves in leadership because of support and value from those around them, including spouses and children (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011).

As women to hold more senior administrative and leadership positions in organizations, it is becoming clearer that women in leadership is not a fleeting trend. To change a culture, underscoring behaviors and beliefs should morph. Evidence of changing attitudes in one study demonstrates more acceptance of women in leadership (Elsesser & Lever, 2011). By looking at individual qualities, rather than through a filter of preconceived notions about a gender, the stereotypes are less apparent (Elsesser & Lever, 2011).

Female principals mentioned how most adults outside their schools expect a principal to be male (Eckman, 2004). The study reported that within a principalship, men liked being in charge and recognized that the leadership position held power, much like a coach. Yet, males complained about not having vacations, whereas females did not



mention this dissatisfaction with the job (Eckman, 2004). Females talked about relationships, particularly with their families—if those relationships were good, then work would be good (Eckman, 2004).

Other potential reasons exist for why women do not enter high-ranking positions. Some women want to work but not at an executive level. Feyerherm and Vick (2005) suggested that women who did not want to be executives may leave the workforce because they lack support. Women have the choice of either moving up or out. Terri (2005) presents a convincing case for mentorship being part of the climb toward a presidential role, especially in higher education. The lack of female executives who can also mentor women is another reason why women may not enter high-ranking positions. Terri (2005) acknowledges that cross-gender mentoring could be beneficial, but only because not many women are at the top to mentor other women. Additional ceilings beyond the bounds of this study, but should be noted, include race and age (Terri, 2005; Wilson, 2014).

Kelly and Dabul Marin (1998) derived an assessment to recognize the blockers for career mobility. Mentorship was the most quoted catalyst of women possessing higher-level positions (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). Mentors can help women break gender-based paradigms. Five out of the six women interviewed had mentors, and all five women praised their mentors. Three had mentors during their undergraduate years but all six had mentees while they were in their leadership roles (Dindoffer et al., 2011). Terri (2005) highlighted that 56 percent of interviewees who were female college presidents had mentors, and 64.4 percent served as mentors. Women lean on the expertise of others to help climb the ladder.

While mentoring may propel mentees, the pairing of some mentors and mentees can harm the mentees' growth. Some attributes make a mentee more likeable, while others cause the mentor and mentee to grow distant rather than closer. Young et al. (2006) reviewed various theories and applied them toward mentoring. In particular, they looked at the similarity-attraction paradigm, a social psychology theory explaining the natural gravity toward others who are similar physically, in personality, and in behavior (Young et al., 2006). Ragins (1997) says those who are most different from each other within a mentoring pair will have less in common with each other. Young et al. (2006) looked at whether mentors and mentees with comparative work, goals, and communication are attracted to similar dispositions, regardless of gender. This mind-set benefits the mentee: The mentor delivers guidance quicker, since a commonality exists. The authors note that mentoring tends to follow the same relational cues as any other relationship based on attachment. First, getting to know each other forms a base. Then the relationship works within the mentorship to move forward. The relationship changes when the two separate, either to become long-term friends or to end the relationship, potentially in anger or resentment (Young et al., 2006).

Perhaps trust requires less evaluation or assignments for the mentoring program (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005). If that is true in a dyad, then the pair will look beyond membership of a group (like race, gender, or other diverse characteristics) to find similarities that will make the pair more comfortable with each other (Ragins, 1997). Mentors and mentees who are different from each other need to find commonalities; otherwise, the lack of similarities might cause the relationship to be shorter than the relationships of those who have a grounding through similarities. Sometimes pairs find

commonalities after time has passed (Ragins, 1997). Mentees suggested that completing assessments online and finding quality mentors who had some similarities to the mentees were helpful (Jackevicius et al., 2014).

Previous research seems to indicate that married males and single females are successful mentees. Potentially, if someone's perception (even subconsciously) of the opposite sex is negative, then that person's opinion of a mentor or mentee of the opposite gender would be low (Young et al., 2006). It is possible that both genders look for those who have an elevated level of payoff and competence with a low level of risk and commitment—particularly for those of the same gender (Young et al., 2006). Women who want to progress through their career to higher levels of management or leadership should consider being mentored, being mindful of whom they choose as mentors. Yet other variables, including pressures at home, can discourage their climb to the top.

### **2.2.2 Work and family responsibilities.**

Eagly and Chin (2010) note the dichotomy of roles for women in leadership. Female leaders are often expected to be warm and friendly but also command a strong presence. Some people believe women are best in their own element at home, while they believe men should provide financially by working outside the home. This mind-set strengthens the stereotype that women are adept only at raising children, caring for others, and generally shying away from holding a position of power in the workplace.

Women feel the pull to be both confident and authoritative while at the same time and nurturing and encouraging (Brown, 2005). This dilemma is referred to as *gender-splitting* (Dindoffer et al., 2011), which leaves many women feeling guilt-ridden and torn between work and home. Generally accepted and encouraged roles for women outside the

home are as secretary, nurse, and teacher (Dindoffer et al., 2011); therefore, it would be assumed that colleges would be full of female teachers and administrators. The Dindoffer et al. (2011) study proved otherwise.

Noszkay and Borsos (2014) interviewed men and women about their careers, the difficulties of gender in their careers, and their visions for the future. Successful women who achieve their goals frequently do so with a masculine overtone and after giving up on having families, and those who have families have given up on the managerial roles they initially wanted (Noszkay & Borsos, 2014). Likewise, Wilson (2014) found that women were choosing to not be part of corporate America in order to give attention to their families at home.

Regarding school principals, Eckman (2004) found that men often chose the principalship for money and after planning to become a principal. Females, however, all reported to fall into their roles without having planned to become principal. Six men got the position of high school principal after male colleagues encouraged them to apply. None of the women had that same experience. Four women noted their gender harmed their chances; they felt that the hiring committee favored men (Eckman, 2004). Another woman said she submitted 10 applications before being hired as a principal (Eckman, 2004).

Mentoring programs should consider the goal of the person being mentored. Five of the men desired the role of superintendent. Two females showed interest in becoming superintendents, but with clear hesitations (Eckman, 2004). One was unsure of the relationships with board members, and the other thought retirement would come before she could move onto the superintendency. The rest saw retirement as the next step

(Eckman, 2004). Principals can both be a mentor and receive mentoring. Yet for both genders, a difference in who the mentee was became evident. Four males talked about raising up assistant principals, and most female principals talked about informally mentoring teachers to become principals (Eckman, 2004). The various motivators for obtaining a principalship, along with moving out of the principalship, is important to note for mentoring programs designed for women.

Just as mentoring can help women achieve their career goals, mentoring can also help them integrate their work life and home life. Yet, while at work, women face demands because of power struggles.

### **2.2.3 Power and office politics.**

Power is inherent in most leadership positions, both internally within an organization and externally. As an example of an external situation, Eckman (2004) found that male principals often chose to pursue a principal role to financially support their families. Female principals often did not seek a principal role (Eckman, 2004). Yet, the females struggled with situations when the other party expected a principal to be male, because power is associated with males. Power may be a change catalyst for those in leadership; particularly for women in leadership.

Women who work in the nonprofit sector, like a hospital, have power struggles as well. Gender causes struggles, but so does the issue of females contending among themselves for the most power (Barrett & Taylor, 2002). Women can combat this divisive behavior by learning how to help one another. For example, midwives have used “tea time” to connect, share their knowledge, and create relationships that would help them pursue goals later in their professional lives (Barrett & Taylor, 2002). Thus, it

seems natural for women to be good at forming positive relationships and using power collectively to enhance the lives of all women. In the same manner, women in leadership should also gain power by making connections and striving for healthy relationships.

Power status may shift according to gender (Young et al., 2006). It seems women have less organizational power, access to resources, and advocates to help them advance. It is possible women do not use these three positioning factors as much as men do because women do not perceive themselves as being availed to them. Young et al. (2006) think it is possible that men seek out high-powered mentors. Likewise, if a man and a woman hold the same position, the man would be chosen as a mentee because of the power factor that males naturally hold (Young et al., 2006).

Power can also be played out through office politics. Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar, and Howard (1996) defines *organizational politics* as actions and behaviors that come from one person or a group of people against another that create conflict in the work environment. This *tête-à-tête* is not part of an organization's formalities. Office politics can be subjective, based on someone's perception of reality. Whether stressors or motivators, politics come from a state of uncertainty. Greater potential for politics exists when the power is centralized at the top of an organization. However, politics decrease when formal policies are woven into an organization, because uncertainty is also decreased (Ferris et al., 1996). Office or organizational politics can also arise when resources are scarce. For example, when layoffs occur, the lack of job opportunities and secure employment causes uncertainty, which leads to tension among staff and, thus, office politics. Fairness of decisions can also create politics because of a lack of certainty. Overall, politics can create anxiety, poor job satisfaction, and dissatisfaction with a

supervisor. Men perceive politics more than women do, but men see politics as part of the job, so they are more involved with the politics in an organization (Ferris et al., 1996; Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999).

Kelly and Dabul Marin (1998) derived an assessment to recognize the blockers for career mobility. Women currently should be tough, decisive, demanding, assertive, and desire power and achievement (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). Kelly and Dabul Marin (1998) found that power seems to be an imperative for those who want to rise, but power is determined by the position, not the person holding the position. Kelly and Dabul Marin's (1998) power and fast track job scale measured how women climbed the ladder. The researchers' results found that those with higher positions had the support of a mentor. Power can come from a pair or a group of people with similar goals (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). A mentor can have an abundance of power to speak into the life of the mentee (Perna et al., 1995). Office politics obliges women to assess their power. Some women find stress in being lonely and overworked (Gardiner & Tiggemann, 1999). Gardiner and Tiggemann (1999) found that women recognized increased office politics and pressure from less power. People who show high political skills seem to be honest, caring, and engaging, according to Breland, Treadway, Duke, and Adams (2007). As people move up within the organization, they leverage their social capital and employ their political skills. Political skills give people the ability to use subjectivity within the promotion process by using their social capital. Positioning and personal branding can also be a sign of political skills. Those with strong political skills seem to make confident and autonomous decisions (Breland et al., 2007). Yet at the same time, Generation X may lack the skills to deal with issues between staff members (Mosley, 2005). The lack of

skills may be addressed by allowing trial-and-error experiences and “patient mentoring” (Mosley, 2005, p. 188).

External factors, such as organizational culture and other power relations, can influence mentoring pairs (Ragins, 1997). A minority mentee’s power can come from external cultural norms. Society has power that influences organizations, and organizations have power that influences relationships. However, majority groups in society that become minority groups in organizations are different from those who are a minority in society and in the organization (Ragins, 1997). Mentoring allows space for mentees to be influenced by the relationship with the mentor and the relationship that develops power in an organization. Internal relationship power and external organizational power can be uneven but still effective. Ragins (1997) gives the example of a mentor who might not have enormous organizational influence but can raise up a mentee nonetheless through the relationship with that mentee. “Power attributions are influenced by group membership, and may lead to underestimation of minority mentors’ power by the protégé, others in the organization, or even by the mentor” (Ragins, 1997, p. 488). Mentoring can increase power, and the mentee may have more power than what the mentor assumes. Ragins (1997) notes that a majority mentor may view a minority mentee differently or the pair may have different power. Therefore, keeping in mind the number of diverse characteristics within a pair can allude to the success of the relationship because of the power differential.

Within the mentoring relationship, the power discrepancy may be more evident when the dyad comprises a person from a majority group, and the other of a minority group. Ragins (1997) says mentors sometimes perceive mentees as younger versions of



themselves. Meanwhile, mentees may see mentors as who the mentees could be in the future. These perceptions make mentoring different from other relationships at work. “Asymmetrical power relationships, in turn, promote stereotyping because people with power do not pay attention to individual differences that may dispel stereotypic impressions” (Ragins, 1997, p. 495). In addition, stereotypes of minorities can skew people’s perception of a minority and the power that person might have; stereotypes may cause people to perceive minorities as having less power (Ragins, 1997). Ragins (1997) uses the illustrations of a female being mentored by either a man or a woman. The mentee might perceive a male mentor as having more power. If the mentor is a woman, the mentee might be perceived as having less power. Ragins (1997) suggests that because of this power variation, mentee successes could be perceived as a victory for the mentor if the mentee is a minority. Likewise, the mentee could receive more credit for something that should have been attributed to the mentor if the mentor is part of a minority group. Successes and failures for the minority mentee or mentor might be risky because successes or failures can be visible. The reputation of either the mentor or mentee could change positively or negatively (Ragins, 1997).

#### **2.2.4 Gender roles in mentoring.**

Male mentees prioritize networking, and female mentees look less favorably on networking because they may not find it as important (Young et al., 2006). Burke (1984) reported that psychosocial functions were more prevalent for female mentees. Women tend to provide more psychological mentoring, and men tend to provide more career mentoring (Allen & Eby, 2004). McKeen and Bujaki (2007) mentioned that the role of gender rather than biological sex can dictate how mentoring occurs. Androgynous people

receive more psychological and career support than those who claim male or female orientations (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). Sanfey et al. (2013) said that “men are overall less effective career sponsors for women than female mentors” (p. 715). Men prefer career building, but not every male seeks out a mentoring relationship (Burke, 1984). Females tend to want a mentor who encourages career development or information, rather than a friend or someone who gives advice or feedback (Sands et al., 1991). According to Young et al., (2006) female mentors are more relational overall, but less in business and more so in academia.

Dindoffer et al. (2011) studied six women at small faith-based liberal arts colleges. Five out of the six women had mentors and gave credit to the mentors for the positions the women held. Three out of the six women had mentors who supported them from their undergraduate years. In addition, the six women had mentees, whether students or professionals.

What the Dindoffer et al. (2011) study is not able to enforce is that fewer women are mentored by females because fewer females are in positions of authority. Some organizations do not have enough women in senior roles to be able to mentor younger people of the same gender (Allen & Eby, 2004). Women are unable to receive mentorship from higher-ranking females because fewer females are in higher education leadership positions (Brown, 2005; Sands et al., 1991).

To close the gap of women in leadership, some women are mentored by men. Differing opinions about whether males or females should mentor women remain in question in the field. Since higher positions are male dominated, men tend to be mentors more often than women (Higgins et al., 2007; Ragins, & Cotton, 1991). Ehrlich (1995)

admitted that same-sex mentoring may not help the cause of advancing women in educational administration, since not many females are currently in those roles, and those who are may not be willing to mentor others. Cunningham (1999) noted that male and female mentees often had male mentors throughout time. This alludes to the historical fact that more men serve as faculty (Maher & Tetreault, 2010). Females in leadership can be a minority if the rest of the leadership is male. If the mentor is part of the majority male group, minority female mentees may not get the role modeling that a majority male mentee would receive (Ragins, 1997). Within the mentoring relationship, whoever is the majority will get the credit: If the mentor is the majority, that mentor will get credit for the protégé's successes; if the mentee is part of the majority, that mentee will get the credit, rather than the minority mentee's training and networking being honored. Yet mentoring someone different than the mentor can increase sensitivities toward that specific minority group, which would help the mentor in the future in other heterogeneous teams (Ragins, 1997).

According to Sanfey et al. (2013), other research indicates that gender does not matter for female mentees. Men mentor both men and women, although most mentees were of the same gender as their mentors (Cunningham, 1999; Sands et al., 1991).

Most faculty experienced mentoring while they were graduate students (Sands et al., 1991). One reason Sands et al. (1991) gave for less mentoring among faculty is that after someone receives a doctoral degree, mentoring is less crucial, since doctors are expected to research on their own without guidance from another.

Ragins and Cotton (1991) suggested that women have a more difficult time than men finding mentors because of gender stereotypes, the fewer number of women in

higher positions, and avoidance of any perception of sexual advances. In their study, each issue was proven true except the last hypothesis about sexual advances (Ragins & Cotton, 1991). Young et al. (2006) discussed the issues of sexuality in cross-gender mentoring pairs. It is unavoidable and must be acknowledged (Young et al., 2006). Some overcompensate in their professional attitude, but that attitude enhances the learning and makes the mentoring more valuable (Young et al., 2006). The authors suggested that the mentor and mentee have a conversation to determine how to address any sexual tension (Young et al., 2006). Defining boundaries within the context of the mentoring seems the best course of action (Young et al., 2006). In addition, recent research discusses the stresses of those who are bisexual, lesbian, or gay (Young et al., 2006).

Ragins and Cotton (1991) concluded that women desire to mentor just as men do, but have additional challenges to overcome in the process. It is possible that women believe barriers exist, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy about women being able to obtain mentors. Still, the benefits for mentors cause women to find mentoring opportunities. However, if a woman was in a previous mentoring relationship as a mentee, that woman is more likely to become a mentor later (Ragins & Cotton, 1991).

Other paradigms can keep women from mentoring. Women are holding more senior roles than ever before in the public sector, but under culturally accepted gender discrimination (Williams, 2014). Men and women typically think their genders are good at some things but not at others. Williams (2014) uses the example of how women generally believe they are good at planning and being role models, and both men and women admittedly believe women are better in support roles. But neither sex thinks

negatively of their own gender. A possible solution is for females to receive mentoring from tenured women (Williams, 2014).

According to McKeen and Bujaki (2007), mentoring is essential for women who want to be successful. Ragins and Cotton (1993) explored what keeps women from mentoring. Possibilities include that fewer women are in positions to mentor, some do not want to be “responsible” for a mentoring failure, some have low self-confidence, and some are time constrained (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). Mentoring during the mid-career level; at that time, the pair can evaluate the past and determine future goals (Ragins & Cotton, 1993). However, mentoring can be tainted by workplace culture.

### **2.3 Workplace Culture**

The term *culture* can incorporate “gender, race, ethnicity, intelligence, sexual orientation, culture, nationality, religion, marital or parental status, position, department, union/nonunion” (Begeç, 2013, p. 64). Within a workplace, culture refers to what is considered acceptable behavior, and unacceptable behavior (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

A way to increase receptivity to a characteristic in the culture of the workplace is to encourage employees and mentors to share stories. Dindoffer et al. (2011) encouraged male and female protégées to share their stories, give advice, and listen to their psychosocial thoughts. Because universities do not require mentoring for preparing principals, those working toward becoming a principal with formal education are not armed with strategies, skills, and war stories from those who have the experience to share (Reyes, 2003). To have stories, an employee must develop a network within a social context.

## **2.4 Developmental Networks Theory**

Building a social network will help women who journey through a mentoring program. The developmental networks theory garnishes the relationships that may help a person learn and grow. It dissolves any notion that more than one mentor during a lifetime is a deficient for growth (Higgins et al., 2007; Ragins, 1997), or that one mentoring pair should continue infinitely.

Instead, the developmental networks theory suggests that social contacts and relationships can have a mentoring aspect to them. It is the degree and the goal of the relationship that defines the developmental network. For Higgins et al. (2007), individuals must look to advance their careers for mentoring to occur. The initiation is the first impression that can either enhance development or become a weak support for an individual's career development (Higgins et al., 2007). In another study, mentees did not realize mentoring would help their career development through technical or social/cultural learning (Reyes, 2003).

Initiating can make or break the mentorship (Higgins et al., 2007). Understanding socioeconomic status, gender, age, and nationality will affect how best to pair a mentor and mentee (Higgins et al., 2007). For example, a higher socioeconomic status will cause younger protégés to seek few and high socioeconomic mentors. This sense of entitlement tends to force the initiation (Higgins et al., 2007). If socioeconomic status is low, as may be the case in a nonprofit organization, a more formal program might help because the tendency will be to not seek out mentors at all. Younger people tend to be mentees, and will more likely seek mentorships. Those who are expatriates will find mentors, perhaps

because they are already used to uncomfortable situations when a person should be outgoing and adventurous (Higgins et al., 2007).

To increase developmental networks, organizations are encouraged to focus on participants' needs. "Organizational programs that are focused on the protégé may help participants by describing and training individuals so that they engage effectively, and not simply frequently, in development-seeking behaviors" (Higgins et al., 2007, p. 363).

## **2.5 Generational Differences**

Wiedmer (2015) explored generational differences of Traditionalists, Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z and reviewed the best practices for managers who lead those generations. It is predicted that 300 retirements happen an hour, equating to 8,000 Boomers retiring a day, for a total of 80 million Boomers (Wiedmer, 2015). The study does not mention those who have second careers after retirement. Some Boomers work part-time after retiring from the corporate world. Sometimes their second careers are in the nonprofit sector, as they want to "give back" and "do some good" (Gilley et al, 2015). Those in a mid-career level are generally of Generation X, which comprises a smaller number of American adults (Glass, 2007; Gronbach, 2008; Rickes, 2016).

Shugart (2001) looked at the specific identifiers of Generation X women and feminism by examining four role models from the generation: Alanis Morissette, Courtney Love, Winona Ryder, and Janeane Garofalo. Shugart's (2001) study refers to "third wave feminism." The first wave is the suffragist movement (ending in 1920). The second wave was highest in the 1960s. The third wave is more political. Generation X,

defined by Shugart (2001) as those born between 1965 and 1976, is in the middle of the third wave.

Shugart (2001) mentions Generation Xers' emphasis on individualism: "Vibrant and outspoken, third wavers appear gleefully brazen, brimming with optimism and intoxicated by their own potential" (p. 133). However, they look out for their own person, not caring about women's rights, which are hallmarks of the previous waves. She determined that the third wave is a subculture of Generation X, rather than being a phase of feminism (Shugart, 2001).

For Shugart (2001), Generation X is tied to pop culture and TV more than other generations are. She calls out *Beavis and Butthead*, *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *Friends*, and grunge music like Pearl Jam, Nirvana, Melissa Etheridge, and Janis Joplin. She found three intersections: consciousness of gender/sexism, individualism (especially if viewed as confrontation), and inconsistency. She notes that the third wave of "the feminist movement predominantly if not exclusively reflected the issues, concerns, and perspectives of middle-class, white, heterosexual feminists" (p. 154). Members of Generation X may find themselves thinking they are feminists, but that it is not a collective movement. Instead, Generation X sees feminism as a set of beliefs each individual may or may not pursue.

Wiedmer (2015) provides more insight into Generation X's culture in America. Generation Xers experienced unique situations that define their worldview. For Generation Xers, which number 84 million people in America, situations like daycare, divorce, and workaholic parents shaped them during early childhood (Glass, 2007; Wiedmer, 2015). This generation also saw Margaret Thatcher take office as the first



female British prime minister. Historical markers such as this one can influence how a person within a larger generation thinks (Glass, 2007; Wiedmer, 2015).

Feyerherm and Vick (2005) predicted in 2005 that by 2015, most of the Matures (the generation before Baby Boomers) and Boomers would have retired. Reality tells a different story (Wiedmer, 2015). Feyerherm and Vick (2005) noted this is the first time America has had four generations in the workplace, but Generation Xers, the authors say, will move on if they do not get what they want out of work. They desire experiences, challenges, and growth opportunities instead of formal education (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005) and will rebel against structure (Lai, Chang, & Lien, 2012). So they should be considered for self-motivated, independent jobs that have high work responsibility (Lai et al., 2012). Generation Xers have little tolerance for “busy work” and will leave a position to accept an entry-level job if they will perceive more meaning and value in their work (Mosley, 2005).

Bova and Kroth (2001) surveyed 197 Generation X employees to learn more about their best workplace learning style. They found that generally Generation Xers prefer action learning, defined as learning by doing, as opposed to lectures, classroom activities, and classic problem solving. They like to have more control over the learning and to focus on outcomes rather than technique. And they are looking for work cultures in which failing is okay, because that failure stimulates learning called incidental learning, their second-most preferred type of learning next to action learning (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Generation Xers’ preferred learning styles could stem from their schooling. Generation X grew up in a school system widely revised to incorporate “interactive exercises, self-paced learning modules, open classroom environments, and they were

encouraged to express themselves. . . They work best when they are given an objective and a deadline but are also allowed the freedom to execute the task as they wish”

(Mosley, 2005, p. 187).

For Generation Xers, money is a motivator to stay at companies, but learning and lifestyle are important to them too (Bova & Kroth, 2001). They need to keep learning and growing, because the skill sets they learn are important to their moving on to the next position. Building skill sets, they find, is also an avenue to job-jump more often. The authors reason that after seeing mass layoffs of their parents around age 50, Generation Xers are—perhaps even subconsciously—avoiding the same fate. In addition, they “value factors such as flexible schedules, shorter commuting distance, interesting work culture and prestige” (Bova & Kroth, 2001, p. 1).

When it comes to mentoring, receiving, practical teaching about being a supervisor and gaining a better understanding of their organizations mattered to mentees of this generation (Dymock, 1999). If the dyads had more trust and openness, then the learning was greater and deeper. Millennials like ambitious and driven characteristics more than Generation Xers do (Holden & Raffo, 2014). Meanwhile, Generation Xers like honest and competent characteristics more than Millennials do (Holden & Raffo, 2014).

Tamborini and Iams (2011) studied women ages 27 and 28 in 2004, 1996, and 1990. These snapshots gave insight into the experiences of late Baby Boomers and Generation Xers at specific ages. The later Generation Xers were more likely to graduate with a master’s, professional, or doctoral degree (7.3 percent of late Generation Xers compared to 4.1 percent of late Boomers). Those who graduated from college were less

likely to have children. Late Generation Xers were also more diverse in ethnicity, specifically, having a higher Hispanic population (Tamborini & Iams, 2011).

Crumpacker and Crumpacker (2007) focused on how the various generations relate to succession planning. They said older generations are looking for leadership positions. Meanwhile mid-career employees pay attention to roles outside work such as the role of mother or caretaker. People plateauing in their careers may look for ways to slow down, and that makes them okay with stepping away from their current roles. However, as both Baby Boomers and Generation Xers leave the workforce, workplaces are left with fewer employees who have institutional knowledge, potentially making the workforce reliant on Millennials and their stunted growth.

Still, Stahl (2013) focused on how Baby Boomers are staying in the workforce longer than anticipated. By using the metaphor of a highway, the author suggests Generation X is feeling the congestion and bottleneck as Millennials are crowding behind them (Stahl, 2013). Younger generations are becoming the new boss because they are looking for management and leadership roles (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

The anomaly of younger generations' viewpoint of gender equality tends to stay within American borders. The team including Yi, Ribbens, Fu, and Cheng (2015) noted that generations are hard to distinguish with a gender-focused mind-set. Therefore, they studied gender, generation, and culture at the same time by looking at career perceptions. The researchers found larger differences in American generations than Chinese generations, although the younger Chinese generations are taking more responsibility for their own careers and expect less from managers. Gender roles are more prominent in China, whose national culture says women are equal to men, but traditional cultural

norms say women are not equal to men. Therefore, people's cultural viewpoints on gender roles must not be treated the same if an organization is multi-national or multi-cultural. Yi et al. (2015) found that women quit their jobs because of family concerns, and are less likely to ask for a career change. The researchers suggested that workplaces add items such as onsite daycare to encourage women to stay in the workforce (Yi et al, 2015).

Generations outside the United States behave similarly to Millennials in the United States. Vieregge and Quick (2011) researched Asians born between 1965 and 2000 who live in the United States. The researchers' work reveals how Generation Xers and Millennials negotiate differently or similarly within a different nation's cultural context (Vieregge & Quick, 2011). During negotiations, American Generation Xers and Millennials spend less time building relationships and more time persuading. Asians within Generation X and the Millennial generation act more like their Western counterparts—again, spending less time building relationships than the previous generations (Vieregge & Quick, 2011).

Even though during negotiations Millennials avoid building relationships first, they tend to seek mentoring relationships, especially in college. The Millennial generation gravitates toward mentoring (Wiedmer, 2015). Fuentes et al. (2014) determined that students and faculty should have important and continuous interactions, especially at the beginning of school (for example, freshman year of college). Federal, state, and institutional dollars help make mentoring happen between students and faculty (Fuentes et al., 2014). Mentoring programs help students not only in their studies but also in life even after college. Exemplifying mentoring between faculty would support the

normal culture of exploring and learning in higher education where students are mentored by faculty. Mentoring faculty could have the opportunity to be mentees themselves.

## **2.6 Work–Life Balance**

Generation Xers generally look for work–life balance, a newer paradox since the dawn of the digital age increased their availability to work wherever, whenever (Al-Asfour & Lettau, 2014). Additionally, if workplaces offer daycare or extended maternity leave, employees are more likely to stay employed at those locations because they honor the work–life balance undertones of their Generation X (Glass, 2007). Literature indicates that women in mid-career, which may include some Generation Xers, find themselves split between work and family (Dindoffer et al., 2011; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). This dilemma possibly includes a divide in time and attention between the workplace and caring for others such as young children or older parents (Eckman, 2004; Greenhaus & Singh, 2007; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007).

Women with undergraduate degrees are more likely to consistently stay with their children at home if the mother’s age is 27 or 28 (Tamborini & Iams, 2011). Those without college degrees had more children with each passing generation. Baby Boomers want to have it all, both a family and a career. Meanwhile, Generation Xers would rather raise a family than have the career. “Generation X, particularly college-educated women born in the mid to late 1970s, are having more children and working fewer cumulative hours at the start of their careers than women born 10–15 years earlier” (Tamborini & Iams, 2011, p. 60). This study shows evidence women are opting out of the workforce to have children.

Tamborini and Iams (2011) studied the childbearing, marital status, and earnings of Baby Boomers and Generation Xers and concluded that foregoing marriage is becoming more popular; therefore, divorce rates are less as well (Tamborini & Iams, 2011). Other research indicates that divorce rates are lower because marriage occurs later in life (Goldstein & Kenny, 2001). Goldstein and Kenney (2001) predicted based on the 1995 current population survey that 90 percent of women born in 1950 through 1965 would marry, but their educational levels, the researchers said, can predict the women's decisions. Those with the highest level of education generally do not marry. However, it is becoming more popular for women with a college education to marry and could become the norm in the future (Goldstein & Kenny, 2001). For those born between 1960 and 1965, an estimated 94 percent of college graduates would marry by age 33. Those with high school diplomas are married by age 33 at a rate of 89 percent (Goldstein & Kenny, 2001). Those with young children or high-earning husbands are most likely not working if they obtained college degrees between 1995 and 2004 (Tamborini & Iams, 2011). Therefore, women within the Generation X birth years may be married and experiencing the tension between work and home.

The study by Greenhaus and Singh (2007) splits the work–life balance into four possibilities: work interference with family, family interference with work, work-enriching family, and family-enriching work. Greenhaus and Singh (2007) suggest a mentee will be able to cope with any of these phases in a healthy manner if the mentor has experience with these issues and emphasizes the changes the mentee wishes to implement. Although the mentor might disagree, it is critical to support the measures the

mentee wishes to employ, because the mentee will lack personal motivation to accomplish the necessary change (Greenhaus & Singh, 2007).

Significant relationships such as motherhood or transitioning parents into end-of-life care can affect an employee's perception of work–life balance. These factors leave women feeling guilt-ridden and torn between work and home. In addition, some female administrators feel overwhelmed by the responsibilities as a wife, mother, and administrator. Dindoffer et al. (2011) found that women who rose to the ranks of president, vice president, or provost in higher education had a strong working woman in their family line who embraced an anti-traditional image of women working outside the home; they also had support from their spouses or children (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011).

Eckman (2004) used the term *role conflict* instead of what is commonly called work–life balance. She also uses the term *role commitment*, referring to whether a person prioritizes work over family, or family over work. The study revealed that neither male nor female administrators of kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12) schools believed an equal commitment to both was possible. Ninety-two percent of the males had children living at home. Males tended to seek administration positions to provide for their families, while five females waited their children were older or grown before seeking a principal role because of anticipated time commitments and additional stress (Eckman, 2004). Women tend to want both work and family, which can cause another self-fulfilling prophecy because they know “what they are getting into” (Damman et al., 2014, p. 101).

Men and women talked about their time commitments as principal; they often worked 11- to 12-hour days and worked on weekends (Eckman, 2004). Fortunately,

strong family support systems seemed to be in place. As an illustration of incorporating a work–life balance, male principals would invite their wives to sporting events and other work functions (Eckman, 2004). However, women did not naturally find an integration but instead kept more boundaries in place (Eckman, 2004). For example, they left from an event early, or warned staff that they would not be the first person in and the last person out each day (Eckman, 2004). Females did not want the principalship imposed on their families, and recognized that the role of the female in a family is to be nurturing and caring (Eckman, 2004).

Generation X women may want an element that addresses the work–life balance in a mentoring program. For those struggling with a work–life balance, same-gender mentoring pairs seems to work best (Sanfey et al., 2013). Having a clear goal also helps; that goal can often be to address a work–life balance (Sanfey et al., 2013).

Eckman (2004) also studied how job satisfaction differs according to gender. Job satisfaction came to the participants when thinking about the “variability of tasks, amount of recognition, development of personal relations, hiring of new staff, instituting program changes, and working with students” (Eckman, 2004, p. 193).

O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) discovered that those in their mid-career phase plateau in their careers and seek happiness and fulfillment outside their careers. They come to work physically but may be unmotivated and unengaged. The reason mid-career women are uninterested in their work, the authors surmised, is because of family responsibilities (O’Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

Work–life balance also affects Generation X. Generation Xers expect their employers to understand the need for a balance between work and family. These



employees do not anticipate working long days for money or titles; they want flexibility in their work schedules to balance what they want to accomplish outside of employment (Wiedmer, 2015). Flexibility includes not only scheduling but also telecommuting. Managers must exhibit and support the same message across their organizations (Wiedmer, 2015), and organizations must have a steady culture to implement a flexible schedule.

Yet, other studies conclude that each individual's needs for flexibility are unique. Gilley et al. (2015) found that expectations and support are not equal for all concerning work-life balance. Their study focused on the ages of managers, not workers, which gives a distinct perspective. They said balance that workers request can be individualistic because different people have different needs. Work quality and quantity lessen if an individual does not maintain balance. Millennials might sacrifice their personal lives for work, but research shows that Generation Xers care more about their lives outside of work (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Therefore, to be "fair," managers should promote work-life balance through coaching and professional development (Gilley et al., 2015).

Providing opportunities for Generation Xers to express their individualistic expectations may help. For example, by understanding that flexibility for a work-life balance is important to them, employers can be mindful of the balance and ask questions regarding an employee's balance (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). A high lack of contentment can come from an imbalance balance between home and work, as well as conflict with authority such as a school board, superintendents, and central office employees (Eckman, 2004).

Gilley et al. (2015) also noted that building trust is important for all generations regarding work–life issues. According to Gilley et al. (2015), mentoring can “contribute to employee growth, development, and work–life balance” (p. 8). Generation Xers want a work–life balance that includes meaningful work (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008; Gilley et al., 2015; Mosley, 2005). Creating flexible work hours, temporary workers, and telecommuting will feel natural to Generation Xers (Buckley et al., 2001).

With increased trust comes honesty in how work–life balance is being perceived or implemented (Gilley et al., 2015). Employees viewed Millennial managers as slightly more supportive than other managers concerning work–life issues. Baby Boomers were already supportive: 63 percent seemed accommodating of work–life flexibility. Perhaps they are supportive because mentors who enter the workforce and who are determined to “give back” (Gilley et al., 2015, p. 16) are seeing earlier versions of themselves and want a work–life balance for their mentees. Some managers believe they do not have policy or organizational backup to promote work–life flexibility because of a lack of authority or prioritization (Gilley et al., 2015; Jackevicius, et al., 2014).

Lai et al. (2012) studied if Asians in Taiwan experience the same struggle for work–life balance. By studying 448 surveys across 10 companies in Taiwan, the authors looked at the tension of what they refer to as the “quality of work life” (QWL). QWL is the work–life balance that occurs if a workload is appropriate. Quality work life can heighten turnover, burnout, stress, but also heighten motivation. (Culbertson et al., 2010; Lai et al., 2012). QWL can be related to age as well. Younger employees are not as affected by higher levels of work load. “Baby boomers live to work and Gen Xers work

to live” (Lai et al., 2012, p. 438–439). The authors admit culture and generation are closely tied (Lai et al., 2012).

Lai et al. (2012) said Generation X can adapt to pressures and manage the balance better than others. In Taiwan, Generation X is called the Strawberry Clan because outside pressure makes these people squishy quickly. The authors claim those born between 1980 and 1990 are less able to handle a heavy workload (Lai et al., 2012). Around the world, those within Generation X’s birth years find themselves in tension between work and home. Supervisors and designers of mentoring programs can keep a few best practices in mind to help support Generation Xer during this period of their lives.

## **2.7 Best Practices**

Poor programs can hurt mentees’ possibilities for professional growth because they can “develop an over-reliance on mentors” (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006, p. 3), among other issues. Yet, mentors may also experience a decrease in positive reputation if a mentee performs poorly, if a mentee eventually takes the mentor’s job, if the mentor is accused of favoritism, and other issues such as time and energy (Ragins, 1997). But a successful program can enhance the ability to put theory into practice, grow professional opportunities, and give confidence to the mentee. *Best practices* are daily practices that are repeated because success crosses with proven and theoretically based research (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). Understanding some keys to good mentoring programs will help unlock what will most benefit women from Generation X in a mentoring program. First, a review of what is best for Generation X in the workplace, and then some best practices for mentoring will close this section.

Buckley et al. (2001) suggested that managers who wish to keep Generation X employees need to rethink how work is done. For those born after 1965, firmly focusing on the vision and values of the organization will encourage employees to have a lengthy tenure. In addition, Buckley et al. (2001) advocated encouraging individual initiative and responsibility to motivate employees of what they call the “NeXt Generation.” The workplace should fit into Generation X’s personality type: independent, flexible, and owners of their work (Buckley et al., 2001; Shugart, 2001). There is less room for managers to have control. For Generation X, failure is okay as long as it was well intentioned, and lateral knowledge sharing is encouraged (Buckley et al., 2001). Understanding how Generation Xers work best will determine how mentoring can aid them.

Linking their actions to the greater purpose keeps Generation Xers engaged. Building into an individual’s skills helps the entire team. Buckley et al. (2001) gave six suggestions to Generation X: Develop personal skills, be self-managed, keep an eye on the job market, work with stronger teammates, network, and become tolerant of politics. For those who manage Generation Xers, the authors recommend nine actions to strengthen the organization: Build the organization’s core competencies, provide flexible (computer-based) training, retain Generation X talent, nail down specific performance goals, develop strong teams, ensure teams are well assembled, allow for flexibility in the workplace (either by incorporating flexible hours or telecommuting), and find ways to provide career resources (Buckley et al., 2001).

For mentoring of any generation, best practices involve mentors with experience. Ragins (1997) said mentors may not need to be part of the same organization or

department as their mentees to be successful mentors. Having experience is what is important. A lack of skill training and a weak network from a mentor may hold a mentee back (Reyes, 2003). Mentors from within the organization can give quicker feedback, provide more opportunities within the organization, and challenge their mentees. For example, a mentor working in administration or who has experience as an administrator is more helpful to a principal than a school psychologist (Reyes, 2003). Yet, external mentors can provide more support in times of leaving an organization, or when office politics are hindering the career of the mentee (Ragins, 1997).

Mentoring may be particularly beneficial for women of color. Four African American women teaching in the suburbs who did not identify mentors were still working as teachers in their districts a year after the study by Reyes (2003). Each applied for an administrative position in her district, and the outcome was a denial. Special attention needs to be devoted to preservice mentoring for women of color (Reyes, 2003). This study provides data suggesting that mentoring programs help with job placement if the mentor has experience in the principalship (12 of 14 cases; Reyes, 2003). Mentoring should go beyond traditional methods and seek ways to challenge mentees to present opportunities of empowerment (Buckley et al., 2001). Reyes (2003) suggests that universities training new principals work should with local school districts to develop solid mentoring programs, including best practices.

Networking to deliver avenues for mentees to expand their career opportunities or to increase the likelihood of reaching a career goal are important to mentees (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005). Having flexibility through making curriculum or event programming optional or voluntary seems to be important to younger, college-age mentees as well

(Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005). Sanfey et al. (2013) says a hindrance to good mentoring is previous influences from others, especially in medical technique. The next section walks through the structure, formal versus informal programs, career cycles, and how to determine success.

### **2.7.1 Structure.**

When the pairing of mentors and mentees occurs, the success of the dyad may come from the quality of the relationship. The pairs in the study agreed that the relationship was the catalyst for change, but they could not specify how the relationship was valuable (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Perhaps a lack of agreement on expectations between the people in the mentoring pair stands as a reason. It is inferred that the poor agreement comes from the power differential within an organization. Psychological support was the only variable both mentors and mentees agreed was a valuable part of the relationship. The most significant outcome of the mentoring was the relationship for everyone, regardless of gender (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Raabe and Beehr (2003) suggests career development, social support, and role modeling are usually the basis of the relationship in a mentoring pair. The authors sought to determine how one of the participants in the mentoring pair's perception added to or detracted from the relationship (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Raabe and Beehr (2003) found that supervisors and coworkers affected organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions more than mentors did. Therefore, mentors should not be several levels above mentees, but rather a closer relationship would be induced if the two were closer in hierarchical status (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

In fact, mentors that are supervisors may be favorable. The authors suggest mentoring and supervision both enhance the career of the individual, but a mentor may help the mentee pursue their goal in different manners than supervisors (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Mentors focus on positive actions, while supervisors must protect employees to promote loyalty. Mentoring can lead to more commitment from mentees since a greater amount of investment and special attention to the development of a mentee's career is part of the experience. This enhances the workforce, and helps employees to stay engaged, thus lowering turnover (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Challenges in the pairing of mentors and mentees may derive from variables outside the relationship structure. Mentors reported that mentees needed to be self-starters for their goals and commit more to the relationship (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Trust and communication were needs from one another, as reported by mentors and mentees. But mentors and mentees also mentioned time constraints as a challenge. However, relationships with the supervisor was more important and more influential, particularly in job satisfaction during the study by Raabe and Beehr (2003). Mid-career mentees preferred longer relationships and programs because they grant reflection on professional development (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005).

After the pair is formed, the first meeting includes a discussion about goals and expectations (Sanfey et al., 2013). Mentees should arrive to each meeting with a list of topics and timelines for projects (Sanfey et al., 2013). Mentors should guide career choices, give feedback, provide opportunities, and push toward success (Sanfey et al., 2013). Mentees might be looking for ways to increase their career goal perspectives.

The time spent in mentoring can be a factor in relationship success. For formal programs, more than two hours a month is suggested, otherwise the mentoring is not effective (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). The most difficult struggle reported was time management by the protégés (Jackevicius et al., 2014). But since most complain about the time commitment, the authors suggested that supervisors take on the mentoring role, since their more constant contact can increase the results, particularly with skill development related directly to a mentee's role and function within an organization (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Meeting together frequently is important because it heightens the perception of being similar and underscores the importance of the attraction theory (Holt et al., 2016; Ragins, 1997; Young et al., 2006).

Time spent together seemed to influence pairs in the study by Holt et al. (2016). Without a formal program, people seek informal mentors. Those dyads who had more contact in the formal program spent less time, if any, with an informal mentor. Those with low connection time with their mentors had a decreased chance of an informal mentor in their lives. By studying the U.S. Air Force's formal mentoring program, Holt et al. (2016) found that a high quality of a formal mentoring relationship can cause a mentee to not look for an informal mentor. The quality of mentoring includes the amount of time spent in a relationship: The greater amount of time meant more benefits to each person in the relationship (Holt et al., 2016). Another best practice is finding a good time balance for the mentee; balancing time means saying no to things that do not advance the goal (Sanfey et al., 2013). Yet if an activity is not mandatory for promotion, few people decline to participate because of a lack of time.



Holt et al. (2016) did recognize that formal mentoring as perceived by the mentor could be inflated because there is a mental correlation between a mentee's success and the mentoring provided (Holt et al., 2016). This means if a mentoring pair failed at helping the mentee, the failure was perceived to be related directly to the mentor's support (Holt et al., 2016). Therefore, a mentor would more likely be ready to help a mentee along to the next level (Holt et al., 2016).

Peer mentoring is another structural element that could improve goals for Generation Xers. A lack of female mentors from previous generation may prompt female mentees consider having a male mentor or a peer mentor (McManus & Russell, 2007). Peers seemed to stop the flow of turnover, because the daily interactions produced relationships that helped people want to come to work (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Even though peers may not have the career development component, peer mentoring was still effective. Mutuality proved to be a special attribute for peer mentoring. Peer mentoring provides benefits for both involved in the mentoring, whereas traditional mentoring has a shadow of being most beneficial for the mentee (McManus & Russell, 2007). An article by Walsh and Daddario (2015) looks at the method of using peer-to-peer mentoring in professional organizations. The authors noted that women tend to join professional organizations more than men do, and that the ages of people involved tend to be younger, with less senior-level or older people involved (Walsh & Daddario, 2015). Yet Jackevicius et al. (2014) suggest that those in their mid-career should be well trained before taking on a mentor role. The lack of senior members as mentors has pushed the next generation of leaders to step up and take the role of mentor. This creates difficulty

for mentees, since other faculty members' limited experience may not be not applicable to the mentee (Jackevicius et al., 2014).

Another possibility for mentoring is to have a younger mentor develop an older mentee. As today's Baby Boomer generation goes back to school to begin different career paths, a mentor might be a younger person, and the mentee might be older than the mentor. Mentees and mentors should be aware of the culture they build within the relationship, as well as variations of a traditional mentoring situation that could occur (Brown, 2005). A study by Merriweather and Morgan (2013) in which a younger faculty member mentored an older student focused on cultural competence, trust, and power as being three attributes of this increasingly less unique situation. *Cultural competence* means understanding another person's distinct perspective and respecting the other person's values and beliefs. If mentors are younger, they must understand a communication gap is possible and recognize the cultural overtones that go with a digital age (Glass, 2007; Merriweather & Morgan, 2013). As an illustration, a younger mentor may text an older mentee, whereas an older mentee prefer phone calls to make appointments. In addition, the nontraditional-age mentoring pair might talk about who has more authority or power. Generally, the mentor has authority, but in the case of a cross-generational mentorship, the elder might have equal authority in the relationship. Role ambiguity can create challenges as well; for example, the two may not know how to address each other if the mentee holds a doctorate, but the mentor does not. The mentor–protégé relationship and understanding are important parts of valuing each other. The solution often appears by becoming more aware of each other's experiences, talking

through struggles, and realizing that the issues came from the difference in age (Merriweather & Morgan, 2013).

Beyond the characteristics of each person involved in the mentoring pair, best practices in structure can be incorporated through reviewing case studies. Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) focused on the Iowa Administrator Mentoring and Induction (IAMI) pilot program between 2002 and 2004 for new school administrators. To select mentors, IAMI had four criteria: four years of service in an administrative role, proof of student achievement and data-based decision making, a desire for student success, and a desire to commit time and energy to help a new administrator. The program was open to all, but women and minorities were the target audience of the marketing materials (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Reyes, 2003). The researchers received many responses (46 percent between 2002 and 2003, and 80 percent between 2003 and 2004). The survey's intent between the two years was different; the program director(s) asked different questions, tried different vehicles for the training materials (printed versus website), and shifted the requirements (written logs and audio journals in place of reflection logs for 2003 and 2004). Both groups of years revealed a 3.20 satisfaction level (out of 4.0). Marks were low on mentor training for superintendents because the mentor training took place during the school year, whereas most would prefer it before school began in the fall (a drop from 3.40 to 2.93).

The outcomes and lessons from this study may influence the structure of formal mentoring programs (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). For example, in 2003 and 2004, a range of points between 3.14 to 3.94 showed the advantage of participants' being physically in the same room or at least the same geographical region. Face-to-face

mentoring was important to all three grade levels (superintendents, elementary school principals, and secondary school principals). Everyone except superintendents ranked the trainings high, with participants commenting that statewide trainings should include discussion groups rather than a formal lecture. Mentorship includes a variety of activities to invest in the mentoring relationship, including written reflective logs, audio journals, group trainings, and curriculum (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). For IAMI, reflection logs received low scores (a drop for mentors from 3.10 to 2.87 between the two groups of years) and were seen as busywork by participants. The participants also preferred written materials distributed during meetings over the website survival guide (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006).

The hardest aspect of mentoring was the time investment (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006), and the second most frequent comment regarded structure. Most mentees wanted their mentors to develop more regularity in the pairs' meetings and communications (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Dymock, 1999). Participants suggested that three or four additional meetings be held to bolster the structure. Participants had mixed views on whether a mentor should be from within or outside the mentee's district. For example, if the mentor was within, that person could be too close to an issue, and if outside, not familiar with the issues of the district (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006).

Regardless of the mentor's location, some elements of the mentoring relationship can boost a mentoring program's structure. Mentees, appreciated having the support, a listening ear, and the networking power of the mentor (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Specific skill sets such as budgeting and leadership training were mentioned less as valuable outcomes. Females discussed the relationship in their feedback (most noticeably

when the pairing involved two females), while males discussed structure and the components of the program. Forty-six of the surveys returned were from females when the Iowa state average for female principals was 30.6 percent. Perhaps this reveals why participants commented that relationship was important, followed by structure.

### **2.7.2 Formal versus informal programs.**

Fuentes et al. (2014) state that informal mentoring programs are better than formal programs for school administrators. These scholars define *formal mentoring* as part of the classes for principals. *Informal mentoring* is defined as receiving mentoring outside the classroom or place of employment. A review of the benefits of formal mentoring is followed by a review of informal programs.

Formal mentoring is composed of supervisors or people with authority within a school or an organization (Reyes, 2003). Formal mentoring provides structure and boundaries for mentoring pairs. Informal programs are impromptu, based on an individual's needs and immediate concerns outside any formal matching program or curriculum. "Mentees prefer formal support for mentoring that is informal in nature so they can choose how best to develop their relationships and address their individual needs" (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005, p. 42). Formal programs give space for shared meaning and agreement on the outcomes of the relationship within a timeframe (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Formal relationships address professional growth, while informal mentoring lends itself well for work-life discussions (Sanfey et al., 2013). An informal mentor is interested in the growth of the mentee, responds as a friend, and can show the ropes of being an administrator but does not have technical knowledge of hiring policies,

budgeting, writing curriculum, and other school-specific necessities (Reyes, 2003). Informal mentoring structures can boost income, promotions, and career development (Sanfey et al., 2013). Having an increased degree of accountability provided by the mentor should be part of any informal program (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005).

Reyes' study (2003) recognizes that informal mentors can also be sponsors for applying formal learning application processes such as credentials. Reyes' study (2003) shows also that mentoring helped new principals find positions. Fifty-two percent were placed in assistant principal positions or central office positions after receiving their master's degree and completing other requirements such as certification and examination. Twenty-four percent of the graduates who were placed successfully had informal mentors. Networking was critical for the new principals' mentoring relationships. The principal gained a resource for the future and learned more about who to contact for what. Those who did not find good mentors who were already principals or had experience as mentors were unable to obtain the roles they desired. For example, one identified a teacher as a mentor and held a quasi-administrative position (Reyes, 2003). Informal mentoring requires initiative on behalf of the mentee since few institutions have formal mentoring programs (Cunningham, 1999). Other research supports informal mentoring as more effective than formal, but formal mentoring is better than no mentoring at all (Young et al., 2006).

Ragins (1997) suggests that since formal programs with assigned pairs seem to be less effective, organizations should create a pool of mentors and a pool of mentees. The organization's role in this hybrid model is to introduce mentors and mentees to each other in group settings, provide training with an emphasis on diversity, and create informal

opportunities for mentoring to occur. The mentor role allows for further growth in not only technical abilities, but also career development (Reyes, 2003). The best mentoring relationship is a combination of informal and formal—meaning that the supervisor is holistically developing the aspiring principal (Reyes, 2003). It is possible to have more than one mentor in either formal or informal programs (Sanfey et al., 2013). Mentors suggested that situations (like faculty orientation) be created to encourage new faculty to look for and approach a mentor (Jackevicius et al., 2014).

Others define *mentoring relationships* in more specific terms. Ehrich (1995) agreed that mentoring can give a step up for those seeking to serve through education administration. Haven taken place in Australia, Ehrich's study (1995) defines mentoring through three types: traditional, institutionalized, and professional. Traditional mentors are those who assist mentees in advancing in their journeys. In the past, this self-selected method provided a high number of male mentors and mentees. To combat this, Ehrich (1995) noticed two more types of mentoring: A professional mentor is one who is a mentor through policy enforcement, and institutionalized mentors are those who are mentoring through a formal program instilled as part of bringing an inexperienced staff member on board (Ehrich, 1995).

Mentoring happens between students and faculty, but seems to not occur unless formalized among staff (Cunningham, 1999). A college of pharmacy at Western University of Health Sciences formalized a mentorship program between 51 mentor–protégé pairs between 2009 and 2012 (Jackevicius et al., 2014). About 70 percent were happy with the formal program overall (Jackevicius et al., 2014). The most difficult struggle reported was time management by the protégés, prioritization, and work–life

balance (Gilley et al., 2015; Jackevicius et al., 2014). Ninety percent of the protégés said the mentors were effective in helping them become more successful. In fact, the peer-reviewed publications by junior faculty members were higher from those involved in the program. Mentoring seems to be helpful among staff, especially in formal programs (Cunningham, 1999).

Regarding gender, Giscombe (2007) reviewed 11 mentoring programs in the corporate arena and reviewed their characteristics to determine if the programs helped or hindered women in the workplace. She found that mentoring programs propelled women, but that informal programs seemed to be more helpful than formal programs. Focusing on corporate leadership and women who want to advance, Giscombe (2007) emphasized the need for tailored structure of the formal programs. Women increased leadership behaviors and skills through a formal mentoring program (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014).

### **2.7.3 Career cycles.**

About 55 percent of nonprofit professionals think they must leave their current employers to advance their careers (Stahl, 2013). Stahl (2013) admitted that variables within a workplace can be complex, decreasing the significance of one particular reason why 55 percent of nonprofit professionals leave. However, one solution, Stahl (2013) noted, in a periodical about talent retention in the nonprofit sphere, is mentoring (Stahl, 2013). Mid-career women could be stereotyped as having plateaued in their desire to grow and learn and in their ability to be promoted (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007). Finding a mentor can help them find a new challenge in their career cycles (Greenhaus & Singh, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2007).



Other scholars have determined the different phases of careers, splitting the phases into a variety of segments. For example, the study conducted by Hall and Chandler (2007) described the career cycle in four stages: exploration, trial, establishment, and mastery. The cycles will be described in the following paragraphs.

A person will begin at an exploration phase. This phase can be triggered by a major life change such as a layoff or a “work-role-level” (Hall & Chandler, 2007, p. 478), meaning the person found a stretching challenge that encouraged him or her to learn something new. Person can also trigger themselves by desiring a new position, career, or standard (Hall & Chandler, 2007).

If a person has a network of people to gather feedback, the next stage can be swift. A network of mentors, not from the same spheres of their lives, can provide guidance as the learner moves through the trial stage (Hall & Chandler, 2007). This stage should include a successful role exit, and coping with the new role. Mentors should present information that helps learners make sense of what they experience and should clarify points of confusion.

The person will move into an establishment phase after settling into the new role (Hall & Chandler, 2007). The learner will have assimilated into the culture, expectations, standards, and political atmosphere and should easily adapt to tasks required, by use of networks gained. Mentors should be uplifting and encouraging during this phase (Hall & Chandler, 2007).

The person will reach mastery when effective with tasks and people (Hall & Chandler, 2007). Mentees develop those around them and reach personal goals. It is noted in the article that this stage can last a few years. Most often, people will then start

to find themselves in the exploration stage again (Hall & Chandler, 2007). The need for a mentor could also arise again.

Sullivan and Mainiero (2007) wrote for a human resource professional and geared their work toward helping provide understanding in terms of career lifecycle. The authors pegged two types of careers: one that follows a pattern of challenge, authenticity, then *balance*; and one that follows a pattern of challenge, *balance*, then authenticity. The authors concluded generally that men follow the first pattern, while women follow the second when authenticity comes later in life. Typically, mid-career women want balance, whether they were married or single. Men did not see the need for balance until their careers and demands for familial financial security were stable (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007).

O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) looked at the career path of women and found their paths were generally separated into three stages: "the idealistic achievement phase; the pragmatic endurance phase; and the reinventive contribution phase" (p. 168). Written for anyone interested in women's career development, particularly managers or women desiring a position with more responsibility and authority, the authors emphasized the need for practical steps toward development. Developmental steps align with practical steps encouraged in mentoring. By focusing on women's careers, the authors mentioned the tension between organizational, societal, or relational pulls yet leave out any kind of incentive, such as internal motivation, discrimination, or business acumen. During any of these stages, a woman could feel stress at home or at work (O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005).

#### **2.7.4 Determining success.**

No matter which stage a working woman may find herself in, her level of stress is dependent on her definition of success. Each participant of Eckman's study (2004) mentioned coping with stress. Negative LMX with a supervisor may increase stress (Culbertson et al., 2010). Culbertson et al. (2010) mention the need for stress as a motivating factor, using the term eustress as a way for stress to benefit an employee. Distress, on the other hand, limits motivation and energy toward a goal. Exercise seemed to be the most common strategy to relieve distress (Eckman, 2004). The church was another way some dealt with distress (Eckman, 2004). The stress can cause additional stress at home, causing a disruption to the work-life interaction (Culbertson et al., 2010). Culbertson et al. (2010) suggest, therefore, reducing stress that negatively motivates an employee by removing office politics, red tape, and job security uneasiness. Eliminating distress can increase the ability to be successful in the workplace.

Principals reported that their job satisfaction grew with each passing year (Eckman, 2004). All also mentioned job satisfaction when discussing students (Eckman, 2004). Success might be defined as "helping another person" (see Appendix A).

Research by Sanfey et al. (2013) focused on the medical profession to determine the benefits of mentoring. Promoted people usually experienced mentoring and were "more likely to publish" (Sanfey et al., 2013, p. 714). Respect, listening, flexibility, reciprocity, connection, and shared values are key elements of success. Women see a lack of mentors as a hindrance to reaching success (Sanfey et al., 2013).

Success may be defined by a word or a person. Feyerherm and Vick (2005) found that Generation X women define *personal fulfillment* as joy, happiness, and contentment

with family or friends. Research showed that 70 percent linked personal fulfillment with professional success. The common denominators included “making a difference, relationships, learning and growing, and challenge or the opportunity to excel and achieve significance” (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005, p. 220). Other researchers have defined success slightly differently. “Career success may be defined as the accomplishment of desirable work-related outcomes at any point in a person’s work experiences over time” (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 179).

Happiness is another theme in the definition of success, especially when mentoring is involved. Sanfey et al. (2013) found that those with mentors stay on track for early career goals, and are typically happier in their careers. Relationships are also important; Generation X women found them as a support structure (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). In addition, learning and growing come with goal obtainment and accomplishment. Challenges provide drive and motivation. Feyerherm and Vick (2005) defined success as women as being able to explore their ideas with independence recorded through a relationship with a mentor. “Inadequate mentoring is not necessarily better than no mentoring at all” (Ehrich, 1995, p. 8).

Throughout the mentoring process, mentees typically have an idea of a skill, relationship, or goal they would like to accomplish. To understand if the result is achieved depends on how success is defined. Arthur et al. (2005) defined success in a career in two different ways: subjective career success and objective career success (Tremblay, Dahan, & Gianecchini, 2014). Subjective career success refers to the “subjective gratification they receive from their work than in terms of objective rewards” (Arthur et al., 2005, pp. 179–180). The subjective can include life outside of work but is

not exempt of life at work (Arthur et al., 2005). Objectiveness is the title, role, or tasks that define a career or position; success is based on performance and criteria of the organization (Arthur et al., 2005; Tremblay et al., 2014). Career success is also subjective in that success is no longer based on measurable outcomes like salary or number of positions held (Breland et al., 2007). Those with more hierarchical power within an organization had a greater emphasis on objective success (Tremblay et al., 2014). Meanwhile, those that cared more about events and people outside the workplace emphasized objective career success less. Often the subjective and objective are interdependent (Arthur et al., 2005). Tremblay et al. (2014) said that objective career success can cause an imbalance at work, favoring objective career success to achieve an advanced role, and lessening the subjective career goal. However, if objective career goals are reached, it is possible the subjective career goals are also accomplished. Therefore, both the subjective and objective career goals may build upon one another (Tremblay et al., 2014). Career success is based on a person's individual definition of success, as well as their network interactions.

Those with high LMX within relationships were less likely to need the boost of a subjective career success when they also had high political skills (Breland et al., 2007). The higher the political skill a person obtained, coupled with a high LMX, created space for more subjective career successes. "The results suggest that individual who are highly politically skilled perceive themselves as more successful in their careers even when in low quality leader-member exchanges" (Breland et al., 2007, p. 9). Tremblay et al. (2014) found relationships, otherwise defined as *social capital* or *politics* did not determine a person's promotability and therefore, the objective career success.

Political skills are increasingly important as people move throughout their careers. It is understood between employees and employers that employees, particularly those of the independent Generation X, will not stay in the same position, or even at the same location, forever (Arthur et al., 2005; Breland et al., 2007; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Mosley, 2005; Shugart, 2001). Arthur et al. (2005) surmised that subjective and objective will collide more as people are able to switch roles and careers more frequently. Breland et al. (2007) found that people no longer choose organizations and work through the hierarchies because the organizations needs their skills and talents. Instead, people consider careers that fulfill their personal needs and these perceptions cause them to shift from organizations to organizations (Breland et al., 2007). Since people find both subjective and objective success in their careers, it only makes sense for mentors to address both career aspirations and psychological support during mentoring. The authors commented that “the interpretation of career success rests with the individual” (Arthur et al., 2005, p. 195).

On the other hand, in the Dries et al. (2008) study, 84 percent of Generation X found organizational security within their careers important. Regardless of their gender, people want to stay with the same organization if it is stable. By comparison, 85 percent of Baby Boomers found organizational security within their careers, and 95 percent of Millennials said their organization were stable and secure. It did not matter which generation the participant was from; all people wanted satisfaction, functional level, the ability to be promoted, and quick promotions (Dries et al., 2008). Salary was not of interest when thinking about their own career success, but was of interest when

evaluating someone else's career. No matter the generation, gender, functional level, or career type, people define career success as satisfaction (Dries et al., 2008).

## **2.8 Summary**

Literature pertaining to women and necessary elements for successful mentoring programs may contribute toward Generation Xers' reaching their definition of success. Mentoring can help create a healthy organization and environment (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). By shaping the culture through sharing knowledge and stories, mentors could become change agents (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Jackevicius et al., 2014; Ragins, 1997; Sands et al., 1991; Waters, 1992). Mentoring is important, especially for women, as some women say they are "undervalued and underutilized" (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005, p. 222). Without women in leadership, a team may lack a diverse group; diverse groups can increase valuable solutions and experiences (Gilbert et al., 1991; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). A possible avenue to tailor women for promotion is through mentoring.

Some women choose to stay out of leadership roles, instead committing their time to family (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Terri, 2005). It is possible that women want to leave the workforce, but others may choose to leave the workforce because they have peaked in the available options for women in leadership. For a woman to advance in her career, the support and mentoring of a woman who is already in executive leadership is beneficial. The theory of attraction says similar people will connect quicker and be more accepting of any differences (Young et al., 2006). Without common ground, mentors and mentees spend more time getting to know one another and less time managing tasks to accomplish career aspirations.

Other hindrances for women in leadership are office politics and power. Young et al. (2006) found that women are less likely to deploy organizational power and gain access to resources to aid their advancement. For those women who are already in leadership, office politics can shift their focus away from the needs of the organization to settle smaller matters between staff and faculty (Ferris et al., 1996). When uncertainty rises within people, they are more likely to use their positional power to get what they want. Yet power is determined by the role, not the person holding the role (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). This causes women to not possess power within the organization because fewer women are in leadership to hold the power.

Gender may also affect mentoring strengths and successes. Male mentees are reported to desire networking and career development, while female mentees want validation, psychological care, and psychosocial development (Allen & Eby, 2004; Burke, 1984; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006). Since fewer women are in leadership, some women are mentored by men (Allen & Eby, 2004; Brown, 2005; Cunningham, 1999; Ehrich, 1995; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Sands et al., 1991). Yet mentoring seems to be most effective for women who want advancement (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007).

Another way for women to create a catalyst for advancement is to network well. The developmental networks theory prescribes that a person should have an arsenal of formal and/or informal mentors (Higgins et al., 2007; Ragins, 1997). Organizations can support this measure by encouraging mentoring and providing avenues for networking (Higgins et al., 2007).



Generation X already leans toward networking as a key element for career growth and mentoring programs. As one of the smaller generations, Generation X holds individualism and experiential learning in high regards (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Glass, 2007; Gronbach, 2008; Rickes, 2016; Shugart, 2001). Generation X wants to keep learning and growing and will switch employers or positions quickly to fulfill those needs (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Since the large Millennial generation behind Generation X stereotypically is driven for powerful positions, and Baby Boomers are staying in the workforce longer than anticipated, Generation X is being squeezed out for leadership positions (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Gronbach, 2008; Stahl, 2013).

Those who become leaders face the pressure of balancing work obligations and home life. Generation X has three major contributors toward women choosing to stay at home full-time over being employed: young children, older parents, and plateauing careers (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Eckman, 2004; Greenhaus & Singh, 2007; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007). Some women become leaders because their families are supportive, or because a female ancestor was a role model, having both a career and a family (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011). Other women wait to achieve their career aspirations until their children are older (Eckman, 2004). Mentoring may help those struggling with a work–life balance (Sanfrey et al, 2013).

Mentoring, if structured properly, may address a multitude of issues Generation X women face in the workplace. For example, Generation Xers want their actions to serve a greater purpose (Buckley et al., 2001). They also need good relationships with their mentors. For mentees who do not connect with their mentors, the beginning stages of

getting to know each other may hinder the accomplishment of the goal (Raabe & Beehr, 2003). In a formal program, if a good mentor is not provided, a mentee may seek an informal mentor, who could be a friend or a supervisor (Holt et al., 2016; Reyes, 2003; Young et al., 2006). In addition, individualism is a hallmark of Generation X; therefore, some professionals within Generation X may look to shift careers to maintain their individualism (Stahl, 2013; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007).

Mentoring may alleviate turnover for females in Generation X and may help them reach their definition of success. Through a well-designed program, or informal mentoring with a peer, mentoring provides relationships and networking options to encourage and support women so they can excel.

Finally, defining success may influence the effectiveness of a mentoring program. Success could be subjective, in which the goals are to receive fulfillment through avenues other than those provided by the employer, for example, serving under-served communities with unimpressive titles. Principals mention working with students as part of their definition of success (Eckman, 2004). Success could also be objective, in which the goals are defined more by the employer, for example, not enjoying the day-to-day work, but knowing that the title provides clout and prestige.

### **Chapter 3. Research Methodology**

This chapter presents the design and methodology used in this study. The protocol was to provide elements and structure for a mentoring program for women who are part of Generation X by asking about experiences and expectations of those who have participated in CWIP's WLMP program or GSU's MILE program. This research was done in a constructivist design, empowering me to study the values, beliefs, and feelings of the interviewees (Creswell, 2012). Using a descriptive qualitative study gave me the opportunity to ask open-ended questions in the form of a semi-structured interview.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The best sampling technique is homogeneous sampling (Creswell, 2012), which involves narrowing the population so the women were the most alike as possible. Women born between 1961 and 1981 who were part of the MILE or WLMP program, mentored by females, and lived in the Chicagoland area were criteria that kept the population similar. This allows me to study people who have common traits or characteristics, which is a hallmark of homogeneous sampling (Creswell, 2012).

The purpose of the research was to determine how best to structure a mentoring program for women of Generation X to reach their definitions of success. I designed the study to learn if women who are in nonprofit leadership believe they are being "crowded out" (Stahl, 2013) by the Millennial generation for leadership positions. Adding to the issue, the Baby Boomer generation is exiting the workplace at a much slower rate than anticipated (Stahl, 2013). In addition, I wanted to find out if these women felt the strain of a work-life balance (Dindoffer et al., 2011; McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007; Greenhaus, & Singh, 2007; Eckman, 2004;

Gilley et. al, 2015; Jackevicius et. al, 2014). The potential of caring for younger children and elder parents could cause distraction in careers (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007; Eckman, 2004; Greenhaus & Singh, 2007), but it is possible that the women have plateaued in their careers (Greenhaus & Singh, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2007; McKeen, & Bujaki, 2007; O'Neil & Bilimoria, 2005; Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007).

### **3.2 Description of Participants**

An abundance of mentoring programs for women in higher education exist, but less focus has been on the mentoring experiences of women in nonprofit leadership positions (Lansford et al., 2010) and female principals. Females working in nonprofit organizations in the Chicagoland area who are from Generation X and were mentored by females through CWIP could participate in the study. Generation X females working in K–12 schools who had experience as an assistant principal or a principal in the Chicagoland area, and who have been previously mentored by females through the MILE program, could also participate in the study. Generation Xers are usually considered as those born between 1961 and 1981 (Ricketts, 2016; Mosley, 2005; Wiedmer, 2015), so these years are the parameters for this study as well.

All of the participants were pulled from two Chicagoland groups. The first group comprised females who have finished WLMP's entry-level mentorship through CWIP, were mentored by females, were born between 1961 and 1981, still work for nonprofit organizations or in K–12 schools, and live in the Chicagoland area. The second group comprised K–12 principals who completed the mentoring program through GSU's MILE program, still work as principals, were mentored by females, were born between 1961 and 1981, and live in the Chicagoland area.

### **3.2.1 Chicago Women in Philanthropy.**

One organization that thrives in mentorship is the Chicago Women in Philanthropy. CWIP was founded in 1981 (“History,” 2015). Its mission is to provide a place for women in philanthropic, corporate-giving, and nonprofit endeavors to meet and enhance their professional development. CWIP states, “Our mission is to educate and encourage philanthropy by facilitating dialogue and uncommon connections that positively impact the lives of women and girls” (“Who We Are,” 2016). The organization focuses on shattering the glass ceiling, partly by increasing funding for programs that encourage girls and women to move forward; helps Chicago provide a better life for all citizens; and helps females to blossom in leadership (“Mission,” 2015). CWIP currently serves any professional woman working in a nonprofit organization.

CWIP launched its mid-career mentoring program in October of 2016 (S. Murphy & D. Walker Johnson, personal communication, September 22, 2014). The program accepted only four mentees (S. Gidley, personal communication, 2017). The participants were those who had completed the entry-level mentoring program through WLMP. Their experience and length of time since being mentees brought insight into what needs to change about the structure, components, and goals of mentoring programs for female leaders in the nonprofit sector.

Mentorship is critical for women to advance in their work environment (Giscombe, 2007; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Williams, 2014). WLMP, CWIP’s leading program (S. Murphy & D. Walker Johnson, personal communication, September 22, 2014), has been in existence for nine years, and in 2016 and 2017 hosted its 10th cohort. The organization’s first year involved a joint effort with the Young Women’s Task Force

(YWTF), which dissolved after its first year of mentoring in 2006. CWIP provided mentors, and YWTF provided the mentees. Today, CWIP hosts 10 mentors paired with 10 mentees per year for its early-career program. The pairs consist of one female mentee who is three to five years into her current role and one female mentor who has spent decades in a nonprofit career. The women attend an opening dinner in October, two presentations during the year, and a closing dinner in the summer. Mentors and mentees can meet throughout the year as they see fit. WLMP does not dictate how many times a mentor and mentee meet, or for how long; mentees and mentors determine what works best for them.

### **3.2.2 Metropolitan Institute for Leadership in Education.**

GSU's MILE program "supports the professional, leadership and executive development needs of senior education leaders in Southern Cook, Northern Kankakee and Eastern Will County school districts" ("About MILE," 2016). The group falls under the mission of GSU's College of Education, which "prepares its students to be reflective lifelong learners; advocates for diversity and social justice; and engaged, effective, transformative educators and mental health professionals" ("About Us," 2016).

All first-year principals are required to be mentored by trained mentors (Illinois General Assembly, 2007; Cunningham, 1999) if a school district can sustain the costs. GSU's MILE program hosts the MILE Principal Mentor Program, coordinated by Project Leader Dr. Tom Eddy. This program has been in existence for eight years.

### **3.3 Data Collection Methods**

For this study, I collected data through semi-structured interviews, using the same set of eight questions for each participant's interview. As needed, I asked clarifying

questions (Wengraf, 2001). The goal was to provide insight and structure into a career mentoring program for Generation X women by asking former mentees about their experiences and about how a mentoring program in this stage of their lives might be designed differently. I used partially structured one-hour interviews as a data collection tool for a qualitative study.

### **3.4 Procedures**

The first step in the study was to gain permission from the Institutional Review Board at GSU. Then, as a base of the study, I began to solicit women's organizations in Chicago that focus on early-career mentoring in the nonprofit sector or for K-12 principals.

Within the first few days of gaining the board's approval, I reached out to the CWIP leadership team and the liaison for GSU's MILE Principal Mentoring Program for approval via e-mail to retrieve the most current contact information for each possible mentee. CWIP had asked to reach out to the women first via e-mail. I was copied on the e-mails; therefore, the women were more likely to participate and could lessen any suspicions of their names or contact information being sold. A representative of the MILE Principal Mentoring Program, Dr. Eddy, had also asked that a representative of the MILE program contact the women who might participate. MILE contacted the women to notify them that I would contact them. Again, the aim was to calm potential participants' suspicions. MILE wished to protect participants' information and give them confidence in its program. No one was pressured by the MILE representative or the CWIP co-chair to take part in the study.

I began contacting possible volunteer participants after the respective organizations contacted them first. I am a member of CWIP and had interviewed the co-chairs of WLMP for a class project two years prior. I did not know and had not spoken to any of the interviewees before asking them to participate. I also had no knowledge of the MILE program before looking at structured programs. Through administrators of the MILE program, I obtained the e-mail addresses of the females who had completed the MILE program.

Participants were selected based on their responses to my e-mail. I contacted 104 women—53 who completed the early-career program through WLMP, and 51 from the MILE program. Their responses disqualified some from participating in the study: Some had been mentored by men (through MILE), others were born outside the target years, a few were no longer working in schools or nonprofit organizations, some had never reached the assistant principal level within their careers, and some had moved outside of Chicagoland. Others did not respond to any of the three e-mails they received and were not included in the results. In the end, 11 women qualified for the study—five from CWIP, and six from MILE.

I met with each participant at a location that provided a quiet space with a closed door. An office or a room at a local library with a closed door allowed me to accurately listen to the participant and make a quality recording. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, no other people were in the room, and spaces without a door, like in a coffee shop, were not used. The use of Skype, other digital video conferencing technology, or telephone conversations would have limited my observations so were not



used for this research. Only face-to-face interviews were used, but the interviewees were assigned numbers to avoid the use of names.

Each participant filled out a consent form prior to the interview (see IRB Approval for the consent form). All interviewees consented and were recorded. The interviews took no more than one hour per person.

The central research question was, “What elements of a mentoring program are requested by Generation X female mentees to reach their definition of success?” To find out, four theory questions emerged: “What, if any, work–life balance issues exist?” “What programmatic structure was the most beneficial for females who are part of Generation X?” “What experiences in careers make mentoring different in this stage of life?” “Does gender play a role in the workplace?” From there, the interview questions, or interview inter/actions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), were developed.

Questions sprouted from two concepts: expectations of a program tailored to Generation X women and outcomes of any previous mentoring programs. Questions were constructed to uncover the foundational elements of a mentoring program, including structure and how success is defined. The questions were split into two sections to help each participant focus on one area of mentoring.

The first question required participants to think about previous programs and helped them set aside issues that might be in their thought process that were not part of the interview. The questions aimed to help participants remember and focus on their mentoring experiences without the distractions of other thoughts or issues.

1. Were you involved in any mentoring programs before, excluding CWIP’s Women in Leadership Mentoring program or the MILE’s Principal Mentoring Program?

This first question allowed me to understand if the participant compared a program to other programs. The next two questions dived deeper into elements that helped or hindered participants' experiences as mentees in a previous program.

2. Choose one beneficial experience from one of the programs. What was the most beneficial experience, and why?
3. Choose one least beneficial experience from one of the programs. What was the least beneficial experience, and why?
4. What was your intended outcome, set at the beginning of the program with your mentor?

Question four allowed the participant to say there was no intended outcome, or to better describe how the participant defined success in the mentoring process.

5. Did you achieve what you hoped to achieve? How do you know?

Question five again was designed to learn more about the participant's ideas of success.

Previous experiences helped me understand if the participant was relying on multiple experiences. The other questions aimed to explore how the participant defined success, and to more fully explore the program experience from that person's unique point of view.

The next set of questions helped me understand the expectations of mentees and gather insight into how structure influenced the success of the program.

1. What attracted you to the mentoring program for female leaders?
2. What elements would you like to see in a mentoring program for this stage of life?

3. What would you like to see different in the mentoring program you completed through CWIP or MILE if you had completed the program today? Upon reflecting on your experience, what would you have changed about the program?

I asked these questions in the “idiolect” (Wengraf, 2001, p. 64), or vernacular, so the participants could clearly understand them.

The semi-structured interview format was beneficial, as it allowed the interviewee to add anything that may be significant. I asked each participant the initial eight questions, but as I heard words that portrayed emotion or needed clarification, I put the structured questions on hold until the answer was fully divulged (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Wengraf, 2001).

At the conclusion of each interview, I thanked the participant for her time and gave her a small token of gratitude in the form of a \$10 gift certificate to Starbucks, thus completing her participation.

Then the process of transcription began. I hired an outside agent, TranscriptionStar, for transcription purposes to alleviate time.

After the transcription was complete, I began writing memos, and as codes appeared, I took note of the codes. Eventually I shifted into the phase of coding, which involves several modes of analysis to find key phrases and patterns. I aimed to write many memos and diagrams to help explain possible inter/actions that could show an underlying theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using the program MAXQDAplus 12 under a student license helped me organize field notes, observational notes, theoretical notes, and methodological notes, as well as memos I wrote after the interview as I discovered new ideas and possible links between codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Constantly asking

questions about phrasing and using the matrix recommended by Corbin and Strauss (2008) aided me in the analysis. I used some in vivo codes, but no names are in the computer system, audio, or field notes. After transcription, I destroyed the audio records. After seven years, I will also destroy the transcriptions.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Using direct quotes is acceptable in qualitative research and helped the data collection phase. The first step was open coding, in which broad categories are established for outcomes from the previous program, needs, and experience/expectations of the current program. Then the axial coding phase allowed for further coding of the program, needs, and expectations. This increased the ability to examine the relationships between the categories. Finally, the selective coding showed the context and interventions. Qualitative design research framework allows for the exploration of mid-career mentoring program expectations.

## Chapter 4. Results

Mentoring program expectations may fluctuate based on the generation and gender of the mentee. I sought to understand how to bolster Generation Xers in their pursuit of success in their career. Throughout my interviewing of mentored women who are part of Generation X, it is possible to identify a few elements included in a mentoring program that might help Generation X females reach success. Presented below are some of those characteristics of a mentoring program tailored to their unique needs.

I used two programs as a basis of study: CWIP's WLMP program, which was less structured and a combination of the Younger Women's Task Force and CWIP, and the MILE program. In 2007, Illinois lawmakers made mentoring mandatory for new principals (Illinois General Assembly, 2007). Since that time, the state no longer requires mentoring but strongly suggests it for those districts that can afford programs (T. Eddy, personal communication, December 2, 2016). I interviewed five people from the WLMP program, and six people who were in K-12 administration (assistant principal, principal, or assistant superintendent).

I conducted a qualitative study involving in-person interviews to answer the central research question: "What elements of a mentoring program are requested by Generation X female mentees to reach their definition of success?" Out of potentially 49 participants, nine had nonworking e-mails addresses and two were not part of Generation X. Twenty-seven never responded. Six confirmed they were part of Generation X and had been mentored by females. In all, I interviewed 11 women. In this chapter, each participant is introduced. The interviews and analysis carefully avoided using names to

keep participants' identities private. Following all the introductions is a cross-participant analysis according to the themes that arose throughout the study.

#### **4.1 Participant One**

Participant One's experience within the first cohort of WLMP is more unusual than some of the other participants' experiences. Since she did not have frequent interactions with her mentor, she found group events more beneficial. She did not connect with her mentor and found their time together as an obligation and a formality. Within the eight structured group activities CWIP offered throughout the program, she was able to find informal mentors whom she still keeps in contact with through her continued volunteering through CWIP. Participant One was in the middle of a doctoral program and found that the schooling was not for her, but she did not have an idea about what the next step would be for her career. She reached out to another mentor within the program to find insight and guidance. Participant One mentioned that she "got a lot out of it, just not what I expected" (personal communication, February 6, 2017). She joined the WLMP Committee and now leads through being a board member. She wanted to learn what to do next and was able to navigate the nonprofit world better because of her time as a mentee.

Considering what she would want in a program tailored toward her stage of life, Participant One was looking for work-life balance. With young children at home and desiring to overcome struggles with managing people at work, she was also looking for better ways to focus on what was in front of her. "The everyday still demands making sure that things get done" (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017). She hopes to influence strategic decisions for her department rather than being tied to

executing tasks without the challenge of idea creation. Beyond work–life balance and professional growth, she wishes to explore the next stage in her career. Currently, as a director, she feels stunted in “making a difference” (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017). Her work involves training future leaders for the for-profit sphere. Participant One would enjoy being much more involved in direct services to the underserved. She admits her volunteering with CWIP makes an indirect difference to those with severe needs, but she wants to take a step toward being more involved within her employment. She is considering more schooling if that is the best next step.

Participant One studied gender in graduate school. She feels obligated to make sure women are represented well, especially the students at the university where she is employed. Since the university trains for-profit executives, she finds herself in a place where women are not equally represented and explores avenues to demystify the bias: She looks for female speakers, calls out times when diversity would be a benefit, and encourages female staff to value themselves as leaders in the workplace.

Participant One defines success as happiness. Whether at home or work, she is looking for goal accomplishment and increased influence. Although she did not have a meaningful relationship with her mentor, she was able to say the time she spent within WLMP was fruitful. She connected more deeply with the nonprofit community in Chicago because of her volunteering that stemmed from WLMP.

In summary, Participant One’s experience is marked by a poor relationship with her mentor. That poor relationship led to informal mentoring situations, which became the success of her time in the program. Work–life balance and learning more about approaching the next step in her career were elements that would be helpful to her in her

stage of life. For her, gender plays a role in the workplace, but her graduate studies emphasize gender in her daily work.

#### **4.2 Participant Two**

Participant Two is a principal who was involved in a mentoring program for teachers before the MILE program. Her mentors' experience gave her insight. Learning about theories and how to handle possible situations during her undergraduate years seemed to be helpful, but as a principal, to have the voice of experience and someone who has insight into the context of a situation were beneficial. However, she felt that large group gatherings were less beneficial because of the time she spent away from the school building, staff, faculty, and students. In addition, she has a young child at home, and time away from her family was difficult. She mentioned that more practical hands-on training during the large group sessions would benefit her more than learning about a topic, such as budgeting, and then going back to her office to try it herself. She admits hands-on learning is best for her and may not be everyone's learning style. In her experience, having the mentor come on-site and visit her school seemed advantageous.

Participant Two's mentor was familiar with the community and the people within it. Her mentor was able to walk her through the differences between the Midwest and the East Coast, where she grew up. Participant Two enrolled in the program as a requirement. Her superintendent was new in the district, so outside expertise seemed to be a good option for Participant Two to grow in her principalship. Since Participant Two was previously an assistant principal, her mentor lessened her surprise at the increased responsibilities and unexpected experiences she would face as a principal. Her mentor asked questions to help Participant Two determine the next step on her own so she could



maintain her independence. Even today, six years after the program, the pair is still in contact from time to time.

Participant Two found her greatest challenge in managing politics and power struggles among staff and faculty. She tries to remain neutral and ignore politicking within the school building. She also avoids politics outside the school with those who expect her to be forceful on an issue she did not want to comment on in public. She finds herself focused on being “here for all the kids,” “here for all the staff,” and “here for the community” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). She mentioned that former classmates and others in education have since moved out of the education world because “they’re just burned out” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Therefore, for a mentoring program geared toward females of Generation X, Participant Two would ask for a stronger network and support system. She hopes her legacy is a support system that allows people to “handle those frustrations” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). She encourages faculty and staff to be with each other outside the school building to build a support system and better relationships among coworkers.

Success for Participant Two means accomplishing a task so that the students have a unique and positive experience: A great learning experience is a success. Outside of work, she says if another person had a positive experience and achieved success, she characterized that moment as a success for herself. She gives the example of when her spouse achieved a goal. She did not feel the need to take credit but felt a sense of pride in his work because she could support him in his efforts.

In summary, Participant Two found comfort in the support a mentor provided during her first year as a principal. She defines success as either being supported or being supportive. Support is a large motivator for Participant Two.

#### **4.3 Participant Three**

For Participant Three, having an experienced person who knew the district's challenges was beneficial. Since her mentor was not employed by her school district, Participant Three found her mentor's outside perspective helpful in stressful situations (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). At the same time, Participant Three recognized that having a mentor who didn't understand the internal working and office politics within the school district was a weakness. Participant Three was part of the MILE program nine years ago as an assistant principal. She is now an assistant superintendent. The program and her mentor left a lasting impact on her: She and her mentor still meet about twice a year.

Participant Three remembers taking part in five observations or meetings, but she and her mentor met much more frequently via phone. These touchpoints discussed a small topic or incident rather than a large subject that would take time to work through. Pressure from politics outside the school caused the participant to reach out to her mentor, who understood the dynamics of the community. Participant Three admits her school district has less violent incidents and disciplinary problems than other districts and is more concerned about parents who believe it is okay to observe their children in the classroom. Another key concern is parents who want their children in a class for gifted students when those children did not qualify through assessments and would struggle in a challenging class.

Participant Three does not remember attending monthly lecture meetings but does remember that the MILE program was mandatory by law. Even though it was required, she found the program an asset because she still has someone to speak with throughout her career.

Managing her career is a reason why she would seek mentoring in this stage of her life. As an assistant superintendent, she realizes that to progress to a higher-ranking position means, “My boss leaves or I leave” (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). In this trial phase (Hall & Chandler, 2007), she may reach out to a mentor to learn the next steps and how to transition into a new role. Like Participant One, Participant Three wonders if higher education schooling would assist her in reaching the next step of her career. She meets with a few others in similar positions in different districts, and as informal mentors, they ask each other, “What’s next?” By doing so, they try to establish the path for each other.

In her current role, she finds herself acting as a mentor to others who are progressing as teachers and principals. Her district has a mentoring program for new teachers, and she helps administer that program.

In considering what she would like in a mentoring program, Participant Three said she wants space to discuss current experiences. She referred to these as “tabletop scenarios” and said they would be an interesting element in a mentoring program (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). After a major event or challenge occurs, she gathers the people involved to work through what to do differently next time. She shared the story of how a robbery in a nearby building caused her school to be on lockdown. She thought of the kindergarten through secondary school building

next door, and rather than staying in the high school building, she ran to the other building to make sure the students were safe. On reflection, she admitted it was not the best move and wished for an opportunity to talk it through with a mentor and other mentees. Even if the scenarios were not real, discussing them in a group would be helpful for her. For example, a group could discuss the question, “If a fire drill and a lockdown drill occurred at the same time, which one takes priority?” By discussing questions like that one, she said, she would be better prepared to make decisions quickly but would want some practice in making decisions in those situations.

That desire for hands-on practice is why Participant Three found on-site observations helpful. Her mentor watched her work through a hiring situation in which she had inherited new teachers she had not hired. The new teachers lacked experience for their positions. Framing the difficult conversation and then being able to debrief with her mentor how the conversation went were valuable.

Participant Three defines success as “helping others succeed” (personal communication, February 9, 2017). She accomplishes this through informal mentoring, meeting with about 15 people who want to be principals. Her district wants to promote those who understand the culture of the school and wants to develop their leadership skills. Providing such people with experiences to help them be successful created success for Participant Three as well.

In summary, Participant Three’s experience within the MILE program provided insight into the benefit of observations. She contacts her mentor occasionally, even though she completed the program nine years ago.

#### **4.4 Participant Four**

Participant Four had the unique experience of having a mentor who was the principal of her school before Participant Four began serving there as assistant principal. The mentor's understanding of the school and the surrounding community made the mentoring richer for Participant Four. She participated in the MILE program during the 2015–2016 academic year, so the experience was fresh in her mind.

Her mentor was also a presenter for some of MILE's monthly large group meetings. Since Participant Four had already heard the material on understanding poverty, she did not attend that meeting and missed one other meeting due to an event at her school.

To help Participant Four prepare for difficult conversations with staff or a supervisor, her mentor role-played various situations. But one-on-one meetings and site visits were of greatest benefit to Participant Four. During their time together, someone would occasionally step in with a question or an issue, and together, the pair would be able to address it in real-time together. The trust in her mentor created a better relationship. "I could say everything that I needed to, and I knew that it was not going to be said [elsewhere]" (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017). However, due to the interruptions, Participant Four asked her mentor not to observe her beyond their one-on-one meetings. "She had a lot of observations of me, but not necessarily intentional" (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Participant Four's goals for her time in the MILE program were to survive her first year as an assistant principal, as well as to "transform my counseling office and make sure that we were doing what we need to do with kids and my communication with

the building as a whole” (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She says she accomplished these objectives.

She also had the personal goal of understanding how to become a better leader. As an assistant principal with “a very large personality” (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017), she found times when she felt she should defer to her principal’s leadership. Participant Four had the most tenure at the school out of the administration staff; the other assistant principal and the principal were new to the building. But the tension between her length of employment and conceding decisions to an authority was delicate. At times, Participant Four felt the pressure to see a task all the way through to completion because she thought she knew how to do it or because she wanted to make sure she knew how to complete the task before delegating it to someone else.

This additional self-imposed work caused a work–life balance issue. With two young children at home, Participant Four recognized she spent less time at home and more time at work, including being at school on the weekends (Eckman, 2004). After her first year as assistant principal, coupled with what she learned in the MILE program, she understood the value of delegating. She understood that “what is really truly my role and what is everybody else’s role has changed, partly due to the help of my mentor” (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She had tapered off going to work during the weekends.

Participant Four has been in other mentoring programs, including a mandatory new-teacher mentoring program 16 years ago, but that program was less structured. She described it as a program in which new teachers were paired with people they may or

may not have a lot in common with. The program did not have any accountability for meeting regularly or attending events. Participant Four liked the MILE program because of its documentation of when participants met and what they discussed. Accountability in the MILE program helped her connect better with her mentor.

Participant Four's mentor helped her understand that the life of an assistant principal is different than the lives of people who hold other positions within a school district. Before her current position, Participant Four was a division coordinator. She sees her growth when situations arise now: She knows the best next step and does not have the self-doubt that would have driven her to call upon her mentor in the past.

Being a female had not hindered her career. Although she recognizes that her superintendent may work better with males, she believes he does not purposely treat her unequally.

Participant Four would like to eventually become a principal, an assistant superintendent, and then a superintendent. However, she recognizes that even though she had strong working women in her family, her stage of life makes it more difficult to seek another position. She has two children at home and does not expect to have the time to work toward another promotion (Eckman, 2004). She notes her position is from "7:00 to 3:00 on paper, but then it's the band concert, it's the basketball game, it's the football game" (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Participant Four defines success as achieving objectives and goals. She also finds success when other people achieve their objectives.

In summary, Participant Four was one of two study participants who had most recently taken part in the MILE program. Her experience was incredibly positive and

helped her from feeling overwhelmed during her first year as assistant principal at a bigger school.

#### **4.5 Participant Five**

Participant Five was part of the original WLMP cohort in 2006 and 2007. She had previously worked for a year in the nonprofit sector and was working at a university during her time through the WLMP. During the program, she considered becoming employed as an executive director in the nonprofit sector. To make the change, she explored options such as more schooling and other steps toward her goal. “That’s where I was hoping to have some clarity, to get some clarity and direction” (Participant Five, personal conversation, February 15, 2017). She and her mentor met about once a month, sometimes casually over coffee or in her mentor’s office. Once they met while having their nails manicured. Since they did not know each other before the program began, it seems they spent more time getting to know each other. Participant Five wanted her mentor to have been more active in her search for clarity. Rather than receiving a list of tasks to complete on her own, Participant Five said it would have been more beneficial if her mentor had come with her to functions or if she had met other people and networked.

She thought her mentor was unclear on how to help or what issue Participant Five was trying to tackle: a career shift. She noted she needed validation too. “There are definitely. . . moments in that relationship where I was probably looking for more validation of my decisions as opposed to guidance of my decisions, if that makes sense” (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). However, Participant Five said her mentoring was successful because of the experiments she did with her mentor. For example, her mentor would ask her to find a position she was interested in



doing and then to prepare her résumé, write a cover letter, and submit them to her mentor as practice. Her mentor also gave her names and phone numbers of executive directors so she could have 10- to 15-minute phone conversations with them. Most were unable to make the time to talk, but she reached a few people.

Through these exercises, Participant Five realized she needed more experience in her career to increase her leadership skills and that more schooling would not boost her chances at shifting her career directly into a nonprofit leadership position. “Having those kinds of conversations really helped settle me” (Participant Five, personal conversation, February 15, 2017). Participant Five did not leave her position at a local university and is still there today. Therefore, if she were to join a mentoring program in this season of her life, her goal would still be to understand how to shift from academia into nonprofit work. “The shift I thought I was going to try to make in my early 30s now seems like a monumental shift now in my early 40s, like I would need an earthquake” (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). Her interest in the nonprofit sector remains.

To define success, Participant Five says, “Professional success would be to have a role in an organization where my leadership and knowledge was valued and . . . I was doing work that really mattered.” Nonprofit work, she said, “really touches people’s lives and matters” (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). Personal success for Participant Five is a home, family, work, and good health. But in general, she defines success as being valued and having relationships.

In summary, Participant Five's experience is marked by not changing careers and realizing through mentoring that she was not ready to shift careers into the nonprofit sector.

#### **4.6 Participant Six**

Participant Six was a mentor and, therefore, fell outside the population requirements.

#### **4.7 Participant Seven**

Participant Seven was part of the original cohort of mentees through YWTF. Many of her coworkers were involved, and one was the president of the Chicago chapter, so Participant Seven joined too. She occasionally sees other mentees from YWTF, since one is a close friend, but she has not seen her mentor in a long time. At the same time she was participating in YWTF, she was part of a professionals' group at her place of employment. The programs through YWTF and her workplace blend together in her memory.

She has had many informal mentors, including supervisors and friends. She still sees past supervisors and asks them for career guidance, support, and education. As Scandura and Schriesheim (1994) found, mentees anticipate that their mentors/supervisors will supply both subjective and objective career guidance (Arthur et al., 2005). Some supervisors do not expect to provide subjective and objective career successes—they will act only from a transactional mind-set in which they give their employees objective career advice in exchange for loyalty, support, or a variety of other actions. For Participant Seven, her supervisor acted from a transactional objective career success viewpoint. Her current supervisor is a mentor through a state-mandated program

for therapists who are seeking licensure. Her supervisor was one of her former professors and has helped her with her career. Participant Seven drew attention to her supervisor as a mentor by using the words “supervisor” and “mentor” interchangeably while speaking about her supervisor. She also considers some of her friends as peer mentors. When making some bigger career decisions, they support each other’s choices by reviewing résumés and meeting irregularly.

During the formal mentoring through YWTF, she was working in the nonprofit sphere and was deciding if she wanted to stay in her role, go back to school to make a career adjustment, or leave the sector altogether.

I think really what attracted me to [mentoring] is I didn’t know what direction I wanted to go, but I knew that I wanted something different, and I was very much looking around for something to kind of help me figure that out. I really was just sort of like a shotgun again—like, you know, shoot and . . . see what kind of sticks and what doesn’t stick. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Participant Seven left her position and the nonprofit sector but does not remember if those decisions stemmed from her time as a mentee. She went back to school, and her studies brought her to become a therapist.

Her mentor through the CWIP/YWTF venture had met with her one-on-one for dinner. Participant Seven had also been invited to a few functions because of similar interests in art. These occasions seem to have provided opportunities for her to explore her desires for a next step.

I think where I was at the time, [mentoring] suited what I needed. I think it also gave me the best fit it could at the time because my mentor is in a completely different field, but it was still very helpful. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

If she were to be mentored in her current state of life, she would focus on work–life balance and career management. She would want to be certain she is doing more of what she likes, doing less of what she doesn't like, and learning how to take care of herself in the process: More specifically, she would want to avoid burnout and gain training knowledge. She has no desire to move on from her current role.

Gender seems to have hindered her more than other participants. For example, while interviewing for a position, she was asked if she would become emotional at work. At another time, she took a position because she needed the work but knew it was at a lower pay-grade than male colleagues. But gender also helped, since her current work revolves around talking to people; in her experience, they seem more open to a female.

Participant Seven defines success as happiness. She wanted to have a job she looked forward to going to each morning. She also wanted financial stability and energy to enjoy life outside of work.

In summary, Participant Seven's journey is marked by trial and error. Fortunately, her trials guided her into a career she enjoys. Her time as a mentee gave her options to explore her desires for a next step, although the two were not directly related. She also understood that mentoring can come through a variety of contexts, including at work with supervisors, as well as through friends as informal or peer mentors.

#### **4.8 Participant Eight**

Participant Eight was on the board of YWTF and went through the mentoring program within its first year to experience the program so she could make improvements for future cohorts.

I feel like I was happy with the program at the end and got what I set out to get out of it. I mean, because I was on the planning committee, I kind of wanted to just experience it . . . for myself, so that then I could make it better for the next cohort of people. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

She built skills throughout the program, but in a broader sense of how to operate a nonprofit organization and sit on a board of directors. She also built a network of professional relationships through the mentoring program. In her role within the nonprofit sector, occasionally a former mentor or mentee became a funder. Participant Eight recognized the person, and the funding relationship started well because both women had a similar experience. The least beneficial experience was that the relationship did not last after the program ended.

While in the program, Participant Eight was looking for career guidance. Her mentor gave feedback on her résumé, and she moved into a different position within the same employer. She is still employed there today, reporting to the executive director. It is a small nonprofit organization with approximately 20 employees, so career plateauing was a possibility. But she added, “We have restructured a lot of programs since then, so that there could be some room to grow within programs” (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017). She recognizes a lateral move is possible, but not attractive. She had been in her position for two and a half years and did not feel the need

to advance soon. Since her employer had the flexibility to restructure, she did not feel stifled or on a career plateau, because as her responsibilities have varied, she has found herself again interested in her work.

Participant Eight does not want to become the executive director right away, yet the current executive director has taken steps to begin grooming her for the position. There have been conversations about succession planning on the board and how staff obligations may alter in the next five years. But Participant Eight has two concerns about becoming an executive director: The fund-raising portion of the position is not of interest to her, and by time she starts the position, she would have a young child.

Meanwhile, she noted that she is someone who jumps at ideas and wants to implement them immediately. Knowing these traits about herself caused her to consider work–life balance, especially with her first child on the way. She was learning to manage her energy toward her career. Unable to say no to staff, she found herself taking on the responsibility to carry out a project “because nobody else is going to be able to do it, so I’ll just do it” (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017).

Within the mentoring program, the pair spent a little time talking about life outside of work, since Participant Eight was in the process of buying her first house. Taking advantage of what more experienced and established women in the nonprofit sector had to offer was an attractive part of being in the WLMP program for her.

If she were being mentored in her current stage of life, Participant Eight would find a mentor who already knows her, has a skill or a network she wants to tap into, or is within her own field in the nonprofit world. She would want to know it would be a successful endeavor before entering a “matchmaking kind of relationship” (Participant

Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017). Although Participant Eight would not seek out a mentor during this stage in her life, she recognized she fulfills the role of mentor to those younger than herself at work.

Regarding gender, Participant Eight geared her education toward women's studies since high school. Now she works directly with women in the nonprofit sector, "so because of that, I've not really worked in male-dominated companies. . . . Primarily I'd just surround myself with other women, other strong women that are all working towards making this world better for women" (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017). Still, she recognized that gender can help or hinder men as well.

I mean, we do have men that work here, and so we have to be thinking about that—like, how are we treating them differently than we treat all the rest of the women? What's their experience like being here differently than the rest of ours? (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Participant Eight defines success as being happy and finding "some sort of meaning to what you're doing every day" (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017).

In summary, although mentoring is not something Participant Eight would seek out in her current stage of life, she recognizes it within her workplace. She views her supervisor as a mentor and understands that she herself has been a mentor to someone younger. Since she works with an organization that serves women exclusively, she has had fewer issues with being a female leader, but she understands that gender discrimination can harm men in a female-dominated organization.

#### **4.9 Participant Nine**

Participant Nine is a principal who was mentored through the MILE program during the 2016–2017 academic year. In 2008, she was part of the New Leaders for New Schools Principal Preparation Program, which trained new principals in Boston and then sent new principals to other states to intern at urban schools before entering the principalship.

She said the MILE program helped develop her leadership skills as an assistant principal through the camaraderie of being with others in a similar position.

To be in the room with people that are having the same kind of experiences that I'm having, you're kind of nervous about some things or uncertain about some things. To be able to have those conversations and dialogue was probably the most beneficial. And equally so, having someone who had already had the experience—the mentors being retired principals themselves—being able to shine some light on things and coach you through those moments. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Her experience was unique in that her mentor became an interim assistant principal at her school for a few months after the MILE program began. Before the mentor became the interim assistant principal, she came about once a month to discuss what Participant Nine was struggling with. The mentor also observed a teacher evaluation conference, but no other observations took place.

Considering mentoring today, Participant Nine said it would be more helpful if more time was built into the program to be together, but not be away from the building.



For the monthly large group meetings, getting input from others within the current cohort on topics mentees were facing could help them as well.

For Participant Nine, her mentoring program was a requirement, and she was under the impression it was mandated by the state. She further describes what would be more helpful:

A program that would keep you abreast of the latest trends, practices, theories that are out there. Because being in the role doesn't lend itself to you to research those things and to stay on top of it. So if you were in a program that would provide that, that would be great. I mean really great. I would sign up. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Participant Nine works with an all-female district office and school board. Some power struggles occur within the all-female group; she had not experienced those power struggles when a male was present.

For Participant Nine, success occurs when a student exceeds expectations. At home, success has a different meaning: "When I am emotionally, mentally, physically whole is success for me. And then I'm at a place where I am doing what I was designed to do, and I'm doing it well. That's success for me" (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017).

In summary, Participant Nine works with an all-female district office and school board and recently went through the MILE program. Since her school had no assistant principal, her mentor served in that role three months after the program began. Participant Nine found the program beneficial but wanted to give more input on topics for the monthly group meetings.

#### 4.10 Participant Ten

Participant Ten's experience in the MILE program was positive. She was in the program in the 2015–2016 academic year. She said her mentor was

Very open, makes you feel comfortable talking to her about anything. She will go out of her way to get answers if she doesn't have them right away, always motivating and encouraging you to do your best and to try different things.

(Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Ten enjoyed the large group gatherings; they were times when she could learn about topics that may affect her students or herself as a leader. Making networking connections was a key element for her. She is still in touch with some of the mentees but wanted an opportunity to form partnerships. By the word *partnerships*, Participant Ten referred to visiting each other's school to observe for an hour or two.

Her mentor observed her once during a faculty meeting. From that situation, Participant Ten learned how to better communicate and to motivate faculty involvement in order to increase engagement in meetings. Her mentor also observed an evaluation. Other times her mentor would come and “walk through the school and see what was going on” (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Sometimes the pair would connect via e-mail or phone call. She saw her mentor at the monthly large group gatherings as well.

Participant Ten found it helpful to hear those who had gone through the program in the past speak to the current cohort about the program. That opportunity allowed for those who have gone through the program to give feedback and express lessons learned.

Currently, what Participant Ten desires is to learn more about how to get parents involved at school or how to implement more “socio-emotional interaction with students” (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017). She noted these topics could be addressed in the group sessions by introducing the subject and then breaking into smaller groups. Between sessions, mentees could discuss among other mentees, apply their knowledge with the help of their mentors, and then come back with observations about the implementation of the topic. The groups could even continue the conversation at the next session.

She wants to remain a principal for some more time to understand the challenges and the struggles so that if she were to move into the role of curriculum director or superintendent, she would be able to support the administrators in the district. To better support teachers, she taught for almost 15 years. But being a female principal has challenges for Participant Ten. She says,

I feel sometimes you have more of a microscope; people are looking at you as soon they think you're about to do something wrong. Whereas I've seen my counterparts who are males do maybe some of the same things and it goes unnoticed. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

But, she concludes,

As long as you're learning from your mistakes and your successes and keep moving forward and believe that what you're doing is right—because ultimately, I'm here for my students, and I just got to make sure I'm doing right by them.

(Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

For Participant Ten, success is being passionate about work, which leads to enjoyment. She also sees success in failure if the person learns from the mistakes. Achievement also is a part of success for Participant Ten.

In summary, Participant Ten had a few ideas about elements of a mentoring program that could be helpful, including observing other mentees, having smaller gatherings, interacting with other mentees between large group meetings, holding alumni gatherings, and adding a second year of mentoring. She defines success by using the word *enjoyment*, but she includes within her definition learning lessons from mistakes and achieving goals.

#### **4.11 Participant Eleven**

Participant Eleven spent the 2015–2016 academic year enrolled in the MILE program. As a principal, she oversees a total of 220 children in two schools within the same district, and neither school has an assistant principal. She enjoyed the monthly large group meetings for the camaraderie and the networking experience with other mentees.

She arranged to observe another mentee’s school so she could continue to learn and grow. The other mentee is the principal of a high school. Since Participant Eleven is a principal at a primary school, she found the experience interesting because she realized the high school students are still students: They are older versions of the children in her building. She said, “It was good to see that our work was not so far from each other” (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017). During the large group meetings, she found value in hearing the “perspectives of other new principals, just sharing those common experiences and also hearing remedy for troubles and/or conflicts that may arise in your first two years” (Participant Eleven, personal communication,

March 10, 2017). She said networking and seeing a “veteran doing the job” (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017) would have benefited her. Although, in about 10 years Participant Eleven hopes to be running her own private preschool.

Her mentor had experience in early childhood education.

I was able to have that conversation with her and [talk about] some of my concerns, because working with Pre-K, in kindergarten, first grade, it’s really about family. It’s not just about a child; it’s about meeting the needs of a family.

So she was able to understand that and shared her experiences with me; [she] encouraged me to be brave in some aspects and challenged my decisions in others. So I appreciated that. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

Participant Eleven asked her mentor to stay with her for an extra year during the 2016–2017 academic year so that her mentor could help implement a project they worked on together during the first year. During the first year of mentoring, the pair met approximately three times a month. Two of those times were on campus, and the third time was during lunch off campus so they could speak freely about issues and challenges. Her mentor supported her by offering her time and by helping with projects, such as during the Christmas season, when every child in Participant Eleven’s buildings receives a Christmas present from a nonprofit organization; the mentor helped wrap and prepare the gifts.

One of Participant Eleven’s goals was to have her mentor help her focus on what is best for the students. The participant had found that addressing staff concerns pulled her away from focusing on students. Some of the staff concerns included hurt feelings

and office politics that occurred before Participant Eleven became principal. Another concern that kept her from focusing on students was the playground. During the program, an auditor told her the playground was unsafe without a fence. She proceeded to take steps to build a new playground with a gated fence, and her mentor supported her along the way. She says the following about her mentor:

They never told me what to do; they just kind of asked me questions to support me and say, “Well, did you do this? Have you done that? Have you considered this? Or have you considered that?” So they kind of just navigated me that way. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

However, while working on getting the gate installed around the playground, Participant Eleven experienced sexism in the workplace. A man who was giving an estimate on the gate called her a kid, and then when he realized she was the principal, asked her out on a date. She refused and let him know the school would no longer need his services as an estimator.

Time away from the school building was the least beneficial part of the program, but she admitted it is not a concern for her because the experience was overwhelmingly positive. She noted that the monthly large group meetings took place between 8:00 and 9:30 in the morning and recommended starting at 8:30 in the morning instead.

Work and life clashed more in the past year because she got married. But at work, her chief outcome is to be more focused on the students and less distracted by other concerns. For example, she understands when staff members call in sick to take care of their younger children but recognized this excuse may be overused and abused, which affects teachers’ professional lives and, ultimately, the students.

In a word, Participant Eleven defines success as growth (personal communication, March 10, 2017). She also referred to sustaining relationships with people and trying new things to achieve success.

In summary, Participant Eleven had several mentors, informal and formal, through her district as well as the MILE program. She found all parts of the program beneficial and thought perhaps shadowing or observing more tenured principals would be a helpful element. However, her experience is marked by ageism and gender discrimination, as shown through the story of the gate estimator.

#### **4.12 Participant Twelve**

Participant Twelve engaged in CWIP's WLMP program in 2009 through 2010 after a partial year of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) mentoring program. Her mentor in the AFP program moved, so they discontinued the relationship. She was attracted to the CWIP organization because it places funders and fund-raisers as peers. "So I just felt like it had a unique sort of ability to really both meet with a lot of different careers and organizations and kind of get a much larger idea of the whole landscape" (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

For her, the benefits of the WLMP program included the networking. After the program, she reached out to one of the mentors before transitioning into her current role in a foundation. That informal mentor was working for a foundation and could explain her experience in that role. She was also involved in formal mentoring during the WLMP program. Participant Twelve and her mentor came together one-on-one about once a month and occasionally met during a CWIP event. After the program, the pair stayed in

touch for a while, but the mentor became a stay-at-home mother and Participant Twelve moved to another town, so the relationship naturally ended.

Participant Twelve and her mentor were both in fund-raising roles for a nonprofit organization: Participant Twelve was a grant writer, and her mentor worked with direct mail to individuals. Participant Twelve said her mentor did not seem to have the networking capabilities or the desire to help the mentee grow in her career, and unfortunately, during the WLMP program, the pair did not connect as well as Participant Twelve had expected. “We had a lot in common—[she was] really nice—but professionally, you know, not incredibly insightful” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). She said her mentor had been in the fund-raising role for about 10 years and was looking toward getting out of the nonprofit sector to start a family. Participant Twelve wanted to be paired with someone who had a more senior role. Pairing mentees with mentors was the program’s only weakness, she said.

I don’t know what their process was for matching the mentors and mentees. . . . I feel like some of the direction they have already moved in is making sure that the mentors are at a really senior level. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Participant Twelve was looking to gain “a bigger perspective” and “just didn’t know how to take the next step” (personal communication, March 31, 2017). She felt that she had gained that new perspective by getting a new job at a larger nonprofit organization; there she was doing a similar role and making more money but gained “a much wider perspective” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017) by having a new employer in a larger organization. She did, however, admit that the new



position may or may not have been a consequence of the WLMP program or her mentor's guidance but did remember her mentor's support in the transition (Hall & Chandler, 2007).

Success for Participant Twelve is defined as happiness. In her career, she has defined success subjectively as growth and finding meaning in her work that "fits in with my life in general" (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017), referring to caring for her young children. She also mentioned she was not looking to be promoted, but rather having a healthy work–life balance (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). However, she would be interested in gaining an advanced position within the philanthropic part of the nonprofit sector. She would also consider an executive director role at a nonprofit organization but enjoys the security and less pressure of philanthropy.

Participant Twelve's predecessor left the role at the foundation because the predecessor was transitioning into being a stay-at-home mom. Participant Twelve's mentor also became a stay-at-home mom. Participant Twelve mentioned these two occasions without any signals becoming a stay-at-home mother was unusual.

Participant Twelve has mostly female bosses. "I guess that maybe I just feel comfortable working in philanthropy and nonprofits because there are so many women that work in these fields" (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). She shared one experience regarding gender discrimination that occurred in a previous role.

I never felt like I was really subject to sexism. . . . I mean, it was a little bit uncomfortable when I was pregnant at my last job and I had a male boss and he

would comment on my eating sometimes. I don't know, just little things like that.  
(Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

In her current role, everyone she works with are females. However, the heads of her foundation, such as the CEO and CFO, are males.

It feels like we're the women that are taking care of all the details and they're making the decisions, even though we have women on the board too. . . . In some of the board meetings, the men talk about golf and, you know, there is just some separation of genders, but I have not felt any effects of that. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

She would not seek a mentor in her current stage of life. "I find that I start to think about mentoring more when I'm ready to move on" (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). She said that networking is valuable and that sustaining multiple relationships—rather than one mentor—is of most benefit. She viewed her supervisor as a mentor.

In summary, Participant Twelve recently moved into a new position within the nonprofit sector, but as a grant maker rather than a grant seeker. She changed organizations while in the WLMP program, but not because of the program. Afterward, a few informal mentors supported her along the way, including an informal mentor she met through the WLMP program and her current supervisor. She does not see the need for mentoring right now but may consider it when she is in a time of career transitioning again.

#### **4.13 Why mentoring is important**

Relationships matter within mentoring (Swap et al., 2001). The participants all met frequently with their mentors (Cunningham, 1999), although some met more frequently than others. Participants One, Four, Five, and Eight met with their mentors about once a month. Participant Eleven met with her mentor three times a month, with her mentor coming to campus at least twice during the program. Participant Nine saw her mentor about once a week. Others either could not remember how frequently the dyad met or knew it was less than once per month.

For principals, on-site observations seemed to be of benefit to mentees. All six principals interviewed mentioned that observations were part of their time in the MILE program. No one mentioned co-leading presentations or researching together (Cunningham, 1999), and none of the WLMP participants mentioned observations.

Some participants appreciated their mentors' emotional support or psychosocial function (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006). Participant Four commented that the MILE program provided mentors who were available as a psychosocial support system, as beginning principals may have many demands placed upon them. Mentoring, said Participant Four, is "a great investment and a show of dedication to the district that they realized that this is not an easy gig" (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

As the literature confirms, most participants wanted career coaching (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Sands et al., 1991, Young et al., 2006). Participants Two (as a principal) and Twelve (as a nonprofit leader) did not mention mentoring to advance in their careers in the future. Some from the MILE program knew mentoring was mandatory for their

districts or participated when mentoring was required by law. Participant Three recognized the program was regulated by law during her time in the MILE program. However, most participants looked to mentoring as a vehicle to shift positions or employers.

This study validated research by Young et al. (2006) that determined the psychosocial functions were more prevalent for female mentees. As both principals and nonprofit leaders, Participants Two, Seven, Ten, Eleven, Twelve used the word *support* when speaking about what their mentors provided. None of the comments pertained to task-orientated activities or skill development, but instead hands-on coaching, openness to contact the mentor no matter what time of day, and physical presence during meetings.

Participant Two highlighted the need for support from her mentor, but also the need to support her staff.

I think support systems are important there. I mean, I don't know that every school building—let's put it this way—has a good network of people and support. I've had people say to me, the only reason I'm staying here is because [I'm] such a supportive principal. . . . That makes me feel great, but it worries me, you know, because I'm over here [thinking], What if I go? Have I left a system in place that supports, that nurtures people, keeps them there, helps them grow? I think having a system in place is nurturing and allows people to handle those frustrations but also continuously cycle back to, 'We are here for a good reason. This is what we're doing. It's important. It's very important.' (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Supporting the staff by being encouraged and supported by a mentor was beneficial. Participant Two's mentor supported her, creating a high LMX relationship between her and her mentor (Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). The mentoring relationship shaped high LMX relationships between Participant Two and her staff through increased trust, respect, and individualized assistance (Graen & Cashman, 2010).

A high LMX between mentors and mentees may help mentees understand culture better as well. Participant Eleven mentioned how a previous mentor taught her the cultural norms of the school where she had begun to teach. "Learning the dynamics of the school and the school culture is overwhelming to a new teacher. . . . She was like, 'Whatever you do, if you want to keep your name clean, don't go in the teacher's lounge'" (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017). Learning cultural norms may help mentees (Dindoffer et al., 2011). Yet, for a principal, the role shifts into creating culture rather than learning culture. For example, Participant Two wanted her staff to know they were supported while at school, yet she also encouraged the faculty and staff to create camaraderie after the final school bell. "I'm like, 'Yeah, you guys should go have some happy hour time.' . . . I don't necessarily [go] with them" (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Being supportive matters to principals.

The WLMP program was different in that mentors may or may not have had a similar role and had less experience in the field. Some of the mentors may serve in various parts of the nonprofit sector. Those involved in the nonprofit program did not necessarily work within the same part of the sector. For instance, a person working with an organization that focuses on eradicating homelessness was paired with someone

whose art gallery was classified as nonprofit because the profits benefited the community (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017). Yet because the mentee had an interest in art and was considering seeking a master's degree in performing arts, the pair had "a lot of common interest" (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017). Through the mentee observing the mentor during an event at the art gallery, the mentee could observe what a normal head of a nonprofit organization did during an event (see Swap et al., 2001). The job titles and the industry corners within the sector may have caused a larger disconnect than in a program like MILE, whose mentors had deep experience within the same role as their mentees. Mentors may not have been the same age level or in the same community dynamics as their mentors, but they did have same position. Therefore, the WLMP program provided fewer avenues for mentees to learn cultural norms and hear from those who had "been there" (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Others looked to their mentors for career guidance (Cunningham, 1999; Perna et al., 1995). Participant Five said she was working in academia for 20 years and wanted to consider how to shift into a nonprofit sector. "I wanted to talk to somebody about what that would look like, how I could leverage my academic experience to go into nonprofit and just talking about the different avenues" (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She set the intended outcome for her mentoring to be "just clarity on what my next professional steps could be" (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). As a woman of Generation X, she still would consider mentoring to help her explore ways to manage her career.

Because I've stuck in academia for so long, I'm pigeonholed. The shift I thought I was going to try to make in my early 30s now seems like a monumental shift now in my early 40s, like I would need an earthquake. . . . If I was looking for a new mentor or a new mentoring program now, definitely it could be someone who could really roll up their sleeves and feel like, "All right, let's do some stuff like assessment"; send me out to the professionals to do that career assessment, and then say, "All right, let's do this." [I felt like my mentor said,] "Let's pretend to apply for jobs and then I'll read what you're doing." (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Likewise, Participant Seven would seek mentoring as career development counseling (Perna et al., 1995). She said, "It was just nice having other women who were in early careers trying to figure out what they wanted to do, and we really enjoy that aspect of it" (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Networking is part of a mentoring program for most participants. Participants One and Twelve from the nonprofit sector used networking as part of mentoring to gain an informal mentor. Participant Twelve called an informal mentor she met through the WLMP program before the participant took her current role. Nonprofit participants networked to gain an advantage in their careers or work. Principal Participants Four, Nine, Ten, and Eleven mentioned networking as well, but more in the sense of making friends among mentees.

Within higher education, mentoring can include networking and helping mentees chart their course throughout their studies. Participant Five runs a mentoring program for women in the sciences. She noted that "the most successful mentoring pairs" were those

whose mentors “really did handhold” their mentees. The mentors would say, “Let’s go investigate faculty who you might want to do research with, and I’ll go with you to meet them,” or “I’m going to take you to my sorority meeting or my activity.” “The purpose,” Participant Five continued, “is to help them find their space on campus” (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Role modeling is another important aspect of mentoring (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006).

Just the idea that there was other more established women in the nonprofit world in Chicago that wanted to offer something to younger women in a mentorship form—I thought we should take advantage of that, because that’s who we’re going to be at some point. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Having a person understand how to handle a specific situation encouraged mentees like Participant Eight.

Likewise, mentees found mentoring as a way for their organizations to invest into their personal growth and encourage healthy environments (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Mentoring, said Participant Four, is “a great investment and a show of dedication to the district that they realized that this is not an easy gig” (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Yet mentors and mentees need to connect to be a catalyst for change (Perna et al., 1995). Two participants (Participant One and Participant Twelve) realized the poor connection with their mentors ruined the experience. A low LMX caused less



engagement (Breevaart et al., 2015; Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). Both of those participants were in the WLMP.

A few participants had mentors who were active in asking questions that allowed space for reflection (Swap et al., 2001).

They would ask me questions to support me. They never told me what to do; they just kind of asked me questions to support me and say, “Well, did you do this? Have you done that? Have you considered this? Or have you considered that?” So they kind of just navigated me that way. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Participant Two had a comparable experience.

[My mentor] was good about giving suggestions—you know, “Think about this. Think about that. Have you thought this way?” So asking those questions was good for me [and] helped me really kind of think things through a little bit differently in a way maybe that I normally would not. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Participants Three and Nine noted mentoring was mandatory under the law (Cunningham, 1999; Illinois General Assembly, 2007). For Participant Nine, the benefit to mentoring was learning from someone else’s experience. The mentors were retired principals and were “able to shine some light on things and coach you through those moments” (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017). In addition to the programs that Participants Three and Nine were required to attend, three of the MILE program participants talked about a mentoring program designed for when they first became teachers.

Women who want to enter leadership roles may find help through mentoring (DeFrank-Cole et al., 2014; Giscombe, 2007; Jackevicius et al., 2014; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006). Six out of eleven women interviewed wanted career guidance for a transition either within the first year of a principalship or into a new position in a nonprofit organization, reminiscent of Breland et al.'s (2014) finding that Generation Xers will consider careers that fulfill their personal needs, causing them to shift from organization to organization. Participant Eleven was looking to get out of her school district as a next step (personal communication, March 10, 2017). Participant Seven did not see herself being promoted again and was happy where she was employed (personal communication, February 20, 2017). Participant Nine was also happy with her current position but knew there was pressure from the board of the nonprofit organization to begin the succession planning process to move her into the executive director position in the next five years (personal communication, March 1, 2017). Likewise, Participant Three had a similar conversation about succession planning with her supervisor the same week as her interview with me (personal communication, February 9, 2017). The other two participants in the study did not talk about wanting to be promoted into a higher leadership position.

#### **4.14 Women in leadership**

Some women feel a pull to be both nurturing and authoritative at the same time (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011). Participant Eleven said, "I'm sweet but I'm tough—like I don't take crap" (personal communication, March 10, 2017). Other participants did not directly express the pressure to be encouraging and commanding simultaneously.

As Lansford et al. (2010) concluded that women have self-awareness and care about their work, mentoring, and authenticity. These qualities appeared in a few participants. For example, the principal participants defined success as taking care of others, especially students. Participant Ten said, “Ultimately I’m here for my students, and I just got to make sure I’m doing right by them” (personal communication, March 9, 2017). Likewise, Participant Nine cares about student victories: “For me, success is when every student is successful” (personal communication, March 1, 2017). These comments display how principals care about their work. Nonprofit leaders also cared for others through mentoring. Participant Eight recognized her role as a mentor to younger employees.

I think at this point in my career, I could [be a mentor]. There were people that work with me that clearly would think that they see me as a mentor; they’ll come in and sit down and all, ask me about career questions or life questions and stuff like that, and so maybe I would sign up to be a mentor to somebody newer in their career. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Some mentees recognized the need to empower the generation after them, such as Participant Eight.

Gender certainly played a role in many of the women’s lives. Lansford et al. (2010) reported that women lead 18.8 percent of the top 400 nonprofits organizations. Principals I interviewed recognized that K–12 schools have a fair number of women in leadership.

I think gender did play a role, because this district is predominantly female. The district office, the school board, all female. . . . When you bring a group of women

together, it becomes a power struggle, . . . and it's, you've got to be seen, you've got to be heard, you want everyone to know who you are. You know, you enter the room and everyone is supposed to stand and clap type of feel. Men don't necessarily bring that, not the men that I've worked with. They give you your space. They give you room to do whatever. They can be slave masters and task drivers, sure, but they put it out in such a way that you don't feel as though you're being micromanaged or there's something to prove. It's, "We're here to do a job; let's just do it." It's better when you have a mix of people than just everybody's all female, everybody's all male; it just brings a different feel. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Within the working world, this participant recognized that gender diversity brought all types of opinions and experiences (Gilbert et al., 1999; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). She concluded by saying, "I've been in many environments where men are part of the team, and it's different than it is with just all female, and that's what I'm saying is better" (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017).

But sometimes, because of gender, opinions from females are ignored, as Participant Ten disclosed.

They're just little incidents here and there where you're meeting with someone and you'll suggest something and then your male counterpart is saying pretty much the same thing, and it's, "Yeah, that's a great idea." And I'm just like, "I think I just kind of said that." Or maybe a few days before, I said it and mentioned, "Hey, maybe we should try this," but then when they bring it back,

it's like the best idea ever. And that can get frustrating at times. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Mentees of the WLMP program were often more open to women's concerns. Participant One said boldly, "Other participants were sensitive to the unequal treatment of women in the workplace" (personal communication, February 6, 2017). Participant Seven explained during her interview with me her experience with gender discrimination, when someone asked her if she would get emotional at work (personal communication, March 20, 2017).

Women who have completed the MILE program were less likely to face gender discrimination. However, Participant Eleven's experience lines up with Eckman's 2004 study, which proved adults outside of a school sometimes expect the principal to be male. While working on a playground project, Participant Eleven needed to make phone calls to a variety of organizations in the community, including businesses. "And sometimes those phone calls were rude. I would talk to a contractor and he'll be like, 'Who are you?' Because he was expecting a man" (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017). This is not the experience of all female principals. Participant Four noticed in her experience that gender was not a tense issue within higher education. She mentioned, "I think that gender may be at least a little less of an issue in education than other fields" (Participant Four, personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Participant Eleven understood how gender could help heal situations as well. She had a student who would be violent but who did not have a mother figure at home.

I finally said to him, "Why are you punching other kids? Why are you hitting at your teacher? . . . We have to stop this. . . . Something has to give." And so in that

instance, he was able to tell me why. For him not having a mom around, it all rooted in not having that nurturing, supportive, kind [person in that] female role. So I just hugged him a little while; I just hugged him—gave him a big hug and told him, . . . “Today is a great day to start over. We will start over.” . . . It worked in my favor to know that he needed a little bit of cuddling, somebody to massage the moment. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

However, Participant Eleven also faced gender discrimination, although she says ageism is more of an issue for her, correlating with the study by Feyerherm & Vick (2005).

Females, as predicted in Eckman’s 2004 study, concentrated on relationships, especially with relationships at home. Participant Eleven said, “You can build relationships, but are you sustaining relationships? Because every day you meet somebody, but that doesn’t mean that you sustain a relationship with them. And so that to me is successful” (personal communication, March 10, 2017).

Participant Four saw success tied directly to family relationships. “Are my children kind? Success. Are they healthy? Success. Does my husband respect me even though he doesn’t understand the educational role? Does he respect my hard work? Yes” (personal communication, February 15, 2017). Meanwhile, Participant Five noted what items come with the relationships at home. “I have a family and we have a home and we have good jobs and we go out to eat whenever we want and a couple dogs. We’re all fairly healthy. So, yeah, well, personally we’re pretty successful” (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Participant Seven summed it nicely: “I think success for me is having a really nice balance, something like the work I enjoy and having the time and the energy to also

invest in the relationships that are important to me” (personal communication, February 20, 2017). The tug for women in leadership between being authoritative and gentle seemed to tie in directly to relationships outside work and keeping focused on career aspirations at work.

Mentoring encourages healthy relationships and can help with career aspirations. However, a few women had no desire to be promoted. Participant Seven liked her current position and did not want to move into an executive role. Participant Eight was resisting the succession planning from the board and her executive director. She also recognized that when that position would open in about five years, she would have a five-year-old child, and she had not decided if work and family would be compatible. Participant Twelve lost contact with her mentor after her mentor decided to become a stay-at-home mother. Her mentors’ home life was perhaps part of the reason why the mentor did not engage with her. “She was leaning towards getting out of the workforce and starting a family” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). The current position Participant Twelve holds opened because the previous woman left to be a stay-at-home mom. As Terri (2005) noted, women leave the workforce to be mothers.

Relationships within mentoring were important to encourage the mentees to become effective leaders. Some mentees had a disheartening experience because they did not connect well with their mentors. This may be explained by the similarity-attraction social psychology theory (Young et al., 2006). If people within a mentoring pair have less in common with each other physically or in personality and behaviors, the pair will need more time to get to know each other (Ragins, 1997; Young et al., 2006). Participants One and Twelve did not connect with their mentors. There is little evidence to explain why the

pair did not work, but the two participants' interviews with me give some clues. For Participant One, the two were not compatible.

My mentor and I did not really have a super-great connection. I felt like our one-on-one meetings that were really meant to be the meat of the program—I kind of dreaded them, because for me they felt really forced. Again, I would try to kind of come up with things like, What are some topics that we can cover that might be more comfortable or that'll again help me get something out of this? We just never really hit it off. (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017)

For Participant Twelve, her mentor was looking to get out of the workforce to have a family after a lengthy time employed in the same position. Her lack of experience in job transitions and promotions made the pair less likely to connect over the goals Participant Twelve had for spending time with her mentor. In contrast, Participant Seven did not have a mentor within the same part of the nonprofit sector. Still, she says of her mentor, “She is not in this field, but she and I held a lot of common interest” (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017).

What seems to make a difference is if someone recognized leadership within the mentee. For example, a principal encouraged Participant Nine to explore leadership skills while she was a substitute teacher.

I had a principal [who] told me, “There’s leadership in you. This is what you are supposed to do.” And it’s like, really? And so then I went back to school to get certified to teach, and then I took on leadership responsibilities very early on—



bringing me, of course, to where I am today. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Women who have role models who are female leaders may be helpful (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Morrison, 1992; Terri 2005). Participant Ten also noted the need for women to help women.

As women, if we can kind of reach out and help each other, I think we should definitely do that. Well, I try to help anybody I can, but especially if I see a woman, because I want them to move forward and do well. And I just hope that more people thought that way. Unfortunately, sometimes with women we think we have to compete, but we don't, because if you move forward, I can move forward; we could kind of help each other along the way, because we do need more women in leadership positions. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Three noted the need for mentoring and created a group that meets to learn from each other about leading others. The group is mixed-gender, and all its members are striving to be principals. Participant Three, as an assistant superintendent, provides experiences for those within the group to learn.

I will meet with them one-on-one to tell them what they can work on. And that's just leadership style; we have a male administrator in the building who doesn't feel the same sense of obligation. (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Women in leadership have the ability to bring other women into leadership.

#### 4.15 Power

Power can be a tool for women in leadership, but it can also be a divisive instrument. Participant Nine had a situation unlike the other participants. “This district is predominantly female. The district office, the school board, all female” (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017). She concluded,

Men by nature are not claw-and-nail type. Women [are] catty, petty, power struck, that kind of thing. Women bring a different type of feel when they’re together, because you know it’s, “I’m this person” or “I’m all that and a bag of chips,” and I’m not saying that men can’t be conceited or think they’re all that either. I’m not saying that. But when you bring a group of women together, it becomes a power struggle. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Participant Nine’s situation caused her to consider the benefits of having a mixed-gender team (Gilbert et al., 1999; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). Power can be lopsided when one gender is more present than another (Barrett & Taylor, 2002; Young et al., 2006).

Although, if the majority is male, women do not use political skills such as advocating for themselves (Young et al., 2006). Participant Four said she has a “very large personality” (personal communication, February 15, 2017) and struggles knowing when to defer to someone else. She shared her experience:

I’d been here for 16 years, but the other assistant principal and the principal were both brand new to the building. So how do I . . . [know] when to then step back and let them lead the way that they lead? . . . I think the biggest thing was I took it all on my shoulders that I did everything. So whether it would be stuff that maybe the principal could have done or stuff that my secretary could have done or stuff

that the counseling office could have done, [I thought,] No, I'm going to see this from beginning to end because that's the only way that I know that it works.

(Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Participant Four found a pace that allowed her to delegate as the males on her team became more familiar with the culture of the school. In times of uncertainty or when resources become scarce is when office politics increase (Ferris et al., 1996). And when the focus drifts from the main mission, power struggles become more apparent. During her first year as principal, Participant Eleven found her staff picking on each other—sometimes about “just absurd things” such as, “She didn't speak to me last year on a Tuesday” or something that happened five years ago (personal communication, March 10, 2017). She briefly addressed the issues (even by saying only, “I'm sorry that happened”) and asked the staff to put those issues aside “to think about the children.”

It's power struggle; it's classroom power struggle. . . . You want to respect people and you want to respect where they are, but you want to push them forward; you want to see them growing. I don't care how long you've been teaching. I don't care how long I've been a principal or not a principal. You can always learn something. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

Participant Four faces similar situations in which staff and faculty have conflicts. She was grateful for her mentor's insight and her help in walking her through how to handle the office politics. Mentors, according to Mosley (2005), should encourage Generation Xers to not accumulate emotional strains of staff members, and that issues may be solved by allowing employees time to process. As Participant Four noted, conflicts happen “when you lead 200 very different personalities” (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Ragins (1997) notes that power distinctions can exist within a mentoring pair. If mentors and their mentees are similar, the mentors may assume the mentees are younger versions of themselves (Ragins, 1997). Or mentees might see their mentors as older version of themselves. In these instances, a power contrast within the pair may be lower because of the attraction theory (Holt et al., 2016; Ragins, 1997; Young et al., 2006). Participant Eleven, a principal at a primary school, verbalized how her mentor was similar to herself.

My mentor was very honest with me, very parallel, and she's very transparent with me. So the good thing is that she experienced early childhood education. . . . She was an early child educator; she was early childhood principal, so she understood the wonderful world of [primary education]. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

#### **4.16 Gender in Mentoring**

Research indicates that as mentees, men prioritize networking, and women want psychosocial support (Allen & Eby, 2004; Burke, 1984; Young et al., 2006). Out of the 11 participants, nine participants mentioned career management as the objective of their mentoring experience. Five participants commented on the support of a mentor as important to their experience. Psychological support seems to be more important to principals: Four out of the five participants were principals. Mosley (2005) notes Generation X has a deep need to be reassured and validated through positive reinforcement. Participant Eleven notes how her mentor supported her and had honest conversations with her.

In moments of success, she was able to validate and say, “You should feel successful.” In moments of defeat, she was saying, “Yeah, you really should feel defeated.” . . . So having that with the mentor and having someone rooting for you, good or bad, is beneficial. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, May 10, 2017)

Psychological support for a female mentee might be exaggerated in this study because the mentors were also female. For this study, women must have been mentored by women. Within the WLMP program, the women were part of an all-female organization (CWIP), so there would be no indication of how many needed to seek out a male mentor because a female was not available. However, for the MILE program, three women said they were mentored by men, so they were unable to participate. Gender in mentoring is important, but since all of the participants were female and had been mentored by females, less indications are available of the difference in having a male mentor.

#### **4.17 Generation X**

More differences in mentoring were brought to light when discussing generational characteristics. People defined by their birth years as part of Generation X tend to be independent and will leave an employer if they do not find what they want (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Lai et al., 2012; Shugart, 2001). Nonprofit leaders Participants Five, Seven, and Eight were using their time in mentoring to leave their current employers. MILE program mentee participants were mostly first-year administrators and would not be looking for career management guidance. However, four of the six principals interviewed said mentoring would help them move to another position or location within the K–12

environment. Only Participant Eleven wished to exit the school system completely to start a daycare business.

Feyerherm and Vick (2005) pegged Generation Xers as those who want to learn through experiences instead of formal education. Two of the participants (Five and Seven) were deciding during the mentoring program whether to go back to school. Participant Five stayed in her current role, and Participant Seven pursued a master's degree and then a doctorate. It is worth noting that during the mentoring program, both women were much younger and closer to college age than other participants. Participant Four, at the time of her interview with me, was considering going back to school for a law degree (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Participants seemed to prefer an active learning style (Bova & Kroth, 2001). Participant Two's learning style is admittedly hands-on training. She was less enthused about group learning, which was more like classrooms than experiential models. Participants' desire for active learning is reflective of the study by Bova and Kroth (2001), who said Generation Xers are hands-on learners who avoid classroom lectures. Participant Ten valued her mentoring because, she said, "As I'm moving up I could say, 'Okay, I remember she said this, so let me try that,' and it can help [me] along [my] path" (personal communication, March 9, 2017). Trying new methods as she grew in her career was important to Participant Ten. Participant Two knew her graduate program was important, but more important to her was having a mentor who had experience in the participant's role. She says,

Learning from someone who has been there before is always the most beneficial. I mean, you learn a lot of theory and a lot of information when you're in your

[graduate] program or your [undergraduate] program, but the reality of the job is very different I think to some degree. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Participant Eleven noted experiences were an important part of mentoring.

I think the mentorship is important. . . . It helps you; it provides another perspective; it allows you to share experiences. . . . I think that's the most important element of mentorship: sharing experiences. Because what I experience and what my mentor experience are two different things, but some of those same feelings remain the same. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

Meanwhile, Participant Two felt that formal lecture was not a style of learning she preferred, because she was learning more through the experience of being a principal.

Sometimes I felt as though the courses that went along with it, or the work that came with it, were redundant to some degree. You know, we were already living the experience. . . . I'd rather have a practical experience than somebody chatting at me about "Here is what you need to know about zero-based budgeting." I don't want to hear the theory. Let's sit down and do one. . . . That's obviously been my learning style. . . . For me, it was always about doing. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Participant Two also recognized that questions provided by the mentor helped the participant to think through a situation without her mentor telling her how to handle it.

This broadens the thinking of the mentee but also provides the independence that most people within Generation X crave (Buckley et al., 2001; Shugart, 2001). Participant Four,

as a principal, felt that through the mentoring program she grew because of the ability to learn through experiences. She encountered a situation recently in which she had to call the union representative and the union president.

I could never have done that last year. I didn't have enough—not even confidence—but enough knowledge, enough experience. . . . Yesterday, would it have been one of those times where I would have maybe called the mentor, maybe said, “Okay, hey, what do I do?” Well, it just came naturally. And was I perfect at it? No. Was I comparatively amazing at it than a year ago? Yes.

(Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

The experiences that the mentors helped the mentees with became the foundation for women to continue to learn and grow. Through those efforts, women of Generation X gain skill sets that will be important to them in future positions (Bova & Kroth, 2001). For example, Participant Ten mentioned that she wished to remain in her role for a few more years.

I definitely want to continue in this position for a while just to get knowledge. Of course, at some point I may want to look into maybe [becoming] a curriculum director or a superintendent, but I'm not in a rush to get to that endpoint, because I always say that there is power in the process, everything that's in between, all the things that you learn so when you do get to that position, you have all this wealth of knowledge that you can lean on. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Twelve, working in the nonprofit sector, would agree:



I just started here a year ago, so I definitely have more learning to do. And this is my first job in philanthropy on the grant-making side, so again, I've a lot more to learn in my current position. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Participant Nine mentioned she wanted to “enhance [her] skill set” (personal communication, March 1, 2017) before moving on to the next role.

Another difference between generations was the goal of succession planning. Older generations desired executive positions, but the younger generation in a mid-career phase looked toward the role within a family to find fulfillment (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007). In their interviews with me, three participants mentioned needing to consider their children when thinking through an advanced position. Participant Eight, who is expecting her first child, was also the only woman to mention succession planning specifically. Her executive director remarked about moving her into the role in the next five years, and Participant Eight was hesitant because of her upcoming role as a mother (personal communication, February 27, 2017).

Although participants were from Generation X, not all their comments were purely characterized by Generation X features. For example, Participant Four recognized she could receive validation from her mentor and reacted to her own words: “You know, that’s very, very Millennial [laughs]” (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

#### **4.18 Work–Life Balance**

Principals seemed to struggle with work–life balance issues. Women with experience in the nonprofit sector reported less need to focus on work–life balance. None of the women mentioned how to integrate work with life, or vice versa. The

compartmentalization is reminiscent of Eckman's 2004 work, indicating that men could integrate family into their work demands, but women were more likely to set boundaries.

A few participants were unsure of the future opportunities for them because of their families. Noszkay and Borsos (2014) noted that successful female leaders either give up on having families or seem to behave more like males. Participant Four explained her vision for the future, but immediately capped it because of her family:

I would definitely like to be a principal. I would like to be an assistant superintendent. I would like to be a superintendent. I've not gone back for my doctorate. I should have before I had my children. I became an administrator at 26. I was very young and I wasn't even married at the time, and since I became an administrator, I got married and had two children. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Likewise, Participant Eight thought about the tension between work and family. "I don't want to have a five-year-old and be an executive director" (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017).

Unlike Eckman's 2004 study, none of the participants mentioned falling into the principalship or their leadership role, and none radically struggled finding employment at their desired administration level. Yet Eckman's 2004 study is supported because females discussed informally mentoring people who desired a higher position within the school system. Participant Three has a group of about 10 to 15 people who meet to talk about gaining leadership skills to become principals (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Participants mentioned that work–life balance is something they would want to know more about in their current stage of life as mid-career Generation X members.

Participant Eight mentioned her life had been unbalanced because she spent more time at work and less time at home (personal communication, February 27, 2017). A participant from the MILE program had similar strains on a balance between work and home.

I don't have any balance. . . . I'm still new at the principal portion of administration. You've got to have some balance, but it's kind of hard because you want to do so much. But you have to realize if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be here to give what you can to your students and your staff.

(Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

A person on her staff was a certified workout instructor and offered a class for staff two times a week. Participant Ten went to the exercise class even though she had to stay late during the evening, because it freed her mind from stress and she was able to accomplish more while at work. For Participant Eleven, work–life balance is also a key element in her stage of life.

Some people say I've moved slow in life as far as getting married, and I don't have any children. I decided to finish my degree for principal. . . . Having someone to say, "You're okay. Let's live in the moment that you're in and let's seize the moment and the opportunity that you have"—that was beneficial for me and that was given to me and it benefited me greatly. . . . All of that other stuff, it will fall into place, and what you're supposed to have you will have it. But right now, seize the moment to effect a systemic change. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

As Greenhaus and Singh (2007) stated, a mentor who supports a healthy work–life balance helps a mentee cope with daily stresses if that is the mentee’s desired outcome. If the mentor does not address the balance of work and home, women in leadership positions who have careers and families often have an example within their families of someone who embraced life outside the home and had support from a spouse or children (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011). Participant Four, a high school assistant principal, shared how her mother, an attorney, provided role modeling.

My mom has her own law firm, so my biggest role model was always a working mom. However, I now juggle both roles, and there is very much that whole, “Well, as a mother of young children, it’s not appropriate for me to be a principal right now, because [of] the expectations and the time that most people in education don’t understand.” . . . I have thought in my career, Would I be better suited, could I move up potentially but down in a sense, like maybe [to] a junior high, because there’s less evening activities, everything is right after school? So I’ve definitely had to shift my goals based on my role as a mother. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Although her mom gave her an example of work–life balance, Participant Four recognizes that the life of a lawyer and the life of an assistant principal can be different, especially because the hours vary. For Participant Four to move into the principal role, she says she would need to be honest with her potential supervisor about how she would manage her work–life balance.

I would have to be able to have that candid conversation with my school board or my superintendent and say, “Look, I’m going to give you 120 percent, but

sometimes I got to give that same to my kids. And so the thing that makes me a good leader also might be a little bit of weakness on a Tuesday; [it] shouldn't be overall, but it might be on a Tuesday, and I need you to understand that." And I think in the right environment, somebody would understand that. . . . I think if the right position opened up or the right people and I felt supported and I felt that it was a place where their values were in line with mine, I think that [taking the principal role] wouldn't be out of the question. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Some women had to help their families understand their roles and the commitments they made.

It's very hard for my husband sometimes to even understand, because he's in the business world and it's 9:00 to 5:00, and sometimes he may have to work late to get a deadline, but it's very much a 9:00 to 5:00, where this is never 9:00 to 5:00. This is a 7:00 to 3:00 on paper, but then it's the band concert, it's the basketball game, it's the football game. . . . Does my husband respect me even though he doesn't understand the educational role? Does he respect my hard work? Yes. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Sustaining relationships is part of balancing the demands of work and home.

Participant Seven, an WLMP mentee, felt she had achieved a good balance, coupled with some planning for how to achieve it.

It's much easier now [to balance work and life] than it used to be. I also have really prioritized the relationships in my life. I'm part of the book club, so that is a carved-out thing: every six weeks I go to my book club. I try to literally schedule

in the things that I find enjoyable so that they don't go away. My husband and I reserve Sunday nights. It's like no matter what else happens, Sunday evening we spend together, even if the rest of the week is haywire; that's protected time. I think it's very important, and really it gets to a point where we're only spending time together Sunday night. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Although the women recognized the importance of balancing work and time outside of work, none of the participants mentioned incorporating their families into their work life or vice versa as did the men in Eckman's 2004 study about principals. However, in that study, women waited until their children were older before seeking a principal role, as in Participant Four's experience. "As a mother of young children, it's not appropriate for me to be a principal right now, because [of] the expectations and the time that most people in education don't understand" (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She continues,

When I have a four- and five-year old at home, that was very hard. The first year was very hard; I didn't spend as much time as I should have with them. I was here most weekends doing work. I have since then stopped doing a little bit of that. And now if I need to, I will, but I think the need has decreased because my ability to—not delegate in a bad way—but to understand [that] what is really truly my role and what is everybody else's role has changed, partly due to the help of my mentor. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Participant Twelve, who has young kids and works in the nonprofit sector, recognized that circumstances at home affect work. She said she isn't looking to climb the corporate

ladder or make more money. “I’m looking to find the right fit” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Although the WLMP program through the CWIP organization was not a substantial help in her decision to have children, Participant Twelve remembered how the organization had role models who could speak about what it is like to be a working mom in the nonprofit sphere. She said the role models’ advice was particularly helpful and useful to women her age and even those five to 10 years younger. Starting a family was a pivotal time in her life, she said. “It was a huge question mark” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). She wondered what would happen in the short-term and where her future would take her.

I don’t know that I got those questions answered by my mentoring program, but I at least felt like they were supportive, and you could see other women . . . being working moms and . . . hear the details of how they managed it. And it was especially within CWIP people who were really very open and talking about it. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Like Participant Twelve, Participant Eight is unsure of the future—in particular, how her new baby will affect her work.

You just can never prepare for what it’s like to have a child. So I’m just trying to want to be open at this point to live life first and then figure out what work needs to be after that, because basically the past few years it’s just been all work. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Participant Eight was proactive in reading books about healthy nonprofit organizations and how an organization’s health is tied to the balance of work. “That’s what I am

working on with my career is to be able to keep doing what I am doing, but be okay with not doing it as hard, as much. I'm not working with too much overtime" (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017). In conclusion, Participant Eight states,

It happens a lot, I mean, all over the place, but in social services, we're helpers, so we just want to continue to help and just do whatever we can to get people what they need. But now I have limits. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Other participants recognized tension. Participant Ten said,

I don't have any balance. But you have to have that balance. And as I move forward, again, I'm still new at the principal portion of administration; you got to have some balance. But it's kind of hard because you want to do so much. But you have to realize if you don't take care of yourself, you won't be here to give what you can to your students and your staff. (Personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Although participants talked about struggles of work–life balance in their interviews, none of the participants mentioned a flexible work schedule to attend to their families, as opposed to the study by Gilley et al. (2015). Work–life balance was a key challenge for the participants, but most of them still found the program useful.

#### **4.19 Best Practices**

Best practices are repeatable actions that are supported by empirical and theory-based research (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). For members of Generation X, connecting their mentoring to a greater purpose could be a best practice (Buckley et al., 2001).



Participant One wanted to have a greater purpose and said so while explaining what she wanted to accomplish during the WLMP. “But I was pretty sure I at least wanted to work in some sort of a capacity that would ‘make a difference in the world’” (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017). In her role currently, the greater purpose is something she still values. “I love my job, almost every detail of my job. But one thing it lacks is that I don’t feel like I’m making a positive difference in the places where I think the world most needs it” (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017). Participant Three, an assistant superintendent, wanted to see change as well. “I still feel like I’m making change every day here, and I’m not one who ever believes in status quo” (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Linking the daily tasks to a greater purpose may be important for mentoring Generation X.

Another key element to mentoring was networking, because it may be beneficial to reach a career goal (Buckley et al., 2001; Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005). Participant Eleven, who was part of the MILE program, enjoyed networking with other principals and meeting other mentors. Meanwhile, Participant Eight, who was part of WLMP, stated, “I [built] relationships with my mentor and other people’s mentors because there was group things that were going on and so we wouldn’t just be networking with our mentor, but others” (personal communication, February 27, 2017). Participant Ten wanted more networking opportunities to have “more of that on-site conversation with the other administrators” (personal communication, March 9, 2017). Networking, or “just reaching out to people,” as Participant Twelve described it, is important to women, because “having one mentor in life doesn’t make sense” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). Before taking her current position, Participant Twelve

asked the opinion of another mentor who was involved in WLMP, but not her assigned mentor. Networking had already benefited her.

For those participants who felt a disconnect with their mentors (Participants One and Twelve), informal mentoring occurred (Holt et al., 2016). Each of the women found another informal mentor who had been assigned to mentor someone else. Networking at the larger group events caused them to seek out others' opinions on career advice. Participant One said, "I would attend those and try to connect with other mentors, more often the mentors than the mentees" (personal communication, February 6, 2017). Networking is important whether a mentor is provided or not. Mentors provide other functions for the mentees as well.

#### **4.19.1 Mentor role.**

Participant Three found her mentor to be a sounding board who could listen and give feedback in situations occurring while she was part of the MILE program. The conversations were tactical and relevant to the activities she needed to participate in, such as teacher assessments, technology upgrades, and personnel issues. Her career strategy came after the MILE program ended and she and her mentor continued to meet for dinner from time to time. Participant Eleven would agree with the importance of having a mentor because "it provides another perspective," allows for "honest conversations," and provides someone who will be "rooting for you" (personal communication, March 10, 2017).

Whether as a supervisor or within a formal program like the MILE program or WLMP, mentors should provide feedback and give the motivation to pursue a goal (Sanfey et al., 2013). Participant Ten found her mentor to be motivating; she encouraged

Participant Ten to try new things. The mentor was also comfortable for the mentee to talk to and went “out of her way to get answers” (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017).

Participant Eight’s mentor gave feedback on her résumé. Other participants experienced feedback through events. During Participant Two’s first year, a celebrity came to her campus. Managing that event was a new experience for the participant, but her mentor was there for the event and supported Participant Two before and after.

Having the person . . . really watch you in action and give you that feedback was much more, on my end, beneficial. . . . She kind of helped me focus on the major things I needed to do. And then she was there, you know. She just was there. Her presence was great. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Participant Three shared an experience when she needed to have a difficult conversation with staff members who were picking on new teachers.

At that time, I was facing a tense staff who didn’t like this topic because it wasn’t the way they were used to having it. So we did a pre-conference, and [my mentor] kind of helped me model “How do I have those difficult conversations?” She was able to watch me in the staff meeting, and then we debriefed. . . . So we were able to talk about that [situation]. (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

All the mentees from the MILE program mentioned appreciating their mentors.

Having someone who’s been there who can either give you some insight and maybe a way to approach something that you haven’t faced before, or even just commiserate a little bit around things that you have no control over but frustrate

you on a day-to-day basis—that type of thing. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Raabe and Beehr (2003) suggest pairs meet for two hours a month. The MILE program and WLMP recommended meeting one-on-one once a month. Participants Four, Five, and Eight met once a month with their mentors. Some pairs met more frequently. “I met with her maybe three times a month, and out of the three times she came to the campus at least twice” (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017). The context and the environment varied from pair to pair. Participant Ten remembered observations. “[My mentor] observed my faculty meetings . . . [and] when I went through an evaluation. Then there’s times she just came over to walk through the school and see what was going on” (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Participant Nine also allowed her mentor to observe an evaluation (personal communication, March 1, 2017). While some principals met for on-site observations, some nonprofit leaders met for a meal, an art show, or a manicure.

They were pretty casual. Sometimes they’d be in her office, one time [while getting our] nails done, [or] just going to have coffee somewhere, and [we] just chatted. . . . It was very conversational, just like, “How are you doing? How is this going? How is this impacting you? . . . The experience was changing my direction of helping me make any decisions. (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Participants One and Seven met for meals. Participant One’s experience was harmful, though, because she was forced to pay for the meal while in a lower-paying position, but Participant Seven enjoyed the time over dinner. “We could go out to dinner, which was

really nice” (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017). Participant Seven was able to have a distinct experience because of similar interests between her and her mentor.

She had an art gallery or ran an art gallery. We were both very interested in expressive art, and so I think on a couple of occasions they would have events at the gallery and she would always invite me, get me free tickets, introduce me to people, encourage me to come. It was really enjoyable. . . . She was always like, “Come, come do this.” (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Other mentors supported their mentees by joining them for events or other activities that needed volunteers, like Participant Two’s Christmas project.

If we needed an extra hand, she would jump in. . . . She joined us with our Christmas collaboration with an organization; they donated [to] every single child in both of my buildings Christmas gifts, and we had to package them and prep them for parents to pick up, and we spent about 10 or 12 hours doing it, and she jumped right in. She knew we needed extra hands, so she saw what’s happening and she said, “I’ll be there to help you guys these two days.” So she jumped right in to see it happen. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

For the MILE program, in which the state of Illinois strongly encourages mentoring for new administrators, participants said their goal was to “survive” (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1,

2017). If they were still principals after the first year, they felt they had accomplished their goal. Since the WLMP program was not mandated by state law, the program was less structured, which seems to have lessened the mentors' effects on mentees (Sanfey et al., 2013). During employment shifts, mentors should help mentees cope with the transition, make sense of the experience, and provide clarity (Hall & Chandler, 2007). Participant Twelve had this experience, but it may not have been tied directly to her mentor's guidance.

I got a new job at a larger nonprofit, where I was doing a similar role but for a much bigger organization, and I was making more money and had a much wider perspective just because of my new employer. So whether that was particularly related to the mentorship or not, I don't know, or if it just kind of coincided in the mentorship, just kind of supported me in that transition. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

The benefits to the mentees varied but consistently lined with Ragins' 1997 study, which highlights how mentors help mentees. Participant Two was grateful for "learning from someone who has been there before" (personal communication, February 27, 2017). Likewise, Participant Three's mentor was familiar with the position and the community surrounding the school, and that familiarity helped the mentee. Her mentor was not part of the same district but resided in the same community, so that commonality helped the pair. Participant Three and her mentor still keep in touch and check in with each other (personal communication, February 9, 2017). A mentor's years of experience also helped Participant Four. Her mentor was a retired principal from the same school building (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

However, some mentees saw benefits in opposite situations. For example, Participant Five found that it was helpful that her mentor was outside of the participant's primary work environment. She appreciated "talking to somebody in a completely different field because, I work in academia . . . and at the time I was considering leaving" (personal communication, February 15, 2017). Mentors within or outside the primary work area may help mentees advance in their goals.

#### **4.19.2 Peer mentoring.**

Mentors may not be older than mentees. When fewer women are available to mentor, some have turned to peer mentoring (McManus & Russell, 2007). MILE program Participant Three knew a few other principals, and they would meet up and discuss situations. She said, "I have a lot of different consortiums or cadres of people that are in other districts. So we kind of talk about what's next. What are you going to do when you get to five to seven years?" (personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Walsh and Daddario (2015) said some women who join professional organizations are younger. Therefore, mentors and mentees may be closer in age if the mentoring is through a professional organization like CWIP. The CWIP organization had the challenges of finding qualified mentors for WLMP. Jackevicius et al. (2014) recommend training mid-career women well if they were to become mentors, since their narrow experience may hamper their mentees' growth. Participant Twelve recognized that her mentor's experience level made her less qualified.

She was kind of not the best match for me, in a sense of she had been in the same job for 10 years, . . . and that was pretty much her only job I think out of college. So she didn't have a lot of context to compare it to, and she was working in a

fund-raising role that was different from the fund-raising role I was in. Her role wouldn't have been a move up in my career. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Some peer mentoring programs were successful. Participant Five runs peer mentoring programs for new students at her university. They are paired with veteran students. She started a mentoring program for women in science and was beginning one for Latino and Latina students majoring in science. The peer mentoring seemed to be successful because of the stereotype of students in science programs.

The major strength I think has been creating community. . . . I think it's a convergence of the fact that science students are usually higher achievers, as well as the fact that women college students are high achievers, so that compounds the idea that when you put them in a mentoring program . . . the mentors are very eager to show their mentees everything and to introduce them to people.

(Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

One of the strengths of the peer mentoring was the networking and active participation of the mentors. Participant Five received beneficial feedback from the mentors in the peer mentoring program she administered. Mentees reported, "She introduced me; . . . she helped me find things as opposed to just talking and helping [people] figure out who they are or confirm their major" (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She found these college student mentors "far more active" than her WLMP mentor (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). She views the program she administers as successful because the program "kind of snowballed. . . . The next year those mentees were like, 'I want to be a mentor. I want to be just like my mentor and



do that'" (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017). Peer mentoring may be effective if the mentor and mentee are aiming toward the same goals.

#### **4.19.3 Monthly large group format meetings.**

Since the group events were not mandatory and involved more than mentors and mentees, the WLMP participants were less likely to mention large group meetings.

Participants of the MILE program came to the GSU campus about once a month to hear from a speaker and meet with other participants. Sometimes the meetings took place in the morning, and other times in the evening. Participant Eleven appreciated the conversations at the large group meetings.

Being able to hear the other perspectives of other new principals, just sharing those common experiences and also hearing remedy for troubles and/or conflicts that may arise in your first two years [were beneficial]. So it was good to hear mentees and mentors having discussions about growth and development. So that was pretty powerful. And then a few times there were a few guest speakers, and the information they presented was very instrumental in making decisions or thinking about the way we'll make a decision. So it was, I saw the need and I saw a need being met. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

Participant Ten liked the large group meetings.

I did like the sessions when we got to learn various things on different topics that we may be facing as leaders or that our students may be facing that we need to be aware of as leaders. So I think those sessions were pretty helpful as well.

(Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Two heard from alumni of the MILE program during the large group meetings.

I think when we had the chance to hear from the seasoned principals, we had a different experience than when we had to hear from some academics who didn't really have the vetted experience, I guess, for lack of a better word, in the field; that was helpful. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

The Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) study about the structure and elements of an Iowa state-run program revealed that the participants wanted more discussion groups rather than formal lectures. This was true for most of the mentees in the MILE program as well. Participant Two did not find the large group meetings as helpful. She thought the courses were redundant. "We were already living the experience. . . . Going back to theory and having those conversations at times felt to me as though we were kind of taking a step back" (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Participant Four found the meeting topics beneficial, but the timing more difficult.

In that first year you were so busy, and it was meeting often, so having to kind of drop things here to go there [was difficult]. I mean, I was very grateful for the things that I learned while I was there, but sometimes it was hard to separate myself from the building for that amount of time. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Participant Nine noticed time limitations of the meetings.

Because of the way that it was set up, it was really just kind of a couple of hours, once a month type thing. If there was a way to structure it differently. . . . And I know of course being there means being away from your school building, but I

don't know exactly how [restructuring] would happen, but to get maybe more time out of it. (Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Participant Two also found the timing of the meetings difficult, but mostly because of her roles at home, not because of being away from the building.

I wouldn't change it a whole lot other than I think the [meeting] time frames. . . . Those evening meetings were rough, and maybe it was because I had a two-year-old at home. . . . My husband was great, but God help him, he had the two-year-old—and I was here like every other night because you've stuff going on until 4:30 or 5:00 sometimes. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Although participants gave some constructive feedback about the large group meetings, they also shared ideas on how to bolster the meeting structure. As in the Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) study, many participants wanted more interactions with their mentor, and a few mentioned on-site observations. Participant Ten had an idea for the elements of a large group monthly meeting.

I think they can start off in the group session, like for the social and emotional aspect. We actually touched on that in one of our sessions, but then it probably would've been a good idea to kind of break out in smaller sections—like I said, maybe work on that and talk about that as a small group. And I think the other topics could kind of take the same approach: Start it as an open forum and then maybe break it off or say, “Hey, go back to your schools, communicate with each other for the next week or two, and then let's come back and talk about something

that you saw in your schools based on that topic.” (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Others identified a vantage point that might shift the topics presented at the large group meetings by asking mentees what they want to know, instead of presenting what a first-year principal needs to know.

The topics that were chosen for us, I’m not saying weren’t beneficial, but to make it better, if you would align that with what the needs of the group are—because again you do have leaders who are ultimately there for the first time, but you also have leaders who may have been principals in another district and are now there because it’s required for them to be there. So you’ve got meet the needs of the group. (Principal Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017)

Some topics would be better as an activity for a few participants. Participant Two found that the large group meeting discussing budgeting was an example of a less valuable outcome (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). “I’d rather have a practical experience than somebody chatting at me about ‘Here is what you need to know about zero-based budgeting.’ I don’t want to hear the theory. Let’s sit down and do one” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Three had other discussion topic format suggestions, including what she calls tabletop scenarios.

We have our director of safety as a retired police officer, and after every scenario, you go back and you bring it to the table. What should we have done differently? There is always those “what if” scenarios that no one ever taught you in a book. (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

She shared an example where a tabletop discussion helped her prepare for future situations.

We had a robbery across the street a couple of months ago and we were in a meeting. . . . There is a kindergarten through secondary building right next door on the same campus. The principal got a phone call, and I could see her face pale, and she says, “We’re on lockdown. We don’t know what’s going on.” Three district administrators run across the driveway with her to the school. My first, always my first, thought is if we had our kids there, are they safe? My tabletop conversation was, “Was that the smartest thing I ever did, to run through the parking lot when I didn’t know why they were locked down? . . . You need to have the people who throw this scenario at you. . . . You have to be able to think on your feet immediately and make a thousand decisions before you can even pick up the phone. So I would like people to throw those scenarios at me, not that there is a right or wrong, and say, “What would you have done? What would you do differently?” That’s the kind of stuff I wish we had more of. (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

The monthly large group meetings for those in the MILE program had some benefits, but also some elements that could affect the success of women in Generation X.

#### **4.20 Informal Mentoring**

“I’ve been lucky to also have people informally in my life who’ve guided me through teaching, and given me some points, and helped me out along the way”

(Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017). Informal mentors are those who are outside a mentee’s place of employment or program, who are impromptu advice

coaches based on immediate needs (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005; Reyes, 2003). The timeframe is not always stated, and an agreement on the outcome may not be stated either (Raabe & Beehr, 2003).

Raabe and Beehr (2003) found that supervisors may be effective mentors because they can help advance the goal of the mentee while also promoting loyalty to the organization. Participant Twelve commented on the fact that her supervisor was a mentor. “My boss is a mentor. I’m learning a lot from her. We work really closely together and I see like directly like how she interacts [with others at work]” (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). Likewise, Participant Seven sees her supervisor as a mentor.

My boss, who runs and owns this practice, was one of my professors who was like a mentor to me and so I came here. And I definitely still look at her very much that way, as she’s 100 percent a mentor. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

A higher quality LMX between supervisors and employees mimic a higher quality mentoring relationship. When supervisors act as mentors, the employees/mentees may exhibit ambitious behaviors and more loyalty to organizations (Holt et al., 2016).

Participant Seven’s supervisor, as a former professor, cultivated a higher LMX, which encouraged higher work engagement in Participant Seven. Likewise, Participant Eight understands that her boss is a mentor.

I have people in the agency that I can bounce ideas about programming and the work stuff off of, . . . [like] my current supervisor or executive director [who serves] as a mentor to me. So I could go to her and say, “I got this idea for a

program. How can we make it work? What do you think about it?” (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Supervisors may mimic mentoring behaviors which increases productivity, healthy workplace culture, and social support (Breevaart et al., 2015).

Another type of mentoring situation is informal mentoring. Informal mentors are good for enabling mentees to learn more about topics that exist outside a career, because the technical skills may not be readily available through an informal mentor (Reyes, 2003; Sanfey et al., 2013).

I don’t think I ever had the urge to have paired with somebody formally, just because it’s so much more comfortable to just . . . go to the people in your life and ask them to guide you on things. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

This participant continued to explain how she views and uses informal mentoring.

I know some people don’t have [informal mentoring], and they need somebody else to kind of like flesh out some of those work-related ideas. But then I also have people in my life that maybe I used to work with, that I could sit down and talk to them if I am struggling with something at work that [I don’t want to talk to] current coworkers about. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Mentoring for Participant Eight did not seem like a valuable option for her in her current stage of life.

I don’t know that I even would consider applying for a mentoring program right now unless like my boss told me I should do it, just because it seems like a

matchmaker kind of relationship, and so you're taking a chance on like, Is this person really going to be helpful to you or not? . . . I just think of the more informal ones, or look for the people in my life that can fill that need rather than through a formal mentorship program. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Participant Seven saw her friends as mentors—people who helped develop her professional career—by reading over her résumé or giving career advice (personal communication, February 20, 2017). She went on to say,

I have some friends who I definitely lean on for guidance, who are more peers. I mean, they're my friends, but I'm definitely trying to make decisions about things and where I'm unsure. . . . I absolutely have some friends that we always send to each other our CVs to get feedback on, but I wouldn't really call it so much "mentorship," but we do support each other's careers. A 100 percent support of each other's careers. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Likewise, Participant Eight recognized the development network she supplies for coworkers. "There were people that work with me that clearly would think that they see me as a mentor. They'll come in and sit down and all, ask me about career questions or life questions and stuff like that" (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017).

Some participants had informal mentors before, during, or after the program. The informal mentors were difficult to define for some participants. Some included friends as



informal mentors because those friends gave feedback on situations at work or about managing a career.

All my informal mentors are people either I've worked with or I've taken classes with or had some sort of previous relationship with, and I just kind of continue that relationship and know that they were a trusted person to go seek advice from. So, yeah, they knew me and they kind of know my style and all of that. . . . This mentoring program was meeting someone who I had never really met before, and . . . we spend a lot of time just getting to know each other, so she definitely had an outsider's perspective on where I was coming from. (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

She continued to share a story about when an informal mentor was influential in a decision-making moment.

I know an informal mentor a couple years prior when I was doing this job switch. . . . We ran into each other and I was like, "I'm thinking about this move, but I'm not sure if I'm ready." And she just was like, "You're ready. Just do it." . . . Maybe she read me enough that she knew that's all I needed to hear. . . . If I'd had an outside mentor doing that transition, maybe it would have gone something like, "Let's make a pro/con list then." (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

Reyes (2003) states the best mentoring is a combination of informal and formal mentoring within one relationship. The mentor could speak about work-related topics and about concerns outside of the work environment. Participant Ten said her mentor provided both informal and formal mentoring.

[Informal mentoring] can be work related, but it can also just be some other things that may extend into work but you want to talk about with that informal person.

Whereas the actual formal setting provides you with some more concrete knowledge that you know you're going to need as you face different challenges through your job. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Sanfey et al. (2013) propose having more than one mentor at a time or within a lifetime. Participants One, Five, Seven, Eight, Eleven, and Twelve (six of 11 interviews) mentioned having informal mentors in their lives, either currently or during the mentoring program.

Four of the six participants in the MILE program mentioned being mentored as new teachers. This is classified as institutionalized mentoring, because a staff member is trained through the mentoring (Ehrich, 1995). By comparison, the MILE program is traditional mentoring program in which mentors assist mentees in goal accomplishment (Ehrich, 1995). A traditional program in a nonprofit organization may reduce turnover or career plateauing.

#### **4.21 Career Cycles**

Around 55 percent of nonprofit professionals may leave their current places of employment to be promoted (Stahl, 2013). Within my interviews, 100 percent of interviewees from the WLMP program mentioned moving on to another employer as part of their goal. Being triggered to look beyond their current employer is what Hall and Chandler (2007) describe as the exploration phase of a career cycle. After that stage, people will generally enter the trial phase, when the person will change roles. Mentors may significantly affect this process, and make it relatively shorter if the person is open

to feedback from a formal or an informal mentor. All the MILE program participants I interviewed found the trial phase easier with the help of a mentor.

However, Participant Eleven found that her mentor's help was not completed within one year.

I thought it was imperative for me to have her for two years. So I asked my district [if I could] join it again to finish out another year with her, because she saw me start something, now I want her to see me . . . begin new things. So she was very handy and instrumental in supporting me through a lot of those changes or moments of development for me. (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017)

When transitioning to a new role, mentoring was beneficial for Participant Three. "I had a wonderful experience. In the end, I was grateful for it" (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Four received immediate clarity on actions to take during her trial phase as she completed the transition into the role of assistant principal. Participant Four described an average one-on-one time with her mentor.

That was when my mentor would come here to the school and we would meet, and it just so happened that [in] divine interventions . . . she would come at the times that I needed the most. And so often, bless her heart, she would have an agenda and she would have questions she would ask me, and we wouldn't even get to those. . . . To have that impartial, nonbiased, confidential person you can talk to is so important as you're trying to navigate through a new job. (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017)

The next phase is the establishment phase, when a person has settled into the new position (Hall & Chandler, 2007). None of the participants had reached this phase during the mentoring program. The final stage is mastery, which may last a few years before the person shifts into the exploration phase again (Hall & Chandler, 2007).

#### **4.22 Success**

Success may be defined subjectively as participants set their own personal standards of success. Or success may be defined objectively as participant's professional advancement through a structured hierarchy is classified as career success (Arthur et al., 2005).

Success can depend on a person's individual definition, as well as stressors in a person's life (Eckman, 2004). One way to overcome stress is to exercise (Eckman, 2004). Participant Ten offered this example to describe the way she battles stress to reach success.

One thing I do like here at our job, we just started towards the end of last year, is we actually have one of our staff members, a certified instructor, [lead] workout sessions. We actually had one yesterday, and I was like, "I'm not going to go because I want to do this." And I said, "No. I need to stop, go work out, get a little stress out, and then clear my mind and come back in, and do more." So I do like that I get to do that at work. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Other participants did not mention the word stress regarding work or home. As in Eckman's 2004 study, principals mentioned students being a part of the definition of success. Participant Nine was succinct in her subjective definition: "For me, success is

when every student is successful” (personal communication, March 1, 2017). Helping another person was important to many participants. For example, Participant Ten mentioned both helping another and being with students.

I think success, part of it, is if you’re able to do something that you’re passionate about, that you enjoy doing. I enjoy coming to work. . . . I enjoy being with my students. . . . I feel good that I helped somebody. That’s success. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Two’s definition of success revolves around making others successful. “Thinking of my success, I feel like no matter professional or personal, is always hinged around making sure that others experience success as well” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Three would agree. “I define success right now by helping others succeed” (personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Four had a similar definition. “I think you know the surface level is getting your objectives and your goals accomplished, but I think that’s a sense of watching other people get their goals and objectives accomplished too” (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017). Participant Three felt successful if someone grew or advanced and she was part of the effort. “I have the ability to affect change on a larger scale” (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). One example Participant Three shared is hiring a teacher who went back to school after a divorce. When that teacher received word that the district was interested in hiring her, she cried and told Participant Three that her family’s life was changed (personal communication, February 9, 2017). Another example Participant Three shared was when students presented what they were learning to the school board. The board thought they were in

the challenging enrichment class, but the students were in an average class. They prepared to be “tiny teachers . . . and they owned their learning. That’s how I define success” (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Beyond helping others, participants also referred to their families and relationships when defining success (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Participant Twelve gave an example of subjective career success: when she was “taking care of [her] family” (personal communication, March 31, 2017). Likewise, Participant Two included her family when thinking about success. “My kids’ accomplishments always make me feel successful as a parent. My husband’s accomplishments make me become successful as a spouse. I take no credit for them, but I feel the success around them” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Twelve remembered her family while thinking about success. “I guess in life, for me success is just being happy and taking care of my family” (personal communication, March 31, 2017). Success through children came up for Participant Four too. “Are my children kind? Success. Are they healthy? Success” (personal communication, February 15, 2017). Participant Five said, “I have a family and we have a home and we have good jobs and we go out to eat whenever we want and a couple dogs. We’re all fairly healthy. So, yeah, well, personally we’re pretty successful (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Participant Seven summarizes by saying,

I don’t want my career to be the only thing in my life. I know myself. I would be so unhappy if I was working 80 hours a week and I didn’t have any time to read books I love or ride my bike, spend time with my husband. To me, that will not be a success. So I think success for me is having a really nice balance, something

like the work I enjoy and having the time and the energy to also invest in the relationships that are important to me. (Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017)

Participant Eleven mentioned relationships. “You can build relationships, but are you sustaining relationships? Because every day you meet somebody, but that doesn’t mean that you sustain a relationship with them. And so that to me is successful” (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017).

For Participant Two, subjective career success included others’ feelings. She cared about her relationships with others and their happiness. “I’ve always believed in treating people fairly and treating people well, and I think that helps me to feel a certain connection with people when they have some success. . . . I love people to be happy” (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Eight, from the nonprofit world, suggested success is gaining happiness and meaningfulness.

I guess I equated [success] with happiness and meaningfulness. Yes, you could be happy on vacation all the time, but maybe you’re not giving back, so I feel like there has to be a component of being happy while having some sort of meaning to what you’re doing every day. (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017)

Other participants described success as happiness. In general, participants provided an answer about either being happy or fulfilling a goal (Eckman, 2004; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). Participant Two says,

It feels like a level of success when I help people do well or sometimes completing tasks; helping them complete tasks makes me feel good, and I don’t

know why I'm equating success with feeling good, but I guess that's just the feeling I get when I think of the level of success. (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017)

Participant One mentioned happiness. "I think being generally happy in one's job or in one's day-to-day" (personal communication, February 6, 2017). Participant Twelve describes success in this way:

Professionally . . . for me, success is just being happy and taking care of my family and becoming more of the person I want to be every day just in terms of how I am in the world and continuing to just grow and just cultivate the things about my own person that I want to be. (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017)

Participant Eleven leans into her purpose and describes that as, "My purpose, it's fun to do the impossible. I mean, it's fun to do the impossible; every day I live to do the impossible. I live to do what people say I cannot do" (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017).

Learning and growing are other themes for how interviewed women of Generation X describe success. Participant Ten characterized success through overcoming mistakes.

I think another part of success is being able to learn from your mistakes and growing from them, learning from your success and growing from it. I think people only think, "Oh, if I'm doing well, I'm growing. I'm improving." But it's those mistakes or those areas where you might have a bump in the road where you grow, when you learn. Because if everything is great all the time, then you never



know what you're made of and you never grow. So I think success is if you can make a mistake and not crumble from that mistake, but learn from it and move forward. . . . I like to learn as much as I can. I like to surround myself with people who I don't want to just do what I do; I want to learn from you. (Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017)

Participant Twelve wants to learn throughout her tenure. "At a professional sense, I feel like continuing to grow in my career" (Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

The themes of career success stem from the women's perception of work-life balance and power, among other issues beyond the boundaries of this research. Yet a mentoring program that excels at adapting concepts toward Generation X will raise the next generation of leaders within K-12 schools and the nonprofit sector. The next chapter will deepen the discussion of strengths and limitations, as well as future research possibilities, for mentoring programs geared toward Generation X women.

## Chapter 5. Discussion

Within this investigation, I discovered that the size of generations affects generational leadership. Generation X is the smallest generation currently in the workplace (Glass, 2007, Gronbach, 2008; Rickes, 2016). With the second largest generation, the Baby Boomers, taking on second careers in the nonprofit sector and retiring at a slower pace than anticipated (Wiedmer, 2015), Generation X may have fewer opportunities to lead organizations. In addition, the largest generation, the Millennials, desires upper management positions, causing Generation X to be stuck at a bottleneck for places of leadership (Stahl, 2013).

Other factors created the need for a deeper investigation into mentoring for women of Generation X. This research supports literature that found that women are less likely to be in leadership. However, attitudes are changing about the need for diverse experiences and opinions within a leadership team. A monoethnic, one-gender team may lack a variety of creative solutions (Gilbert et al., 1991; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). The lack of women in leadership may be overcome through mentoring. As role models, women currently in leadership could consider helping other women break the glass ceiling (Morrison, 1992).

Mentoring is one avenue of encouraging Generation X women to reach their goals. Depending on their personal definition of success within their careers, mentoring could help females in Generation X excel in objective career success and take on executive roles. However, others may view mid-career women as ones lacking the motivation to learn, grow, and be promoted, because their intentions may be to leave the workforce to raise their children or for other personal reasons (McKeen & Bujaki, 2007;

Tamborini & Iams, 2011). To retain talent and keep turnover low, mentoring program elements for Generation X may vary slightly.

To better understand what mentoring program elements would be useful, it was necessary to determine how women of Generation X define success. By finding the intersection of these topics discussed above, I formed the central research question, “What elements of a mentoring program are requested by Generation X female mentees to reach their definition of success?” By viewing the central research question and mentoring through the LMX theory, the qualitative research study involved asking women about elements and expectations of a mentoring program.

I gathered interview participants from two programs: CWIP, a nonprofit organization focused on the advancement of women’s concerns in the nonprofit workplace, and GSU’s MILE program, which pairs first-year principals with veteran or retired principals. The striking difference is that state law strongly encourages the MILE program, and CWIP’s WLMP is not state mandated. The Illinois state government formerly required and financially supported mentoring (Illinois General Assembly, 2007); while that funding is no longer available, Illinois law still strongly encourages mentoring (T. Eddy, personal communication, December 2, 2016). The MILE program provided monthly large group meetings and mentors for one-on-one sessions that would occur about once a month. Sometimes the mentors would observe their mentees or help their mentees with special projects or events. WLMP asks participants to meet once a month, but there is no accountability or requirement to meet. Mentees and mentors may meet at CWIP events, including the annual luncheon in March or the opening lunch in October.

From these two programs, 11 participants provided insight into the mentoring relationship, shared the benefits and weaknesses of each program, and defined success. Their responses are cataloged in this last chapter. This chapter explores the findings, strengths, and limitations of the research, and proposes future research direction based on the participants' comments.

### **5.1 Discussion Related to the Findings of the Study**

A summary of beneficial elements, explored throughout this section, is included in Appendix B. Findings were based on the leader–member exchange (LMX) theory, which states that a relationship should be built over time (Graen & Cashman, 2010). When women connected with their mentors, a strong LMX derived from commonality and mutual trust enhanced the mentoring (Breevaart et al., 2015; Sparrowe & Linden, 1997). For those who had a low LMX, the prediction that mentees would seek other mentors was true for this research (Holt et al., 2016).

Throughout my interviews with all 11 participants, a few themes emerged. The first theme is the importance of the relationship between the mentor and mentee (Swap et al., 2001). For seven of the women who participated in this study, the relationship with their mentors was the core benefit from the mentoring program. Two participants (One and Twelve, from WLMP) mentioned that their relationship with their mentors was the least beneficial element of the program because they did not connect with their mentors. Proving the attraction theory to be of importance to mentoring, those two women did not have commonality with their mentors and instead sought out informal mentors from the same organization (Holt et al., 2016; Young et al., 2006). Participant Seven spoke about

her mentor not being a significant contributor during her career transition, but the dyad's common interest in art connected the two (personal communication, February 20, 2017).

Those who met with their mentors sought psychological support (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Sands et al., 1991; Young et al., 2006) or career advice (Dindoffer et al., 2011; Sands et al., 1991, Young et al., 2006). As mentees, women tend to want more psychosocial support, whereas men desire career networking (Allen & Eby, 2004; Burke, 1984; Young et al., 2006). All participants from WLMP sought a career transition into a different role, to a nonprofit employer, or out of the sector completely. Those in the MILE program wanted help transitioning into their roles. Therefore, observations were an element of usefulness to principal participants.

Further, a possible conclusion drawn is that since mentees had different objectives and goals, mentoring may serve a variety of functions dependent on the goal of the mentee. If a mentee was looking for a new position, the function of the mentor would be different than for a mentee who was beginning a new position. A mentee could also ask for validation and support. Eight of the 11 women mentioned the word support when thinking about benefits of their mentors' guidance. Six of those respondents were from the MILE program, and two were from the nonprofit sector. All eight used the word support to describe contexts in which mentors would provide encouragement, validation, and verbal instruction, not physical help for tasks. Mentors should consider the goals of their mentees and whether their mentees want support.

To properly help their mentees, mentors must know what their mentees expect. To do so, in the beginning stages of the relationship or during a possible application process, mentors may ask mentees about their goals. A mentee may express the need to

understand the culture within an organization or better utilize time-management skills to address work–life balance issues. Perhaps a mentee wants to focus on communicating with a team better or exploring a new job market. Some programs require mentees to write their goals on applications before matching them with mentors to better accommodate the mentees’ goals and ambitions.

Asking about the mentees’ goals also provides mentors and mentees a way to discuss whether the goals would fit within a timeline. An example of a time-bound goal would be when a mentee wishes to develop public speaking skills before a major presentation. Or perhaps a mentee wishes to gain knowledge about recruiting candidates and best practices of hiring before a position is open to the public.

Networking was another key element of mentoring for those who were part of WLMP and the MILE program (see Appendix B). However, those who saw networking to advance their careers came from WLMP (Participants Eight, One, and Twelve). Those from the MILE program saw networking as a relationship-building exercise among mentees to create coalitions and partnerships (Participants Eleven, Four, Nine, and Ten).

Gender was another theme for women in leadership. All participants in both programs talked about how gender caused them to be treated differently in the workplace. Even those who did not see their gender hampering their careers shared stories of how they were treated unequally or saw women around them being treated unequally. Per results from Eckman (2004), principals were less likely to see gender as a hindrance because more females than males work in the K–12 school industry.

Power within the workplace and between genders was a common theme the participants mentioned. Participant Nine’s district office and board comprised only

females. She recognized the need for diverse opinions and experiences (Gilbert et al., 1999; Ragins, 1997; Waters, 1992). When the team consisted of mixed genders, tension about who had the most authority seemed to be part of the female leader's experience. For example, Participant Four, as an assistant principal but also the most tenured person in the administration within her school, had to learn when to defer to her new male principal (personal communication, February 15, 2017). Participant Ten, as a principal, would suggest an idea, but it may not be recognized until a male repeated the idea (personal communication, March 9, 2017).

Even when power is not combined with gender, it can still cause office politics within the workplace (see Appendix B). When Participant Eleven began her principalship, staff would come to her to discuss unresolved situations from years before she arrived (personal communication, March 10, 2017). Participant Four, as a principal, found her mentor helping her through circumstances involving office politics (personal communication, February 15, 2017). A mentoring program structured around needs of female Generation X members should consider dedicating some time to training mentors on handling office politics and personality conflicts. For example, an experiential lesson through role-playing regarding how to converse about disagreements with other leaders is one possible element that would help ease the tension around the topic of power at work.

Generational characteristics is another theme of the research. Generation X members want to learn by experience (Bova & Kroth, 2001; Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Although formal education is important,

Generation X members prefer active learning in the workplace. Mentoring for Generation X women should include an element of role-playing, observation by the mentor, or immediately applicable activities. Avoiding formal lectures about theories would benefit members of Generation X.

It is any mentor's responsibility to listen to the Generation X managers and try to understand what they find difficult or frustrating. . . . The most appropriate response is simply one that confirms that the Generation X manager is confronted with a difficult situation and there may not be an easy answer or clear solution. (Mosley, 2005, p. 189)

In addition, Generation X members want independence and are willing to risk their positions if they are unable to feel the freedom they desire (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Lai et al., 2012; Shugart, 2001). Three of the participants, all from the nonprofit sector, were considering leaving their employers during their mentoring through WLMP (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017). MILE participants would consider mentoring in the future if they desired to leave their current roles (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017; Participant Ten, March 9, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

Some women expressed no aspirations to advance within their careers when describing success (see Appendix A). Participant Seven was enjoying being a therapist (personal communication, February 20, 2017). Participant Eight, a nonprofit leader, knew



she could not move into an executive director role, because when that opportunity would arise, she would have a five-year-old, and the demands of the higher role would conflict with her child's needs at home (personal communication, February 27, 2017).

Reminiscent of Eckman's 2004 study, Participant Four, an assistant principal, is not pursuing the principalship because of her two young children at home (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Without a balance between work and life, some women, including Participants Eight and Four, said they would be less likely to take on a different role. But halting a career for the family's sake was not exclusive to principalships. Participant Twelve mentioned two women in her life who left the workforce to start families: The woman who was previously in Participant Twelve's current role left to raise a family, and her mentor in WLMP became a stay-at-home mother (personal communication, March 31, 2017). It is worth noting that the participant said these comments as if it were normal and natural for women to end their careers to take care of their families. But her perspective raises the question, Would it be as normal and natural for a man to leave the workforce to tend to his family? Some women quit their careers to be with their families full-time, avoiding the work-life balance discussion altogether. Participants mentioned that work-life balance was a topic for mentoring pairs to discuss in their current stages of life (see Appendix B). Further, healthy relationships within both the mentoring pair and their own families were important to mentees (Crumpacker & Crumpacker, 2007).

For participants who were not anticipating leaving the workforce for their families, a healthy work-life balance has helped reduce stress (Greenhaus & Singh, 2007). For instance, Participant Ten looks for ways to have balance while at work, so she

exercises with coworkers (personal communication, March 9, 2017). Participants have also honed time management skills to balance work and family. Participant Seven blocks time for activities she enjoys and has set aside time each week to spend with her husband (personal communication, February 20, 2017). Women also may have a family member who is an example of how work and family may synchronize (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011). Participant Four thought of her attorney-mother as a role model (personal communication, February 15, 2017), and Participant Twelve saw her mentor, and the broader community through the WLMP, set the example of how work and family can coexist (personal communication, March 31, 2017). A mentoring program for Generation X females may consider providing insight or activities to help them manage work–life balance.

Best practices for mentoring programs for Generation X was another theme. Generation X members want to know that their efforts matter toward a greater purpose (Buckley et al., 2001; Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017); otherwise, Generation X members will leave their current employers to be promoted (Stahl, 2013). All participants of WLMP were looking for a career transition and explored the career cycles (Hall & Chandler, 2007) through mentoring. Principals in the MILE program would seek mentors if they wanted to move to a new position, but most were in the trial phase of career transitions and had not been triggered to enter the previous phase of exploration (Hall & Chandler, 2007; Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017).

Mentoring programs for Generation X should also include an element of networking (see Appendix B), both with other mentors and among the mentees (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017; Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

Networking helps people reach career goals (Buckley et al., 2001; Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005) and gives them the freedom to find another mentor (Holt et al, 2016; Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017; Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

Whether mentors are assigned or are found informally, other elements should be considered when designing best practices for a mentoring program custom-made for Generation X. Mentors are important to Generation X mentees, and choosing the best element when mentoring may include a variety of generation-specific learning environments. For example, mentors should conduct experiential learning activities such as role-playing and observation, which give space for trial-and-error moments (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Also, mentors should consider their role as one of support (Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Asking questions and allowing the mentees to find their way was one benefit to women of Generation X within the WLMP and MILE programs (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9,

2017). Asking questions will help mentees transition out of current roles or into new ones (Hall & Chandler, 2007; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Ragins, 1997). Mentors should consider their own community and the area that surrounds their mentees' daily activities. Having familiarity with their mentees' position or community was a benefit for three of the participants (Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017). By understanding the cultural dynamics of the mentor's culture and the mentee's culture, a mentor will more quickly develop a higher LMX with the mentee. The strength of the relationship between a mentor and a mentee may be a catalyst toward the mentee's reaching personal goals.

Informal mentoring and supervisory mentoring may benefit Generation X members. Literature supports the idea that mentees are willing to go outside their programs to find another mentor as a source of immediate advice or skills that their formal mentors do not possess (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005; Reyes, 2003; Sanfey et al., 2013). Friends are also included within informal mentoring (Participant Five personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017). Informal mentoring can also occur by organizing activities in which pairs are naturally formed or allowing mentors to identify themselves to a pool of mentees (Ragins, 1997). Generation X women are inclined to seek support from others and will reach out to whoever is best qualified to provide that support. However, an informal mentor may not discredit a

formal mentor or vice versa. Sanfey et al. (2013) recommend a person having multiple mentors at multiple occasions within a lifetime.

Other possible elements for Generation X–specific mentoring lie outside the mentoring relationship. If a large group meeting is part of a program, directors of that program should consider the program’s structure to fit more with Generation X’s preferred learning style. Having discussion groups and putting lessons into practice better support Generation X members (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). Participant Ten asked if it was possible to learn about a topic briefly and then break into teams for discussion and implementation throughout a specified period. Reconvening in the large group afterward to talk about the lessons learned would be her preferred format for larger group learning (personal communication, March 9, 2017). For three participants of the MILE program, the large group meetings provided useful content, but the time of day made it difficult to participate (Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

The final theme is how women defined success. A table of participants’ definitions is available in Appendix A. All of the participants described success subjectively (Arthur et al., 2005). One participant, however, described success objectively as the upward movement in her career (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017), but included subjective definitions, like being happy. All of the participants, except for Participants One and Eight, described success as having

healthy relationships with students or family (Participant Eleven, personal communication, March 10, 2017; Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017; Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017; Participant Ten, personal communication, March 9, 2017; Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017). For those working in a principalship or similar position, student success mattered. If participants did not mention student success specifically, they did mention making sure others were taken care of at work or at home. Participants also mentioned the word *happy* or *happiness* as part of success (Eckman, 2004; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017; Participant Two, personal communication, February 9, 2017).

### **5.1.1 Summary and theory questions.**

Six themes—relationships, gender, power, generational characteristics, best practices, and defining success—answered the following theory questions: “What, if any, work–life balance issues exist?” “What programmatic structure is necessary for Generation X females?” “What experiences in careers make mentoring different in this stage of life?” “Does gender play a role within the workplace?” The paragraphs below review each question through the six themes.

*What, if any, work–life balance issues exist?* Regarding the first issue, work–life balance, women of Generation X desire to have meaning within a healthy work culture while providing well-being for their family members. This was indicated in themes including relationships, gender, power, and best practices. Females in Eckman’s 2004 study also felt the tension between balancing work and home. Similarly, women in this study would understand those principals interviewed in the Eckman (2004) study, although it is possible the women in Eckman’s study and this one are from different generations. Regardless, the Eckman (2004) study and this study confirms that the principalship role puts a strain on maintaining balance between work life and home life. Furthermore, in the Eckman (2004) study, males integrated work and home by asking their wives to attend school events. MILE program participants did not mention that this was an avenue of balance for them, confirming the Eckman (2004) study.

*What programmatic structure is necessary for Generation X females?* The next theory question, “What programmatic structure is necessary for Generation X females?” was answered mostly through the themes of relationships, gender, generational characteristics, and best practices. Within the relationships theme, of most importance to participants were the one-on-one mentoring sessions. Principals mentioned observations, role-playing, and mentors’ asking supportive questions as beneficial parts of their experience. Nonprofit leaders did not participate in observations but had experimental learning opportunities and role-playing as part of their sessions, although role-playing occurred more frequently through the MILE program. For female mentees, mentors can anticipate providing psychological support, in addition to career transition support.

Best practices and generational characteristics blend together to answer the theory question of what structure would support Generation X women the best. A generational characteristic of Generation X is the desire to have meaningful work. Participants mentioned wanting validation that their roles would “make a difference in the world” (Brondyk & Searby, 2013; Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017).

Lai et al. (2012) suggested that if Generation X members do not find meaning in their work and are not independent or responsible for the outcomes, they will rebel against the structure. It could be inferred, but is unconfirmed, that Generation X members would choose a structure that does not include large group lectures because that format does not allow for independence and responsibility for the individual’s learning. In addition, their desires for experiences instead of formal education causes Generation X members to resist lecture-type structures (Feyerherm & Vick, 2005). In this investigation, some principal participants suggested new elements be added to mentoring, including mentees observing a veteran or another participant’s school, as well as formulating small group discussions during implementation phases of lecture materials. Since WLMP did not request that its participants attend large group functions, the participants I interviewed did not discuss the structural elements of large group meetings as being either positive or negative for the nonprofit sphere. However, two participants mentioned an informal mentor they met through a larger group function (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017). This study highlights the need for active learning and discussion in large group formats.



Also included in answering the theory question of structure for Generation X mentoring is the repeated need for networking. Avenues for networking could be an element Generation X females want in a mentoring program; otherwise, mentees may look toward friends or supervisors as informal mentors to receive guidance they have not found in their formal mentors (Hopkins & Grigoriu, 2005; Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017; Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017; Raabe & Beehr, 2003; Reyes, 2003).

*What experiences in careers make mentoring different in this stage of life?* The next theory question, “What experiences in careers make mentoring different this stage of life?” had an unexpected conclusion: The qualitative research proved this question null. The needs in participants’ current stages of life were similar to what they needed earlier in their lives; therefore, mentoring programs geared toward the younger Millennial generation could also apply to those of older generations. Different generations do not need different elements in mentoring, but instead, mentoring for women should include elements to advance their goals and achieve success. The participants I interviewed mentioned the need for a mentor during career transitions and for guidance during work–life imbalances during the mid-career stage of life. All of the WLMP participants would seek mentoring when seeking a career transition either into a new role or out of the nonprofit sector (Participant Eight, personal communication, February 27, 2017; Participant Five, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant One, personal

communication, February 6, 2017; Participant Seven, personal communication, February 20, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017).

*Does gender play a role within in the workplace?* Finally, participants voiced the last theory question: “Does gender play a role within the workplace?” Participants shared stories about how gender hindered or helped them within the workplace. Yet participants recognized gender was not an obtrusive concern in their daily work. Participants from the MILE program seemed to face gender discrimination less than others. For example, one participant said outright, “I think that gender may be at least a little less of an issue in education than other fields” (Participant Four, personal communication, February 20, 2017). On the other hand, for Participant Nine, who worked with an all-female board and district office staff, being female came at a cost (personal communication, March 1, 2017). She said a diversity of opinions and experiences through both male and female colleagues could diminish power struggles and competition. For WLMP participants, gender equality was a boldly stated passion. “What I studied in grad school was gender. I very much own that I’m a feminist” (Participant One, personal communication, February 6, 2017). Likewise, Participant Five had worked for 20 years, and 16 of those years were for women-centered programs (personal communication, February 15, 2017).

### **5.1.2 Conclusions.**

This qualitative research study found that women of Generation X see mentoring as a vehicle toward a transition in their careers, but are less likely to seek it out during their current phases of life. Principals are more likely to want to participate in a mentoring program to “survive” their first year of principalship (Participant Three, personal communication, February 9, 2017; Participant Four, personal communication,

February 15, 2017; Participant Nine, personal communication, March 1, 2017), but since the MILE program is designed to meet the needs of first-year administrators, the principals from this study felt no need to be mentored throughout their tenure as principal.

Women in nonprofit leadership still pursued mentoring during career transitions, transitions that included either entering the nonprofit sector or leaving the nonprofit sector. Per their generational stereotype, Generation Xers like to remain independent and will leave a position or sector if they do not feel a sense of satisfaction or believe that they are making a difference (Buckley et al., 2001; Dries et al., 2008; Feyerherm & Vick, 2005; Lai et al., 2012; Mosley, 2005; Shugart, 2001).

The structure of a mentoring program for Generation X females could be helpful if a few elements are provided within the framework of the program. For example, observations seemed to be important for MILE participant principals who volunteered for this study. Observations were not part of WLMP, and only one WLMP participant mentioned that observations would be helpful in her current stage of life. However, it is possible that without knowing that mentors of other programs offer observations, the women would not think about that element as an option. No one mentioned written logs or other devices for accountability as something they would appreciate within a mentoring program for Generation X. In addition, some asked for more discussions about topics that were affecting them. Rather than providing a monthly meeting about a topic, these women would rather have a safe space where they can ask peers and other mentors questions about situations and how best to handle them. Few mentioned the burden of the

time commitment for the monthly meetings. However, the regular meetings created more difficulty for work–life balance.

Work–life balance was a topic seven of the 11 participants mentioned.

Participants mentioned that having a strong female role model in their lives was a benefit for learning how to have a work–life balance (Brown, 2005; Dindoffer et al., 2011; Participant Four, personal communication, February 15, 2017; Participant Twelve, personal communication, March 31, 2017; Raabe & Beehr, 2003). Role-playing and modeling a work–life balance through a mentor also seemed to be beneficial for women who mentioned work–life balance. A strong conclusion to this research is that more senior women in leadership are needed to mentor younger women.

## **5.2 Strengths and Limitations**

As with any research study, strengths and limitations existed for this study as well. The strengths came mostly from the unique features of my experience and background. For example, my being a female may have encouraged women to be honest, especially when speaking about their experiences as females in the workplace. I also work in the nonprofit sector, so I could easily understand the WLMP participants' benefits and challenges of being within the sector.

Another strength lies in the interdisciplinary structure of this study.

Interdisciplinary studies require researchers to consider influences in various industries and examine the implications of variables within those industries. The practicability and immediate application make this study of interest to those within the industries represented in the interdisciplinary study. This study is unique in that participants included both nonprofit leaders and principals. The crossover between the nonprofit

sector and a sector whose influence is chiefly governmental and political shows what is legitimately a trait of Generation X females, and what characteristics come from their choice of profession. While principals used the word *survival* to describe one of their goals during their time in their mentoring programs, nonprofit leaders asked for help in career transitions. Yet all participants mentioned needing help with work–life balance. All participants also mentioned the importance of relationships while describing success. Work–life balance and relationships were important to Generation X females, while only principals voiced the need for surviving the pressures of the daily work environment.

In research, a strength can also be a weakness. While this strength of finding lateral connections between the interdisciplinary roles was a strength to see what was affecting all women, it also could obstruct other populations. Studying two of the many female-only mentoring programs in the Chicagoland area became a hindrance to fully understanding what women of Generation X need in a mentoring program. Other female-based mentoring groups exist within the Chicagoland area, but none focus on mid-career or Generation X women, such as CWIP’s WLMP. Likewise, other programs may mentor principals, and their format, elements, and structure may be different than the MILE program. The research is limited by the population but also enhanced by the restrictions on the sample population.

Other limitations within this study exist. Again, strengths can be weaknesses. Since I am a female, participants may have formulated answers that a female would understand or may have exaggerated their answers regarding gender. I also did not have any prior contact with any of the participants, and their not knowing me could have hampered their trust and transparency within the interview. In addition, I am from the

nonprofit sector. For principal participants, the challenges and struggles may have been less identifiable by me because of my lack of experience within that sphere.

### **5.3 Further research**

Further studies could explore how females are perceived in the nonprofit sector. Gender is a topic of conversation within the workforce today; the research community interested in females working in the nonprofit sector could reveal through a qualitative grounded theory study how they understand their value in the workplace. It would be interesting to also note how they understand their contributions to the workplace and the sector overall by means of comprehending success in the nonprofit sector.

In addition, the lack of input from mentors or program designers limited this study's findings. Women in the nonprofit sphere may define success through being a mentor. This aspect could be explored in the principalship role as well. Literature points to the power of a woman who has been mentored by a female (Brown, 2005; McManus & Russell, 2007; Sanfey et al., 2013), so speaking with mentors may reveal more intricacies of females mentoring females.

Along this route for research would be interviewing Generation X males from the MILE program. The experience and needs of Generation X males may differ from those who participated in this study. Basing a new study about gender in Generation X mentoring that includes both male and female participants could highlight if findings in this study are related directly to only gender. This same study could be also conducted by a man; it is possible that answers would be different if the researcher were a man. Natural biases and stereotypes could emerge, even subconsciously.

Further research could include an examination of formal versus informal mentoring for mid-career women. Mid-career programs should determine if mentors should have a single mentee, a dyad, or a triad of mentees. Since peer-to-peer mentoring is acceptable, perhaps a dyad of mentees would help a mid-career woman achieve her goals. There is little mention of how other factors might affect peer mentoring, such as women leaving the workforce for family reasons. It would also be interesting to learn if one of the peers is involved in another mentoring behavior, either as a protégé or as a mentor. In addition, mentoring as a means of talent retention for female Generation X employees in the nonprofit sector or as a principal could be better analyzed.

Future studies can more broadly explore mentoring for females within Generation X to help them reach their definition of success. As Baby Boomers continue to leave the workplace and Millennials grow through experiences, Generation Xers may find themselves in a precarious place of insignificance, causing them to consider leaving the workforce to find meaning through relationships outside of work. Potentially, they may seek to start families and exit the workforce. Unless we take up the mantle of discovering how to encourage them to strive for success, the nonprofit sector and K–12 schools could be left wanting their experience, knowledge, and creative learning styles. Mentoring may be an avenue to capitalize on their capabilities, talents, and skills, in turn, making our nonprofit organizations and schools more successful.

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Appendix A

*Determination of Success*

Participant and program	Definition of success				
	Relationships	Career goals/growing	Happiness	Helping others	Enjoying work/meaningful work
1 WLMP	–	X	X	–	X
2 MILE	X	X	X	X	–
3 MILE	X	–	–	X	–
4 MILE	X	X	–	–	–
5 WLMP	X	X	–	–	X
7 WLMP	X	–	–	X	–
8 WLMP	–	–	X	–	X
9 MILE	X	–	–	X	X
10 MILE	X	–	–	X	X
11 MILE	X	X	–	X	–
12 WLMP	X	X	X	–	X
Total	9	6	4	6	6

*Note.* Dashes reflect participants who did not use a specific subjective or objective determiner within their definition of success.

Appendix B

*Beneficial Elements of Mentoring Programs for Generation X*

Participant and program	Beneficial elements						
	Large group meeting	One-on-one	Observation/role play	Work-life balance	Power/politics	Networking	Support
1 WLMP	X	–	–	X	–	X	–
2 MILE	–	X	X	X	X	–	X
3 MILE	–	X	X	–	X	–	X
4 MILE	–	X	X	X	X	X	X
5 WLMP	–	–	X	–	–	–	–
7 WLMP	–	–	–	X	–	–	X
8 WLMP	–	X	–	X	–	X	–
9 MILE	–	X	X	–	–	X	X
10 MILE	X	X	X	–	X	X	X
11 MILE	X	X	–	X	X	X	X
12 WLMP	–	–	–	X	–	X	X
Total	3	7	6	7	5	7	8

*Note.* Dashes reflect participants who did not mention that element as being beneficial.